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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 4 July 2018

House of Commons

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Oral Answers to Questions

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

East Africa: Trading Opportunities

1. **Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to promote trading opportunities to encourage development in east Africa. [906239]

The Secretary of State for International Development (Penny Mordaunt): The UK supports regional trade and development by improving infrastructure and cutting red tape through our flagship programme TradeMark East Africa, which has helped to reduce import times at the Mombasa port by 50%. We will also support the region by ensuring that there is continuity in market access arrangements post-EU exit.

Andrew Jones: In the past decade more than 1 billion people have been lifted out of poverty, largely thanks to free trade. Owing to my commercial experience, I have seen for myself the quality of the produce from the agricultural sector in east Africa, and I am not surprised that it has found a strong export market. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the best and most sustainable way out of poverty is through trade?

Penny Mordaunt: I agree wholeheartedly. The greatest progress that has been made towards the first global goal has resulted from the liberalisation of world trade. We want to move more nations from aid to trade, because that is where their future lies.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State may know that the countries of east Africa are some of the worst performers in terms of road deaths and serious road accidents. Could part of the trading relationship involve trade in both services and technology to help to bring down those dreadful casualty figures?

Penny Mordaunt: Absolutely. I congratulate the hon. Gentleman and thank him for the work he does on a critical issue that results in an enormous number of deaths every year. I think there will be a greater onus on us to provide technical support for developing countries, and cutting the number of road deaths is clearly an area in which that technical support will be needed.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): Key to boosting east African trade is continuing to break down non-tariff barriers between East African countries, reduce transportation costs and reduce import-export clearance times. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the TradeMark East Africa programme has an important continuing role in helping to boost trade even further?

Penny Mordaunt: I absolutely agree with my right hon. Friend. Frictionless trade is a good thing, and the corridor that TradeMark East Africa has provided has cut border times dramatically, as well as cutting corruption. We are funding the second leg of that trade corridor, and it has done amazing work for the region's prosperity.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): If we are to promote trade, we need to be able to promote travel. However, the Scotland Malawi Partnership and others have received a litany of complaints from people who want to come to the United Kingdom and sell their goods from east Africa, but have been denied visas by the Home Office. Will the Secretary of State meet representatives of the Home Office as a matter of urgency to ensure that they sort out the mess of the east African visa system?

Penny Mordaunt: I have frequent dialogues with colleagues throughout the Government. As the hon. Gentleman will know, 70 of my staff are embedded in the Department for International Trade to deal with these issues, particularly in respect of developing nations, but if he knows of any specific cases and will pass them on to me, I shall be happy to look at them.

Kate Osamor (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op): In Lisbon 11 years ago, the historic joint Africa-EU strategy was launched. That strategy, which was based on the principles of ownership, partnership and solidarity, has already had to withstand the economic impact of the global financial crisis and the eurozone crisis. What assessment has the Secretary of State made of the social and economic impact that Brexit will have on it?

Penny Mordaunt: The fact that we will be able to make our own trade arrangements with developing countries will be of massive advantage to those countries, and the nations with which we work are incredibly excited about the possibilities that will result from our leaving the EU. I think that we should be optimistic about Africa's future, and its leaders are optimistic, but as well as promoting trade we must help them to combat illicit money flows. If we add up everything that goes into those nations, we see that it is tiny by comparison with what leaves them as a result of corruption and illicit flows. We will deal with both.

Kate Osamor: I am grateful for the Secretary of State's answer, but I have to say that I do not share her optimism. Along with many others, I believe that the joint Africa-EU strategy marked a new phase in Africa-EU relations, opening a gateway to future trade deals based on benefits for African communities, not just European corporations. How will the Secretary of State ensure that any future deals negotiated by her Government benefit rather than damage the livelihoods of the world's poorest people?

Penny Mordaunt: Because at the heart of our trade strategy as we leave the EU are developing nations—we want to give them preferential treatment and support them in their ambitions. I would point to the evidence that since we announced that we are leaving the EU, we have made huge progress on initiatives like the Sahel alliance and a greater focus with bilateral partners including France on our work together in Africa. I urge the hon. Lady to be optimistic about the future.

Technology

2. **Vicky Ford** (Chelmsford) (Con): What steps she is taking to promote the development of technology in developing countries. [906240]

6. **Alan Mak** (Havant) (Con): What steps she is taking to promote the development of technology in developing countries. [906244]

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Harriett Baldwin): Investments from our aid budget in technologies are saving and changing lives all over the world. Half our research budget this year is for new technologies in developing countries in health, agriculture, climate, clean energy, water and education and for humanitarian response in emergencies.

Vicky Ford: The Phoenix rotary club in Chelmsford supports the One Last Push campaign to eradicate polio, and new technology means that polio workers on the ground can target efforts where they are most needed. Will my hon. Friend confirm that this Government will continue to support the One Last Push campaign and end polio for good?

Harriett Baldwin: This question gives me an opportunity to pay tribute not only to the rotary club my hon. Friend mentions but to Rotarians across the world who have been working hard on this push to eradicate polio. UK Aid has been at their side throughout this journey; we have eradicated something like 99% of the world's polio cases, but we must continue to push for that final 1%.

Alan Mak: In April, Commonwealth Heads of Government committed to achieving quality eye care for all. Will my hon. Friend meet me and other vision campaigners to ensure that vision is taken seriously at this month's global disability summit?

Harriett Baldwin: I thank my hon. Friend for highlighting such an important issue. As someone who is extremely myopic, I benefit from glasses. This is an incredibly important aspect of what we can do, and at this month's disability summit the world will be coming together to pledge what more it can do to help with people's inclusion around the world, and certainly vision will play a key role.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): Last week, I met some of CAFOD's Pacific climate warriors who campaign for environmental justice so that they can protect their homes so that we can all work together to protect our common home. What are the British Government doing to promote the development

of technology in places that suffer the most catastrophic effects of climate change that ultimately affect the UK, too?

Harriett Baldwin: The hon. Lady is right to highlight this issue. She will be aware of the announcements we made alongside so many of the small island states at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in April to help them with technology to adapt to the changing climate, and also the additional £61 million announced by the Prime Minister to tackle the scourge of plastics in our oceans.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): Some small charities are working exceptionally hard in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly using technology to deliver much needed clean drinking water to those areas. What help can the Government offer to those charities to deliver for those people in that exceptionally dry part of the continent of Africa?

Harriett Baldwin: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to draw attention to the challenges posed by climate change, particularly to the countries nearest the Sahara. UK Aid is working very closely with them, and investments in technology are helping to address that and provide drinking water for many hundreds of thousands of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

Antoinette Sandbach (Eddisbury) (Con): The development of the M-Pesa payment system in Kenya with the help of DFID has absolutely transformed the economy, particularly for small traders. What other steps and similar developments can my hon. Friend outline that would improve the Kenyan economy?

Harriett Baldwin: This is another great example of how UK Aid can work to unlock a payment system that in many ways leapfrogs what we have here in the UK: people can pay from their mobile phone for a range of technologies and goods. Recently we had a solar fridge in DFID, and M-KOPA Solar is helping poor people in Kenya and other countries to pay for those fridges by using that technology.

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): After continued pressure from these Scottish National party Benches, it was reassuring to hear after meeting the World Bank last week that it has made a firm commitment to no longer finance upstream oil and gas after 2019. However, the UK Government are still spending millions of pounds of taxpayers' money funding fossil fuel projects in countries that are already bearing the worst brunt of climate change. Will the Minister of State today match the World Bank commitment to stop funding polluting fuels by 2019?

Harriett Baldwin: Along with colleagues in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, we are doing a lot to encourage many of these countries not only to power past coal and fossil fuels but to invest considerable amounts in renewable energy. I share the hon. Gentleman's aspiration to work with developing countries to power past fossil fuels.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Ah! I thought the hon. Member for Liverpool, Walton (Dan Carden) wanted to come in on this question, but he has perambulated to Question 5. Well, so be it. That is not a scandal.

Venezuela: Vulnerable People

3. **Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): What assistance her Department is providing to vulnerable people in Venezuela. [906241]

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Alistair Burt): We are deeply concerned by the worsening crisis in Venezuela. Too many Venezuelans are suffering the consequences of the Maduro Government's mismanagement. While we are urging the Venezuelan Government to accept humanitarian aid, we are deploying two humanitarian advisers to the region in support of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's efforts to push the Government of Venezuela to meet the needs of their population.

Andrew Rosindell: The Minister will be aware of the United Nations human rights report that details the complete erosion of the rule of law and human rights in Venezuela. Will he explain to the House what the UK is doing to support economic reform and stability in the region, to ensure that the money is spent in the right place while the Venezuelan Government still refuse to acknowledge that there is a humanitarian crisis?

Alistair Burt: We are providing support in the crisis and to the region through the funding of key UN and humanitarian agencies, but, as my hon. Friend says, this is limited because of the Venezuelan Government's refusal to admit the seriousness and reality of the situation. We are urging them to address the most urgent needs of their own population.

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): Very large numbers of people are fleeing the situation in Venezuela, particularly into neighbouring Colombia. Will the Minister tell us what the Government are doing to address that situation, and what opportunity the Government see for the proposed UN global compact for refugees to address crises such as this one?

Alistair Burt: The hon. Gentleman is right to highlight the regional crisis and the growing global problem of refugees in relation to the length of time they stay in host states and their prospects of returning. Venezuela is not the only affected area. We continue to support UN agencies in relation to this, and we are playing a leading part in creating the new compact for refugees.

Orphanages

4. **Dr Lisa Cameron** (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): What steps her Department is taking to support children in orphanages in developing countries. [906242]

The Secretary of State for International Development (Penny Mordaunt): DFID's primary focus is to tackle the underlying drivers of institutionalisation. We address these through poverty reduction programmes and through our strong focus on education, nutrition, health, economic

development and social protection. Through UK Aid Match, we are funding charities such as Hope and Homes for Children, which supports children into family-based and community-based care.

Dr Cameron: We all recall the harrowing reports of disabled children being tied to rough bed frames or left on sodden mattresses on the floor and abandoned in orphanages around the developing world. Given that the ability to thrive entails the right to grow up in a family, what priority is the Department giving to finding foster families for disabled children in orphanages?

Penny Mordaunt: The hon. Lady touches on a subject close to my heart. When I was an aid worker in the former eastern bloc, I worked in the hospitals and orphanages there. Many of the children were not orphans as we would understand the term; they had families. We believe that the best way to care for and develop children, whatever their circumstances and whether they have a disability or not, is in a family or community setting. The disability summit that is coming up will afford us the opportunity to focus on the needs of the specific group that the hon. Lady refers to.

Mr Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con): I am sure the Secretary of State shares my horror at recent reports about the sex trafficking and exploitation of children in unmonitored orphanages. Is this not something that the international community should look to stamp out, and will she do her utmost to move it up the global political agenda for action?

Penny Mordaunt: We will certainly do that. DFID does not, as a policy, fund these types of institutions. We have traction with other donors around the world, and we will certainly try to move them on to share our policy.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): It is estimated that more than 50,000 children have been orphaned in Yemen since 2015, but the orphanages are struggling with a chronic lack of funds and are in constant danger of being closed. What discussions is the Minister having with her Saudi counterparts and others to ensure that the orphanages are getting the support they need?

Penny Mordaunt: This is a complex area, and I thank the hon. Lady for raising it. In addition to the efforts we are making with the Saudis and the Emiratis to try to get supplies into Yemen, we are also aware of in-country issues with moving supplies around, including basic vaccines and so forth. My right hon. Friend the Minister for the Middle East is in frequent contact with all parties, as am I.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): The Indian diaspora in this country is incredibly generous in donating money to fund orphanages and schools for disabled children in India. What assistance can the Department give to match fund that generosity?

Penny Mordaunt: Our aid programmes in India are limited to investments on which we make a return and to technical support. We do not do traditional aid programmes in India, and we certainly do not fund the types of institutions to which my hon. Friend refers.

If he thinks we should be doing something that we are not, he can write to me and I will take a look at it, but that is our policy.

Access to Education

5. **Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): What steps she is taking to expand access to education in developing countries. [906243]

The Minister for Africa (Harriett Baldwin): We supported 7.1 million children between 2015 and 2017 through bilateral and multilateral education programmes. UK leadership has secured ambitious commitments to ensure that children have access to 12 years of quality education.

Jim Shannon: I thank the Minister for her response. DFID is working with the Pakistan Minorities Teachers Association to provide education to religious minorities in schools. Does the Minister agree that DFID should continue and expand its work with the PMTA to ensure that hate material is removed from textbooks and that it does not inadvertently fund discriminatory materials?

Harriett Baldwin: The hon. Gentleman raises an important issue, and I can reassure him that DFID does not fund the production of any textbooks in Pakistan that contain any bias against religious minorities. I can also confirm that in terms of our support for education in Pakistan, we support independent evaluations—

Mr Speaker: That is extremely helpful, but I am keen to get others in.

Jeremy Lefroy (Stafford) (Con): Given that most jobs in developing countries will be in self-employment or small businesses, what input does DFID have into the curriculum in developing countries to ensure that the necessary skills are taught?

Harriett Baldwin: The education strategy that we published earlier this year focuses on ensuring that people leave primary school with good literacy and maths skills and that we invest in high-quality teaching.

Jo Platt (Leigh) (Lab/Co-op): Last month, I had the pleasure of visiting a Voluntary Service Overseas project in Malawi that focuses on the promotion of youth engagement in the country. My time was spent with young people from all over the country who were passionate, political and eager to have their voices heard. Will the Minister commit to meet me to discuss that project and how we can support youth voice structures in developing countries?

Harriett Baldwin: I am delighted to hear about the hon. Lady's wonderful trip to Malawi and look forward to meeting her to discuss it in more detail. I can confirm that we are doing extensive bilateral work in Malawi and that many young people from the UK go out with the VSO's International Citizen Service.

Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): Some 11.5 million young people globally have signed a petition to the United Nations backing a \$10 billion plan to create an international finance facility for education that would guarantee every child the right to an education by 2030. If we are to meet the sustainable development goal on

education, former Prime Minister Gordon Brown says that we require an "extraordinary, indeed superhuman, effort." Will the Government provide both financial guarantees to such a facility and that superhuman effort?

Harriett Baldwin: I pay tribute to former Prime Minister Gordon Brown's work on the girls' education agenda around the world. We are considering the feasibility of that international financing facility for education, and we are going through the technical detail, but we are not yet in a position to support the proposal.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Speaker: Order. I will take Questions 7 and 9, but there will be no time for supplementaries.

Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

7. **Ross Thomson** (Aberdeen South) (Con): What steps she is taking to support Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. [906245]

9. **Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods** (City of Durham) (Lab): What steps her Department is taking to protect Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh in preparation for the monsoon season. [906248]

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Alistair Burt): The UK has helped to lead the international response to the crisis. We are working with the Government of Bangladesh and humanitarian partners to improve shelters, provide water and sanitation, vaccinate against deadly disease and pre-position emergency supplies.

Ross Thomson: Save the Children reports that just over 70% of school-age Rohingya children in Bangladesh are currently out of school. Will the Department help to lead a significant scale-up of education programming in the refugee camps?

Alistair Burt: Yes.

Dr Blackman-Woods: Save the Children has warned that not only are powerful storms affecting the Rohingya refugee camps, but such storms are likely to become more frequent. What are the Government doing to ensure that global action is taken to address flooding issues? [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: I understand the sense of anticipation. I just remind the House that we are discussing the plight of Rohingya refugees, whom we owe some empathy and respect.

Alistair Burt: My right hon. Friend the Minister for Asia and the Pacific was at Cox's Bazar last weekend. He raised issues of global support with the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, who was also there. We are working with global partners to do all we can to meet the needs of those in such difficult circumstances.

Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab): The Red Cross has announced that conditions are not ready for Rohingya refugees to return to Myanmar. This will be a protracted

crisis, with up to 200,000 Rohingya being affected by the monsoon season. This was not a surprise. Where was the Government's disaster relief plan?

Alistair Burt: The hon. Lady is right, and we are already working with other agencies on the fact that the refugees are likely to be there for much longer than people would originally have expected. It is still important that they are safe to return to Myanmar, but if that is not possible, we will indeed be working with others to make sure they are as safe as possible where they are.

Topical Questions

T1. [906254] **Bob Stewart** (Beckenham) (Con): If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for International Development (Penny Mordaunt) [*In British Sign Language*]: On 24 July, we will hold a global disability conference here in London, organised by the UK Government, by the Kenyan Government and by the International Disability Alliance. For too long, in the world's poorest countries, disabled people have not been able to reach their full potential because of stigma or not enough practical support. I am proud to be focused on this area, which has been neglected for too long. The conference will support the global effort to advance disability inclusion for some countries' most vulnerable people. [*Applause.*]

Mr Speaker: In thanking the Secretary of State, and the gratitude of the House is obvious, let me just say by way of reply that that is—[*in British Sign Language*—good news.

Bob Stewart: As a boy, my ayah came from Somaliland, which was a British protectorate then. Will my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State explain what her Department is doing to help that great country, which has always been a friend of the UK?

Penny Mordaunt: I thank my hon. Friend for that question. UK assistance to Somaliland includes support for critical economic infrastructure, humanitarian assistance, police and justice support, and engagement in counter-terrorism and security. We provided rapid response in the aftermath of the tropical storm, and we will also support Somaliland's National Electoral Commission to plan and prepare to deliver elections next year.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP) *rose*—

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady will revel in her popularity.

T2. [906255] **Alison Thewliss:** Reuters has reported that fighting in Hodeidah has forced around 2,000 high school students to take a dangerous six-hour journey across mountains to sit their exams in Sana'a, but more than 2 million children are reported to be out of school in Yemen, and the conflict is having a profound effect on their education. What are the Government doing to end the conflict?

Alistair Burt: We are giving every support to the work of the UN special envoy, Martin Griffiths, who, almost as we speak, is in Sana'a and talking to the coalition parties. Only through this UN negotiation might we get a resolution of the conflict.

T3. [906256] **Mr Laurence Robertson** (Tewkesbury) (Con): I know through personal experience the good work DFID does with the Foreign Office in promoting trade with developing countries. Will the Secretary of State continue to work with the Foreign Office to make sure we offer better trade deals to developing countries, particularly those in Africa, than they currently have with the European Union?

Penny Mordaunt: As I said, leaving the EU affords us the opportunity to develop our own trading deals with those nations. We work incredibly closely with the Foreign Office, including through our ministerial teams coming together once a week to discuss these matters.

T4. [906257] **Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): The recent aid transparency index showed DFID a commendable third but the FCO a poor 40th in the global rankings of aid agencies. Can the Secretary of State explain the discrepancy between the two and ensure that all UK aid spend meets the same standards of quality, poverty reduction and transparency?

Penny Mordaunt: As the hon. Gentleman knows, earlier this year I convened the first cross-ministerial official development assistance group. Every Department that spends ODA money, and the National Security Council, which looks after the cross-Government funds, meets at that group, through which we will provide training, support and the tools DFID uses to get other Departments to the standard we want them to reach.

T5. [906258] **Luke Hall** (Thornbury and Yate) (Con): Building on the Government's efforts to tackle modern slavery in the UK, will the Secretary of State update the House on what steps she is taking to tackle modern slavery overseas?

Alistair Burt: Tackling modern slavery is a priority for the Department. Last year, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced £40 million of new funding that aims to reach at least 500,000 people at risk of slavery. We will continue to work on this as a priority.

T6. [906259] **Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): Ministers will be aware that as we speak the bulldozers are moving into the Palestinian settlement of Khan al-Ahmar. That will lead to the forced displacement of the residents there, in a clear breach of international law. Will the Minister assure me that we are on the ground now, gathering evidence of these breaches of law, so that those who are responsible will later be legally accountable?

Alistair Burt: I will be answering an urgent question on this matter shortly. We have taken a great deal of interest over many years in the affairs of those Bedouins at Khan al-Ahmar. I visited them just a few weeks ago, and this remains a matter of great concern to the UK.

T7. [906260] **John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): At the recent royal highland show, a number of excellent charities were exhibiting, including the Scottish-based landmine clearance charities the HALO Trust and World Vision. Will the Minister reassure the charities and me that this Government will continue to be committed to the 0.7% international aid budget and the support they give to these charities?

Penny Mordaunt: Absolutely; that is our policy. I will be visiting the HALO Trust tomorrow. It does a tremendous amount of work de-mining in many parts of the world, and it is a very valued partner of ours.

T8. [906261] **Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): Healthcare workers tending wounded in Gaza are coming under fire from the Israeli defence force. What discussions has the Secretary of State had with the Israeli Government about this unacceptable and barbaric practice?

Alistair Burt: We have many discussions with the Government and state of Israel about the issues recently in Gaza. Although it is right for Israel to protect itself, aid workers and medical workers should never be a target for attack.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [906224] **Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): If she will list her official engagements for Wednesday 4 July.

The Prime Minister (Mrs Theresa May): I am sure the whole House will wish to join me in offering our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Private Reece Miller from the 1st Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment, who died on 30 June while on operations in Estonia as a result of a non-battle injury. Private Miller served his country with great distinction and that service will not be forgotten.

This week marks 70 years since the NHS was founded. It is rightly one of the nation's most loved institutions, and I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to and recognise the dedication and hard work of NHS staff across the country.

The country witnessed a very rare and welcome event last night: the England football team winning a penalty shoot-out. The explosion of relief and, most of all, joy could be felt up and down the country, not just in the Smoking Room of the House of Commons. I congratulate Gareth Southgate and his team on a great performance. Last week, I promised to fly the flag of St George above No. 10 for all of England's remaining matches in the World cup, and I know the whole House will want to join me in wishing the England team the best of luck in Saturday's quarter final. Let's keep that flag flying.

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

Tommy Sheppard: The Scotland Act 2016 transferred responsibility for the Crown Estate in Scotland to the Scottish Government, but a large retail park in my constituency called Fort Kinnaird was exempted from the transfer on the grounds that it was tied up with a private joint venture. Last month, the Government sold the Crown Estate's interests in Fort Kinnaird for the receipt of £167 million, but last week the Treasury confirmed to me that none of that money would go to the Scottish Government and that it would be retained here in London. Will the Prime Minister review that

decision in order that the proceeds from the sale of a major public asset in Scotland's capital city are given to the people of Scotland?

The Prime Minister: My understanding is that although the hon. Gentleman says that the money has come to the Government, it has actually gone to the Crown Estate, but I am happy to look into that and clarify that point for him in writing.

Q3. [906226] **Rachel Maclean** (Redditch) (Con): After last night, I am sure that there is one question I do not need to ask the Prime Minister, which is whether she believes that football is coming home. I will ask her, though, whether she agrees that another great victory for our United Kingdom is the BAE contract. What does she think that means for jobs up and down the country in the manufacturing supply chain after we leave the EU?

The Prime Minister: I sincerely hope that Members across the whole House will congratulate England on their success and welcome it.

My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight the excellent news that Australia has selected the global combat ship and BAE as the preferred tenderer for its future frigate programme. The scale and nature of the contract puts the UK at the forefront of maritime design and engineering, and demonstrates what can be achieved by UK industry and Government working hand in hand. It is the start of a new era in strategic defence industrial collaboration between the UK and Australia, which will be reinforced by the forthcoming defence industrial dialogue. As we leave the UK—as we leave the EU—[*Interruption.*] As we leave the European Union, the UK has an opportunity to build on our closer relationships with allies such as Australia, and that is exactly what we are doing.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): I share the Prime Minister's tribute to Private Reece Miller, who died while serving in the 1st Battalion the Yorkshire Regiment. Our thoughts are with this family and friends and, of course, with the entire regiment.

I spent the weekend congratulating the NHS on its 70th birthday in Nye Bevan's birthplace. The message from the crowd there was: "The NHS is great; let's fund it properly." [*Interruption.*]

While we are speaking of emergency services, we should send from the House a message of our thanks and support to all those firefighters tackling the huge fires on Saddleworth moor and Winter hill.

Of course, I congratulate the England team on a fantastic performance last night and wish them well on Saturday in the match against Sweden.

With fares rising above inflation, passenger numbers falling and services being cut, does the Prime Minister accept her failure on yet another public service: the buses?

The Prime Minister: First, I absolutely agree with the right hon. Gentleman and, I am sure, all Members of this House that our thanks should go to the firefighters and troops who have been struggling to deal with the terrible fires that we have seen on the moorlands in the north of Britain. On his point about buses, I merely

point out to him that we should look at the responsibility that local authorities up and down the country have for the buses.

May I also comment on the right hon. Gentleman's remark about putting sufficient funding into the national health service? At the last election, the Labour party said that giving the NHS an extra 2.2% a year would make it

“the envy of the world.”

Well, we are not giving it an extra 2.2% or, indeed, an extra 2.5% or 3%. We are giving the NHS an extra 3.4% a year. Now the right hon. Gentleman tries to say that that is not enough. What should we believe—what he said before the election or what he says after the election?

Jeremy Corbyn: In case the Prime Minister has forgotten, my question was about buses. Since 2010, her Government have cut 46% from bus budgets in England and passenger numbers have fallen, and, among the elderly and disabled, they have fallen by 10%. Her Government belatedly committed to keeping the free bus pass, but a bus pass is not much use if there is not a bus. Does she think it is fair that bus fares have risen by 13% more than inflation since 2010?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman says that, in his first question, he asked about buses; he did indeed and I gave him an answer in reference to buses. What he cannot do is simply stand up and make assertions about what the Government are doing without expecting those to be challenged, which is exactly what I did on his funding for the national health service.

It was right that we made that commitment in relation to bus passes. What we are seeing across the country is that, as people's working habits are changing, there is less usage of buses, but we are working with local authorities on this. Local authorities have many responsibilities in relation to buses, and I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman asks some of those local authorities what they are doing about the buses in their own areas.

Jeremy Corbyn: Under this Government, fares have risen three times faster than people's pay. Bus users are often people on lower incomes whose wages are lower than they were 10 years ago in real terms and who have suffered a benefits freeze. Under the stewardship of this Government, 500 bus routes have been cut every year, leaving many people more isolated and lonely and damaging our local communities. Does the Prime Minister believe that bus services are a public responsibility, or just something that we leave to the market?

The Prime Minister: I have made the point on two occasions about the responsibilities that others have in relation to buses. The right hon. Gentleman might, for example, look at what the Mayor of London—who when I last looked was a Labour politician—is doing in relation to buses in London. The right hon. Gentleman talks also about the impact of fares on lower-income people. It is important that we consider the situation of people who are on low incomes. That is why it is this Government who introduced the national living wage and have increased the national living wage. That is why it is this Government who have taken 4 million people out of paying income tax altogether. That is helping people on low incomes in this country.

Jeremy Corbyn: When Sadiq Khan ran for Mayor of London, he promised to freeze bus fares, and what has he done? He has frozen bus fares. [*Interruption.*] If the Prime Minister is concerned about the travelcard fares, she should speak to the Secretary of State for Transport: he is the one who sets that fare. Bus routes are being wiped out: 26 million fewer journeys have been made across the north of England and the midlands under her Government. So much for a northern powerhouse and a midlands engine. Can we be clear: does the Prime Minister think that deregulation of the bus industry, putting profit before passengers, has been a success or a failure?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman talks about what the Mayor of London has done, but what have we seen in the number of people using buses in London? It has gone down under the current Mayor. If he wants to talk about what Mayors are doing, I am very happy to talk about what Andy Street, the Conservative Mayor of the West Midlands, has done; he has extended free bus fares to apprentices and students.

Jeremy Corbyn: It will be a Labour Government who save the bus industry and who give free fares to under 26-year-olds. The truth is that since deregulation fares have risen faster than inflation, ridership has fallen and these private bus monopolies have made a profit of £3.3 billion since 2010. That is what the Tories give us in public transport. The Government have given metro Mayors the powers to franchise and regulate to secure better services. Why will they not extend that power to all local authorities?

The Prime Minister: Of course, the local authorities have some responsibilities and capabilities in relation to subsidising bus routes and fares; and, yes, we have given those powers to the metro Mayors. The right hon. Gentleman earlier referenced what was happening in the northern powerhouse and the midlands engine. I will tell him what is happening: more investment in our public transport; more investment in our roads; and more investment in the infrastructure that brings jobs to people in the north and across the midlands.

Jeremy Corbyn: It is a shame that this Government are so shy of giving powers to local authorities, and are instead more interested in cutting their resources. Bus services are in crisis under this Government. Fares are increasing, routes are being cut and passenger numbers are falling. The situation is isolating elderly and disabled people, damaging communities and high streets, and leading to more congestion in our towns and cities, with people spending more time travelling to work or school. It is bad for our climate change commitments and for our air quality. Will the Prime Minister at last recognise the crucial importance of often the only mode of transport available for many people by ending the cuts to bus budgets and giving councils the power to ensure that everyone gets a regulated bus service, wherever they live?

The Prime Minister: I will take no lessons from the right hon. Gentleman in devolution to local authorities. Which party has established the metro Mayors and given them those powers? It is the Conservative party in government. Which party is doing growth deals around the country, giving local authorities new responsibilities? It is this Conservative Government. And what did we

see in the north-east? When we were talking to Labour councils in the north-east about a devolution deal, Labour council leaders there rejected that devolution. That is what the Labour party is doing. The right hon. Gentleman wants to know what this Government are delivering for the people of the north, the south, the midlands—for every part of this country. We are delivering record high employment, rising wages, falling borrowing, stronger environmental protection and a Britain fit for the future.

Q4. [906227] **Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con): You wait for a bus question and seven come along at once; there is another one coming now. This morning, my office manager walked from Delabole to Sir James Smith's School. This is a route that Cornwall Council has deemed to be safe and within Government guidance, and parents have been refused free public transport for their kids. At three miles there and three miles back, the road has no pavements and no street lighting. In winter months, the children will be asked to walk to and from school in the dark on a single track road alongside cars, tractors and lorries. There are similar stories all around Cornwall. Will the Prime Minister look at this guidance and talk to Cornwall Council about what can be done?

The Prime Minister: We are committed to recognising the responsibilities that local authorities have in these matters, and we have committed to providing them with the funding that they need. We have increased the funding to Cornwall for 2019-20 by more than £12 million since 2015-16. It is a matter for the local authority to decide how to spend its funding and to make decisions on local matters, but I agree with my hon. Friend and would encourage local authorities to ensure that, in doing that, they are absolutely taking into account the wishes and concerns of the communities that they serve, including the one to which my hon. Friend referred.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): As a football fan, may I congratulate England on their very fine victory in the World cup—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. It is very unfair on the leader of the Scottish National party—[*Interruption.*] Order. I inform the House, almost certainly for the first time, that we are today visited by an American state senator and his wife, whom I had the great privilege of meeting earlier this morning. I am sure we will wish to impress the two of them with the quality of our behaviour.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Perhaps on American Independence Day we should welcome the senator.

May I congratulate England on their very fine victory in the World cup and wish them all the best in their coming games?

This morning, we have learned that Vote Leave is expected to be found guilty of breaking electoral law. Does the Prime Minister agree that we need absolute transparency in elections and that people must be held accountable?

The Prime Minister: First, may I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his congratulations and best wishes to the England team?

On the issue that the right hon. Gentleman refers to, I am not going to comment, as I am sure that hon. Members will understand, on what appears to be a leaked report that the Government have not seen. The Electoral Commission has said in relation to the Vote Leave matter that it will consider representations it has received and will

“publish a thorough and detailed closing report in order to provide a full and balanced account”.

The Government will of course consider that report when we receive it, and we will also consider any recommendations arising from it when it is released.

Ian Blackford: Of course, it is the principle that is important. Our democracy cannot and must not be bought. The Conservatives are systematically shielding their donations from public scrutiny. Jackson Carlaw—the MSP for Eastwood—the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid) and the hon. Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) have all accepted donations from the Scottish Unionist Association Trust. The trust has donated £319,000 to the Scottish Conservatives, yet there is no information available about the people who currently manage the trust and there are no public accounts to indicate who its donors are or what assets it holds. The BBC has revealed that the former vice-chairman of the Conservative party in Scotland, Richard Cook, was behind the DUP's £435,000 donation during the EU referendum, and has

“a trail of involvement in illegal activity and foreign money”.

I am now giving the Prime Minister—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. I very much hope and trust that the right hon. Gentleman has advised those Members in advance, as he has referred to them. I know that he is approaching his peroration and will be sensitive to the fact that the House wants that.

Ian Blackford: I have indeed, Mr Speaker.

I am now giving the Prime Minister the chance to tell us what checks the Scottish Tory party had in place before accepting such large donations. Will she investigate the links between the Conservative party and the trust and promise to publish a list of all donations and donors?

The Prime Minister: I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that all donations to the Scottish Conservative party are accepted and declared in accordance with the law, and the Scottish Conservative party works with the Electoral Commission to make sure that that is all done properly.

Q5. [906228] **Gillian Keegan** (Chichester) (Con): Domestic abuse is an act of brutality often hidden in plain sight, and it affects one in four women and one in six men across this country. Last week saw the launch of the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse, and 170 companies and some MPs have signed up to train their employees to spot the tell-tale signs and to help provide much-needed support. Will the Prime Minister support this initiative and also encourage more MPs and businesses across the country to sign up?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend has raised a very important issue. Of course, as she said, this is something of which we see many women being victims, but men can be victims of domestic abuse, too. I certainly welcome

the efforts of the Employers' Initiative in raising awareness of this issue and in doing that vital work of providing advice and support to employers and employees on the steps they can take to address it. I understand that the Minister for Women, my hon. Friend the Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins), who is also responsible for crime, safeguarding and vulnerability, recently attended the launch of a toolkit for employers on tackling domestic abuse that was developed in partnership with the Employers' Initiative, Public Health England and Business in the Community. I would absolutely encourage Members from all sides of this House, as employers, to sign up to the initiative and also to promote it in their constituencies so that we can take every step we can to root out domestic violence and domestic abuse.

Q2. [906225] **Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods** (City of Durham) (Lab): President Trump has recently locked up children in cages, instigated a ban on Muslims, stalled action on climate change and started trade wars, and he is now threatening women's reproductive rights. Should the Prime Minister not be challenging his divisive and damaging policies, instead of inviting him for tea and cakes at No. 10?

The Prime Minister: I have responded to the points that the hon. Lady has raised. I have been very clear, and I have said in the House, for example, that the action taken against child migrants was not unacceptable and is not something we would do here in the UK. We did not consider that acceptable. She wants me to challenge the President of the United States. What better way to challenge the President of the United States than to sit down and talk to him?

Q6. [906229] **Mr Simon Clarke** (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): I look forward to welcoming Heather Steven, the practice manager at Loftus's GP surgery, to my right hon. Friend's Downing Street reception for the NHS later. Can my right hon. Friend assure the House that as part of this Government's record investment in the NHS, she will ensure that primary care services receive all the support they need?

The Prime Minister: The intention behind this increase in the NHS budget is that we will see it directed to frontline and primary services. We need a long-term plan. The NHS is developing that long-term plan itself. The budget will have increased by 2023-24, with an extra £20 billion a year in real terms compared with today, and it is through the 10-year plan, which will be led by doctors, that we will make sure we are delivering world-class care for everyone and that every penny is well spent.

Q7. [906230] **Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): This morning, the head of the National Audit Office took the unprecedented step of writing an open letter to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, setting out how the right hon. Lady has misled Parliament in three respective statements she has made on universal credit. The ministerial code is very clear that:

"It is of paramount importance that Ministers give accurate and truthful information to Parliament, correcting any inadvertent error at the earliest opportunity. Ministers who knowingly mislead Parliament will be expected to offer their resignation to the Prime Minister".

Has she?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady said, it is clear that Ministers should correct the record in Parliament, and the Welfare Secretary will be correcting the record at the Dispatch Box after PMQs, as I believe she has advised you, Mr Speaker.

Q9. [906232] **Mr Robert Goodwill** (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): On Saturday in Llandudno, the Prime Minister received a warm welcome as the nation paid tribute to our brilliant armed forces. It is great news that valiant Salisbury will host the event next year, and we are absolutely delighted that Britain's premier resort, Scarborough, will be the location of the national Armed Forces Day event in 2020. Is the Prime Minister looking forward to coming to Scarborough as much as we are looking forward to welcoming her on 27 June 2020? Does she suspect, like me, that the Leader of the Opposition will already have put the date in his diary, as no doubt he will be planning to wash his hair again that day?

The Prime Minister: It was a great privilege to attend Armed Forces Day in Llandudno on Saturday; it was a fantastic celebration. Other events took place up and down the country, and it was a great opportunity to recognise the bravery and professionalism of our armed forces and the wonderful job that they do day in, day out for us, putting themselves on the line and making sacrifices for our safety. I am delighted that Salisbury and Scarborough will host the day in 2019 and 2020 respectively. Armed Forces Day will give people yet another reason to visit the great resort of Scarborough in 2020, and I certainly look forward to continuing to celebrate Armed Forces Day in the future and to joining my right hon. Friend in celebrating it in Scarborough.

Q8. [906231] **Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): The nursery at Basford Hall is well used and well rated and helps parents access further education. Despite that, Nottingham College is planning to close it. Our campaign to stop that is backed by 1,800 local residents and our local councillors. Does the Prime Minister agree with them that we must remove all barriers to accessing further education, and will she support our call for the college to revisit that decision?

The Prime Minister: I have not seen the details of the particular issue at the college that the hon. Gentleman has mentioned. On the general point, I think it is important that we make sure that education—further education, higher education—is available to people and is available to people whatever their background, whatever their circumstances and, as I say, whatever their particular circumstances. I want to see a country where how far people go in life is about them, their talents and their willingness to work hard, not where they have come from and not what their circumstances are.

Q15. [906238] **Andrew Lewer** (Northampton South) (Con): Will the Prime Minister join me in welcoming a major investment in the exciting new campus for the University of Northampton in my constituency, and does she share my view that this could play a key role in the revitalisation of the town centre?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to share the view that my hon. Friend has expressed in welcoming the investment that is taking place in the new campus

for the University of Northampton. It is good to see that investment being put in by the university—into its staff, technology, facilities and infrastructure—but putting students firmly at the heart of the institution. As he says, however, it is also a great opportunity for the local community. As my hon. Friend will know, the campus is part of the Northampton Waterside enterprise zone, which, I understand, has created over 2,800 jobs and attracted £320 million of private sector investment, and I am sure this new campus will also be a catalyst for investment, and new jobs as well.

Q10. [906233] **Julie Cooper** (Burnley) (Lab): Maintained nursery schools employ qualified teachers, are inspected as schools and have all the costs associated with schools, but still they are not funded as schools. Does the Prime Minister recognise that all the grammar schools in the world cannot raise standards if children are neglected in those early years? If these nursery schools are not funded as schools, they will close. Will the Prime Minister commit today to making sure that that does not happen and make a financial commitment to support them in the future?

The Prime Minister: I fully recognise the importance of the early years education that is provided by nursery schools—maintained nursery schools—and, indeed, by others. That was why many years ago, when I was the chairman of education in the London Borough of Merton, I was happy to complete a programme that ensured we put in early years education for those parents who wanted it, at a time when the Labour Government and others—the Labour Government previously and the Government at the time—were not putting it in. We recognise the importance of nursery education.

Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): Despite great Government investment in the railway line from Cambridge into King's Cross St Pancras and then across London on Thameslink, over the past seven weeks my constituents have endured an appalling service. We are told that that will now improve on 15 July, but if it does not, does the Prime Minister agree with me that Govia Thameslink should be stripped of the service and a new operator—a new operator of last resort—brought in to sort out this mess?

The Prime Minister: As I have said previously, the disruption that passengers have been facing is simply unacceptable, and it is unacceptable that it is continuing to happen today. As my right hon. and learned Friend says, on 15 July there will be a full interim timetable introduced, with the aim of improving reliability and performance for passengers, and there is work being done—a review of Govia Thameslink, which is going to report in the next few weeks. Clearly, however, we need to ensure that the priority is to make sure that that interim timetable is implemented and passengers do get the services that they need. We also need to ensure that if the services are not provided in the way that is right and are not what the passengers need, the Department for Transport will look at this and that nothing is off the table.

Q11. [906234] **Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): Mr Speaker, I invite you and the Prime Minister to visit Newcastle this summer for the Great Exhibition

of the North, celebrating engineering and creativity from Stephenson's Rocket to the Wilson twins' Suspended Island installation. Given that the Prime Minister refuses to invest in tidal power or carbon capture and to rule out a no-deal Brexit, which will devastate engineering supply chains, what hope is there that our engineering future will be as glorious as our engineering past?

The Prime Minister: There is every hope, because of the investment and the commitment that the Government are giving through our modern industrial strategy. The hon. Lady asks if I and members of the Government will visit the Great Exhibition of the North, and I think she may be surprised to find how many of us do indeed visit it over the summer.

Mr Speaker: I am sure people will. I visited the constituency of the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah) in February, and I am still fizzing with excitement about the matter five months later.

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con): Popular Bramhall hairdressers Ed and Mike are visiting Parliament today. Like many other small businesses, it is because of their skills, expertise and hard work that they are successful. Will the Prime Minister join me in praising small businesses up and down the country for the work that they do, and does she agree that is by building a strong economy that we provide the best conditions for them to survive and thrive?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in recognising the vital role that small businesses play in our economy and, indeed, in our local communities. They provide valuable services, products and jobs for local people, and we should never fail to recognise the great work that they do. Government's role is to ensure that there is a strong economy in which those businesses can thrive, and that is exactly what the Conservative Government are doing.

Q12. [906235] **Kate Hoey** (Vauxhall) (Lab): The Prime Minister will know that later this month Zimbabwe will have its first election since Mugabe was ousted by a military coup. The hon. Member for Bournemouth West (Conor Burns) and I have recently returned from Zimbabwe, and we heard from Zimbabweans concerns that that will not be a genuinely free and fair election. The constitution is not being adhered to, and the main opposition do not have a chance to reach the state media. Will the Prime Minister give an assurance that our Government will not rush to agree that this is a free and fair election until we have seen that it really means change, not just for the election?

The Prime Minister: I commend the excellent work that the hon. Lady continues to do as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on Zimbabwe. We obviously welcome the announcement of the date of the election on 30 July, but we urge all parties involved to pursue free, fair and peaceful elections, because that is absolutely what the Zimbabwean people deserve. We will certainly watch very carefully to see how those elections are conducted, and consider the conduct of those elections as appropriate. We have repeatedly said that if the Zimbabwean Government can demonstrate commitment

to political and economic reform, the UK stands ready to do all that it can to support recovery, but that commitment is essential.

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con): President Macron has ordered that every one of his Cabinet Ministers should be subject to a performance review. When the Prime Minister meets her Cabinet on Friday, will she judge every one of their contributions and the final deal that they decide against the very clear criteria laid down in the Conservative manifesto and the Labour manifesto, which got 85% of the votes, that we will categorically leave the single market, the customs union and the remit of the European Court of Justice?

The Prime Minister: I am pleased to tell my right hon. Friend that we have a strong team in Cabinet who will take this decision on Friday. I assure him that the Brexit that the Government will deliver and are working to deliver is a Brexit that ensures that we are out of the customs union, we are out of the single market, we are out of the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, we are out of the common agricultural policy, we are out of the common fisheries policy, we bring an end to free movement, we take control of our borders, and we have an independent trade policy, but we are also able to have a good trade arrangement with the European Union, protecting jobs and prosperity for the future.

Q13. [906236] **Angus Brendan MacNeil** (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): Sweetly following on from the right hon. Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), with the Prime Minister's Chequers failure Friday on the way, and "max-fac" soon giving way to "tot cap" or total capitulation, the UK's Government handling of Brexit has been dither, delay and duck, but can I give the Prime Minister an opportunity for a straight answer? Shellfish producers in my constituency are worried about getting their produce to French and Spanish markets, so together with those countries and independent Ireland, how open does the Prime Minister want and envisage borders and trade routes after Brexit?

The Prime Minister: I have made it very clear that we are committed to no hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland and to as frictionless a border with the European Union in future as possible. Can I also say that I think fishermen up and down the country welcome the proposals that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has introduced on fisheries policy for the future? It is this Government who are taking the UK out of the common fisheries policy. The worst policy for fishermen in Scotland would be the Scottish National party's policy of staying in the CFP.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): In Harlow in 2016—*[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. I know what this question is about and it must be heard with courtesy and respect.

Robert Halfon: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

In Harlow in 2016, a beautiful little girl, Summer Grant, tragically lost her life when a bouncy castle she was playing in blew away. This weekend, there was

another horrific fatality from an inflatable in Great Yarmouth. The grandmother of Summer Grant has contacted me to ask for more safeguarding and training for these temporary structures. My right hon. Friend the Member for Great Yarmouth (Brandon Lewis) has also urged for lessons to be learned. I have been contacted by other parents around the country whose children have been injured in similar circumstances. A reputable operator from Harlow has told me that bouncy castles can be bought for just a few hundred pounds on eBay and that many inflatables are not properly regulated. Will my right hon. Friend urgently review the regulations on bouncy castles and inflatables, and will she implement a temporary ban on bouncy castles and inflatables in public areas until we know they can be safe?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend raises a very, very serious issue. I offer my deepest condolences, and I am sure those of the whole House, to the family of Summer Grant and the family of Ava-May Littleboy, who tragically was the victim of the bouncy castle incident that took place at the weekend. I share my right hon. Friend's concerns about these tragic incidents. As regards the incident that took place at the weekend, I understand that Norfolk police, aided by and working with the Health and Safety Executive, have started an investigation into the incident. It is too early to know the cause of the incident, but if any findings emerge from the investigation, the necessary recommendations to improve safety will be shared across the relevant sectors as soon as possible.

Q14. [906237] **Imran Hussain** (Bradford East) (Lab): Under this Government, we have seen a climate of division towards refugees and migrants, with Windrush just the tip of the iceberg. Now we see the Government extending the hostile environment to those facing oppression and seeking protection, with the revelation that the Home Office has failed to let new asylum contracts in Yorkshire and Humber, creating a real risk that those fleeing persecution will be left without a roof over their heads. Is this the vision for Britain that the Prime Minister sees, or will she give a guarantee here today that no one fleeing persecution will find themselves homeless?

The Prime Minister: This country has a proud and long tradition of welcoming those who are fleeing from persecution and providing them with appropriate support. As the hon. Gentleman will have noticed, the Home Secretary is on the Front Bench and will have heard his specific issue about Home Office contracts in his area. We have that long and proud tradition, and it continues today. We welcome, and deal sensitively and carefully with, those who are fleeing persecution, and we will continue to do so.

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): Just as an aside, Mr Speaker, the Bercow report on speech, language and communication was very well referenced in Westminster Hall this morning.

My question is about ice cream. In this hot weather, there has been a great run on Granny Gothards ice cream in Taunton Deane, for which all the milk is provided by local farmers. The ice cream is not just popular locally, however, because Granny Gothards has just secured contracts to sell its 135 varieties of ice

cream to China, and it is expanding to the middle east, including Saudi Arabia. Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating Granny Gothards on its sweet export success and on winning two awards at the Taunton Deane business awards? Does not that demonstrate the opportunities in global markets?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to join my hon. Friend in congratulating Granny Gothards on not only its two business awards but, crucially, the export contracts it is working on. It is absolutely right that my hon. Friend highlights the opportunities that businesses will have as we leave the European Union. It will be an opportunity to boost productivity, deliver better infrastructure and maximise the potential of our country and businesses such as Granny Gothards, which is obviously such a success in her constituency.

Mr Speaker: In the week of a special birthday for him, and in the name of encouraging a young Member as he seeks to build his career, I call Mr Stephen Pound.

Stephen Pound (Ealing North) (Lab): May I, in respect of the Prime Minister's opening statement, declare an interest, as I, too, was born in the first week of July 1948? While I recognise that the national health service is held in rather higher esteem by the nation than I am—[HON. MEMBERS: "No!"]—we both need a bit of care and attention. May I tell the Prime Minister that what the NHS needs is not warm words but cold cash? I would willingly—happily, joyfully—pay more in income tax to save the national health service. Would she?

The Prime Minister: May I first wish the hon. Gentleman a very happy 70th birthday this week? He is held in very high esteem across this House and he should not underestimate that—[*Interruption.*] My saying that might not have done very well for him with his Front Benchers, but there we are. May I also take this opportunity, as I have not had one previously, to wish a very happy birthday to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke), whose birthday was on Monday?

On the issue that the hon. Member for Ealing North (Stephen Pound) raised in his question, we are providing the national health service with that money to ensure that, by 2023-24, it will have £20 billion extra in real terms. We are ensuring, alongside that, that a 10-year plan is produced that delivers for patients.

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): Following the celebrations of Armed Forces Day, will my right hon. Friend join me in supporting an inspirational charity, the On Course Foundation, which is helping injured military personnel who have lost limbs, here and in the USA, to rebuild their lives by giving them the skills, knowledge and confidence to find long-term employment in the golf industry? Will she agree to meet me and some of these amazing men and women to see how this charity, which was founded by John Simpson, could be extended to some of our other services, such as the police and fire services?

The Prime Minister: I thank my right hon. Friend for her warm words about the On Course Foundation, which is doing excellent work, as she says. It is really important that we ensure that those of our armed forces

who are injured and who are veterans are given the support that they need. She has highlighted a particular area in which that is happening. Armed Forces Day on Saturday gave me the opportunity to announce that, next year, we are going to have the first national games for wounded, injured and sick veterans and personnel of our armed forces. That has been inspired by the Invictus games, but these games will focus on those in our British armed forces. As she mentioned the police and fire services, I will ensure that the relevant Home Office Minister will meet her.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op): This morning, I spoke to Afghan Sikh community leaders in my constituency following the horrific terrorist attack in the Afghan city of Jalalabad on Sunday, which was a deliberate attack with devastating consequences. The 19 people killed included the trustees of the gurdwara and the only Sikh candidate in the forthcoming elections, Mr Avtar Singh Khalsa. The gurdwara had been a safe haven for many persecuted families and they were on their way to visit the President. At the moment, the Afghan Sikhs in west London are meeting in prayer and remembrance for those killed, many of whom they knew. Will the Prime Minister update the House on what she is doing to ensure the safety of minorities in Afghanistan, and will she meet the Afghan diaspora to discuss their concerns?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Lady raises a very serious issue. The terrorist attack that she refers to was indeed appalling. As she said, too many victims lost their lives as a result of that attack that took place in Afghanistan. It is important that we ensure that we are providing support, as we do through our contribution in Afghanistan. That is a contribution to security in the Kabul area specifically from our forces, but it is also about working with others to ensure that the Afghan security forces are able to provide security and safety for all communities living in Afghanistan. Tremendous achievements have been made in Afghanistan today, compared with the situation before these efforts, but sadly, as the hon. Lady highlights, too many terrorist attacks are still taking place in Afghanistan. We will continue to work with our allies and the Afghan Government to prevent these in future and to ensure that people can go about their daily lives in safety and security and with confidence.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): In agreeing with the Prime Minister, as I always do, that Brexit means Brexit, and that that generally means taking back control, may I ask her to confirm not only that after we leave the EU we will be leaving the single market and customs union, but that it is her personal position, and the settled negotiating position of Her Majesty's Government, that we will have full and unfettered control of migration into this country, full and unfettered control in our ability to make new trade deals with the rest of the world and, above all, full and unfettered control of how we regulate our own business?

The Prime Minister: I am very happy to say to my hon. Friend that after we leave the EU, we will indeed be operating our own independent trade policy. Parliament will be determining our laws and we will bring an end to free movement.

Chuka Umunna (Streatham) (Lab): A 19-year-old constituent was stabbed in December 2016. He nearly died from his injuries and his mother subsequently came to see me to get help to move out of the borough because she feared it would happen again. Despite our efforts, they were not moved. Late last Wednesday, as his mother feared, he was again stabbed—this time seven times—close to their home. Prime Minister, it is an outrage that the system is not protecting teenagers in this situation. What does it say about our society? Will she commit to introducing a compulsory scheme—not just pan-London but nationally—to facilitate such necessary moves between social housing providers and quite simply save lives?

The Prime Minister: On the attacks on the hon. Gentleman's constituent, we are taking the use of offensive weapons—we have introduced the Offensive Weapons Bill—and serious violence very seriously. I understand that he sits on the serious violence taskforce that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary has established to take account of views across the House on an issue that is a matter for all of us, and I am grateful to him for sitting on that taskforce.

The hon. Gentleman refers to a matter that lies in the hands of local authorities and social housing providers. On operations across London, he could of course speak to the Mayor of London about his responsibilities and the measures that he could introduce.

Points of Order

12.52 pm

Caroline Flint (Don Valley) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Order. We will come to the right hon. Lady later—I will not forget her—but first I call the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to make a point of order.

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Ms Esther McVey): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. While speaking in Parliament in answer to questions on the National Audit Office report on universal credit, I mistakenly said that the NAO had asked for the roll-out of universal credit to continue at a faster rate and to be speeded up. In fact, the NAO did not say that, and I want to apologise—

Hon. Members: Resign!

Mr Speaker: Order. This is rather unseemly. I know that passions run high, but the Secretary of State contacted me to say that she intended to say what she is about to say, and the House should hear her say it.

Ms McVey: I want to apologise to you, Mr Speaker, and the House for inadvertently misleading you. I meant to say that the NAO had said that there was no practical alternative to continuing with universal credit. We adopt a “test and learn” approach to the roll-out of universal credit, which the NAO says mainly follows good practice, and therefore the point I was trying to make was that the calls from the Labour party to pause it seemed to fly in the face of those conclusions. As you know, Mr Speaker, I asked you yesterday if I could come to the House to correct the record. I believe it is right that, as a Minister, I should come and correct the record, and I therefore hope that you will accept my apology.

On the other issues raised in the letter sent today by the NAO, the NAO contacted my office at the end of last week and we are working on setting up a meeting. On the NAO report not taking into account the impact of the recent changes to UC, I still maintain that this is the case, and those changes include the housing benefit run-on, the 100% advances and the removal of waiting days. The impact of those changes is still being felt and therefore, by definition, could not have been fully taken into account by the NAO report. I hope that that clarifies the position.

Mr Speaker: I can confirm that the Secretary of State most certainly did contact me last night indicating that she would like to apologise on a point of order, and I certainly accept her apology.

Frank Field (Birkenhead) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. I gently say to the right hon. Gentleman that the apology has been proffered and, as far as the Chair is concerned, accepted. I do not want there to be an extended—

Frank Field *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. No, I do not want further points of order on this matter. It can no doubt be the subject of future debate, but I cannot see what point of order can arise. If the right hon. Gentleman has a point of order, as opposed to a point of argument or an expression of criticism, I am happy to hear it, but if it ceases to be a point of order, he will have to resume his seat. I call him purely because he is the Chair of the Work and Pensions Committee, but it had better be a point of order.

Frank Field: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I have given notice to you, for tomorrow’s agenda, to ask for an urgent question to follow up that statement.

Mr Speaker: It is very generous of the right hon. Gentleman to tell me publicly that he has given me notice. I do not know whether he means that he has given me notice just now, in the form of that point of order, or that he has made an application to my office. People do not normally advertise urgent questions to the nation in advance. I will make a decision about it at the appropriate time.

Frank Field: You are an innovator, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: Flattery will get the right hon. Gentleman everywhere. My innovations are there for everyone to see, whether they approve of them or not, but as far as urgent questions are concerned, as I think the House accepts, I make a judgment at the appropriate time, and now is not the appropriate time. He has, with some cheekiness and a degree of perspicacity, made his own point in his own way, and it is on the record.

Caroline Flint: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. During Prime Minister’s questions, the Prime Minister suggested that when she was chair of education at Merton Council, she put money into early years education while Labour was making cuts. She was chair of the education board from 1988 to 1990, when the council was Conservative-run and, as far as I recall, there was a Conservative Government. Can you advise me, Mr Speaker, on how we can correct the record?

Mr Speaker: I think that the right hon. Lady has, to her own satisfaction, done so already. I hope she will understand if I say that I will not get into a debate about the respective local government records of senior officeholders in the House. Apart from anything else, I am not sure that I would want to stand by everything that I said or did in the 1980s.

Demolition of Khan al-Ahmar

12.58 pm

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab) (*Urgent Question*): I had hoped to ask the Foreign Secretary to make a statement on the imminent demolition of the village of Khan al-Ahmar and the threat of the forcible transfer of its residents, but in the light of developments this morning, I must instead ask the Foreign Secretary to make a statement on the demolition that has commenced at Khan al-Ahmar and the village of Abu Nuwar and on the actual forcible transfer of the residents of those villages.

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): This morning, officials from our embassy in Tel Aviv and from our consulate general in Jerusalem visited Khan al-Ahmar to express our concern and demonstrate the international community's support for that community. Once there, they did indeed observe a bulldozer, which began levelling the ground. While we have not yet witnessed any demolition of structures, it would appear that demolition is imminent. We deeply regret this turn of events. The United Nations has said that this would not only constitute forcible transfer, but pave the way for settlement building in E1. In accordance with our long-standing policy, we therefore condemn such a move, which would strike a major blow to prospects for a two-state solution with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

The United Kingdom has repeatedly raised its concerns with the Israeli authorities and others, for instance during my visit to Khan al-Ahmar on 30 May. On 12 June, I issued a video message emphasising the United Kingdom's concern at the village's imminent demolition, and I reiterated that concern to the Israeli ambassador to the UK on 20 June. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary has also expressed his concern, most recently during his meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu in London on 6 June. The Foreign Secretary's statement on 1 June also made it clear that the UK was deeply concerned by the proposed demolition, which the UN has said could amount to "forcible transfer", in violation of international humanitarian law. As recently as Monday, the British ambassador to Israel raised the issue with the Israeli national security adviser. Later today, the British ambassador will join a *démarche* alongside European partners to request as a matter of urgency that the Israeli authorities halt demolition plans.

Israel believes that, under its independent court system and rule of law, it has the right to take the action that it is beginning today, but it is not compelled to do so, and need not do so. A change of plan would be welcomed around the world and would assist the prospects of a two-state solution and an end to this long-standing issue.

Richard Burden: As we speak, bulldozers are flattening the village of Khan al-Ahmar and destroying its school, which was built with international donor support and which provides education for about 170 Bedouin children from five different communities. The village of Abu Nuwar is also being destroyed today.

People who live in these villages threaten no one. Their crime is to have homes on land that Israel wants, in order to expand the illegal settlements of Kfar Adumim and Ma'ale Adumim. To speak plainly, this is state-sponsored theft: a theft that will cut the west bank in

two, making a contiguous Palestinian state near-impossible and the prospects of a two-state solution still more remote. More importantly, as the Minister said, the forcible transfer of the villagers of Khan al-Ahmar and Abu Nuwar contravenes international humanitarian law. It is a war crime.

As the Minister also said, he—along with over 100 Members of this House and peers, and about 300 international public figures—has repeatedly urged the Government of Israel not to go ahead with the demolitions. Now that they have ignored those calls, the question is whether the commission of this war crime will have any consequence. If not, why will Mr Netanyahu believe other than that war crimes can continue with impunity? What practical action do the UK Government propose to take to hold those responsible for this war crime to account, and is it not time finally to outlaw commercial dealings by UK firms with illegal settlements in the west bank?

Alistair Burt: As the hon. Gentleman set out, this is an area of land that many of us know quite well from visits made over a lengthy period. This is a community that was moved before and moved to settle where they are, unable to get planning permission under Israeli planning law and therefore they built the settlement they did. The discussion that has taken place since the formation of the settlement has been about the rights and wrongs of that building and about the difficulties of Israeli law as to what would happen next. However, I think that the overwhelming sense of many of us is that this should not be happening and need not be happening. The damage it proposes to do, at a time when many of us are looking to a move on the middle east peace process in which this piece of land might play a significant part, rather pulls the rug away from those of us who want to see a two-state solution—which, as many say, is perhaps why this has been done.

As I have said, both the timing and the action itself are deeply concerning, but nothing is irrevocable yet. In terms of what we are doing, we are already in conversation with like-minded European partners about what should be done next.

Sir Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex) (Con): I believe in a secure Israel alongside a viable and independent Palestine. However, it is beyond comprehension that a remarkable country like Israel, cultured, sophisticated and democratic—whose people down the centuries have themselves known such terrible suffering—can countenance such wicked behaviour, which is contrary to all international laws and humanitarian conventions, as she continues to bulldoze Palestinian villages like Khan al-Ahmar, whose residents' houses are, I understand, at this moment being flattened. What other country would dare to behave in this barbaric way? Will the Government condemn these actions in the strongest possible terms?

Alistair Burt: The short answer to the last part of my right hon. Friend's question is yes. The wider issue that he raised—and he put this extremely well in the Westminster Hall debate last week—was the contrast between an Israel for which many of us feel very deeply, and which we believe has many admirable qualities, and some of its actions which seem to go against that history and culture, and about which we have a sense of deep

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concern and sometimes bemusement. I know that it will have its reasons to defend its actions, and it is for the Israeli Government to do that, but the rest of us are disappointed and very perplexed today.

Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): Thank you for granting the urgent question, Mr Speaker, and I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden), who chairs the Britain-Palestine all-party parliamentary group, on securing it.

Just a week ago, when the Minister spoke about Khan al-Ahmar—it is a village that both of us have visited, and I know that he has worked on this issue assiduously—he agreed that, if the village were demolished, if its 181 residents were forcibly removed, and if their homes and their school were razed to the ground to make way for new illegal Israeli settlements, that action would “call into question the viability of a two-state solution.”

It could, he said, be construed as “a breach of international humanitarian law”.

However, he also said:

“It is still possible for any demolition not to go ahead.”—[*Official Report*, 26 June 2018; Vol. 643, c. 744.]

A week on, I am afraid that—as we all know—we are no longer dealing in woulds, coulds and possibilities. We are dealing with the reality: the reality that this forcible eviction and demolition, this breach of international law, this hammer blow to the two-state solution, is taking place as we sit here today.

We are all tired of asking what can be done to cajole or compel the Netanyahu Government to start listening to their international allies, to start complying with UN resolutions on settlements, or to start acting with some basic fairness and justice on the issue of building permits. That is all increasingly just a waste of breath. I therefore wish to ask the Minister two different questions today, which I believe are more worth while.

Does the Minister share my concerns that we are fast approaching a dangerous place where even some respected Palestinian figures are moving away from the idea of a two-state solution towards seeking democratic control over a single state, with all the implications that that would have for the potential Israeli minority? If he does share those concerns, will he also agree with me that before that shift in opinion can take hold, and before the actions of the Netanyahu Government render a two-state solution a geographical impossibility, this is the time for the United Kingdom to lead the major nations of the world in recognising the Palestinian state, and to do so immediately, while there is still a state left to recognise?

Alistair Burt: I thank the right hon. Lady for what she has said. I agree with many of her remarks. The danger that she identifies of a two-state solution slipping away has, of course, been potentially real for some time. Individual actions such as this are doubly difficult to understand and accept at a time when we have all been anticipating a development that would be workable and allow us to move forward.

No one quite knows what the boundaries of a future state might be, but we all have a sense of what the parameters would be. That is why the concerns about

the E1 area outside Jerusalem have been so important and have perhaps led to some restraint over the years. But if that is to go, what is left and what is next? So that is what we need to do. As I said a moment ago, we are currently in conversation with like-minded European partners about what the response should be and there are a number of options, but the best thing we should be thinking through is what option preserves the important chances there still are for a two-state solution, which has been so long sought for and is still in the mind of the UK the only viable possibility of providing both justice for the Palestinians in some measure and security for the state of Israel. If there is a different answer, I, in 30 years, have not heard it.

Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con): Many of us on both sides of this House who call ourselves friends of Israel rightly hail that nation as a bastion of liberal values in a troubled region, so does my right hon. Friend agree that it is right that we ask the Israeli Government to abide by the very highest standards that they set for themselves, and will he underline again the point he has just made: the real solution to all this, yet again, is to keep pushing for the peace process to be resurrected and following that path forward?

Alistair Burt: My right hon. Friend has been, and is, a good friend of the state of Israel, as many of us have been over many years, and I can sense the pain behind his question. We do indeed rightly hold a democracy to high standards and will continue to do so.

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): This is devastating news today at a human level for those who have been impacted, but also for the peace process. Does the Minister agree that sustainable and lasting peace is built on respect for one another and respect for the rule of law? Does he agree with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights that the demolition violates international law? If so, will he set out what kind of action he is thinking about taking, rather than merely expressions of regret? Is it time for a global response? Finally, may I join others in this House, the Scottish Government and other states in calling on this Government to recognise Palestine as an independent state?

Alistair Burt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his comments and the way in which he put them. At such a fragile time, it is difficult to see what steps can be taken next, after what will be seen as a provocative gesture, that would make it still viable to keep working on the solution we want to see, but that still remains a possibility. There was much talk when Jerusalem was recognised by the United States as the capital of Israel that that was the end of everything. It was not and it remains entirely possible to proceed. Jerusalem should be a shared capital—that is what the United Kingdom believes—and despite the Americans' position we do not believe that has been taken off the table. But every time there is a move that makes that solution less likely, it becomes more difficult to see what the alternative is. As I have said, there will be a range of options and we are considering with friends and others what might be done.

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): My right hon. Friend is precisely that: he is an honourable man and a reasonable man, and I have some sympathy for him that

each and every time he comes to the Dispatch Box to talk about this issue he provides that reasonableness, but he does provide a commentary at a time when we are looking for more leadership and I would just ask him this. At the moment, the latest news is that the Americans are discussing the Kushner peace process with the Russians. Has my right hon. Friend or any of his officials or fellow Ministers in the FCO had any input or sight of the Kushner peace plan, or are the British not playing any part in this whatsoever?

Alistair Burt: The American envoys have been in regular contact both with officials and the Foreign Secretary and on occasions with myself. They have kept many of the proposals very close to their chest. We have said that it is very important that they should continue to engage with the Palestinian Authority and we would again seek that, although everyone can understand why those circumstances are difficult. We have urged that the US envoys might certainly talk more widely to partners when they get close to producing their response to this. I am sure, as I have said before, that the US being the only broker in this is unlikely to be accepted now. We are very keen to work with others when these proposals come forward to find an answer.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): It is, sadly, all too clear that, as well as destroying people's homes, as we have heard today, the Government of Israel are in the process of severely damaging their international reputation when it comes to respect for the rule of law. Given all the criticism that the right hon. Gentleman has made from the Dispatch Box and other countries have echoed, why does he think the Government of Israel feel they can get away with doing what they want?

Alistair Burt: I do not know whether it is appropriate to answer in the terms that the right hon. Gentleman has offered. He poses his own question, which I think will be out there for many others to consider. We remain clearly very attached to Israel as an ally in many respects in terms of defence and security particularly in what is a difficult region, but, as is sometimes the case even with the closest friends, there are areas where we are not only not certain of their course of action but believe it to be fundamentally wrong, and this is one of those. So we must manage that relationship. This provides another opportunity for us to talk further about what will happen in the future, but every time there is something like this, it makes it that bit more difficult to see that something we have all been working on for so long is going to result in the solution we are all seeking. But we will continue to press for that.

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): Are we mad in continuing to express concern or even condemn and yet expect a different outcome? No, we are not mad because actually we do not expect a different outcome and, by our refusal to act, we make ourselves complicit, don't we?

Alistair Burt: My right hon. Friend has experience of government and of relationships with those in the region and understands the background of which he speaks. It does make it all difficult, but we have not all given up on the prospects of a two-state solution, which, as I have said, I do not see an alternative to, and the UK's

determination to keep in contact with all sides in relation to this and press that case is perhaps even more imperative now than it was this morning.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): Like the Minister, I visited the village a few weeks ago and saw for myself the school that the community had built there, which is currently, as we speak, being destroyed along with the community's homes. Today, I am also, like the Minister, perplexed and dismayed that Israel appears not to comprehend or to be prepared to take note of the outrage and the damage done to its reputation by this forcible transfer of communities, which is regarded as a breach of international law. Can he assure us that, as well as the talks he mentioned with like-minded European partners, he will ensure that the Government make the case to the President of the United States when he is here this month that this cannot be allowed to continue and make clear the damage it is doing, because he does appear to have some influence?

Alistair Burt: The short answer to that must be yes. I cannot imagine a conversation between the Prime Minister and the President of the United States that would not cover such a significant world issue, in which of course the United States does indeed have an important part to play.

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): Article 53 of the Geneva convention expressly prohibits the destruction of property in occupied territory other than for military purposes. Given that there can be no possible military purpose in destroying the residential community of Khan al-Ahmar, does my right hon. Friend agree with my assessment that, even as we speak, the state of Israel is committing a war crime?

Alistair Burt: I am not sure whether the UK is in a position to make that judgment, but certainly, as has been made clear, the United Nations has already said that it could constitute forcible transfer and clearly now that things have actually begun that matter becomes a much sharper one for consideration.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab): I have visited Khan al-Ahmar twice and have met many of the families there. This is a personal violation for them, as well as a war crime, but it is also a strategic step. There are 46 Bedouin villages and their future may well hang on whether the Israeli authorities get away with the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar. This allows for the splitting of the west bank and for the annexation, which is now openly talked about, of the west bank by Israel to take place. If not now, when are the Government going to act? When are they going to act against illegal settlements and end trade? When are they going to recognise Palestine and when are they going to recognise their historical obligations and take a lead internationally, rather than wringing their hands?

Alistair Burt: I say again that it is my view—and, I think, the view of the Government—that we want to keep the opportunity of the two-state solution open and viable. That requires remaining in contact with the Government of the state of Israel. All these issues—the concerns about the building of settlements and their strategic position—are a vital part of the land jigsaw that the envoys are presumably working through and

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they must come forward as the basis for negotiations between the Palestinians and the state of Israel. It should be the United Kingdom's job to do everything it can to keep those channels and opportunities open, and the actions that we will take in response to this will be in accordance with those principles.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that the village of Khan al-Ahmar is in area C of the west bank, that under the Oslo accords it is under the direct control of Israel and that the Israeli courts have ruled it to be an illegal settlement? Will he also confirm that the Government of Israel have offered alternative accommodation with running water and proper civilisation? [Interruption.]

Alistair Burt: Both those statements from my hon. Friend are true, as far as they go—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker: Order.

Alistair Burt: It is just a question of what the background and context might be. The settlements in the area are deemed illegal, but between 2014 and the summer of 2016 just 1.3% of building permits requested by Palestinians in area C were granted, and between 2010 and 2015 only 8% of all building permits in Jerusalem were given in Palestinian neighbourhoods. Practically, this leaves Palestinians with little option but to build without permission, placing their homes at risk of demolition on the grounds that they do not have a permit. While recognising Israel's judicial system and recognising the rights that it believes it has in relation to this, other circumstances have to come into consideration, which is why the United Kingdom takes the view that it does about this demolition.

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): For the two Bushes, Clinton and Obama, building on area E1, where Bedouins have grazed sheep and goats for years, was a red line, but now, under Trump, there are no red lines. Does the Minister not appreciate that his concern, disappointment and bemusement—as I think he even said—do not seem enough when bulldozers will literally be concreting over all hopes for a two-state solution by constructing a continuous west bank settlement?

Alistair Burt: The hon. Lady makes her own points very strongly. It is right that this has been considered a red line, for the reasons that she has set out. It has yet to be seen what the international reaction to this will be.

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend see the link between this urgent question and the debate later today in Westminster Hall in the name of the right hon. Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan), the chair of Labour Friends of Israel, about incitement in the Palestinian education system? These cruel and illegal actions form part of an unshakeable Palestinian perception of Israeli policy over five decades in the occupied territories that breeds the anger and despair that contribute to an environment of historic hatred that is going to become almost impossible to reverse.

Alistair Burt: My own observation, from my recent visit, is that the separation is growing, particularly between young people. Whereas there are older people in Palestinian areas and in Israel who can talk about living in each other's villages and about times past, that now seems impossible for some younger people. This is built on the failure over many decades to reach a solution that would allow that sort of life to continue. I do not think there is any future unless the people of Israel and the Palestinian people find a way back—with all the security guarantees that need to be given—to the sort of life where their security is built on their neighbours and not on walls and division.

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): I have also had the honour and privilege of visiting Khan al-Ahmar, where I met many wonderful people who were just trying to live in peace and do the best for their families and their community. Surely the time has now come for the British Government formally to recognise the state of Palestine. Surely the time has also come for us to impose sanctions and cease all trade with the illegally occupied territories.

Alistair Burt: I hear what the hon. Gentleman says. That is not the policy of the United Kingdom, for reasons that we have given before, but I have indicated that we are in consultation with European colleagues and considering what response there might be to these circumstances.

Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con): Like my right hon. Friend, I consider myself a friend of Israel and a strong supporter of a two-state solution, but is it not the case that these demolitions cast serious doubt on Israel's own commitment to those objectives?

Alistair Burt: Again, the short answer is a worrying yes. Israel has many friends around the world. I count myself as a friend of the middle east as well as a friend of individual separate states. In my experience, the determination to reach a just solution had slipped down the agenda of the world in recent years, but it has now gone back up the agenda, partly as a result of President Trump's decision on Jerusalem and partly as a result of the feeling that, although we have said it many times before, maybe there is just one last chance before we get into a situation that none of us wishes to see. It is possible that the events of today, a little like the catalyst of Gaza recently, might be a further reminder that that chance is slipping away and that the door might be closing all too quickly.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): The Minister, for whom I have enormous regard, has described how British officials were taken by surprise this morning when they went to visit the villages and found bulldozers on site—

Alistair Burt *indicated dissent.*

Lady Hermon: They were not surprised?

Alistair Burt: They were not surprised, ma'am. They went there because they knew that things were happening. They were not taken by surprise.

Lady Hermon: I thank the Minister for that clarification. They were not taken by surprise, but they went there because they feared that demolitions were going to take place. I would like to be reassured that, when the reports came back that the bulldozers were indeed on site, the Foreign Office immediately contacted the White House and asked the Americans to use the influence that they seem to have in Israel to save those villages from demolition. Did that happen? Have we contacted the White House? Did the Foreign Secretary make that call? Did the Prime Minister make that call? Did anyone in the British Government make that call to the White House?

Alistair Burt: Forgive me—I do not know the answer to that question. I have been dealing with DFID questions in the House this morning and then I moved on to this. I do not know what official contact there has been between us and the United States, but the hon. Lady asks an extremely good question. I cannot imagine that in dealing with this issue we are not in direct contact with our friends in the United States, and I will certainly make sure that we are.

Ross Thomson (Aberdeen South) (Con): Strong concerns have been expressed this afternoon, and I join those calls for the demolitions to be halted. Israel has provided welfare for the rapidly growing Bedouin communities and proposed solutions to improve their quality of life. Does the Minister recognise that Israel is trying to work with those communities to resolve this undeniably sensitive situation?

Alistair Burt: I know from my previous experience that, again, the short answer is yes. Proposals have been put forward, including by Benny Begin some years ago, and a lot of work has been done with the Bedouin community from the Negev and in the area. However, there is a fundamental point at which people's rights, feelings and desires have to be taken into account. In this particular instance, it is not deniable that Israel has indeed come forward with alternative accommodation, but the question is, as it would be for any of us: if someone offers us something, we have a choice whether to accept it, but if that choice is taken away, the circumstances are rather different. What we have sought to stress to Israel is that, although this particular case has been through its legal system and alternatives have been provided, this is not what that community, which has already been moved, wanted. Accordingly, many people believe that those rights and wishes should be somehow taken into account, in a state that values and prizes the need for rights and laws to protect the most vulnerable, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) said. He is surprised that that has not been the case.

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab): The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has said that the demolition of structures in the Khan al-Ahmar encampment would be a violation of international law and has called on the Israeli authorities to stop it. If the demolition goes ahead, which is likely given the previous record of the Israeli authorities, do the Government intend to take steps to hold the authorities to account for their actions?

Alistair Burt: I can only repeat what I said earlier, which is that we are in discussion with other partners about what the response might be, but I hope that I made clear the UK's deep concern and our condemnation of an action that threatens the two-state solution.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): There is clearly a strong feeling today that we need more than just condemnation. Given that Israel's settlements, the demolitions and the forcible transfer of people are illegal under international law, the British Government could tell UK businesses that they should not collude with illegality in their commercial dealings with the settlements any more than they should collude with illegality in the UK.

Alistair Burt: I hear the hon. and learned Lady's views and understand where they come from, but that has not been our policy in the past. We have left the choice to people who know the background and the circumstances that relate to settlements and their produce. However, as I said earlier, the UK reserves all its actions while it considers what it might do.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): I, too, am a friend of Israel, which is why I will not pretend that what is taking place today is happening out of some concern for the welfare of the Bedouin community in Khan al-Ahmar or is the result of some planning dispute. What is happening is a deliberate policy intention of the present Israeli Government, who have no regard or concern for a two-state solution and simply want to expand illegal settlements, which will ultimately undermine the security and legitimacy of the Israelis and grossly infringe the human rights of Palestinians. Having been to Khan al-Ahmar and knowing what lies ahead if the demolition happens without a serious international response, I have to say that if Israel is going to demolish Palestinian villages on the grounds that they are illegal settlements, is it not time for this country and our European partners to take targeted economic sanctions against illegal Israeli settlements in the west bank?

Alistair Burt: I refer the hon. Gentleman to what I said previously about potential action. Like one or two other Members, he speaks from a background of support and understanding for the state of Israel and therefore with even greater concern and upset at what is happening and the reasons behind it. He will have spoken for many both inside and outside, just as others have done.

Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab): We are now hearing of dozens of Palestinians being hospitalised as a result of the tragedy of the start of the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar this morning. That demolition is a war crime, so how will the British Government ensure that Israeli decision makers are held to account for what has happened today?

Alistair Burt: May I start by thanking the hon. Lady for trying to get hold of me today? I got the telephone message a little too late to respond, but I appreciate that she attempted to get in touch.

I said earlier that the British ambassador would be joining a *démarche* of Israel this afternoon in response to the actions that have been taken. I assure the hon. Lady, as I assured the House, that there is no shortage

[Alistair Burt]

of opportunity for either Ministers or our ambassador or consul general to make a case. It is not the lack of making a case that is the concern; it is the lack of listening to the case. Accordingly, we need to see, in consultation with others, what we can do. We have different views about the future security of the state of Israel, but I wish that we were all coming from the same place. We will continue to make our case as strongly as we can.

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab): Like so many Members, I was inspired by the community of Khan al-Ahmar when I visited last November, and I know that the Minister was, too. B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Centre for Human Rights, has said that the demolition is a war crime, but it also highlights our potential influence in stopping such crimes as a member of the UN Security Council with deep cultural, diplomatic and commercial ties with Israel worth more than £7 billion in annual bilateral trade. I know that the Minister cares about this issue and that the Government have issued strong words, but is it not time to go beyond words and to start using all possible leverage to stop illegal demolitions?

Alistair Burt: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for what he said. Of course, if there was an agreement, the land rights would be sorted out as part of it, so we would not have such issues. The imperative remains to seek and reach an agreement between the Palestinians and the state of Israel that ends such risks. Today's actions make it even more imperative that that happens even more urgently, to protect the rights of Palestinians and, indeed, to see Israel granted the security it needs in an ultimate agreement relating to the conflict.

Paula Sherriff (Dewsbury) (Lab): I have just heard that 35 people have been injured so far today as a direct result of the demolition. I know the Minister to be a very decent man, so will he pledge specifically to investigate why JCB bulldozers were used in the demolition of homes, given that it is certainly a serious breach of international law, if not a war crime?

Alistair Burt: I in turn greatly respect the hon. Lady and will indeed ensure that that investigation is carried out.

Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab): Without wanting to impugn the Minister's personal integrity—I hold him in the highest regard, although we do not agree on this—regret and condemnation are not enough. We have international obligations, not least those specified in the last line of the Balfour declaration, which states that

“nothing shall be done which may prejudice the...rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine”.

Palestinian settlements are being demolished to make way for illegal Israeli settlements, which is a breach of international law, so are we going to call the Israeli ambassador in? Are we going to tell him that we will no longer trade with those illegal settlements? I suggest that that is what we need to do.

Alistair Burt: The hon. Gentleman has a long held a passionate commitment to this cause and has a fair way of expressing it, and it is true that we do not always

agree. We will of course be in contact with the Israeli ambassador, but I cannot anticipate the actions of the British Government at this stage.

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): Like the Minister, I had the privilege of visiting Khan al-Ahmar just last September. Part of the site includes a school with 170 children that was part-funded by the EU, so will the Minister set out what representations he has made to the Israeli Government for reparations if the school is to be demolished? The EU and the British Government must be far stricter, because this situation involves children, and Israel is in breach of article 50 of the Geneva convention.

Alistair Burt: The UK has not directly funded any structures in recent years that have been demolished by the Israeli Government. We have consulted EU partners on the demolitions, and we are keeping the case for compensation under review. No decision has been made about whether we will claim compensation in future. We are focused on preventing demolitions from happening through our funding to a legal aid programme that helps residents to challenge decisions in the Israeli legal system. Our work with the Norwegian Refugee Council has been extremely effective over the years in providing a counter to some of the demolition applications.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): I, too, have visited the village of Khan al-Ahmar, and I am one of the 25 MPs who signed a letter saying that this forcible transfer is a war crime. Rather than condemning the action and reserving our options, we need to hear more from the Minister about what will be done to hold those responsible to account. Does he accept that the longer he ducks the issue of allowing trade with illegal settlements and not recognising the state of Palestine, the vicious circle will just continue until it is too late?

Alistair Burt: I understand, particularly the hon. Gentleman's last point. I have indicated that the British ambassador is taking part in a *démarche* this afternoon in relation to the Israeli Government. We are in consultation with European partners and colleagues on what actions might be taken. I cannot say anything further than that.

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab): Some 181 people live in Khan al-Ahmar, and more than half of them are children. The Minister has acknowledged that the actions of the Israeli Government are contrary to international law, but those actions are also simply cruel. As we have heard, people are being injured by this demolition process. It is a grievous situation. What plans do the Government have to contribute towards humanitarian assistance efforts for the people who are being forcibly displaced?

Alistair Burt: We are very active in all areas of the west bank in supporting humanitarian needs through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and the like. Plainly, we did not wish to see this demolition and, in company with others, we must now consider what we can do to support those who have been displaced. This is obviously very immediate, and I will report back to the House as soon as we have a clear answer to the hon. Lady's concerns.

Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab): We are kidding ourselves if we think we can stop this illegal work with diplomacy. Diplomacy has always failed in the past, so something else needs to be done. The Minister has responded four times on the issue of banning the import of Israeli goods produced in illegal settlements, but he says such a ban has not been British policy in the past. Does that mean he is considering a change? If not, why not?

Alistair Burt: There are circumstances in which a Minister cannot win, no matter what he says. I am accurate in saying that that is the current policy, but I also indicated, without any suggestion of a change in policy, that the United Kingdom's response to today's activities has not yet been fully considered. We are talking through with other partners what that response might be. I do not want to set any hares running by saying any more in response to the hon. Gentleman's question.

Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): The demolition of Khan al-Ahmar and the forcible transfer of its population represents a step change in the nature of the occupation. The Minister has recognised that it could well deal a fatal blow to a two-state solution. As he has said, representations making the case to his Israeli counterparts clearly have not worked. Does he accept that this is the moment for a fundamental reappraisal of the Government's approach?

Alistair Burt: The short answer is probably no, because the fundamental determination of the Government's approach is to do everything we can to keep the option of a two-state solution alive and to work with all parties, including the state of Israel, towards that end. The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right in saying that, because of the long-standing international concern about this community and because of the recognition of the significance of where the community is, the actions taken today constitute, in his words, a "step change" in what is happening. I do not think it undermines our determination that that ultimate settlement is the only thing that will deal with all these matters. So long as a two-state solution remains a viable possibility, it should still form the United Kingdom's policy. Of course, in relation to this particular action, as I indicated earlier, we have to consider what response there might sensibly be.

Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): I visited the community of Khan al-Ahmar in February 2018 and met the schoolchildren and the families there. What is happening today is truly heartbreaking. I believe the Minister, and I believe that he thinks his actions are the right way forward, but how far away must the peace process be from realisation and how bad does the atrocity have to be before he is genuinely willing to come to the Dispatch Box to tell us what actions and what sanctions his Department and this Government are at least debating?

Alistair Burt: That is a good question. At what stage do I—that is less relevant—and the British Government give up on the two-state solution? There are plenty of voices out there telling us to do so: "It is just not going to happen. It is fantasy. It has all gone." I do not believe that, and I do not want it to be the case, for the reason I gave earlier—I do not see a viable alternative.

The hon. Gentleman poses a very real question: at what stage do we give up on a two-state solution? I do not want to give up on all those friends over the years, on those behind the Oslo accords and on those who worked so determinedly for a two-state solution. I do not want the United Kingdom to be in a position of saying, "We are washing our hands of this," but there comes a point when it is completely impossible. Until the envoys have reported and until the work has been done, I do not think that stage has yet been reached. Each issue that makes it more difficult, as we have seen today, runs the risk of that day coming closer.

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): Israel will rightly face international condemnation and obloquy for these actions, but the demolitions will go ahead anyway. Aside from the Trump regime in America, which is part of the problem, is there anybody out there to whom Israel might listen? The impression it gives at the moment is of a state going rogue that does not actually want to be part of the international community.

Alistair Burt: The hon. Gentleman puts it very forcefully. Israel co-operates in a variety of international organisations, and all the states that work with Israel must and should have some influence with it. He is right to talk about the United States, which is plainly its major relationship, but Israel has a strong relationship with the EU and it has a growing relationship with a number of other Arab states in the region.

This has to be a relationship built not only on what Israel is but on what Israel is to become. Accordingly, such actions raise question marks that friends do not wish to see. Let us see where the influence can be, and let us try to work together so that the Israel we see today, and the Israel we want to see, is the Israel that will be staunch in defence of rights, secure in its own existence and supported by its neighbours, but that works for a just settlement with those who live in the Palestinian areas and in Gaza.

Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): Following this shameful demolition, what must the state of Israel do for this Government to act? That has to be the question. The Minister has said many times this afternoon that it is not UK Government policy, but does he agree that the time has come for the UK at least to examine genuinely hard-hitting, far-reaching economic sanctions, because negotiation, pleading and appeals to international law have demonstrably failed?

Alistair Burt: I can only repeat what I said earlier. Our policy remains a determination to do everything we can to see that the two-state solution remains viable, to do nothing that will make it less likely and to work with others who are determined to see it become a possibility. All our actions and responses should still be guided by those principles.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): We have now been discussing this for 50 minutes, and I have yet to hear the Minister state a single practical action that the Government propose in response to this atrocity. Like others in this House, I do not doubt his sincerity, but I am alarmed by his reticence to do something about it.

[Tommy Sheppard]

The Minister has hinted that the Government are considering further measures, and he has alluded to discussions with international partners. If the Government themselves are not prepared to take action in the field of economic sanctions to try to put pressure on Israel, will he give a commitment that this Government will not oppose such measures if they are proposed by other Governments in international forums?

Alistair Burt: I understand the hon. Gentleman's admonitions, but I will not make policy standing here at the Dispatch Box. I indicated that this needs a considered response, which we are undertaking in company with others. I am sorry that is not as neat as a swift, immediate response, but I think it is the right response. We will consider with others what to do.

I have listened very carefully to the House, and I hope others have listened to the feeling the House has expressed and take due note of the deep concerns that Members have rightly expressed, whatever position they have taken in the past, about the actions that have taken place today. I hope those concerns will go loudly around the world.

Sustainable Fisheries

1.49 pm

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Michael Gove): With your permission, Mr Speaker, I should like to make a statement about the future for Britain's fishing industry. Today, we are publishing a White Paper, "Sustainable Fisheries for Future Generations", which sets out how we can benefit both our economy and our environment when we leave the European Union, and take back control of our seas. The White Paper outlines how the Government can ensure that more of the fish in our waters is caught by our boats and benefits our fishing communities. We will also aspire to the highest environmental standards, so we can ensure that our seas are healthy and productive for future generations.

The United Kingdom is blessed by waters that contain some of the historically richest fishing grounds in the world. Those waters sustained a fishing industry that was at the heart of coastal communities from Shetland to Cornwall. Thousands were employed in catching, processing and marketing fish, which enjoyed a global reputation for excellence. But in recent decades both the health of our fishing industry and the management of our fish stocks has been undermined by the operation of the European Union's common fisheries policy. As a result of the CFP, more than half of the fish in our own waters has been caught by foreign vessels. Access to fishing opportunities has been allocated according to out of date formulae which do not properly reflect either changes in our global climate or advances in marine science. During our membership of the CFP, we have seen jobs in fisheries decline, businesses go to the wall and communities hollowed out, but now that we are leaving the EU and taking back control of our waters, a brighter future beckons.

Today's White Paper outlines how, as an independent coastal state, under international law, we will be in control of the seas that make up our exclusive economic zone—the waters up to 200 nautical miles out from our coastline or halfway between our nation and others. We will determine, in annual negotiations with our neighbours, who has access to our waters. We will also ensure that any additional fishing opportunities then available to our vessels are allocated fairly and thoughtfully to help support vessels of all sizes and communities across the UK. Fisheries will be a separate strand of our future relationship with the EU from the future economic partnership. Through the fisheries strand there will be a separate process, whereby the EU and the UK, as an independent coastal state, will negotiate on access to waters and fishing opportunities on an annual basis.

Outside the CFP, we can also be more ambitious environmentally; we can make sure that our future fishing policies are truly sustainable and that they protect and enhance marine habitats, in line with the goals of our 25-year environment plan. Sustainability is key to a successful fisheries industry. We will continue to work under the principle of maximum sustainable yield, and we will use the best available science to create a policy that ensures profitability and resilience for decades to come. We are fortunate that Britain is a world leader in fisheries science and marine conservation, and we will use that expertise and the flexibility that comes from

new fishing opportunities to ensure the current methods of managing stocks, such as the ban on discarding fish caught over quota, work better and in the interests of both the industry and the environment.

We will also ensure that all foreign vessels seeking to fish in our waters will be allowed to do so only if they adhere to our high sustainability standards. We will deploy the most sophisticated monitoring technology to ensure those standards are rigorously policed and upheld. We will deploy not only technology, but the vessels, aircraft and people required to safeguard our waters. We will also consider whether and how to replace the European maritime and fisheries fund, which has supported the sector across the UK.

Of course, delivering for the UK fishing industry depends on close collaboration with the devolved Administrations. The White Paper sets out our approach to develop a UK framework for fisheries management that will respect the devolution settlements, and, where necessary, we will maintain the overall coherence of the UK's fisheries policy. This will help deliver our international obligations and protect the functioning of the hugely important UK internal market.

However, there are specific opportunities that this White Paper outlines where we can better support the sector in England. We can look at new opportunities for those in the current under-10 metre category, who have suffered particularly badly from some aspects of past policy. We can also look at running a targeted scientific trial system based on effort, or days at sea, rather than a quota for some low-impact inshore fisheries, although of course any trial would have to ensure that the system's operation was consistent with our commitment to sustainable fishing.

Over the past year, this Government have explained how we can deliver a green Brexit—a suite of measures that replaces the existing common agricultural policy and CFP with new approaches that better serve both our economy and the environment. Alongside replacements for the CAP and CFP, we have also introduced policies that contribute to a cleaner, greener planet and, in particular, healthier, more resilient rivers, seas and oceans. We have introduced reforms to the water industry; introduced a world-leading ban on the plastic microbeads in rinse-off personal care products; called for evidence on new measures to restrict the use of other single use plastics; and, subject to consultation, we are setting out how we might introduce a deposit return scheme for plastic bottles, ban the sale of plastic straws, plastic-stemmed cotton buds and plastic stirrers; and extend the 5p plastic carrier bag charge to all retailers.

We have worked with other nations, through the Commonwealth Clean Oceans Alliance and the G7, to further enhance the health and productivity of our marine environment, and the global leadership the Prime Minister has shown in securing cleaner seas has been recognised by the United Nations. Now, with our departure from the European Union, we can demonstrate even more ambitious leadership in our own waters. We can regenerate our coastal communities. We can ensure our fishing industry enjoys an economic renaissance, and we can do so by putting the highest environmental standards at the heart of everything we do. This White Paper charts that course, and I commend it to this House.

1.55 pm

Sue Hayman (Workington) (Lab): The Secretary of State made fisheries the poster child for the leave campaign, and a number of promises were made to the fishing industry and coastal communities about what Brexit would mean for them. So far, he has categorically failed to deliver, and there are fears that this White Paper is just more of the same. There is a huge gap between his vision and what he actually ends up delivering. Promises made about taking back control of waters during transition will not be delivered, despite what Ministers said right up to the point of their U-turn. This went against assurances the Secretary of State gave to this House and to coastal communities to take back absolute control of waters on day one, and he went on to assess his own performance as delivering a “sub-optimal outcome” for the fishing industry.

This White Paper is full of optimism for the negotiations, but the only deal so far agreed on fishing is that we will keep EU fishing policies during the transition period. We are not holding our breath that this will all go according to plan. Future customs arrangements will be key to the fishing industry, but given reports that the Secretary of State physically ripped up the Prime Minister's preferred customs option, it is clear that the big decisions for the negotiations, including those on fishing, are a long way from being agreed. Some 70% of what we catch we export, and 80% of the fish we eat, we import. Why should the fishing industry believe his rhetoric today when fundamental questions on customs go unanswered? Trade and access are entirely separate issues according to the White Paper. So far, nothing about the EU's negotiating position says this will work, so how realistic does he think this position is?

I welcome the commitment to be environmentally ambitious. In that case, will the Secretary of State support Labour's proposals for national marine parks? I also welcome his commitment to collaboration with the devolved Administrations. What clarity can he give on the future fisheries workforce, including EU workers, who are so vital for the catching sector? Will every penny of European maritime and fisheries fund be replaced, and what is the mechanism for delivering that? Will the Treasury be taking a slice, as it plans to do for agricultural subsidies?

The White Paper talks warmly about the coastal communities fund, but a recent parliamentary question asked by my hon. Friend the Member for Halifax (Holly Lynch) revealed that only about 6% of the fund has been awarded to the fishing sector to date. If the Government really think fishing is the lifeblood of coastal communities, why are they not backing this up with the funding that the industry desperately needs? We do not have to wait until Brexit to give the small businesses that are the backbone of our fishing sector a better deal. The Secretary of State has powers today to adjust quotas and to help, especially, the under-10 metre fleet. So will he make a commitment today not to wait until Brexit to do the right thing and help those boats?

There is no point in catching more fish if it is going to rot at our border, awaiting export, trying to reach markets. Fishing communities such as those I represent need a fairer deal for the catching and processing sectors, which are the backbone of our local economies and which drive economic regeneration in our coastal towns.

[Sue Hayman]

If the Secretary of State thinks he can avoid scrutiny on the promises made to the fishing sector in the past, he is sadly mistaken. Warm soundbites do not reassure coastal communities. I assure the Secretary of State that Labour will be holding his feet to the fire to ensure that the promises that he makes today are delivered.

Michael Gove: I thank the hon. Lady for her generous welcome of so much of the White Paper. I thank her, too, for reflecting on its optimistic tone, which reflects the sunny disposition that is always there in DEFRA Ministers' statements.

The hon. Lady asked what we have already achieved. Not only have we already achieved withdrawal from the London fisheries convention, but we have made it clear, as has the European Union, that although we of course will have a transition process, in the December 2020 Council—that is, even before the transition process ends—the UK will be treated as an independent coastal state and will negotiate as a third country. The European Union acknowledges that we will be leaving and negotiating separately at that point, and that is something that the whole House, and certainly the Opposition, can welcome.

The hon. Lady referred to the fact that 70% of the fish that we catch is exported, and of course it is, because, as I mentioned in my statement, it is high-quality fish caught by the brave men and women who go to sea. We will of course ensure through our future economic partnership, which is being negotiated separately, that we continue to have as-frictionless-as-possible access to European markets. Michel Barnier, someone whom I hugely admire, has himself pointed out that he wants to ensure that the free trade agreement that is concluded between the UK and the EU has neither quotas nor tariffs, so we can look forward to a bright future there, as well.

The hon. Lady mentioned national marine parks. That sounds like a great idea, but while Labour has been talking in the abstract about national marine parks, the Government have been getting on with the hard work of designating and protecting new marine protected areas around our coastline. The Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey) has built on the work of my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon) to show how a Government who are absolutely committed to instituting appropriate protection for our coastline can make a real difference.

The hon. Lady was quite right to mention the under-10 metre fleet. As I mentioned in my statement and as is made clear in the White Paper, we want to ensure that new fishing opportunities are allocated in a way that supports that fleet, but, again following the steps undertaken by my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury when he was Fisheries Minister, quota has already been reallocated to support the under-10 metre fleet.

I wish to make one final point, which I suspect I may make a couple of times this afternoon. These opportunities arise as a result of our departure from the common fisheries policy. When an opportunity was given to vote for absence and departure from the common fisheries policy in the European Parliament, Labour Members of the European Parliament voted against it. It is all very

well to will the end, but unless someone supports the means, which Labour has not done, they are not a true friend of our fishermen.

Richard Benyon (Newbury) (Con): My right hon. Friend will know that there is no greater critic of the common fisheries policy than me, but I am sure he would agree that even had we not gone into it, we would probably still have a problem, because man's technical ability to harvest vast quantities from the sea has been a problem the world over. I very much hope that the White Paper contains a firm commitment to an ecosystems approach to fisheries management and that within that there is the possibility of rebalancing fishing opportunity to try to assist the smaller, more local fishing fleet and give it a fairer cut of the opportunity.

Michael Gove: When my right hon. Friend was a DEFRA Minister, he contributed significantly to improvements to the common fisheries policy, and fishing and coastal communities throughout the United Kingdom owe him a particular debt. He is right on both his points: in or out of the CFP, we have to make sure that conservation measures are at the heart of our future policy, and it is also right that we do more, particularly for coastal communities where they use inshore vessels, to ensure that opportunities are reallocated to benefit them and the communities and businesses built around them.

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): We have heard so much about red lines since 2016, but those red lines might now be considered red herrings. I have read the documents issued this morning. Given the commitment to

“continue to work with our European partners to regulate fishing and to set harvest rates”,

will the fleets still be subject to the CFP, but without a Minister at the table when decisions are being agreed? Given that maximum sustainable yield has been established and the Secretary of State has already made it clear to the Danish fleet that it and all others will still be welcome to fish in UK waters, will our fleets continue to be subject to the same quotas as they currently are?

Given that the UK Government “will consider whether and how to replace”

the European maritime and fisheries fund, is there a possibility that the fleets will receive reduced funding, or that funding might be redistributed on an uneven footing to suit a Government's political ends? Is there even a possibility that the fleets will no longer receive funding at all? I note the point about the World Trade Organisation wanting to see an end to fisheries subsidies, but wonder whether raw, unfettered competition is really best for Scotland's fishing fleet.

On partnership working, the Government say that frameworks will “not normally” be changed without the devolved Administrations' consent. That “not normally” bothers me. May we have a guarantee that frameworks will not be put in place without the explicit agreement of the Scottish Government? Welsh and Northern Irish Members will no doubt press a similar case. May we also have a guarantee that no future changes will be made without unanimity—that no Administration will be overruled?

Finally, before Mr Speaker's eyes turn disapprovingly upon me, I note the establishment of an English marine management reserve; will that have Barnett consequentials?

Mr Speaker: The hon. Lady's anxiety was misplaced, as she had 14 seconds to spare. She was a model citizen and will now be esteemed throughout the House.

Michael Gove: In response to the hon. Lady's questions, I think the answers are no, no, no, no and yes.

The Scottish National party's position on future fisheries is an uncomfortable one, because it has in the past represented some of the most important fishing communities in this country, but does so no longer. One reason why it no longer represents those communities in this House is its failure to stand up for them and its failure to demand our exit from the common fisheries policy. There is a fundamental weakness that no amount of faux outrage or weak punning can mask. I have the highest regard for individuals in the Scottish Government who are trying to work with us and our superb team of civil servants to ensure that we have frameworks that safeguard Scottish fishermen's interests, but Scottish fishermen have no friends among the Scottish National party representatives in this place, which is why the SNP Benches are so scanty and their arguments even thinner.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): Is this not a great Brexit opportunity to restore our fishing grounds and rebuild our fishing industry? Is it not the case that we have a huge opportunity to make sure that much more of our fish is landed by our boats, so that we ensure that our traditional fish and chips once again includes fish from our fishing grounds, properly looked after by a national policy?

Michael Gove: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. During the referendum campaign, he made a passionate and coherent case for many of the benefits that could accrue to Britain as a result of leaving the EU. My friend outside this House, the leader of the Scottish Conservatives, Ruth Davidson, who argued for a slightly different position during the referendum, made the point that when it comes to fish, certainly in the Conservative party, we are all Brexiteers now.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. As he said, "a brighter future beckons". Will he confirm that, when we leave the EU and get fishing back into our own hands again and under our own control, the fishing-village initiatives and the grant assistance will still be available, so that our fishing sector will be sustainable for the long term?

Michael Gove: Absolutely. It is our commitment to make sure that we support all the coastal and fishing communities throughout the United Kingdom that have suffered in the past, but for which a brighter future does beckon.

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con): You will remember, Mr Speaker, that in 2005, having travelled all round the British Isles and visited many fishing nations in the north Atlantic and the Falklands, the Conservative party published a Green Paper on how a sane fisheries policy would be run and managed, and we fought the 2005 general election on that paper. This is a

really great day. I heartily congratulate the Secretary of State for his clear statement that we will take control of the 200 miles. We said at the time:

"The Common Fisheries Policy is a biological, environmental, economic and social disaster; it is beyond reform."

Its most egregious fault is the disgusting issue of quota discards, whereby it is estimated that up to a million tonnes of fish are thrown back dead every year. The Secretary of State has gone into great detail. In the transition period, will trials be carried out on refined effort control, employing catch-composition percentages?

Mr Speaker: I am glad to see that the right hon. Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) is back in the House and in rude health. May I just say that I do hope that, one day, he will tell us what he really thinks?

Michael Gove: It is great to see my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) back in his place. He has been a pioneer of many of the policies that we are announcing today, and I am in his debt. It is the case that we have talked about introducing pilots of some form of effort control—days at sea—providing that that is consistent, of course, with important environmental and sustainable factors. We will be working with the industry to ensure that we bring in those pilots as quickly as possible.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): On the radio this morning, the Secretary of State repeatedly cited Norway and Iceland as models for our future fishing relationship with the rest of Europe. He knows that Norway is in the European economic area, and that Iceland is in the European Free Trade Association, which guarantees them free and unfettered access to the European Union for their exports. Is not his claim that he can claim back quota that other countries currently hold while guaranteeing free and unfettered access for our industry's vital exports to the European Union another cruel betrayal being perpetrated on our fishing industry?

Michael Gove: The right hon. Gentleman served with distinction as a DEFRA Minister, and I take seriously his contributions on this matter. As I stress, there are two separate strands to our negotiations with the EU. There are negotiations that we will have as an independent coastal state. Iceland and Norway are very successful independent coastal states, which have control of their fisheries, and which also ensures that the fish that they catch are successfully exported. We will have a separate set of negotiations as part of the future economic partnership.

Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con): This statement and the White Paper are very welcome as they provide the framework to revitalise the Lowestoft and East Anglian fishing industry. Does the Secretary of State agree that now is the time for regional strategies to be developed within this national framework to ensure that coastal communities derive maximum benefit from Brexit? These strategies should look at issues such as the economic link, protecting the marine environment from such damaging activities as electronic pulse fishing, access to quota for small-scale fishermen and infrastructure investment.

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend puts his finger on exactly those issues that we do need to make sure are at the heart of any developed regional strategy, particularly for fishermen in East Anglia. He is absolutely right.

Mr Alan Campbell (Tynemouth) (Lab): The European Maritime and Fisheries Fund will allocate more than £250 million to UK fishing communities by 2020. The Secretary of State has chosen to ignore this question twice, so let me ask it in a different form: has the Treasury guaranteed that money after we leave?

Michael Gove: Yes, it has. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has made it clear that EMFF funding, which is committed before we leave the European Union, will continue to be paid.

Dr Sarah Wollaston (Totnes) (Con): As an independent coastal state, we will be able to decide who can access our waters after 2020 and on what terms, but that will be subject to negotiation. Will the Secretary of State reassure the fishing community in my constituency that its interests will not be traded away after the transition period? In considering the environmental aspects, can he say whether those terms will also include a ban on electric pulse fishing?

Michael Gove: I absolutely share the concern about pulse fishing, which has been articulated by my hon. Friends the Members for Totnes (Dr Wollaston) and for Waveney (Peter Aldous). Yes, absolutely. She and I may differ on one or two aspects of politics, but one of the many things that we are united on is our belief that we need to ensure that, as an independent coastal state, we control access to our waters and that, separately, we secure the deepest and friendliest trade, economic and other relationship with the EU.

Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Oh, yes, there are lots of fish in Grimsby. Let us hear about the situation.

Melanie Onn: The Secretary of State made reference in his statement to the fact that more than half the fish in our waters are caught by foreign vessels. If the Government are so committed to supporting UK fisheries, why have four out of the six most lucrative fishing licences in the world been awarded to a Norwegian company rather than SG Fisheries or Fortuna Ltd, both of which are UK-led companies? Is that how he treats his true friends?

Michael Gove: I simply remark that Norway outside the European Union seems to be doing rather well.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): The Secretary of State knows that my anger and disappointment at what the UK Government agreed in March was echoed by many fishing communities in Moray. Therefore, I really do welcome what is in this White Paper, which has been roundly welcomed by the fishing industry, with the Scottish Fishermen's Federation calling it a positive statement for taking back control of our waters. Will he confirm from the Dispatch Box that this UK Conservative Government will not allow a link between access to our waters and access to EU markets? Does he agree that the shambolic position of the SNP is indefensible considering that it wants to go straight back into the hated CFP, and will he accept my invitation to come to

Moray to meet Moray fishermen to discuss his vision for the future for the UK as an independent coastal state?

Michael Gove: Those are three bullseyes—back of the net, I am tempted to say, on three occasions. My hon. Friend is absolutely right that we have separate negotiations, exactly as he requested. It is also the case, exactly as he points out, that the SNP is in a regrettable position on this issue, and my heart goes out to it and its supporters for having to justify their inconsistencies on this issue. It is always a pleasure to visit his constituency, and I will try to do so later this year.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): May I welcome the substance of this White Paper? It has many of the things that I have long wanted and that the fishermen in my constituency would want to see there. Of course, whether we see it in the future will depend on the Government's ability to hold fast on their promises of separating trade and access to waters, or at the very least a bit faster than they were able to hold to their promises on the transitional arrangements. Looking to the future for a fisheries management, the real opportunity here, surely, is to do things differently for our smaller inshore fleets. Will the Secretary of State take as his guiding principle a presumption of local management when it comes to arranging these opportunities for the future?

Michael Gove: I am very grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the generous and constructive tone that he takes, which is of a piece with all his contributions in this House. Absolutely, in Shetland, in particular, there are communities that we want to work with precisely along the lines that he mentions.

Mrs Anne-Marie Trevelyan (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con): My right hon. Friend should know that the fishermen just south of the Scottish border, along the north-east coast, are really pleased to see the progress that has been made with this White Paper, but the issue continues to be how we will tackle the choke species issue, because that is something that continues to concern them.

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend raises an important issue. One thing that we hope to be able to do is to use additional quota, which we can allocate to UK vessels to help deal with that particular challenge. It is also the case that the White Paper includes proposals, which we hope will make it easier for individual fishermen who catch over quota to be able to land all the fish that they have caught in a way that ensures that we can have environmentally effective management. We look forward to responses from the industry to our proposals.

Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for producing this paper and thank him especially for meeting the fishermen and the industry in Northern Ireland, ensuring that some of the points that they raised are reflected in this White Paper. That is a positive message. In his recent meeting with Minister Creed, did he discuss voisinage agreements, or good neighbour agreements, with the Republic of Ireland? Did he take the opportunity to remind the Republic of Ireland that a good deal for us with Europe will mean a good deal for the Republic of Ireland in our sea fisheries waters?

Michael Gove: I thank my hon. Friend for allowing me to have conversations with a number of representatives of the fishing industry in Northern Ireland, which helped inform the paper. Absolutely, in conversations with Minister Creed and with other Ministers in the Irish Government, we have always sought, both in the voisinage agreement and in other areas, to try to work in the interests of all those who fish in our waters.

Mr John Whittingdale (Maldon) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Will he confirm that taking back control of our waters will allow us to design a fisheries policy that will be beneficial not just to the commercial fishing industry, but to recreational sea anglers, and will he bear their interests in mind?

Michael Gove: My right hon. Friend makes a very good point. Indeed, the White Paper explains how angling, which is a hugely important part of the life of the nation, can benefit from the additional opportunities that accrue as a result of life outside the European Union. He is absolutely right to underline that, and we look forward to responses obviously not just from the fishing industry, but from recreational and other anglers as well.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State explain the logic behind retaining the existing system of fixed quota allocations for the current quota? As he will know, there has been a great deal of unhappiness about that. Three multimillion-pound companies currently control nearly two thirds of our fishing stock. If he wants to take back control, should we not be reviewing something that is now more than 20 years out of date?

Michael Gove: The hon. Lady makes a very good point. One of the things that my right hon. Friend the Member for Newbury (Richard Benyon) did when he was a Minister was to establish in law that we could move away from some of the FQAs, but appropriate notice needs to be given to do so because the way in which people exercise those rights has been safeguarded in law. However, the direction of travel that the hon. Lady outlines is one with which I sympathise.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): We will need a growing and sustainable workforce if we are to land more of our own fish, yet approximately half those who undertake the difficult and poorly paid work done by crew on board fishing vessels are from outside the British Isles. What will be done to ensure that we have the workforce that we will need to rely on if we are to land more of our own fish?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. I am in conversation with the Immigration Minister and the Home Secretary to ensure that the fishing and fish processing industries will have access to the labour that they need to take advantage of these opportunities.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): I welcome the White Paper and its policies to revive coastal communities, which were being devastated by our membership of the EU and the impact of the common fisheries policy. I know that the Secretary of State is an enthusiastic supporter of the wellbeing of those communities, but given the Government's record in the negotiations to date,

will he give us an assurance and a guarantee that nothing will be conceded or done during negotiations on the future trade arrangement that would dilute the Government's ability to deliver on the aspirations in the White Paper?

Michael Gove: Absolutely. Today's White Paper is a document that has been agreed across the Government. It represents the Government's negotiating position and Government policy, and all Ministers and our negotiating team are united behind it.

David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend and his whole team at DEFRA for pulling the White Paper together—a lot of work has clearly gone into it. I also thank him for visiting the new fish market in Peterhead in my constituency earlier this week. I think that that was about the third time in the last year that he has visited Peterhead, which is most welcome. However, will he confirm that it is the Government's position that market access for fisheries products is kept separate from the question of fishing opportunities and access to waters?

Michael Gove: I thank my hon. Friend for the welcome that he and his constituents gave me on Monday, when I visited Peterhead for the third time this year. I also thank him and his Scottish Conservative colleagues for their support and for the detailed analysis that they have provided to ensure that we deliver on this policy. It has been a real pleasure to have Scottish Conservative Members who are absolutely committed to the health of the fishing industry and who—rather than trying to make cheap political points off the back of hard-working men and women, as some other parties in this House have sought to do—have put the welfare of the coastal communities that they represent in this House first. It is an exemplary way in which to proceed.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The Secretary of State said in his statement:

“The White Paper sets out our approach to develop a UK framework for fisheries management that will respect the devolution settlements”,

yet he did not properly engage the Scottish Government in the production of this White Paper. He stood at the Dispatch Box and just said, “No, no, no,” to the questions from my hon. Friend the Member for Edinburgh North and Leith (Deidre Brock) about framework guarantees.

The White Paper itself says that frameworks will “not normally be adjusted” without the consent of the devolved institutions. We know what those weasel words mean. Page 22 of the document states:

“The powers concerning international relations, on access to waters and setting quota, will be exercised at UK level”.

Is not that Tory speak for, “The UK Government will do what they want and expect the devolved Administrations to like it or lump it.”?

Michael Gove: No.

Kirstene Hair (Angus) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's renewed commitment that we will leave the hated CFP by 2020. The only MPs in Scotland who pledged to leave the CFP during the election campaign were the Scottish Conservatives, because the SNP is

[Kirstene Hair]

desperate to drag us back in. Does my right hon. Friend share my belief that getting out of this disastrous EU institution will give renewed opportunities for coastal towns such as Arbroath in my constituency of Angus?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend is right. Voters in Montrose and Arbroath voted for Scottish Conservatives because they wanted us out of the common fisheries policy. That was why Scottish Conservatives won seats at the last general election, and it why the Scottish National party is in such an embittered position. In Strasbourg and Brussels, its representatives vote to keep us in the common fisheries policy, but in coastal communities, the Scottish National party pretends that it is the friend of fishing communities. I am afraid that such fundamental inconsistency from a party that calls itself the voice of Scotland is frankly a disgrace.

Lady Hermon (North Down) (Ind): It is a pleasure to hear the DEFRA Secretary at the Dispatch Box. Even if I am not convinced by half of what he has said, he is always very entertaining, positive and upbeat. With his characteristic enthusiasm, he has repeatedly said that we are taking back control of our waters. For the avoidance of doubt and any ambiguity, are Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough exclusively British waters? Also, has he had the opportunity to speak to his good friend the Foreign Secretary to confirm the clarity that he is going to deliver to the House and the people of Northern Ireland as he steps up to the Dispatch Box?

Michael Gove: The first thing to say is that I am in constant communication with my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary. The hon. Lady's point about Lough Foyle and Carlingford Lough has been very well articulated, but I would not want to cut across my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. The hon. Lady is incredibly generous in the compliments that she pays DEFRA Ministers. May I simply say in return that we in DEFRA are huge fans of the hon. Lady?

Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con): I congratulate the Secretary of State on an excellent White Paper—the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee greatly looks forward to scrutinising it. Our fishermen will get their fish back. For 40 years, they have been denied that, and it will be great to see. When we do our deals with the EU, will we also negotiate with Norway and Iceland? The fish move around, especially with the temperature of the water, so let us try to ensure that we do actually catch the fish.

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I look forward to giving evidence to his Committee and I am grateful to members of his Committee for their support in the preparation of the White Paper. My hon. Friend is absolutely right; of course we are going to be negotiating with the European Union, but we also need to negotiate with other independent coastal states, including Norway and Iceland, in the interests of all who fish in our seas.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): This morning, I contacted the Welsh Fishermen's Association, which tells me that four weeks of delays to our current

trading relationships would leave the Welsh fishing fleet in danger of collapse, and that six weeks of delays would lead to catastrophic business failures. Will the Secretary of State outline how he intends to use his influence in the Cabinet to ensure that Welsh fishermen face neither tariff nor non-tariff barriers when trading with the EU in the future?

Michael Gove: The hon. Lady makes a good point. As I mentioned earlier, it is the European Union's position that it wants to conclude a trade agreement—whatever other aspects it may contain—with neither quotas nor tariff barriers. I hope that not only Welsh fishermen but fishermen across the country can benefit from that. I know that the hon. Lady's daughter works in the fishing industry; I wish her all the best for the future.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): As my right hon. Friend knows full well, the Jurassic coast sits in my constituency. Along it, the fishing industry—fishing line and shell fishermen—are relied on very much by local business, as has been described. Three marine conservation zones could be placed along that stretch of coastline. While the fishermen agree to look after fish stocks, they are concerned that the legislative process and the amount of bureaucracy could affect their livelihoods. Will my right hon. Friend reassure the industry that if these zones are implemented, they will not affect the livelihoods of fishermen, who are vital to the tourism sector?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. Of course, the network of marine conservation zones exists to ensure that we can have healthy and sustainable seas for the future. I will, of course, do everything possible to provide reassurance to his constituents. Either I or a DEFRA Minister will make time to ensure that we can see them as well.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): Mike Russell, the Scottish Government's constitutional relations Minister, has said that the UK Government “failed to engage with” the Scottish Government “in any significant or meaningful way before producing its White Paper”.

Fergus Ewing, the Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy, has said that the Scottish Government were only shown a “final copy a few days before publication”.

Are these statements true? If not, will the Secretary of State undertake to place in the Library of the House a full record of the discussions that the Government had with the Scottish Government before publishing this document?

Michael Gove: I do not think that anything in this document is a particular surprise to anyone. Of course we shared it with the Scottish Government. Our superb team of officials at DEFRA has been working with Scottish Government officials to secure an outcome. The hon. Gentleman, for whom I have an enormous amount of respect, has been reduced to processology, because on the substance of the matter, I am afraid that the Scottish National party stands against the interests of Scotland's fishermen because it wants to keep us in

the common fisheries policy. This processology misses the point, which is that Scotland's fishermen enjoy fantastic new opportunities as a result of a Conservative Government and the leadership shown by 13 superb Scottish Conservative MPs.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): I welcome the Secretary of State's White Paper and his statement. He will know that the seafood processing sector is of particular interest in the Grimsby-Cleethorpes area. I welcome the reference to that in the White Paper, as will the industry. Will he assure me and the industry that he will continue to work closely with it to ensure the continuity of supply that is so vital?

Michael Gove: I absolutely will. The processing sector is absolutely critical. We must make sure, as I said earlier, not just that it has access to the labour it needs, but that we do everything to support it in terms of infrastructure and advocacy.

Stephen Gethins (North East Fife) (SNP): Just to be helpful to the Secretary of State, if he checks the European Parliament record, as I am sure he would like to, he will see that the SNP has, of course, consistently voted against the common fisheries policy.

Fishing communities that I represent—who, incidentally, have not elected a Conservative MP for some decades now—benefit hugely from the European maritime and fisheries fund. Can the Secretary of State assure me that any future funds will at least match what those communities would have had if we had remained in the European Union?

Michael Gove: On the most recent occasion that Scottish National party MEPs had an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment, they stuck with the SNP position, which is to remain in the EU and, of course, to remain in the common fisheries policy as well.

I know that the hon. Gentleman—his re-election to this House by a slim but still clear margin is a reflection of his hard work—represents the constituents in Crail, Anstruther and elsewhere with all the energy and devotion that he brings to so many of his duties. He is right about the MFF: we do need to ensure that the future replacement continues to be as generous as before.

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con): I welcome the statement, which will come as a relief to the sector in Newlyn and west Cornwall and is consistent with promises that have been made by the Secretary of State and the Fisheries Minister in Newlyn. After years of decline and the erosion of the fleet, skills and infrastructure as a result of the common fisheries policy, will the Secretary of State give careful consideration to how he and the Government can now support the sector to prepare for a more active and vibrant fishing sector in small coastal communities and larger ports such as Newlyn?

Michael Gove: Yes, absolutely. It was a pleasure to visit my hon. Friend's constituency. Of course, Newlyn is one of the most important ports in the south-west. We will do everything that we can to make sure that the harbour gets the investment it needs to regenerate and to take advantage of the additional opportunities that life outside the common fisheries policy can provide.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): Four decades-plus ago, the trawlermen of the Humber were sold down the river by our membership of the European Union. There is still huge anger in our area about how they were treated, which probably explains why we sensibly voted by a margin of 67% to leave the EU. I therefore welcome this announcement. May I urge the Secretary of State to work with the Department of Communities and Local Government—or whatever it is called this week—on the management of the coastal communities fund to look at how we can use it to support more of our young people going into the fishing and food processing industries and at how we can grow the sector?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes a very good point. I think that one of the reasons why the vote to leave was as high as it was in his constituency was not just memories of what had happened four decades ago, but his force of advocacy in putting the case for the benefits of life outside the European Union. He is right that we need to do a lot more for our coastal communities, which face particular social and economic challenges. Reviving the fishing industry and an economic renaissance in fish processing can help, but there is more to do. With a formidable advocate like my hon. Friend for communities such as Brigg and Goole, I am sure that the Government's feet will be held to the fire.

Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con): As my right hon. Friend knows, we do not have a very large fishing fleet on the glorious coastline of Clacton-on-Sea, but we do have many fish and chip shops. Will he assure me that, post Brexit, those who fish in our waters will be encouraged to fish sustainably so that we can enjoy the wide of variety of fish that we currently do?

Michael Gove: It is always a pleasure to visit my hon. Friend's constituency, and he is absolutely right. We need to make sure that sustainability is at the heart of everything we do so that we make sure that future generations have the opportunity to enjoy healthy waters and the harvest they bring.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con) *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): And finally, with the prize for patience and perseverance, Steve Double.

Steve Double: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker, and thank you for saving the best for last.

I warmly welcome the Secretary of State's statement, which will be hugely welcomed by fishing communities across Cornwall, particularly in Mevagissey and Newquay in my constituency. Will he commit to ensuring that as this policy is developed, the voice of our fishermen is heard and considered loud and clear, and particularly that of the under-10 metre fleet? May I gently remind him of his offer to come and meet the fishermen in Mevagissey? I look forward to seeing him there soon.

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend is absolutely right—we do need to make sure that we continue to listen to representatives of the fishing industry, who played a big part in making sure that we got the White Paper to the

[Michael Gove]

position that it is in for publication today. I underline my gratitude to him for his invitation, which I am looking forward to taking up.

Finally, let me say that I am very grateful not just to hon. Members who have contributed so constructively to this exchange but, in particular, to the civil servants at DEFRA, who have done an outstanding job in preparing today's White Paper. They do a superb job not just in making sure that the environment is at the heart of everything we do with regard to fisheries, but in supporting my hon. Friend the Fisheries Minister at every December Council. I am hugely grateful for the contribution that they make, as we all should be.

Point of Order

2.36 pm

Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. May I ask your advice on the process by which the Government should inform Her Majesty's Opposition of changes to business, including questions? As you will be aware, the Government have amended the order of oral questions to bring Defence questions forward by a week to this coming Monday, but they did not inform me or anyone in the Opposition of this fact. This means that those questions will fall before the NATO summit and before the modernising defence programme reports, so my colleagues will not be able to question the Department on the outcome of those events. What would be considered sufficient pretext to make this request, and what would be the standard procedure for notifying the Opposition? I know that the Secretary of State is rather busy with various extra-curricular activities at present, but should not he, his ministerial team or the Government Whips have shown us the courtesy of notifying us of this important change?

Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con): Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Of course, by bringing this forward, we will have the opportunity to tee up Ministers on issues before they arise at the summit—and, indeed, we will not be denied the opportunity to question Ministers on the outcome of the summit, because there will be further Defence questions.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his further point of order. I can see that we have two sides of the same story, not surprisingly—that is what this Chamber is for. I am concerned by the point of order put forward by the hon. Member for Llanelli (Nia Griffith), but the arrangement of questions is of course a matter for the Government, not for the Chair. Mr Speaker has no direct input or influence in how these matters are done. I understand that if changes are made to the order of questions, that is usually discussed through the usual channels. If that has not happened on this occasion, it is regrettable.

I understand, though, that the revised rota was actually published by the Table Office on 13 June and that the new dates for Defence and Home Office orals have been visible in the "Future Business" section of the Order Paper since that date. I appreciate, of course, that it is easy to overlook these matters. I understand that the Table Office will explore the best way to highlight changes to the rota in future. However, I am sure that the House has heard both the points made by the hon. Lady and by the right hon. Gentleman—

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con) *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker: And it is about to hear a further point from Sir Hugo Swire.

Sir Hugo Swire: Further to that point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was wondering if you could offer any assistance in enabling those on the Labour

Front Bench to follow parliamentary procedure more closely and to actually read what is printed in good time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I appreciate the point that the right hon. Gentleman makes. It is of course incumbent upon every Member of the House to look at the Order Paper every day, but there are also matters of courtesy to be observed. I think that those courtesies are usually observed, and if there has been a failure to do so on this occasion, I am quite sure that those on the Treasury Bench have heard these exchanges and that apologies will be forthcoming.

BILL PRESENTED

RAIL PASSENGER (COMPENSATION) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Bim Afolami, supported by Sir Mike Penning, Tom Tugendhat, Tim Loughton, Huw Merriman, Sir Michael Fallon, Heidi Allen, Anne Main, Teresa Pearce, Mohammad Yasin, Caroline Lucas and Iain Stewart, presented a Bill to make provision for a single compensation scheme for passengers across train operators; to require train operators to pay automatic compensation to season ticket holders and certain other passengers where certain standards of service are not met; to allow train operators to recover compensation paid to passengers from Network Rail in certain circumstances; to establish a body to administer rail compensation; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 26 October, and to be printed (Bill 242).

International Development (Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups)

Motion for leave to introduce a Bill (Standing Order No. 23)

2.41 pm

Stephen Twigg (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to make provision in connection with the protection of children and vulnerable adults in receipt of official development assistance and disaster relief.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to present this ten-minute rule Bill. Safeguarding is one of the most important aspects of the modern workplace. Robust and comprehensive safeguarding procedures aim to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and exploitation. The abuse of power is wrong in any context, but when it happens in the aid and development sector, it can affect some of the most vulnerable people in the world. When people do not have access to food, clean water, shelter, education or medicine, they place their utmost trust in those who are delivering those services. It is crucial that the voices of victims and survivors are at the heart of this debate.

The recent highly publicised scandals in the aid sector are not new. In 2002, the United Nations published a special report after allegations of sexual abuse were made against UN peacekeepers and non-governmental organisations in a number of African countries. That was followed by a Save the Children report in 2008 and a further UN report in 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to my friend, the hon. Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham), who is a long-standing member of the Select Committee on International Development and has been a vocal campaigner for better protection of children and women facing sexual exploitation and abuse—an issue that she highlighted following a visit to the world humanitarian summit in Istanbul in 2016.

In February this year, *The Times* published the findings of an investigation into the behaviour of some Oxfam staff after the 2011 Haiti earthquake. The most appalling allegations were that humanitarian workers were paying young women and girls for sex. That happened in a community that was facing an extreme humanitarian crisis. The investigation, which was the first in a series, saw the development sector come under intense scrutiny for its safeguarding and reporting mechanisms.

On the back of those allegations, the International Development Committee began an inquiry into sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector. We wanted to understand why there had been a failure to protect the vulnerable and how safeguarding practice could be improved. We have received more than 50 pieces of written evidence and taken oral evidence from 20 witnesses. Yesterday, the Secretary of State came before the Committee to reaffirm that victims and survivors will be at the heart of any reforms that the Department for International Development undertakes in this area. Last week, as part of our inquiry, we visited the UN in New York. We wanted to scrutinise directly its safeguarding policies and challenge it to do more to protect vulnerable groups. We also visited the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in Washington to look at how they are reforming their safeguarding mechanisms.

[Stephen Twigg]

A common concern throughout our inquiry has been the lack of a universal approach to safeguarding to cover aid and humanitarian workers. Kevin Watkins from Save the Children highlighted that in his evidence to us, saying:

“as a sector, we would benefit from legislation that established humanitarian aid work as a regulated sector... We need a globalisation of the DBS system.”

Currently there is no coherent system for vetting prospective aid workers. Many UK-based aid organisations require their staff to pass a basic background check before they can work with the vulnerable in this country. However, those checks do not necessarily extend to people working overseas. I would like to see a system that enables organisations to vet prospective humanitarian workers to check their suitability to work with children and vulnerable adults. Ideally, that system would be comprehensive and global, so people working for multilateral organisations such as the UN and the World Bank and for other Governments would be vetted, as well as those working for non-governmental organisations.

Setting up such a system is surely an urgent priority, but it will be challenging. There are well-documented concerns—for example, about data protection and data sharing—that need to be addressed. There is also the issue of cost. At the moment, the onus is on organisations to fund safeguarding checks, but that could put smaller organisations at a disadvantage. We heard last week that United States Agency for International Development delivery contracts often include funding for these kinds of background checks. If we are to establish a successful vetting and referencing system, DFID should consider how it might help to shoulder the cost for these checks. We raised that with the Secretary of State yesterday, and I was encouraged that the Department recognises the challenge, particularly for the smaller organisations. It might be costly in the short term, but vulnerable groups surely need to be kept safe whatever the cost.

The last year has been a watershed for the campaign against sexual harassment and assault. The Me Too movement has rightly focused more closely than ever on the behaviour of people in the workplace. How an organisation deals with issues of harassment and abuse sends a signal about its ethos. There are serious concerns that some humanitarian workers have been let off lightly or even exonerated altogether when instances of harassment have occurred. Allegations that abuse or harassment were swept under the carpet for the sake of organisational reputation have been made against a number of aid agencies. That is not acceptable in any workplace, and all organisations should have robust safeguarding mechanisms against issues of this nature. Over the course of our inquiry, it has become apparent that these mechanisms are nowhere near as robust as they should be in the aid and development sector.

As a result of those concerns, the International Development (Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups) Bill was put together. The purpose is to ensure that all UK aid is provided in a way that is likely to contribute to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults from sexual exploitation and abuse. For that to be achieved, all workers in the aid sector would be regulated in line with the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. The level to which these workers would be checked

would be similar to the level to which social workers and teachers are checked. The Bill also makes provision for the Secretary of State to bring us into line with any future international regulations, as well as requiring her to produce an annual report on safeguarding within UK aid.

This year, DFID has taken a leading role in addressing the issue of safeguarding. In February, the Secretary of State wrote to all organisations that receive UK aid, asking them to spell out in detail their safeguarding policies. That included NGOs, multilateral partners and other DFID suppliers, numbering well over 1,000 organisations. I am pleased that the Secretary of State has continued to show leadership and a strong personal commitment on this issue.

This Bill alone will not of course solve all the safeguarding problems in the aid sector, but this is an opportunity for the United Kingdom to develop the very best domestic practice. However, global change is required if we are to see real and sustained improvement. The safeguarding summit in October provides a welcome and vital opportunity to push for a global vetting and referencing system, as well as a long overdue platform for survivors and victims. With strong United Kingdom leadership from DFID, we can ensure that the most vulnerable are protected from predatory practices in the future.

I am grateful to have had this opportunity to highlight a very important issue, which the Select Committee that I chair is addressing at the moment, and I thank Members on both sides of the House for their support for the Bill.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Stephen Twigg, Mrs Pauline Latham, Mrs Maria Miller, Sarah Champion, Chris Law, Jim Shannon, Caroline Lucas, Layla Moran, Mr Virendra Sharma, Mrs Helen Grant, Paul Scully and Lloyd Russell-Moyle present the Bill.

Stephen Twigg accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 26 October, and to be printed (Bill 243).

SUPPLY AND APPROPRIATION (MAIN ESTIMATES) (NO. 2) BILL

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 56), That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read a Second time.

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 56), That the Bill be now read the Third time.

Question agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.

IVORY BILL (PROGRAMME) (NO. 2)

Ordered,

That the Order of 4 June 2018 (Ivory Bill (Programme)) be varied as follows:

(1) Paragraphs (4) and (5) of the Order shall be omitted.

(2) Proceedings on Consideration and any proceedings in legislative grand committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion two hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order.

(3) Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order.—
(David Rutley.)

Ivory Bill

Consideration of Bill, not amended in the Public Bill Committee

New Clause 1

REQUIREMENT TO AMEND DEFINITION OF IVORY

“(1) Within 12 months of the coming into force of section 35 of this Act, the Secretary of State must lay a draft of an instrument containing regulations under section 35(2) before each House of Parliament.

(2) As soon as practicable after laying a draft of an instrument under subsection (1), a Minister of the Crown must propose a motion to approve the draft instrument in each House of Parliament.

(3) The instrument laid in draft under subsection (1) must amend section 35(1) so as to include ivory from a hippopotamus, killer whale, narwhal, sperm whale, or walrus in the definition of ivory in that section.”—(*Sue Hayman.*)

This new clause creates a duty to, within 12 months of this section coming into force, lay an instrument in draft which would include in the definition of ivory all the ivory-bearing species listed in an Appendix to the CITES, and to propose to each House that the draft instrument be approved.

Brought up, and read the First time.

2.53 pm

Sue Hayman (Workington) (Lab): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

New clause 2—*Report on the international ivory market*—

“(1) Within 12 months of section 1 of this Act coming into force, the Secretary of State must publish and lay before each House of Parliament a report on the international ivory market.

(2) The report must as far as practicable analyse the impact of this Act on the demand for ivory in the United Kingdom and in other countries.

(3) The report must consider—

- (a) the impact on nations or communities that generate income from ivory of—
 - (i) the provisions of this Act, and
 - (ii) international agreements related to the ivory trade,
- (b) the work of the Department for International Development in—
 - (i) reducing the global demand for ivory, and
 - (ii) mitigating any negative impact of the provisions of this Act on nations or communities that generate an income from ivory.”

This new clause would require a report to be laid before each House of Parliament on the international ivory market, including how the Department for International Development is working to reduce global demand for ivory.

Government amendments 1 to 4.

Sue Hayman: I rise to speak to new clauses 1 and 2 in my name and in those of my right hon. and hon. Friends. Labour’s new clause 1 seeks to expand the definition of ivory to cover the species included in the convention on international trade in endangered species. Members from both sides of the House have voiced their support for the principle of extending the Bill beyond elephants. This is, after all, the Ivory Bill, not merely the elephant ivory Bill. It is not every day that an Ivory Bill comes around, so who knows when this

House will have a similar opportunity to take action? Today provides a unique opportunity to enshrine protections for all ivory-bearing species, particularly those listed under CITES, which are some of those most at risk.

This broadening of the definition of ivory is not just because many CITES species are at risk of becoming endangered, but to stop the focus on banning just elephant ivory and so pushing poachers towards other forms of ivory, including hippo, narwhal, killer whale, sperm whale and walrus ivory. As the Born Free Foundation has stated:

“It would be a tragedy if we worked really hard to save elephants and other species were collateral damage in the process... We recognise that the trade is entrepreneurial and will move to wherever there is an opportunity.”

Both the International Fund for Animal Welfare and the Born Free Foundation stated in their evidence to Members that an extension of the definition of ivory would be welcome, provided that it did not delay the passage of the Bill. During the evidence session, Will Travers of the Born Free Foundation said:

“From 2007 to 2016—just under a decade—78,000 hippos and hippo products were exported by CITES parties. Hong Kong imported 60 tonnes of hippo ivory between 2004 and 2014... Those are not insignificant by any measure—they are enormously significant.”—[*Official Report, Ivory Public Bill Committee, 12 June 2018; c. 5, Q2.*]

As I have said on the record, the Opposition are keen for this legislation not to be unnecessarily delayed, but we must also ensure that it is the best it can possibly be. There appears to have been a rush to push it through at any cost before the international wildlife conference in October, despite the advice I have been given that this is not achievable: it will not get through all the legislative stages in time for the conference. Will the Minister clarify whether the target has been to get it in place before the conference? Will he explain to the House why the Government have sought to oppose sensible and necessary amendments to the Bill on the basis of not wishing to delay it?

Sir Hugo Swire (East Devon) (Con): In the spirit of consensus, will the hon. Lady also take this opportunity to congratulate this Government on being the first to legislate in this area?

Sue Hayman: As the right hon. Gentleman will hear, I shall be doing just that later in my speech. That is a very important point, and we do support the Bill.

Will the Minister look again at the arguments the Government made against Labour’s attempts to broaden the scope of the Bill in Committee? One of the arguments was that such an amendment could be challenged under the European convention on human rights. As I said in response in Committee, this is clutching at straws, and it is directly in opposition to the legal advice that I have sought, so I want to put this argument to rest once and for all.

According to the legal advice I have taken, primary legislation can be challenged only on human rights and EU law grounds. I have been informed that in the case of human rights, the argument would have to rest on article 1 of protocol 1 on the peaceful enjoyment of property, which is also subject to a public interest caveat. On that basis, we can justify the inclusion of other creatures—such as on the grounds of endangerment

[Sue Hayman]

—in the same way as elephants. This is the legal information and advice that I have received, and I wish to put it formally on the record.

In fact, it is arguable that the omission of other species makes the Government more susceptible to legal challenge, not less, as the Government have already recognised the need to protect other ivory-bearing species, but have chosen not to do that through this legislation. If Ministers are going to continue to push this argument, may I ask that a copy of the legal advice they have received is made available to Members in the House of Commons Library?

Despite the fact that the Opposition feel that these other ivory-bearing species could legally be incorporated in the Bill, if needed, we have, in the spirit in which this entire legislative process has been conducted, listened to the concerns set out by the Minister in Committee, and we have revised our original amendment into new clause 1, to address the concerns that the Government raised in Committee. New clause 1 would simply mandate the Government to introduce secondary legislation on other CITES ivory-bearing species within a 12-month timeframe. Given that the Government have said that they understand the merit of widening the scope of the measure to include other species, it should not be a problem for them to commit to doing so in the Bill. New clause 1 would allow a consultation if necessary, while at the same time ensuring that secondary legislation is introduced and that the issue cannot slip off the agenda indefinitely.

3 pm

We cannot wait until those other species are in danger or until the problem has been displaced before taking action. We have the opportunity to take action today. Does the Minister agree that leaving out those species in the first place was an oversight, and does he recognise that other species, particularly the hippo, are at risk of being poached as an alternative to elephant ivory?

New clause 1 goes beyond vague promises and warm words of support. We have seen how a commitment to banning ivory has drifted in and out of consecutive Conservative manifestos and how Government commitments on animal welfare issues such as the banning of wild animals in circuses have been allowed to drop off the agenda. We must not allow the same thing to happen in this case.

New clause 2 seeks to focus minds and action on the international nature of the illegal wildlife trade. We simply cannot tackle the global trade in illegal ivory on our own. The illegal wildlife trade has grown rapidly in recent years and is now estimated to be the fourth largest transnational illegal trade, worth over £15 billion a year. The illegal wildlife trade drives corruption and has been linked to other forms of organised crime, such as arms, human trafficking and drugs. The effective tackling of this illegal trade requires international co-operation. In the spirit of the international wildlife crime conference that Britain will host in October, new clause 2 sets out a clear responsibility for the Secretary of State to provide to the House a report on cross-departmental efforts to tackle this trade and the poverty that drives it in the communities that are affected.

Sir Hugo Swire: New clause 2 has some merit, but it seems that it simply requires the Secretary of State to report within 12 months. It says nothing about an annual report on what the Government are doing to help to combat the trade and what targets have been achieved. Why have the Opposition alighted on a single one-off report?

Sue Hayman: The new clause was tabled after we looked at what has happened since China banned ivory in January. Everyone was very excited about that, and believed that it would have a swift impact on ivory poaching. The evidence before us shows that more than six months on, it has not had very much impact. Rather than sitting here being very pleased with ourselves for introducing an ivory Bill, which I am sure we will do, we need to make sure that what we produce is effective in the communities where ivory is being poached. The idea of having a report in 12 months was to see whether what we are doing is having more effect than the Chinese ban. If not, the Government would have an opportunity to review the legislation.

Sir Hugo Swire: Indeed, the logic of what the hon. Lady says is that these things take time to have an impact. A one-off report in 12 months might not truly reflect the changes that the Government's legislation will have in, say, two to three years. An annualised report is something worth looking at.

Sue Hayman: If the right hon. Gentleman would like an annualised report and would like to discuss with the other place how that can be pursued after he has supported our proposal, I am sure that that is something that can be considered.

Zac Goldsmith (Richmond Park) (Con): Of course there is merit in studying whether or not these measures work, but new clause 2 asks a very narrow question. Ivory is just one of many illegally traded products. There are all kinds of forestry products, as well as pangolins—1 million a year are traded. Rhino horns are traded to the detriment of that species. The ban is just one of many hundreds of initiatives that tackle the illegal wildlife trade. Why focus on one of hundreds of products, and one strand among hundreds of strands of work that we need to tackle the illegal wildlife trade? It seems reductionist, and probably not the best use of money or time.

Sue Hayman: In the same spirit, surely the hon. Gentleman would support new clause 1, which expands the scope of species that are covered. We could say that the Government have a narrow focus in looking only at elephants.

Zac Goldsmith: I look forward to hearing the Minister speak and to a commitment that the ban will extend to other species. My concern about new clause 1 is twofold. First, I am not a lawyer, but I share worries, based on what I have heard, that we might unsettle the Bill by making it susceptible to judicial challenge. Secondly, the new clause looks only at CITES species that bear ivory, but there are other species that bear ivory. The warthog would be decimated if it became the legal option for people who wanted ivory, and the mammoth is a concern. Yes, I know that the mammoth is extinct,

but it has become an enormous source of laundered ivory. There is a legitimate mammoth trade, as the hon. Lady knows, and it is used as an excuse or opportunity for smugglers to trade elephant ivory under that cover. That is a clumsy way of putting it, but it is a loophole that has been exploited mercilessly. I hope that my hon. Friend the Minister, when he makes the commitments that I am looking forward to, will make a commitment to extend the ban, subject to consultation, to all forms of ivory.

Sue Hayman: It is a shame that the hon. Gentleman did not serve on the Bill Committee, because he could have supported our amendment 12, which proposed much of what he has just said.

Looking at how we tackle the illegal trade effectively, hon. Members will agree that we need international co-operation, as I have said. In debate and in Committee, hon. Members have said that we need to look at how we work effectively with the Department for International Development in the communities where poaching takes place. Poverty and corruption drive the trade. We have seen in recent days a terrible example of that with the poaching of Bella, a 20-year-old white rhino with a young calf. Bella was dehorned in an effort to make her less of a target a week before she was shot dead by poachers at Kragga Kamma game park in the Eastern Cape. However, hunters sliced her face to extract the small amount of horn that remained. The grisly discovery of the mutilated carcase of a dehorned rhino, killed for less than one centimetre of horn stump, lying next to her calf underscores the depths of South Africa's poaching problem. It also underscores the fact that poachers kill for very little ivory, which is why it is important to extend the scope of the Bill.

Will Travers, director of the Born Free Foundation, told the Bill Committee:

"In my view, there is a common linkage with our clear objectives in overseas development, which are to deal with poverty and to provide opportunity...If we are not investing in the protected areas where elephants and other species live, we are not doing a great service either to the species we wish to protect or to the people who live literally downstream from those protected areas."— [*Official Report, Ivory Public Bill Committee*, 12 June 2018; c. 9, Q12.]

International leadership and commitment are needed from DEFRA. I sincerely hope that the Minister will agree to support new clause 2, which would make meaningful the commitment to international action on the illegal ivory trade.

Government amendments 3 and 4 bear an uncanny resemblance to amendment 12, which Labour tabled in Committee, as I mentioned. Labour does not seek to oppose the Government amendments, as it is proper and right that the Secretary of State should have the discretion to include additional species, whether they are CITES-listed or not, at a later date depending on the evidence at the time.

I would like to make clear the difference between Government amendments 3 and 4 and Labour's new clause 1. They are entirely different and in no way contradict one another. Government amendments 3 and 4 seek to provide powers for the Secretary of State to add CITES and non-CITES listed species to the definition in future if the Secretary of State so wishes. The amendment does not compel or require the

Government to do so and it does not specify a timeframe. It is therefore important that both Government amendments 3 and 4, as well as new clause 1, are adopted today to protect the most at risk CITES species as a priority within the next 12 months, as well as providing the Secretary of State with the discretionary powers to include species at an future time if necessary.

This House is united in its determination to clamp down on the ivory trade. Labour's 2017 election manifesto made a clear commitment to a full ban on ivory sales, and I welcome the Bill today. It is an important step forward in protecting elephants and starting to tackle this appalling trade. The Committee stage was conducted in a spirit of working hard and being constructive together. I recommend both Labour's new clauses and the Government amendments to the House. We need to close any loopholes in the Bill that might further endanger the walrus, narwhal, sperm whale, killer whale and hippo. I have tried hard to work constructively with the Minister. I ask that he take our concerns and our new clauses very seriously. I urge the whole House to support Labour's new clauses 1 and 2 today.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): It was a pleasure to serve with the hon. Member for Workington (Sue Hayman) and her colleagues and with my right hon. and hon. Friends on the important Bill Committee. It is great to see the Bill on Report. Since before the days of Hannibal, the elephant has been important, totemic and ritualistic in our psyche and in our history. We want to ensure that the elephant, and man's relationship with that supremely powerful and totemic animal, has not just a present but a future.

From time to time, I toy with trying to win the lottery. If I did, one of the things I would do is take my children on safari in Africa to see, among other animals, elephants. My children are quite young, so I think to myself that I will do that in 10 or 12 years' time when they are a bit older. I just hope that the elephants will still be there. That, of course, presupposes that I win the lottery. I fundamentally believe that the Bill will have an important role to play in helping to deter the trade, making it morally reprehensible to trade in ivory and to poach, and to act as a beacon of excellence for other countries to follow.

I do not particularly like to be tied into other agendas and the timetable of other agendas, but I have been entirely persuaded, in Committee and on Second Reading, by the comments and assurances given by my hon. Friend the Minister from the Dispatch Box about the importance of getting the Bill through cleanly and swiftly to ensure it hits the statute book at an appropriate time and in a form whereby it can be cited at the important conference in the autumn.

3.15 pm

The hon. Member for Workington will know that I share entirely what she says, but she will not, I am sure, also be surprised to hear that I will vote against her new clauses. Clause 35, which we discussed at some length in Committee, is clearly able to deliver what the hon. Lady and many of us on the Government Benches seek. I take entirely her point and it is not contained in the Government amendments. One of the great joys of

being a Parliamentary Private Secretary, such as I am, is that one is not allowed to table in one's own name amendments to proposed legislation or to sign such amendments. I still have concerns, however.

Clause 35(3) refers to animals or species only on the CITES list. CITES is clearly a recognised international forum that deserves a huge amount of respect and great weight must be placed on its findings. However, I say politely but with a certain degree of firmness to those on the Treasury Bench that we should not be restricted solely to species recognised by CITES. My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith), who has led this debate in so many ways, alluded to the warthog. This seems an appropriate time to rest an argument on the wise words of Flanders and Swann, to whom one should always turn in moments of stress and anxiety. It is probably before your time, Madam Deputy Speaker, but you might remember the song, "The Warthog (The Hog Beneath the Skin)":

"The jungle was giving a party

A post hibernation ball"—

I'm not going to sing it—

"The ballroom was crowded with waltzing gazelles, gorillas and zebras and all.

But who is that animal almost in tears

Pretending to powder her nose?"—

it is not my hon. Friend the Member for Brentwood and Ongar (Alex Burghart)—

"A poor little warthog who sits by herself

In a pink satin dress with blue bows.

Again she is nobody's choice and she sings in a sad little voice:

No one ever wants to court a warthog

Though a warthog does her best."

I do not want to see us almost in tears as a result of a drafting error that restricts ourselves only to CITES. It may be that CITES does not respond to what I regrettably predict will be a fall in the warthog population, if that is the only form of ivory still able to be traded legally because it cannot be covered by the requirements of clause 35. I therefore urge my friends on the Treasury Bench to consider the small deletion of the word "only" in clause 35(3).

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park, I too am not a lawyer—a fact that I usually rejoice in—but I suggest that the deletion of clause 35(6)(b),

"extant on the day on which this Act is passed",

brings into the compass of the Bill mammoth. My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What we should be trying to endeavour to encourage across the world, not just here as a legislature, is the decommodification of ivory. The fact that it comes from a species that is extinct is to my mind immaterial, because one is still saying that it is fine to trade in it. My anxiety is that a perverse response, totally counter-intuitive to that which the Bill hopes to achieve, could be that the provisions expedite elephant poaching, because if the argument is that it is fine to trade in an extinct species, there could well be an impetus to drive the elephant to extinction merely to legitimise the trade in its ivory products.

Graham P. Jones (Hyndburn) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman has invested a lot of thought into the decommodification of ivory, as though that would be the silver bullet. Does he think that it is the silver bullet or that other action is needed to combat ivory poaching?

Simon Hoare: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. It would be a terrible fallacy if we as legislators fell into the trap of thinking that something will stop all because we make it illegal. The Bill sends a very clear signal and closes down an important market in the ivory trade. However, if the hon. Gentleman is pointing to the work that our troops can do through the Ministry of Defence, or the work that Department for International Development and other organs of the state can do to better educate, to help economies in the developing world to grow, to realise and maximise the value of safari-type tourism, and to help to train people and give them the skills to go out with confidence to combat those who seek to kill elephants and other species merely for their ivory, he is absolutely right and I agree with him entirely. The Bill of itself will not achieve our aim, but I am absolutely convinced that it will play an incredibly important part when viewed as part of the wider and more colourful mosaic of tools that we have at our disposal.

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): Does the hon. Gentleman agree that we have to address the demand particularly in countries that on the surface adhere to the rules but allow trading below that to carry on and in some cases encourage it?

Simon Hoare: The hon. Gentleman makes a strong point and he is absolutely right. From that position, notwithstanding the cited but not referenced legal advice that the shadow spokesman, the hon. Member for Workington, mentioned, I would argue that precisely because of the need to send a clear message to other countries who are either subject to or perceived to benefit from the ivory trade, the most important thing that we can do is have the legislation in a really advanced state to take to this important conference in the autumn as an example of best practice and what can be done in the legislative process.

New clause 2 is on the report of the international ivory market. This slightly segues into the point made by the hon. Member for—I am going to say Alyn and Deeside—

Mark Tami: That is right.

Simon Hoare: Well, there we are—my knowledge of north Wales Labour MPs is getting even better. This segues into the hon. Gentleman's point. I would much prefer to see pressurised resources in DEFRA, the MOD and DFID, concentrated on deploying as much as we possibly can to arrest and frustrate the ivory trade and poaching, rather than the bureaucratic complexities that, in essence, underpin new clause 2 about having the report on the international ivory market. Apart from having a report to keep open a door or prop open a broken window, I am not entirely sure what the report of itself would do and what sits at the heart of the new clause.

Of course, I support the amendments proposed by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley) *rose*—

Simon Hoare: With trepidation but a certain degree of honour, I give way to my hon. Friend the Minister.

David Rutley: As always, my hon. Friend is very assiduous. I wonder whether he noticed today that we have announced that we intend to consult on extending the ban to include other ivory species, and we will seek to start the consultation process and gather evidence as soon as practicable or on Royal Assent. Does he not believe that that shows our clear commitment to taking action in this very important area?

Simon Hoare: My hon. Friend has pointed to my effective oratorical default, which is that I never, ever write a speech. I scribble notes on bits of paper and then get terribly confused—sometimes it is a shame and sometimes it is a blessing. In concluding my remarks on new clause 1, I was going to say—again, this militates against the need for it—precisely the point that my hon. Friend made from the Dispatch Box. He and our right hon. Friend the Secretary of State have made incredibly clear their enthusiasm and appetite for expeditiously moving forward to include species such as the narwhal and others, which we are keen to see included.

My hon. Friend the Member for Berwick-upon-Tweed (Mrs Trevelyan) and I have an affection for the narwhal, which might even be described as an obsession. I think it is probably best to keep that to ourselves—we do not need to go into the whys and wherefores. However, not only have Ministers and the Secretary of State indicated the appetite to make full use of clause 35(4), but were there ever to be a change of Government—pray God that this is at such an interval that my hon. Friend and I will probably have hung up our boots—I rather get the impression that a Labour Government would also be as keen to exercise the scope of clause 35(4), so trying to put this in the Bill in a new clause is irrelevant.

In conclusion, I recognise the enthusiasm and determination that the DEFRA team have shown on this Bill. I also put on record my thanks for what I think is the unsung work of my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) and my right hon. Friend the Member for South Northamptonshire (Andrea Leadsom)—the current Leader of the House, if I have got her constituency wrong—who did so much work when she was the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. I also thank the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey), because only due to circumstances beyond her control was she not able to bring to the point of delivery that which she had been involved in from the moment of conception. She should take enormous pride in the Bill, because it is something that is important for the House to do. Although there was some disagreement about pace and tempo during the Bill Committee and on Second Reading, the unanimity of view does credit to this place. Too often, it is seen through the rather narrow microcosm of Prime Minister's questions, but when this place gets it, when it understands the need to do something, there is, I suggest, no finer example of the practice of politics. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to play a part, albeit a very small one, in bringing the Bill to this stage.

Anna Turley (Redcar) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate everybody who has helped to get this important Bill to this point, including the many campaigners and organisations who have pushed for it over the years, and I thank the civil servants and the Clerks who have

worked so hard and all those who gave their time to give evidence to the Bill Committee. It was a pleasure to be part of that Committee, and I echo the words of the hon. Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare): it was Parliament at its best, working constructively and collaboratively across party lines to ensure that this groundbreaking Bill was as good as it could be.

The Bill matters deeply because the illegal wildlife trade has grown rapidly in recent years. It is now estimated to be the fourth-largest international illegal trade and worth over £15 billion per year. The illegal wildlife trade drives corruption, undermines the rule of law, threatens sustainability in developing countries and has been linked to other forms of organised crime, such as arms, drugs and human trafficking. The number of elephants in the wild has declined by almost a third in the last decade, and around 20,000 a year are still being slaughtered owing to the global demand for ivory—an average of around 55 a day.

3.30 pm

There are now approximately 415,000 African elephants left. In the last decade, their numbers fell by about 111,000, mainly owing to poaching. While the UK is not one of the countries of most concern in terms of its contribution to the global illegal ivory trade, there is recent evidence that our legal ivory market is still being used to launder illegal ivory, and ivory is being shipped legally and illegally to Asian countries. TRAFFIC, the wildlife trade monitoring network, surveyed the UK ivory market in 2016 and found that while ivory sales had declined since 2004, the UK was still a net exporter of ivory. There was also some discrepancy in the numbers: the UK reported that only 17 raw tusks were exported to other countries, but importing countries reported 109 tusks that had come from the UK. UK ivory traders were also unclear on the laws around the legal ivory trade. The Bill is therefore vital and long overdue, and I am delighted to have been a member of the Committee and to be speaking on it today.

I want to focus my comments on two areas that I do not believe have been suitably progressed during the passage of the Bill. First, I will speak to new clause 1, in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Sue Hayman), and the issue of widening the scope of “ivory” to cover species besides elephants. I recognise the amendment the Secretary of State has brought forward, about which we will no doubt hear more, and which will allow the scope of the Bill to be widened in the future, but I cannot help feeling we have missed an historic opportunity to do so here and now.

As I mentioned in Committee, there is a phrase used by medical students: “First, do no harm.” It is something that we ought to abide by in this place when passing legislation. I have a real concern, backed up by evidence, that by limiting the Bill to elephant ivory, we may have a disproportionate impact on another species, as poachers and dealers look elsewhere to feed their markets. Just as I did in Committee, I wish to speak, in particular, about the noble hippopotamus—known, of course, as the river horse—and to support my hon. Friend's comments about the hippo.

The number of hippos in the world has crashed by 95% in the last 30 years—that is inconceivable—and that is widely acknowledged to be a knock-on effect of the increasing restrictions on the trade in elephant

ivory. Since the convention on international trade in endangered species imposed the ban in 1990, 30,000 tonnes of hippo teeth have been exported from Africa. For example, a few years ago, in the Virunga national park in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, there were 29,000 hippos, but now there are just 1,300. The hippo is vulnerable and on the red list of threatened species, and there is deep concern that it is being poached and hunted for its teeth as loopholes are closed around elephant ivory.

In 2014, some 60 tonnes of hippo teeth were exported to Hong Kong from Africa and from there were sent on to European countries. If the purpose of the Bill is to close markets that are driving the trade, and given that there is clearly a strong integrated global trade in hippo teeth that has a huge effect on the species, it is vital that we take this opportunity to send out the message that we in this country do not believe that hippos should be killed or poached for their teeth and ensure that we do not, through the Bill, have a damaging impact on the hippopotamus.

I accept that the Government have tabled amendment 3 to allow them to widen the scope in the future, but I have not heard any arguments either in Committee or today that have convinced me that we cannot broaden the scope now. On the point about the conference in the autumn, if the Government were to accept our new clause today, or in the Lords, we would still hit that timetable—there would be no delay in the process. My hon. Friend the Member for Workington has clearly set out the legal position showing that the Government are on safe ground and that there would not be sufficient means for a challenge. We are missing a vital opportunity. The arguments about delays to the legislative process do not stack up. The Government should come on board and support our new clause. I sincerely hope that any delay in broadening the scope arising as a result of having to wait for secondary legislation will not have a devastating knock-on consequence for the hippo and other species.

I welcome the fact that the Government amendment does not limit the animals that may be covered in the future simply to those registered as protected in CITES. I believe that they were won over by the excellent representations that my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) made very powerfully in Committee, when she said that we should look at this through the prism not just of protecting endangered species but of our moral obligation. We ought to be driving out poaching and the hunting of animals for the use of their body parts because it is morally reprehensible, whether the animals are endangered or not. I am grateful that the Government have taken that on board.

Zac Goldsmith: I am taking a leap here, but I do not think that any Conservative will have disagreed with anything that the hon. Lady has said. It seems to me that the only real difference between the Opposition and the Government—and this is a question, not a statement—is a matter of process. The aspirations are almost identical. The Government's commitment is to go further than new clause 1 by going beyond the CITES species, but on that there is no disagreement between the two parties. The only issue, really, is whether the Opposition are willing to trust the Government to honour the pledge that we have just heard from the

Minister, but that is it. This is not about the issue; it is a matter of trust and process. Does the hon. Lady agree with that?

Anna Turley: Absolutely. I think the principle of trust is important, and I hope we would support the Government on that, but for me this is about timing. The issue is not whether it will happen, but the fact that it could be six months or a year before the Bill is passed. In the meantime, especially if the Bill proceeds successfully and is widely heralded, there will be a great deal of awareness about the crackdown on the ivory trade in this country. What concerns me is the knock-on effect in the next six months to a year on the trade in hippo teeth, which could be a direct consequence of the Bill. I therefore do not want any delay caused by the wait for secondary legislation. In principle, however, the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right: we are going in the same direction.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for her references to my contribution in Committee. Let me also express my admiration for her elephant-patterned dress.

On the question whether another Bill will be introduced, is it not the case that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which does not normally handle an awful lot of legislation, has so much on its plate at the moment, what with the agriculture Bill, the fisheries Bill and so many other strategies—the need to consider agriculture subsidies, for instance—that the chances are that this will get pushed to the bottom of the pile if it is not dealt with soon?

Anna Turley: My hon. Friend has made an extremely important point, and one that is close to my heart. My private Member's Bill to increase the punishment for animal cruelty was published in December, but we are still waiting for it to come before this place. There is a huge backlog in legislation, and I think it is dangerous to wait.

Zac Goldsmith: I apologise for intervening again, but may I take up that last point? Subject to consultation—and it is inconceivable that those consulted would oppose the proposals; we have to assume that they would pass the test of public opinion—these changes could be introduced very quickly and easily by means of a statutory instrument. This does not require primary legislation; it would be a very simple procedure, and the measure would go through unopposed.

Anna Turley: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point, but, conversely, I do not understand what his problem is with our new clause. We want to make the change here and now, and I have heard no sustained or reasonable explanation of why we need to delay.

Zac Goldsmith: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Anna Turley: I will take one more intervention, but then I must make some progress.

Zac Goldsmith: I will not support the new clause because I think that the Government's commitment goes further, and, fundamentally, I have no reason to disbelieve the promise that the Minister has just made.

The Government will consult on extending the ban, and I have no doubt that the British people will respond to that consultation properly and positively. The statutory instrument will then be introduced. There is no reason for any Conservative Member to question what I think has been an impeccable track record on the part of DEFRA over the last year.

Anna Turley: The hon. Gentleman is right—the principle of the Government’s amendment, which broadens the CITES endangered species definition, is important and we support it—but I do not understand why he cannot support both. They are not mutually exclusive. We would really like to press on with this today, and there does not seem to be any reason for hesitation—other than work and effort, I am afraid.

Finally, let me say something about resources. In Committee, I was shocked by the lack of resources to back up the Bill. The Border Force CITES team at Heathrow has only 10 members of staff, although it is currently dealing with more than 1,000 seizures a year. The police National Wildlife Crime Unit has only 12 members of staff, despite dealing with all forms of wildlife crime from deer poaching to thefts of birds’ eggs, and no funding has been allocated to it beyond 2020. I think it reckless and irresponsible for the Secretary of State to introduce the Bill without having secured or committed resources to ensure that it can be properly enforced. There is a danger that this important Bill will be rendered hollow and unenforceable, and I hope that the Government are working to address that and give us some funding commitments.

Sir Hugo Swire: The hon. Lady has, of course, omitted the very serious commitment, in terms of personnel and funding, that we give through the British Army and anti-poacher training, in Africa and elsewhere. She must concede that.

Anna Turley: Absolutely, but that is a separate issue. I am talking about enforcement in this country. Thousands of cases a year pass through Heathrow, and the police must investigate every single item that is found in a suitcase. As we heard in Committee, there must be months and months of investigation of very complex cases of a cross-border and international nature, and that requires proper resources.

I hope that the Government have listened wholeheartedly to our recommendations, but I welcome the Bill. We have worked on it collaboratively and in strong partnership, and I think that there is little in it with which any Member can disagree. It is a landmark Bill, and I hope that it will have a significant impact on not only the elephant population, but many other species.

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con): I congratulate the Minister, the Secretary of State and the Opposition and everyone who worked so hard in Committee to get the Bill this far. We are all under time pressure, as the shadow Minister said; it is vital that this ban is in law by the time we have the conference, so that we can regain the leadership we had on this huge international issue.

I listened carefully to the shadow Minister’s speech, and I am in complete agreement with the intention. In fact, I mentioned the advice we got from the Born Free

Foundation when I spoke on Second Reading, pointing out, importantly, the reduction in numbers. The hon. Lady cited the numbers; I have seen the figure of a reduction in hippo numbers of 25%, and she is absolutely right about what would happen if we only limit one type of ivory. Hippos spend a very happy life stationary; they are sitting targets in large pools of water. They have a very nice lazy time, but they would suffer terribly. That is just one species that would be hit, as I have mentioned.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) has been vocal in his interventions so far and I congratulate him on all the work he has done in recent years. On the same day as Second Reading, we wrote a joint letter to the Secretary of State, with a number of other Members, pointing out that the definition of ivory in the Bill as it stands is simply too narrow. Clause 35(1) says that

“‘ivory’ means ivory from the tusk or tooth of an elephant.”

We pointed out in our letter that we were worried about other species such as hippopotamus, narwhal, killer whale, sperm whale and walrus as well as extinct species such as mammoth, which are being literally mined in Siberia by unscrupulous dealers. We also recommended, in very much the same sentiments as the hon. Lady has expressed, that we should name these ivory species, and possibly list them on—this was my phrase—the face of the Bill. So we wrote to the Secretary of State, and I am delighted that DEFRA has looked at this. I think that is what the hon. Lady is trying to achieve with her new clause 1.

I am not particularly fussed which of the mechanisms is used, either my idea of this being on the face of the Bill—for which we have not actually tabled an amendment—or the hon. Lady’s new clause 1, the downside of which is that it states:

“Within 12 months of the coming into force...the Secretary of State must lay a draft of an instrument”.

What we heard from the Minister just now is interesting, and I think we will hear from him again shortly. Apparently, it is on the DEFRA website that what is now being proposed is that the consultation could begin immediately we get Royal Assent—it could even be on the same day. What I like about the new Government amendment 3 is that it goes much wider: we are not limited to CITES or a shortlist of species, which is what I was going to propose. Amendment 3 is better, as it is a much wider definition, and, as I understand it, it could go through faster. I have told this House on many occasions over the last 21 years that I am not a lawyer, but, as I understand it, without a formal consultation, this legislation could be prey to a legal challenge, whereas a statutory instrument, properly constituted, and after consultation and going through the human rights requirements, could probably be got through in about 12 weeks if it was pushed through. Therefore, it seems to me that we are all trying to achieve exactly the same aim, which is to seek to protect a number of other species that are not mentioned at the moment. Clause 35(1) is very narrowly drawn and is purely about elephants, and living elephants.

I am impressed by the arguments, therefore, and I hope we are going to hear from the Minister on this. He has had a go at me informally, and I appreciate his ringing me at home about this last weekend. I hope we will hear from him that the DEFRA lawyers have gone through this in some detail and that under his arrangement

[Mr Owen Paterson]

we will scotch any chance of a legal challenge as it will go through the human rights requirements and the consultation will be absolutely clean. What is good and clever about it is that it is so wide that it encompasses the dead animal, the mammoth, which is a big advantage. So I will be strongly supporting the Government on this. As I said, I am in total agreement with the Opposition's intentions. I think that what I and my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park wrote is probably the least good proposal, and happily it has not been put down as an amendment.

3.45 pm

Kerry McCarthy: The right hon. Gentleman mentioned a whole list of animals that might be included, and we also had a full discussion about this in Committee. It was only when the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds spoke to me this week that I realised that one species that had not been mentioned was the helmeted hornbill. I had no idea that there was a market in red ivory from the hornbill. Has that species come up in any of his considerations, and does he think that it should be put forward for protection as well? It is protected under CITES.

Mr Paterson: I am being told via a sedentary intervention that that is not ivory. This is an interesting issue, but surely the good point about Government amendment 3 is that it is very widely drafted, so that a lot of species and a lot of animals could be included. I think that that is a good thing. What the Opposition new clause is proposing, and what we were originally proposing in our letter, is actually narrower and less effective.

I shall sit down now, because it will be much more interesting for the House to hear what the Minister has to say, but this information is on the DEFRA website, and if we could get a statutory instrument out and get started on consulting on the day of Royal Assent, that would be the most rapid method. I think we all agree that we want to give the widest possible protection to the widest number of species, and that seems to be the right route to take.

Zac Goldsmith: I want to thank and pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for having taken this issue from somewhere near the bottom of the agenda four years ago and catapulting it to the top at the first illegal wildlife trade conference in 2014. That was really seismic, and it moved the dial on this issue unlike anything that had gone before. Does he agree that the 2018 conference in October will be an opportunity to go further still, not just by demonstrating our own commitment but by getting other key countries—particularly Asian countries such as Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, as well as members of the European Union—to make the same commitment that we are making here in this House today? This needs to be a global challenge, not simply a British one.

Mr Paterson: I thank my hon. Friend for his kind comments. It would be invidious of me not to mention my two other Cabinet colleagues at the time. One is now the right hon. Lord Hague of Richmond, and when I came back from Lewa in Kenya, he was as sharp as a tack and immediately got the point of the problem. DEFRA and the Foreign Office worked extremely closely

to put the conference together. I also want to give credit to my right hon. Friend the Member for Putney (Justine Greening), who was really helpful from the DFID point of view. She saw the necessity for long-term sustainable economic activity in these areas, where there is a real danger of the value of wildlife not being appreciated. The advantage that I saw in Lewa, which I touched on at Second Reading, is that having rangers and properly protected wildlife creates a virtuous circle by bringing stability to the cattle industry, where the locals have been poaching each other's cattle for centuries.

My hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park mentioned the conference, and he was right to say that it is vital to get the Bill through in time for that. I went to the FCO a couple of days ago, and I was delighted to see the preparations for the conference. More than 70 countries have been asked so far, which is marvellous. I think we had 42 countries at the previous one. It is really important to get across how much co-operation there is between all sorts of countries that we could not possibly expect to be co-operating so closely. When I was in Moscow, the Minister there stressed how well the programmes with the Chinese Government were going on protecting the snow leopards in the Amur mountains. We got co-operation across the board at the conference, which was a unique event, and I very much hope that this autumn's conference here will have a similar boost and a similar impact. However, we can only go to it and look people in the eye if we have got this legislation through.

Sir Hugo Swire: I hope that I am not stating the obvious, but I just wondered whether my right hon. Friend agrees that a good place to start this best practice would be within the Commonwealth.

Mr Paterson: Absolutely. Commonwealth members made several helpful contributions at the conference, and they will be invited again. The Commonwealth is a good vehicle for this, because this is about stopping both supply and demand, mainly in Asian countries, and some of our Commonwealth colleagues could be helpful at both ends of the trade.

I really want to hear from the Minister, but, based on what he has told me informally and from what I have seen on the DEFRA website, I will be supporting amendment 3, because it will deliver the fastest route to our aim. I think it would also be sensible for the Opposition, having listened to the debate and been convinced by the arguments, to withdraw their amendments so that we can get on to Third Reading.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP): It is a privilege to speak once again on the Bill, which the Scottish National party welcomes. We also welcome Government amendments 1 and 2 to clause 6, and Government amendments 3 and 4 to clause 35.

We are working towards implementing stringent measures to protect and conserve populations of elephants and other endangered species for future generations. The survival of the species is the most important thing and must be realised, so the Bill must be as strong as possible. I thank members of the Bill Committee who worked together so consensually towards the same aim: protecting ivory-bearing species and populations of

elephants. We have the same aims and aspirations; this debate has just been about how we reach the final outcome that we all desire. The general public are absolutely behind the Bill, and we must take our lead from their good common decency and sense. The consultation received 70,000 responses, so we must act decisively in their name.

The SNP also supports new clause 1, which would require the Secretary of State to introduce a statutory instrument within 12 months of the Bill becoming law to extend its scope to include hippos, killer whales, narwhals, sperm whales and walruses. Such action is integral to affirming the UK's commitment to stopping the trade of all inhumanely obtained ivory.

We heard compelling evidence in Committee about the unscrupulous nature of ivory poachers. They will stop at nothing, leaving no ivory-bearing species safe. They trade in death. They undermine poor and vulnerable communities in developing parts of the world, moving from species to species to make their money. Protecting elephants is critical, but the SNP believes that the Bill does not go far enough due to the possible impact on other species and further knock-on effects. Those other species also require protection from the actions of unscrupulous individuals.

Reports indicate that hippo teeth, which are also ivory, are being auctioned in Tanzania and that demand for ivory also poses a threat to Malawi's hippos. Hippo teeth represent a cheaper and easier option. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, demand for them increased after the 1989 ban on the international trade of elephant ivory. I recently read that a killer whale that was beached in Vancouver—near where some of my family live—had its teeth removed by unscrupulous ivory thieves. It was an 18-year-old killer whale called J32 that had been nicknamed “Rhapsody”. Such people will go to any lengths.

Turning to narwhals—the sea unicorns—Queen Elizabeth I spent £10,000 on a narwhal tusk, which is the equivalent of around £1.5 million today. The average price today is between £3,000 and £12,000, and narwhals are considered to be near-threatened. It is important that we support new clause 1 to ensure that poachers do not move from species to species.

The SNP also supports new clause 2, which would require the Secretary of State to lay a report before each House within 12 months of the Bill becoming law, detailing the state of international ivory markets and the steps taken by the Department for International Development to reduce demand for ivory. That is extremely important, because we are in a race against time. We will need to know that the Bill is having the desired impact—and quickly—so that we can amend or adjust the processes in place to save the species we desire to save.

The race against time means we must work, via DFID, with the communities that are most affected. We must determine, through a whole-Government approach, to tackle this trade and to ensure that we do our utmost to protect populations. Jobs and livelihoods are integral to populations affected by poaching. There must be alternatives to poaching, because we heard in Committee that people living in poverty in such areas tend to be caught up in poaching activity just to feed

their families. If they have no alternative, there will be little for them to do other than to try to continue poaching unabated.

Through DFID, we must look to ensure that we leave no one behind, and that we protect jobs and livelihoods as alternatives for these communities. We must also work with rangers and conservation agents, who have a direct impact on tourism, to ensure that there are opportunities for growth and development in the countries affected.

SNP Members want the strongest Bill possible. We want to work consensually with Members on both sides of the House. We want to ensure there is a whole-Government approach and, most of all, we want to ensure that we proceed in a timely manner. The utmost goal of this legislation is not a conference at the end, but the survival of a species.

It is important that we come together to ensure that this happens for our children and grandchildren. My children visited the elephants two years ago. They still speak today about their experience of seeing baby elephants wandering. We want to ensure that that can continue and that this magnificent species continues to wander across our savannahs.

The 2015 SNP manifesto included a commitment to support further animal welfare measures with a global focus, including action to end the illegal ivory trade, so I commend new clauses 1 and 2 and the Government amendments to the House, to achieve the most stringent legislation possible.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. Just for guidance, may I say that if colleagues can stick to about seven minutes each, we will get everyone in? The Minister has yet to speak.

Mr Ranil Jayawardena (North East Hampshire) (Con): I am pleased that the Bill has made progress in Committee, building on the Government's proactive work. As I have said before, I am pleased not only because of my interest in this area—that was why I founded the all-party group on endangered species with Members on both sides of the House—but because, like Opposition Members, many Conservative Members were elected on a manifesto promise to tackle the international wildlife trade and to press for a total ban on ivory sales. That was in the first manifesto I stood on. It is a manifesto promise I intend to keep, and I wish to highlight the last point in that specific wording. While the Minister is to be commended for bringing forward this much-needed Bill, in an unrelentingly positive manner, to protect these strong, smart, gentle endangered animals from murder—that is what it is: some 20,000 elephants are murdered each year for their ivory—we must protect many, many more species.

4 pm

As I said on Second Reading, clause 35 is unnecessarily narrow. I can accept that the explicit exemptions, such as those on portrait miniatures or musical instruments, are necessary, fair and proportionate, but an over-narrow definition of ivory is not. This is not just a technical matter; it is a matter of principle. It is not just about ensuring that the Bill covers every type of ivory and is extended to another category of item. It cuts to the fundamental principle of the ban: protecting endangered species now. If all a poacher has to do to sell the ivory

they have recently butchered from an elephant is to declare it as ivory from a hippopotamus or from a long-dead mammoth, that is simply not good enough. Members can be certain that those profiting from the illegal wildlife trade will know the loopholes inside out. Worse, as the hon. Member for Redcar (Anna Turley) set out, such an approach may lead to poachers targeting those other species—hippos, walruses, narwhals and others—perfectly legally so that they can then sell that ivory under this Bill, as it stands. In effect, poachers would target those species by default for extinction. I am sure none of those outcomes is the desired intention, which is why I am pleased that the Government seem to be moving in the right direction.

I do not raise these points to criticise Her Majesty's Government. Quite the contrary: I absolutely commend the Minister for his commitment to action on this, and I believe he will seize the opportunity to do the right thing, particularly as Government amendments 3 and 4 suggest that the Government are listening and want to expand the Bill's scope through secondary legislation. That is why I will support the Government's amendments, if anyone was to oppose them—I am encouraged to hear that they seem to have universal support across the Chamber—but I have concerns about the shadow Minister's new clause 1, given its unnecessarily narrow focus on CITES and the species with us today. The measure could result in those who wish to do these animals harm using the loophole of simply saying, "That is mammoth ivory." I am sure that that is not the shadow Minister's intention, however, and I welcome her support for Government amendments 3 and 4, as they are the way of delivering the change we want.

I encourage the Minister to bring forward the consultation as soon as possible after Royal Assent, as he has indicated already. I encourage him to make that consultation as wide as possible and to include as many species as the Government need to be aware of. I hope that the Government will then act as swiftly as possible to bring secondary legislation to this place at the appropriate time.

Graham P. Jones: I want to speak to new clause 2, although on new clause 1, and given the speech we just heard from the hon. Member for North East Hampshire (Mr Jayawardena), I must say that I entirely agree that we should broaden the species to which the Bill applies, because it is about saving our wildlife, planet and ecosystem. None of those things operates in isolation. Our ecosystem is holistic and we must protect it as one. I would therefore hope that any changes made by new clause 1 would make the provisions as broad as possible.

I am delighted that the Leader of the Opposition and our shadow Front-Bench spokesperson have tabled new clause 2. I know that it has been brought forward with the notion of trying to gain cross-party support, however, because I do not think it goes far enough at all.

A year ago, when I had the fortune to meet Angolan MPs, I raised this issue with them. It is a case in point that while legislation to ban ivory was passed in 2016, those MPs had no idea that they had passed the legislation. When legislators do not know that they have passed legislation, we know we are starting off with a bit of a problem.

In 2018, poaching in Angola is as virulent as it was prior to the legislation. The rate of poaching has simply continued. Action has been taken and poachers have

been prosecuted in cases involving considerable amounts of ivory, but by the time they are caught, the elephant is unfortunately dead. The elephant population is, of course, declining. Figures from *National Geographic* suggest that before the civil war, in around 1975, there were 200,000 elephants in Angola, but there may be just 2,000 left. According to more accurate figures from the general elephant census, which was conducted in partnership with Elephants Without Borders, there were some 70,000 elephants in southern Angola before the war but there are now around 3,400. That is a colossal cull of this wonderful animal over 40 years. I stress that the issue affects many animals, but in the short time I have, I wish to concentrate on elephants.

According to Elephants Without Borders, in 2015, for every 10 live elephants that the census recorded, it found four carcasses. That is incredible. Fifty-five elephants are being killed every day and the population is down by 111,000 in the past decade. The way in which they are killed paints a picture of what this cruel industry is about, how it operates and how poachers act with impunity. They use AK47s, and it requires many AK47 rounds to bring an animal down. We have all seen the horrific pictures of elephants that have not been killed, but are alive and suffering while their horns are hacked off. It is truly appalling.

The great elephant census did not just cover Angola. Between 2009 and 2016—just seven years—Tanzania has seen an elephant population decline of 60%, almost all of which is due to poaching. In the same seven-year period, Mozambique has seen a 48% fall in its elephant population. The National Academy of Sciences has said that 100,000 elephants were killed between 2010 and 2012. These statistics paint a picture of incredible carnage and an incredible reduction in elephant numbers. I, for one, am sad. We must take firmer action.

Elephants Without Borders has suggested that not only legislation is required. We must take protective action. The two must go hand in hand, but the legislation must be tough, and new clause 2 does not go far enough. We must do more. I welcome the fact that DFID staff are out in Kenya, providing some support for the protection of elephants. Perhaps that is the beginning of a future in which we protect the animals on this planet, along with the biology of the environment that we need to sustain the planet from which we draw life.

We need legislation, but we also need active protection. Legislating in this place simply does not go far enough; it is time for international laws and international action. It is time for the United Nations to step up and begin to put in place a framework that protects our planet and these animals. It is time that we not only pass legislation, but take direct action on protected areas. Instead of just providing armed forces for humanitarian purposes, it is about time that we and the United Nations provided forces for environmental purposes. The time has come for us, both as legislators and those active in the field, to take this issue seriously.

I finish by congratulating the British Army on what it is doing out in Kenya, but we need more of it. I support new clause 2 as a beginning, but it is the beginning of a long road, because a lot more needs to be done.

Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con): This is a very important debate. In listening to speeches from across the House, I was struck by the fact that I had never seen

the House so united in terms of the purpose and seriousness of this legislation. The real differences—if there are differences—are about the manner of dealing with this and how we get the best results. That is very encouraging.

If one were to look at the number of elephants, one would be truly horrified. There were something like 1.2 million in 1980. Today, from the figures that I saw, there are a little over 400,000. Over 38 years, we have seen a two-thirds reduction in the number of wild elephants, so the species is undoubtedly in danger.

As a consequence, one can see why the Government have come up with this legislation. Initially, it was a very narrowly focused Bill, essentially designed to stop the trade in ivory with respect to elephants and the killing of elephants by poachers. One can understand exactly what the narrow scope of this legislation was. It was right for the people who have been campaigning on this issue to suggest that the narrow focus on elephants should be widened. Obviously, ivory comes from a range of sources. People have talked about mammoths and the teeth of hippopotamuses. It was inevitable that the legislation as drafted would be perhaps attacked or scrutinised on the basis that the focus was too narrow. I fully understand that.

What has happened in the past couple of days is that the Front-Bench team has listened to the debates and to the various representations. I saw on Twitter—I do not use Twitter very much, by the way—that the Environment Secretary has suggested that the next phase should be a much wider consultation than that proposed in new clause 1 by Opposition Front Benchers. That must be the right approach because, under the new clause, as Members have mentioned, mammoths are not included. We know that the way people claim that bits of ivory come from mammoths hides a multitude of sins and a great deal of criminality. That is another issue that is often overlooked in this debate—it has been mentioned once or twice.

The communities in which elephant poaching takes place, and the people who are driving this trade, are often linked with organised crime and with other very unsavoury elements in the countries of Africa in which the elephant and ivory are found. This has been going on for decades. One need only read accounts from Stanley in the 19th century to see how poachers—mass murderers, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Hampshire (Mr Jayawardena) suggested—have been perpetrating these crimes for decades. It has to stop. The reason that this is an interesting and important piece of legislation is that it marks, I think, the first time, or one of the first times, that a western country—or certainly an advanced economic country—has taken this issue very seriously.

As we go forward, after the international conference at the beginning of October, we will have to be even more focused and even more rigorous in our approach to the ivory trade. As people have observed, just banning the ivory trade with respect to the elephant will not be good enough. We have to take a holistic approach. We cannot simply say that ivory from the elephant should be banned and not legislate for other animals and other sources of ivory. The broader approach is obviously the best one, but legislation is difficult in any broad approach. We have to get the right terms and the right drafting. I am not sure that new clause 1 is necessarily the best way

of trying to address this problem, which is why I will vote against it if it is pressed to a Division. I think that Government amendments 3 and 4 are a bit broader and more flexible. As we have discovered today, there have been later announcements suggesting that a broader approach—even broader than that proposed in new clause 1—is for the best.

It is a real credit to this House that something as sensitive as this Bill has brought forward a wide, courteous and informed debate. It is a real honour to be able to participate in the passage of this legislation.

4.15 pm

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab): It is a great privilege to speak in this debate, which is of so much interest to many of our constituents, right across the UK. I would like to talk about four things. I will speak in support of new clauses 1 and 2, but first I will refer to a couple of other issues that we discussed at some length in Committee. It would be helpful to hear the Minister's response regarding those issues, but they will not be fresh ones to him; this is well-trodden ground.

The first issue is that of cyber-security. This is an important matter, as has been acknowledged. Much illegal trading is done over the internet. In Committee, we discussed the need for proper measures to deal with that and heard about the difficulties in tracing that. Does the Minister have anything to say on that? If we are to make this legislation effective, it is important that we deal with the issue of cyber-security and cyber-trade.

The second issue is that of enforcement, which we also discussed in Committee. When taking evidence, we heard from Inspector Lou Hubble—head of the UK National Wildlife Crime Unit—who spoke particularly about cyber-security. She saw the need for additional resources to deal with the cyber-trade in ivory. Goods that are often presented not as ivory, but as bovine bone or other sources are really difficult to track down. I wonder whether the Minister has anything to say about that.

Let me turn to new clause 1. It seems that we all agree that we need to extend the legislation to include other sources of ivory. We are all concerned that, if we ban elephant ivory and strengthen the measures against that, we may displace the trade and find that other species are affected. That is why I am keen, as are other colleagues, that we broaden the description of ivory in the Bill. I heard the Minister saying that an announcement had been made on this, and it is good to see that there is change and movement in this area—we all agree that that is important—but I still support new clause 1. Will the Government consider going that bit further and supporting the new clause?

Sir Hugo Swire: The hon. Lady talks about going a bit further. Surely the whole point is that what the Government are proposing goes further than the Opposition's new clause.

Liz Twist: We are keen to see that action is taken now and not deferred. From our perspective, new clause 1 would improve and strengthen the Bill.

New clause 2, which is also in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Workington (Sue Hayman), calls for a report on the ivory trade in 12 months' time.

[Liz Twist]

It is important that we have a mechanism for reviewing how the Bill is operating in practice within a period of a year, so that we can ensure that it is doing what we want it to do: reduce the slaughter of endangered species and other species covered by the Bill. It is also important that we ensure we can take steps to strengthen the legislation in the future if that is necessary, so I support new clause 2.

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con): We have had an important discussion of this Bill over the past few weeks. It has been a great honour to speak on something that is so important to so many of my constituents. It has also been very good to see how the House works very constructively together on occasions where there are particularly important and historic matters for us to discuss, as in this case. I am very grateful to the Government for listening so constructively to many of the points that I have made, some on behalf of my constituents and some on my own reading of the Bill, and for answering a great many of them. I will address those in the course of my brief comments.

I do not support new clause 1 because I think the Government have proposed a better way of doing this. I say that for two reasons. They have been covered already but bear repeating. The first is the fact that the Government amendment goes further. New clause 1 deals only with CITES-listed species. The hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist) rightly raised a concern that we all have—I raised it on Second Reading—about species displacement, for want of a better phrase. The new clause, if anything, makes that more likely because it does not cover species that are not on the CITES list, such as the warthog. We need to ensure that we can go further. There is much more freedom in the Government's approach, which is to add species whether they are endangered or not and whether they are extant or extinct. Their amendment will also cover the mammoth, which, as we have heard, is being mined, and closes a loophole whereby mammoth ivory can be passed off as elephant ivory. It is a much better way of doing this because it goes further.

Secondly, the Government's amendment goes faster because we can deal with the matter by secondary legislation. I entirely understand what the Opposition are trying to do through new clause 1, but the big, overriding problem is the procedural one. If a challenge is raised to the primary legislation on the human rights ground, we may run into difficulty on the whole Act, and that would be a great shame. I have thought very hard about this. As a lawyer, I am naturally of the mind that I do not like legislation that is rushed through, because rushed laws are often bad laws. I would instinctively prefer that we took more time and got it right. In this case, however, there is very much a need to move quickly, given that the conference is coming up, and given all the heartbreaking stories that we have heard today and throughout the Bill's passage, including during the evidence session.

It is very important that we make it clear that the ivory trade is no longer acceptable. It is also very important that we make it clear that Britain is a world leader on this. We have heard about the great work that

is being done by the Army—I pay tribute to that—and through DFID. We can look at doing a lot more to expand that work. I very much welcome that.

For those reasons, we need to get this Bill on to the statute book as soon as possible, despite the fact that that goes against my natural instinct whereby I prefer to slow things down and take more time to make sure that there is not a hiccup further along the line. I am sensitive to the concern about everything being pushed into the long grass and the further expansion never happening, but I am very encouraged by today's announcement by the Secretary of State that he will now be consulting on this. It seems to me that the Government have approached this in entirely the right way.

I have had a number of concerns about the Bill as it has gone through. Constituents have raised concerns with regard to the antique trade and those have been answered. I am grateful to the Minister for doing so, in full, and at relatively short notice. I had some concerns about the definitions aspect of clause 35. The Government's amendments deal with those concerns because they mean that we do not have to worry about a particular species once the secondary legislation has been brought in to expand the species list further.

We can now move forward quickly with legislation that sets a positive, leading path for Britain as a nation. I wholeheartedly welcome that. I thank the Government very much for listening to all of us who have expressed concerns and for answering those concerns. I very much welcome the Bill and the Government's amendments to it.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): I spent three days on the Public Bill Committee carrying out detailed scrutiny. Although we did not always agree on the detail, I valued all the contributions from Committee members, who clearly believed strongly in eradicating the global ivory trade. We have a further opportunity today to make this a better Bill.

I want to start by raising a question that I asked the Minister in Committee, but which he might answer differently today. We had a detailed discussion about musical instruments and the rule that if less than 20% of an antique musical instrument is ivory, it can be sold. We heard from the Musicians Union that many retired musicians sell their instrument collection because it is not an industry in which people have a pension. I raised the issue of guitar picks made from mammoth ivory. The Minister quite rightly pointed out that they would be exempt because they are made from mammoth ivory. However, with amendment 3, there is a potential for mammoth ivory to be covered by the Bill. That changes the status of those guitar picks. I wonder whether the Minister will give a new response to that question today.

However, that is not the substantive part of my speech. I am in favour of the new clauses tabled by my right hon. Friend the Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn), and in particular new clause 1. I will restrict my comments to the protection of other horned animals, and in particular the monodon monoceros, more commonly known as the narwhal, as I did in Committee. I do not have time to go into depth on the hippo, killer whale, sperm whale, walrus or warthog.

After returning home from the Committee, on which I served for three days, I was asked at the dinner table by my children what I had done that week in Parliament,

and I said, “Have you heard of the narwhal?” My 10-year-old son immediately broke into song. Following the example of the hon. Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare), I will allow Members to hear the narwhal song:

“Narwhals, narwhals, swimming in the ocean
Causing a commotion coz they are so awesome”.

It goes on:

“Like an underwater unicorn
They’ve got a kick-ass facial horn
They’re the Jedi of the sea.”

Who could disagree with that?

If Members were not aware of the narwhal, I am sure they are now fully clued up and join every 10-year-old in the land who has impeccable knowledge of the narwhal. That knowledge is not new, however. Narwhals were known as sea unicorns for many centuries before exploration of the Arctic, and their tusks were one of the most valuable commodities in pre-industrial revolution Britain. Queen Elizabeth I is said to have spent £10,000—equivalent to £1.5 million today—on a narwhal tusk, which was placed with the Crown jewels.

Although narwhal horns are no longer so valuable, they are valued at between £3,000 and £12,000, and a double tusk can fetch as much as £25,000. The International Union for Conservation of Nature considers narwhal hunting still to be a major issue. In Canada and Greenland, narwhal hunting is still permitted, and between 2007 and 2011 an average of 979 narwhals were hunted a year. The Inuit as a native tribe have hunted narwhal for centuries, using them as a source of both food and income. In addition to the global trade in tusks and teeth, a Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society study found that shops in Japan were selling ground narwhal tusk as a tonic to treat fever. Shop counter prices for that medicine varied from \$540 to \$929 for 100 grams. Numerous reports have been produced, and there is an evidence base from non-governmental organisations.

CITES, which we have heard much about today, says that the main threats to the narwhal are hunting and climate change. The majority of narwhals live in and around Greenland’s territorial waters. Export of narwhal products was banned in Greenland in 2006, but narwhal products are legally traded within Greenland. Only subsistence hunting should take place. CITES says that there is a significant trade in narwhal tusks and parts, but not sufficient data to track it. The Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society is concerned that the hunting of narwhal has already become unsustainable. Narwhals have been over-harvested in Canada and Greenland. The society said:

“The annual hunting in western Greenland...significantly exceeded the quotas recommended by those scientific bodies of regional and international organisations charged with narwhal management.”

Laws in Greenland are being broken. Surely we should align our laws with theirs.

I am not sure whether the Minister is aware that the Inuit people are permitted to sell narwhal derivatives, including the horn, within the European Union. On one Canadian website, I could have ordered a narwhal tusk from my desk here in Parliament for around \$70 an inch that could be legally sent to the European Union. There are restrictions on what can be imported without permits and penalties for contravening import rules. I thank the Minister for his letter in which he outlined the restrictions

on imports from Greenland, which I deem sufficient, but he does not mention Canada, where restrictions are not so tight. I want to repeat what I asked him in Committee: will he clarify his views on narwhal horn trade from Canada?

As I have said, narwhals are also affected by climate change. While I understand the need for haste with elephants, narwhals face more than one threat, so it is important to include narwhals in the scope of the Bill, rather than for this to be covered under clause 35. Why wait when action can be taken in the Bill today?

4.30 pm

Sir Hugo Swire: I will speak briefly because time is marching on, and I did not have the privilege of serving on what I believe must have been a fascinating Public Bill Committee. Coming to this quite new, I urge the Opposition to drop their proposal to push new clause 1, which I do not think the Government are supporting. I completely understand where they are coming from, and had the Government not come up with their latest proposal, I would in fact have supported new clause 1. However, I believe the Government’s proposal trumps what the Opposition are suggesting. It is unfortunate, when we are trying to send a unified message to those in the world who are watching these deliberations, that there is or is perceived to be some artificial division between us, when I do not think there really is one. I therefore urge the Opposition to look again at withdrawing new clause 1.

It is important to get the Bill through without the threat of judicial review or—I am not a lawyer—any other kind of legal challenge. We must aim for the wildlife conference in October, and it is absolutely critical that we enable the Bill to be passed before then. At the wildlife conference, which is designed to protect the elephant, I hope, as a former Minister for Asia, that we will cover Indian elephants, because we tend to concentrate more on Africa than elsewhere. I saw a programme the other day about what is happening to elephants because of logging: there is no use for them, and they are therefore abused, killed or whatever. I hope that the wildlife conference, rather than just discussing the issue of elephants being killed for their ivory, also looks more holistically at the role of an elephant in such communities and at how we can better support them.

As I say, I have come to this quite late, but I believe there are still outstanding issues. I am sure those issues will be addressed in tremendous detail in the other place, not least the subject of compensation for some collectors, the measures on antiques and the proposals put forward by the antiques trade, which I think need to be looked at again, as well as the charges to exemption certificates. I am sure such points have been well articulated in Committee, and I have absolutely no doubt that they will be looked at more closely again in the other place; the point of the other place is to look at such issues in great detail.

I believe the principle of what the Government are seeking with the Bill is absolutely right. It is one of those rare occasions when the House is unified on something that will have huge popularity well beyond the Chamber.

Mr Paterson: Am I right to say, as a summary of the position of those involved in the antiques trade, that they find that the Bill is tough but fair and that they

[*Mr Paterson*]

would not like it tightened up any further? For speed, should we advise those in the other place not to spend too much time changing the Bill? Speed is of the essence in getting it through before the conference.

Sir Hugo Swire: Yes, I agree with my right hon. Friend. I would say that there are legitimate concerns that still need flushing out, but I do not think anything should be done that will prevent the passage of the Bill in time for the wildlife conference. There are genuine concerns about how tight the legislation is in some respects and about how people may be inadvertently affected. I believe that legislation is only as good as the thought that is given to it, and there is nothing worse than implementing bad legislation. The legislation has to stand the test of time, and I believe the Government are trying to achieve that. I am sure that any serious points raised in the other place will be addressed suitably, but my right hon. Friend is, as usual, absolutely right that we must do nothing to prevent the swift passage of what is, in most respects, an excellent Bill.

David Rutley: This has been another outstanding debate on a very important subject, and I am very grateful for all the contributions that have been made.

On Second Reading, I was heartened to hear the support from all parties for the Bill. I thank all the Committee members for their important contributions on this issue and for the suggestions on how we can refine the Bill. Progress has been swift, and it is crucial that we continue that pace of progress on the Bill, as has been set out in numerous speeches.

I would like to give a warm welcome back to the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey). As always, the Department will benefit from her keen intellect and boundless energy in moving forward with so many important initiatives, of which this Bill is not the least. It is good that she is in her place on the Front Bench today.

We have not really discussed the intention of Government amendments 1 and 2, which seek to provide a definition of a pre-1918 portrait miniature for the purpose of the exemption in clause 6. The amendments add a size restriction to the definition so that portraits with a 320 sq cm surface area qualify for exemption. That is the maximum area of the visible surface of the ivory “canvas”, irrespective of the size of the frame. In Committee, Emma Rutherford, a representative of Philip Mould & Company, who is an expert on portrait miniatures gave evidence on how the exemption for portrait miniatures could be refined to add a size limit. The Government listened to that expert evidence and to views expressed in Committee and have introduced proposals that set maximum dimensions for portrait miniatures. We have discussed this, but we have chosen to exempt portrait miniatures because the value of these popular items is due not to their ivory content but to their historical importance, the delicate painting and their luminosity.

Let me now move on to important subjects that have been discussed at length today. We should focus our attention on Government amendments 3 and 4 and discuss matters raised in debate. I shall then come on to discuss new clause 1. As has been said, amendments 3

and 4 will extend the power to make secondary legislation so that the definition of ivory could include that from any ivory-bearing species.

The hon. Member for Workington (Sue Hayman), in a characteristically considered contribution, asked whether the focus on elephants was initially an oversight. Non-governmental organisations, particularly during the evidence session, underlined the need to focus on elephants as an urgent priority. There was no oversight—there was a clear focus to start with—but that is not to say that we should not move on and look at other species.

We have heard passionate speeches expressing concerns about other species, from the hon. Member for Redcar (Anna Turley) about hippos, and from the hon. Member for East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow (Dr Cameron). I do not think anyone will forget the speech by the hon. Member for Leeds North West (Alex Sobel), and his legendary narwhal song. We will have to find the words and start humming them in the bath, or something.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State made clear on Second Reading, it is important that, as a result of this ban, the trade in ivory does not move to other species. That is why we included a power in clause 35(3) to allow other ivory-bearing species listed under CITES to be brought into the scope of the ban.

Robert Courts: May I repeat my thanks to the Minister for listening to the concerns that I have expressed about that provision in particular? Does he agree that the key point is that we need to move quickly to protect elephants, but after that we need maximum flexibility so that the Government can protect other species, whatever they are, as and when required?

David Rutley: My hon. Friend has been consistent throughout the process about the need to push forward, as have many colleagues on both sides of the House. Absolutely—we need pace, and I will come on to how we will ensure that we move forward as quickly as possible in the weeks and months ahead.

Sir Hugo Swire: When my hon. Friend begins to explain why the Government’s proposals are better than Opposition new clause 1, will he provide the House with evidence such as potential legal challenges or judicial review that has led the Government to decide that this is a better way to proceed?

David Rutley: Indeed I will. My right hon. Friend has made an important point. Of course, we want to move fast, but we want whatever legislation we introduce to be compliant. We want to make sure that it is effective and enforceable legislation, and I will come on to explain more about that.

We have listened carefully to the views put forward by expert witnesses in Committee and by Members on both sides of the House, and we have made it clear that we should not wait for ivory species to become endangered before we can take action. The amendments will therefore allow us to prohibit dealings in ivory from CITES species, as is currently the case under the existing drafting of clause 35 and, additionally, any other ivory-bearing animal or species, including those that are endangered—for example, warthogs, my favourite animal.

Simon Hoare: Hear, hear.

David Rutley: Quite right, too. The amendments also cover extinct species, such as mammoths. We believe that extending clause 35 to allow warthogs to be brought into the scope of the ban is important due to the risk of displacement. That has been talked about by several people, including my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts). We also recognise that mammoth ivory is sufficiently similar to elephant ivory that its continued sale could perpetuate the demand for elephant ivory.

I would like to thank my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare), of warthog fame, and my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham)—we will not forget her contributions in Committee on mammoths—for their determined commitment to these species. The Government are clear that we should work together for the Bill to move swiftly through Parliament and that we should not allow the Bill to be derailed. Quick passage is important as in October the Government are hosting the fourth illegal wildlife trade conference, referred to by Members on both sides of the House, at which we will bring together global leaders on this issue. The conference will build on previous efforts, address the underlying systemic issues that facilitate the illegal wildlife trade and demonstrate a step-change in the fight against this criminal trade. Our aim is to make significant progress with the Bill before the conference.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): It was a great privilege to serve on the Bill Committee. Britain's global leadership on this issue is absolutely essential. Does the Minister agree that the strong message we are sending out by passing the Bill in a timely manner and widening the scope to other species will lead to change in countries across the world?

David Rutley: I thank my hon. Friend for his contribution in Committee. He makes an important point. We want to highlight our commitment to tackling illegal wildlife trade. The Bill, and the extension we are talking about today through the consultation, will be important in sending out a clear signal to other countries, and not least the EU as it looks at its own ban.

As referenced on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs website, the Government are clear that introducing protections for other ivory-bearing species is important. That is why we announced today our intention to consult on proposals to extend the ban to other ivory-bearing species on or as soon as practicable after Royal Assent.

Mr Jayawardena: I was not on the Bill Committee, but I have been following the Bill closely, as have other members of the all-party group on endangered species. Can my hon. Friend confirm that the consultation would allow the Government to move further and faster than would have been possible under new clause 1?

David Rutley: Absolutely. It is our intention to move further. We are all agreed on that. As I will set out, we believe categorically that this will be faster. I think that that is the sort of speed people want to see as we move forward in the weeks ahead.

Simon Hoare: What capacity is there within DEFRA post conference—I appreciate it is currently fantastically busy—if other countries want to dip into the collective expertise of both Ministers and officials on how to deliver and devise this sort of legislation? Who will be available? We should be a centre of excellence and a resource for information and knowledge.

David Rutley: That is another excellent point. DEFRA officials work very closely with their counterparts in other countries. The conference in October will be a perfect opportunity to bring parties together. If further co-operation is required they will be ready to do that, but there is important work to do in the UK as well.

The Government want to ensure that if in future we decide to extend the scope of the ban, any legislation which applies to ivory-bearing animals or species is robust, proportionate, defensible, enforceable and, importantly, compliant with the European convention on human rights. We will therefore ensure that we gather and analyse evidence on the market for ivory from the other species. We therefore think that it is vital to consult on any proposals and gather views and evidence from stakeholders and the public. That would support an analysis that will focus on the impact of the measures—

Kwasi Kwarteng: Could my hon. Friend give the House any indication on timing for the consultation process?

4.45 pm

David Rutley: As I said in the DEFRA announcement—I am pleased that my hon. Friend has given me the opportunity to underline this—the consultation would start on or as soon as practicable after Royal Assent. The commencement of the Bill will be around six months afterwards. Importantly, the consultation will take place at the point of or close to—as soon as practicable—Royal Assent. We will then move forward with the consultation and, assuming that the evidence shows that it is right to put forward the statutory instrument and include certain species that we have talked about, we can then move forward on a quicker timescale than has been set out—*[Interruption.]* From a sedentary position, I heard the hon. Member for Workington suggesting that we do it straightaway, which is a lovely thought and I understand her intention. However, the key thing that I am trying to stress is pace. Let us make sure that the Bill is compliant as well. I say gently to Opposition Members—I know that they are committed to pressing the new clause to a vote—that we want to make sure that the Bill is compliant, and given the focus and commitment that we have all given to the Bill, it is not right for there to be any risk, not just to the future of the delegated powers, but to the Bill as a whole by putting such provisions in it. That is what I ask Members to consider as we move to the vote.

We have already talked about new clause 1, but let me just add further weight to the arguments around it. It is clear that this new clause will place the Secretary of State under a duty to lay an instrument under the affirmative procedure within 12 months of clause 35 coming into force. It would extend the prohibition on dealing elephant ivory to ivory from CITES-listed species, so it does not go as far as the approach that the Government have set out.

[David Rutley]

As I said, the Government intend to consult on the extension of the ban and to conduct analysis of the impact that this may have on individuals and business. The new clause, however, presupposes or prejudges the outcome of that important work and would remove the opportunity for the public to provide evidence. It would oblige the Government to extend the prohibition to CITES species, even if the evidence does not support it. For some or all of the species listed in the new clause, that could mean that the regulations may not be compliant with the European convention on human rights and could be challenged on that basis. Given that explanation, I very much hope that in her concluding remarks the hon. Member for Workington will consider withdrawing her new clause.

During the debate, a number of other issues have been raised and I will turn briefly to some of them. The hon. Member for Redcar (Anna Turley) has made points about resources and cyber-security. I assure her that this is obviously a key area of focus and priority for the Government. The National Wildlife Crime Unit and Border Force do a fantastic job and we are committed to making sure that they have the resources to take this work forward. Of course, the Office for Product Safety and Standards, the regulator, will have additional resources, and working together with the enforcement agencies, will ensure that the ban is enforceable and is done so well.

The hon. Member for Leeds North West (Alex Sobel) made the point about plectrums. If they are made of mammoth and assuming that the ban extends to mammoths, they would be prohibited, but clearly, they can still be used. They can be passed on and bequeathed; they just cannot be sold commercially. He makes an excellent point about narwhals. We have exchanged correspondence and we encourage other nations to take such commitments seriously. I will gladly meet him separately to talk about Canada.

The hon. Member for Workington talked about the need for a report. We talked about this in Committee at great length. I understand why she wants a report, but the Government do not believe it to be their job to produce one, because other organisations can do so more independently, and of course there would be a cost involved as well. I therefore ask her not to press her new clause 2. With that, I thank hon. Members for their contributions on Report.

Sue Hayman: We have had an excellent debate this afternoon, and it is great that hon. Members right across the House have welcomed and supported this important Bill. I thank the Minister for our constructive discussions in Committee and today and warmly welcome the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey), to her place.

I take issue with what some hon. Members have said about Government amendments 3 and 4 meaning that new clause 1 is not required. Our new clause would amend clause 35(1), whereas the Government amendments amend subsections (2) and (3), so they are not mutually exclusive. If we are to make the Bill as strong as it can be today and achieve as much as we can, I see no reason why the House cannot support both new clause 1 and

the Government amendments. We would then today have the strongest Bill possible. I am a little disappointed, therefore, that the Government do not want to support the new clause.

Robert Courts: A Bill that is open to challenge is not a strong Bill. Is that not the fundamental problem with the hon. Lady's argument?

Sue Hayman: I will come to that point, but I am aware that I only have a minute and half left.

Having made those comments, I strongly welcome the Minister's commitment to seek to start a consultation process on widening the scope of the ban to other species if the House does not support the new clause today. The Opposition have pushed strongly for this right from the beginning, and I welcome the fact that he has listened to us. On the issue the hon. Member for Witney (Robert Courts) raised, I talked about the consultation in Committee, and I must again draw Members' attention to the fact that I am an associate of the Consultation Institute. I have taken further advice from the institute, and it has reiterated that the consultation could be carried out both swiftly and efficiently as a supplementary consultation without giving rise to any issues of legal challenge. It is happy to support the Government in achieving a very solid consultation. None of us in the House wants to see any legal challenges to the Bill. If the Minister would like me to put him in touch with the institute—if he thinks that would help—I would be more than happy to do so. With that, I ask the House to support new clause 1.

4.53 pm

Two hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on the programme motion, the debate was interrupted (Programme Order, this day).

The Deputy Speaker put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair (Standing Order No. 83E), That the clause be read a Second time.

The House divided: Ayes 256, Noes 305.

Division No. 203]

[4.53 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Brock, Deidre
Ali, Rushanara	Brown, Alan
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Brown, Lyn
Amesbury, Mike	Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Bryant, Chris
Ashworth, Jonathan	Buck, Ms Karen
Austin, Ian	Burden, Richard
Bailey, Mr Adrian	Burgon, Richard
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Butler, Dawn
Beckett, rh Margaret	Byrne, rh Liam
Benn, rh Hilary	Cadbury, Ruth
Berger, Luciana	Cameron, Dr Lisa
Betts, Mr Clive	Campbell, rh Mr Alan
Black, Mhairi	Carden, Dan
Blackford, rh Ian	Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Blackman, Kirsty	Champion, Sarah
Blomfield, Paul	Chapman, Douglas
Brabin, Tracy	Charalambous, Bambos
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Cherry, Joanna
Brake, rh Tom	Clwyd, rh Ann

Coaker, Vernon
 Cooper, Julie
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Crausby, Sir David
 Crawley, Angela
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Cunningham, Mr Jim
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Nic
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 De Cordova, Marsha
 De Piero, Gloria
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dent Coad, Emma
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Drew, Dr David
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Ellman, Dame Louise
 Elmore, Chris
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farrelly, Paul
 Fellows, Marion
 Fitzpatrick, Jim
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flint, rh Caroline
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Frith, James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gaffney, Hugh
 Gapes, Mike
 Gardiner, Barry
 George, Ruth
 Gethins, Stephen
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Godsiff, Mr Roger
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Grogan, John
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanson, rh David
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayman, Sue
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hepburn, Mr Stephen
 Hermon, Lady
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Kelvin
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Mr George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Johnson, Diana
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Graham
 P.
 Jones, Helen
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Sarah
 Jones, Susan Elan
 Kane, Mike
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Killen, Ged
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Laird, Lesley
 Lake, Ben
 Lamb, rh Norman
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lee, Karen
 Leslie, Mr Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lucas, Ian C.
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Mann, John
 Marsden, Gordon
 Martin, Sandy
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart
 C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McInnes, Liz
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moon, Mrs Madeleine

Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Onasanya, Fiona
 Onn, Melanie
 Onwurah, Chi
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Albert
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pearce, Teresa
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Pound, Stephen
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rashid, Faisal
 Reed, Mr Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Ryan, rh Joan
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Sherriff, Paula
 Shuker, Mr Gavin
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Skinner, Mr Dennis
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smeeth, Ruth
 Smith, Angela
 Smith, Eleanor

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Allen, Heidi
 Amess, Sir David
 Andrew, Stuart
 Argar, Edward
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, Stephen
 Baron, Mr John
 Bebb, Guto
 Bellingham, Sir Henry
 Benyon, rh Richard
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, Jake
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Boles, Nick
 Bone, Mr Peter
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham

Smith, Laura
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeing, Wes
 Sweeney, Mr Paul
 Tami, Mark
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds,
 Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turley, Anna
 Twigg, Stephen
 Twist, Liz
 Umunna, Chuka
 Vaz, Valerie
 Walker, Thelma
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitfield, Martin
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Williams, Dr Paul
 Wilson, Phil
 Woodcock, John
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Nick Smith and
 Jeff Smith**

NOES

Braverman, Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buckland, Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, Conor
 Burt, rh Alistair
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishty, Rehman
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Churchill, Jo
 Clark, Colin
 Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Cleverly, James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, Dr Thérèse
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Cox, Mr Geoffrey

Crabb, rh Stephen
 Davies, Chris
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Glyn
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Dinénage, Caroline
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan, rh Sir Alan
 Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
 Dunne, Mr Philip
 Ellis, Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Charlie
 Eustice, George
 Evans, Mr Nigel
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Fabricant, Michael
 Fallon, rh Sir Michael
 Field, rh Mark
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Gauke, rh Mr David
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
 Girvan, Paul
 Glen, John
 Goldsmith, Zac
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Luke
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Bill
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Greening, rh Justine
 Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
 Griffiths, Andrew
 Gyimah, Mr Sam
 Hair, Kirstene
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, rh Mr Philip
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harrington, Richard
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Simon
 Hayes, rh Mr John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Heaton-Jones, Peter
 Henderson, Gordon
 Herbert, rh Nick
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Hollingbery, George
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Howell, John
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
 James, Margot
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnson, Joseph
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kennedy, Seema
 Kerr, Stephen
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kwarteng, Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Lancaster, rh Mark
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Lee, Dr Phillip
 Lefroy, Jeremy
 Leigh, Sir Edward
 Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lidington, rh Mr David
 Little Pengelly, Emma
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Main, Mrs Anne
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mann, Scott
 Masterton, Paul
 Maynard, Paul
 McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
 McVey, rh Ms Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Mills, Nigel
 Milton, rh Anne

Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morgan, rh Nicky
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morton, Wendy
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, Dr Andrew
 Neill, Robert
 Newton, Sarah
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Perry, rh Claire
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Prisk, Mr Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, Dominic
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Rudd, rh Amber
 Rutley, David
 Sandbach, Antoinette
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Mr Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, Alok

Shelbrooke, Alec
 Simpson, David
 Simpson, rh Mr Keith
 Skidmore, Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
 Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
 Spencer, Mark
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Stewart, Rory
 Streeter, Mr Gary
 Sturdy, Julian
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Swire, rh Sir Hugo
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Thomson, Ross
 Throup, Maggie
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Tredinnick, David
 Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Charles
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Whately, Helen
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wollaston, Dr Sarah
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Noes:
Craig Whittaker and
Amanda Milling

Question accordingly negatived.

New Clause 2

REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL IVORY MARKET

“(1) Within 12 months of section 1 of this Act coming into force, the Secretary of State must publish and lay before each House of Parliament a report on the international ivory market.

(2) The report must as far as practicable analyse the impact of this Act on the demand for ivory in the United Kingdom and in other countries.

(3) The report must consider—

- (a) the impact on nations or communities that generate income from ivory of—
 - (i) the provisions of this Act, and
 - (ii) international agreements related to the ivory trade,

- (b) the work of the Department for International Development in—
- (i) reducing the global demand for ivory, and
 - (ii) mitigating any negative impact of the provisions of this Act on nations or communities that generate an income from ivory.”—(*Sue Hayman.*)

This new clause would require a report to be laid before each House of Parliament on the international ivory market, including how the Department for International Development is working to reduce global demand for ivory.

Brought up,

Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.

The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 306.

Division No. 204]

[5.12 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Cunningham, Alex	Hamilton, Fabian	McKinnell, Catherine
Ali, Rushanara	Cunningham, Mr Jim	Hanson, rh David	McMorris, Anna
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Daby, Janet	Hardy, Emma	Mearns, Ian
Amesbury, Mike	Dakin, Nic	Harris, Carolyn	Monaghan, Carol
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Davey, rh Sir Edward	Hayes, Helen	Moon, Mrs Madeleine
Ashworth, Jonathan	David, Wayne	Hayman, Sue	Morden, Jessica
Austin, Ian	De Cordova, Marsha	Healey, rh John	Morgan, Stephen
Bailey, Mr Adrian	De Piero, Gloria	Hendrick, Sir Mark	Morris, Grahame
Barron, rh Sir Kevin	Debbonaire, Thangam	Hendry, Drew	Murray, Ian
Beckett, rh Margaret	Dent Coad, Emma	Hepburn, Mr Stephen	Norris, Alex
Benn, rh Hilary	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh	Hermon, Lady	O'Hara, Brendan
Berger, Luciana	Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Hill, Mike	Onasanya, Fiona
Betts, Mr Clive	Dodds, Anneliese	Hillier, Meg	Onn, Melanie
Black, Mhairi	Doughty, Stephen	Hobhouse, Wera	Onwurah, Chi
Blackford, rh Ian	Dowd, Peter	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	Osamor, Kate
Blackman, Kirsty	Drew, Dr David	Hollern, Kate	Owen, Albert
Blomfield, Paul	Dromey, Jack	Hopkins, Kelvin	Peacock, Stephanie
Brabin, Tracy	Duffield, Rosie	Hosie, Stewart	Pearce, Teresa
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Eagle, Ms Angela	Howarth, rh Mr George	Pennycook, Matthew
Brake, rh Tom	Eagle, Maria	Huq, Dr Rupa	Perkins, Toby
Brock, Deidre	Edwards, Jonathan	Hussain, Imran	Phillips, Jess
Brown, Alan	Efford, Clive	Johnson, Diana	Phillipson, Bridget
Brown, Lyn	Elliott, Julie	Jones, Darren	Platt, Jo
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Ellman, Dame Louise	Jones, Gerald	Pollard, Luke
Bryant, Chris	Elmore, Chris	Jones, Graham P.	Pound, Stephen
Buck, Ms Karen	Esterson, Bill	Jones, Helen	Qureshi, Yasmin
Burden, Richard	Evans, Chris	Jones, rh Mr Kevan	Rashid, Faisal
Burton, Richard	Farrelly, Paul	Jones, Sarah	Reed, Mr Steve
Butler, Dawn	Fellows, Marion	Jones, Susan Elan	Rees, Christina
Byrne, rh Liam	Field, rh Frank	Kane, Mike	Reeves, Ellie
Cable, rh Sir Vince	Fitzpatrick, Jim	Kendall, Liz	Reynolds, Emma
Cadbury, Ruth	Fletcher, Colleen	Khan, Afzal	Rodda, Matt
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Flint, rh Caroline	Killen, Ged	Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Campbell, rh Mr Alan	Froxcroft, Vicky	Kinnock, Stephen	Ryan, rh Joan
Carden, Dan	Frith, James	Kyle, Peter	Saville Roberts, Liz
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Furniss, Gill	Laird, Lesley	Sharma, Mr Virendra
Champion, Sarah	Gaffney, Hugh	Lake, Ben	Sheerman, Mr Barry
Chapman, Douglas	Gapes, Mike	Lamb, rh Norman	Sheppard, Tommy
Charalambous, Bambos	Gardiner, Barry	Lavery, Ian	Sherriff, Paula
Cherry, Joanna	George, Ruth	Law, Chris	Shuker, Mr Gavin
Clwyd, rh Ann	Gethins, Stephen	Lee, Karen	Siddiq, Tulip
Coaker, Vernon	Gibson, Patricia	Leslie, Mr Chris	Skinner, Mr Dennis
Cooper, Julie	Gill, Preet Kaur	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma	Slaughter, Andy
Cooper, Rosie	Glindon, Mary	Lewis, Clive	Smeeth, Ruth
Cooper, rh Yvette	Godsiff, Mr Roger	Lewis, Mr Ivan	Smith, Angela
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Grady, Patrick	Linden, David	Smith, Eleanor
Cowan, Ronnie	Grant, Peter	Lloyd, Tony	Smith, Laura
Crausby, Sir David	Gray, Neil	Long Bailey, Rebecca	Smyth, Karin
Crawley, Angela	Green, Kate	Lucas, Caroline	Snell, Gareth
Creagh, Mary	Greenwood, Lilian	Lucas, Ian C.	Sobel, Alex
Creasy, Stella	Greenwood, Margaret	Lynch, Holly	Spellar, rh John
Cruddas, Jon	Griffith, Nia	MacNeil, Angus Brendan	Starmer, rh Keir
Cryer, John	Grogan, John	Madders, Justin	Stephens, Chris
Cummins, Judith	Haigh, Louise	Mahmood, Mr Khalid	Stevens, Jo
		Mahmood, Shabana	Stone, Jamie
		Malhotra, Seema	Streeting, Wes
		Mann, John	Sweeney, Mr Paul
		Marsden, Gordon	Tami, Mark
		Martin, Sandy	Thewliss, Alison
		Maskell, Rachael	Thomas, Gareth
		Matheson, Christian	Thomas-Symonds, Nick
		Mc Nally, John	Thornberry, rh Emily
		McCarthy, Kerry	Timms, rh Stephen
		McDonagh, Siobhain	Trickett, Jon
		McDonald, Andy	Turley, Anna
		McDonald, Stewart Malcolm	Twigg, Stephen
		McDonald, Stuart C.	Twist, Liz
		McDonnell, rh John	Umunna, Chuka
		McFadden, rh Mr Pat	Vaz, Valerie
		McGinn, Conor	Walker, Thelma
		McGovern, Alison	West, Catherine
		McInnes, Liz	Western, Matt

Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitfield, Martin
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Williams, Hywel
Williams, Dr Paul
Wilson, Phil
Wishart, Pete

Woodcock, John
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Nick Smith and
Jeff Smith

NOES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Allen, Heidi
Amess, Sir David
Andrew, Stuart
Argar, Edward
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Mr Richard
Badenoch, Mrs Kemi
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, Stephen
Baron, Mr John
Bebb, Guto
Bellingham, Sir Henry
Benyon, rh Richard
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, Jake
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Boles, Nick
Bone, Mr Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Brokenshire, rh James
Bruce, Fiona
Buckland, Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, Conor
Burt, rh Alistair
Cairns, rh Alun
Cartledge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
Chope, Sir Christopher
Churchill, Jo
Clark, Colin
Clark, rh Greg
Clarke, rh Mr Kenneth
Clarke, Mr Simon
Cleverly, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Coffey, Dr Thérèse
Collins, Damian
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Cox, Mr Geoffrey
Crabb, rh Stephen
Davies, Chris
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Glyn

Davies, Mims
Davies, Philip
Davis, rh Mr David
Dinenage, Caroline
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Dorries, Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Duddridge, James
Duguid, David
Duncan, rh Sir Alan
Duncan Smith, rh Mr Iain
Dunne, Mr Philip
Ellis, Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Charlie
Eustice, George
Evans, Mr Nigel
Evennett, rh Sir David
Fabricant, Michael
Fallon, rh Sir Michael
Field, rh Mark
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gauke, rh Mr David
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goldsmith, Zac
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Luke
Graham, Richard
Grant, Bill
Grant, Mrs Helen
Gray, James
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Greening, rh Justine
Grieve, rh Mr Dominic
Griffiths, Andrew
Gyimah, Mr Sam
Hair, Kirstene
Halfon, rh Robert
Hall, Luke
Hammond, rh Mr Philip

Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Hands, rh Greg
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harrington, Richard
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Simon
Hayes, rh Mr John
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Heaton-Jones, Peter
Henderson, Gordon
Herbert, rh Nick
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Hollingbery, George
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Howell, John
Huddleston, Nigel
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, rh Mr Jeremy
Hurd, rh Mr Nick
James, Margot
Javid, rh Sajid
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, Robert
Johnson, rh Boris
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnson, Gareth
Johnson, Joseph
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Mr Marcus
Kawczynski, Daniel
Keegan, Gillian
Kennedy, Seema
Kerr, Stephen
Knight, rh Sir Greg
Knight, Julian
Kwarteng, Kwasi
Lamont, John
Lancaster, rh Mark
Leadsom, rh Andrea
Lee, Dr Phillip
Lefroy, Jeremy
Leigh, Sir Edward
Letwin, rh Sir Oliver
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Lidington, rh Mr David
Little Pengelly, Emma
Lopez, Julia
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Main, Mrs Anne
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, Kit
Mann, Scott
Masterton, Paul
Maynard, Paul
McLoughlin, rh Sir Patrick
McVey, rh Ms Esther

Menzies, Mark
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Mills, Nigel
Milton, rh Anne
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Moore, Damien
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morgan, rh Nicky
Morris, Anne Marie
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morton, Wendy
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, Dr Andrew
Neill, Robert
Newton, Sarah
Nokes, rh Caroline
Norman, Jesse
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Perry, rh Claire
Philp, Chris
Pincher, Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Prisk, Mr Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quin, Jeremy
Quince, Will
Raab, Dominic
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, Mr Jacob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Rudd, rh Amber
Rutley, David
Sandbach, Antoinette
Scully, Paul
Seely, Mr Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shapps, rh Grant
Sharma, Alok
Shelbrooke, Alec
Simpson, David
Simpson, rh Mr Keith
Skidmore, Chris
Smith, Chloe
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Soames, rh Sir Nicholas
Spelman, rh Dame Caroline
Spencer, Mark
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John

Stewart, Bob	Villiers, rh Theresa
Stewart, Iain	Walker, Mr Charles
Stewart, Rory	Walker, Mr Robin
Streeter, Mr Gary	Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Sturdy, Julian	Warburton, David
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond	Warman, Matt
Swire, rh Sir Hugo	Watling, Giles
Syms, Sir Robert	Whately, Helen
Thomas, Derek	Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Thomson, Ross	Wiggin, Bill
Throup, Maggie	Williamson, rh Gavin
Tolhurst, Kelly	Wilson, rh Sammy
Tomlinson, Justin	Wollaston, Dr Sarah
Tomlinson, Michael	Wood, Mike
Tracey, Craig	Wragg, Mr William
Tredinnick, David	Wright, rh Jeremy
Trevelyan, Mrs Anne-Marie	Zahawi, Nadhim
Truss, rh Elizabeth	
Tugendhat, Tom	Tellers for the Noes:
Vara, Mr Shailesh	Craig Whittaker and
Vickers, Martin	Amanda Milling

Question accordingly negated.

Clause 6

PRE-1918 PORTRAIT MINIATURES

Amendments made: 1, page 5, line 4, after “miniature” insert

“with a surface area of no more than 320 cm ”.

See the explanatory statement for Amendment 2.

Amendment 2, page 5, line 5, at end insert—

“() For the purposes of subsection (1) (a) the ‘surface area’ of a portrait miniature does not include any part consisting of or covered by a frame.”—(*David Rutley.*)

Amendment 1 and this amendment impose a size restriction on the items that can qualify for exemption as portrait miniatures, so that for example anything larger than 20 cm by 16 cm will not qualify. The size restriction applies to the visible surface area of the picture itself.

Clause 35

MEANING OF “IVORY”

Amendments made: 3, page 21, line 1, at end insert

“so as to include ivory from an animal or species (whether extant or not) that is not for the time being covered by that subsection”.

See the explanatory statement for Amendment 4.

Amendment 4, page 21, line 2, leave out subsection (3).—(*David Rutley.*)

The effect of Amendment 3 and this amendment is that regulations amending Clause 35(1) will be able to add ivory from any species of animal, including those that are not currently endangered and those that are extinct.

Third Reading

Queen’s consent signified.

5.26 pm

David Rutley: I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

What a pleasure it is to move the Third Reading motion for this important Bill. It is a simple but vital piece of legislation with a clear purpose: to help save one of the world’s most magnificent animals, the elephant, from the brink of extinction at the hands of ruthless ivory poachers. The ban on the sale of elephant ivory items of all ages, with only limited exemptions, will be

the strongest in Europe and among the strongest in the world. The introduction of the Bill has reaffirmed the UK’s global leadership on this critical issue, and reflects our commitment to making the abhorrent trade in ivory a thing of the past. By seeking to ensure that ivory is never seen by the poachers as a commodity for financial gain or by potential customers as a status symbol, we will protect elephants for future generations.

The Bill has been improved today by amendments made on Report that took account of the evidence put forward by expert witnesses in Committee. This is my first time taking a Bill through the House as a Minister, and I am grateful for the positive way in which Members have engaged with it as it has progressed; I hope that that spirit will continue. We can all be rightly proud of the Bill. Let me take this opportunity to thank all the non-governmental organisations, the museums, the antiques sector and the enforcement bodies for their contributions and written evidence taken and received in Committee evidence sessions.

Mrs Anne-Marie Trevelyan (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con): The Minister mentioned museums. On Second Reading, I raised the question of Northumbrian pipes made since 1975 using CITES-approved ivory. I understand that in Committee, despite these pipes’ unique and beautiful nature, it proved impossible to give a specific exemption for pipes made since 1975, but will the Minister meet me to discuss how we might find a way to use the local community or to set up some sort of fund, so that these pipes, which are owned by families, will not be lost to the musical traditions of Northumberland and will find a repository that can be passed on to future generations?

David Rutley: That issue was also raised by the hon. Member for Blaydon (Liz Twist). My hon. Friend is a formidable local champion and I will of course meet her to discuss how the Government can look into ways to continue to keep that rich part of her community’s heritage very much alive.

Mr Dominic Grieve (Beaconsfield) (Con): I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way. I have not involved myself in the passage of this Bill, but I was intrigued by what consideration had been given to probate valuation. If someone is the owner of a Giambologna cup made of ivory, which is potentially worth millions, and which could have an exemption certificate granted to it, but they never apply for one and they die and they hand it over to a future generation, I assume that its value will be zero for that purpose.

David Rutley: Guidance will be given to help people understand the implications of this measure. We are making sure that the new regulator does their job formally to help the antique trade understand all the implications, and there will also be a public engagement exercise. My right hon. and learned Friend makes an important point, but I am sure that it will be further scrutinised in the other place as this Bill makes progress.

Let me return now to some remarks that I had previously wanted to get through, which is that we have had good debates on clause 35 both in Committee and on Report. The widening of the power to extend the definition of ivory to include that from non-CITES

[David Rutley]

species will be important, for example, if the prohibition in elephant ivory increases pressure on other ivory-bearing species and continues to fuel demand, or if the continued trade in other forms of ivory provides cover for the illegal trade of elephant ivory. This could well include ivory from the unfairly maligned warthog and the extinct mammoths. This will come as some relief to my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare), who is no longer in his place, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham). The widening of the power will also include other endangered species that Members have mentioned with such concern, including hippos, narwhals, walruses, killer whales and sperm whales. As I said on Report, the Government are committed to action.

We have today announced that we intend to consult on extending the ban to include other ivory species, and we will seek to start the consultation process and to gather evidence on, or as soon as practicable after, Royal Assent. This process will ensure that if we do extend the scope of the ban, it will be robust, defensible, enforceable, and compliant with the European convention on human rights.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): Will my hon. Friend explain to the House how long he expects the consultation to last and what the sequence of events would be that we might arrive at some new legislation to protect these endangered species?

David Rutley: We will seek to do this as speedily as possible. A consultation normally lasts about 12 weeks, but, clearly, that work needs to be further reviewed, and then we can move things forward. I think that my hon. Friend can use his own process of deduction to work out that we can move this further and quicker than would have been set out by the Opposition's amendments.

Let me conclude by thanking once again and paying tribute to the Secretary of State for his determination to introduce this Bill. I have also mentioned the important work that the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Suffolk Coastal (Dr Coffey) has done in taking this Bill forward, ahead of its introduction in this House. It is also important to recognise the contributions from my hon. Friend the Member for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith) and from my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) who set out his long-held ambitions to take this work forward. I also wish to pay particular tribute to those members of the Bill Committee who sat through various evidence sessions and made very important contributions during the Committee stage, including the hon. Member for Workington (Sue Hayman). She made some characteristically thoughtful and considered contributions, even though we did not quite agree on some of the procedural matters. We are grateful for that constructive approach not just from Members of this House, but from representatives from conservation non-governmental organisations, from the musicians sector, from the arts and antiques sector, from the enforcement agencies and from others. I also wish to extend my thanks to our wonderful and hardworking Bill team, our private offices, our Parliamentary Private Secretaries, and the Whips who, like warthogs, can get overlooked

at times. I also wish to thank the Clerks and other parliamentary staff for their sterling work and support on this issue.

It has been a real honour to take the Bill from Second Reading through to today, particularly knowing that there has been such strong support from all parties across the House. I wish the Bill safe and speedy passage through its remaining stages in the other place.

5.35 pm

Sue Hayman: I just want to reiterate that Labour is not opposing the Bill. We have sought to strengthen it in Committee and today, and I trust that the Minister and Conservative Members who served on the Bill Committee would agree that we have demonstrated our earnest desire and efforts to do so.

It is good that there is clear, widespread, cross-party recognition that this comprehensive ban on the sale of ivory is needed. I thank the Bill Committee Clerk, Gail Poulton, for her tireless work with Members, for supporting me and my team and for her expert guidance. I also thank all members of the Committee from both sides of the House, including the Minister, for participation in a good-natured and thorough debate throughout. In particular, I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol West (Thangam Debonaie) and for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard), and my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Anna Turley), who is no longer in her place, but was wearing a marvellous elephant dress earlier. I thought I was doing well wearing ivory-coloured clothes, but there we are. I also thank my hon. Friends the Members for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and for Blaydon (Liz Twist), and my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds North West (Alex Sobel) for his introductions to Obi-Wan narwhal. I thank all those hon. Friends for their support, time and dedication over the last few weeks. I also thank all the different organisations that have given us their time and expertise.

I would go as far as to say that there has been agreement in principle from all parties in the House for the premise behind the vast majority of the Labour amendments in Committee. All we were doing was seeking to increase transparency, remove conflicts of interest and clarify the definitions in the Bill. I will just highlight a few key concerns that came up in Committee.

We discussed an annual register of items exempted for having artistic, cultural or historical value. This was strongly supported by conservation groups during the Committee's evidence hearing, and it would ensure public confidence in the ivory ban and that any exemptions applied were fair. Despite not supporting our amendment, the Minister provided an assurance in Committee that steps would be taken to ensure the utmost transparency and public confidence. In time, it would be interesting to have more detail on those assurances. We also asked for assurances regarding the potential abuse of replacement certificates, as the Bill currently includes no limit on those. Again, it would be interesting to hear from the Minister more about how any potential abuse could be eliminated.

The Committee heard that the National Wildlife Crime Unit has only 12 members of staff to cover its whole area of operations, right across the UK, and that this number includes administrative staff as well as enforcement officers. This level was a cause for concern

in Committee, given the expanded responsibilities of the unit under the Bill. The Minister mentioned the potential for this being dealt with in the autumn statement—I think that is actually the Budget now, but it moves so often—so we would be grateful if the Minister acknowledged that these concerns exist so that they can then be addressed at that point.

The Committee also heard how the internet plays a central role in the sale of ivory products. I would be grateful if the Minister outlined plans for proactively policing and monitoring this online activity and mentioned what kind of resources would be needed.

This Bill is a welcome step forward for the future of global elephant populations. I look forward to working with colleagues right across the House to ensure that we continue to do everything in our power to stamp out the global ivory trade and preserve these iconic animal species for generations to come.

Mr Speaker: A number of people still wish to speak, and we have 15 minutes remaining.

5.38 pm

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): I rise to speak in support of the Bill's Third Reading. This is a day of celebration for all animals that have horns.

I detected a slight bit of grandstanding about who should take credit for this Bill—I understand all that. The hon. Member for Workington (Sue Hayman) shared with the House the details of the terrible attack on Bella the rhino, and I absolutely understood the point that she was making. For my part, I could not care less who gets credit for the Bill; I am just delighted that it is happening. I think that the credit goes to all the women and men who have not just come to the party now, but have been campaigning on this issue year in, year out. They are the ones who should be congratulated.

I know that I am speaking in the House at the moment, where we sit opposite one another, but may I congratulate my Government, particularly the Secretary of State, for at long last dealing with this issue and achieving something? The hon. Member for Workington tabled amendments to the Bill, but, having worked it out, I think that following the consultation we can deal with the whole process within a year, which is quicker than would be the case under the Opposition's approach. Our Australian neighbours, who are not in the World Cup, are following our lead on this matter, and the Government's plan to launch the Ivory Alliance 2024 will share our position further with other countries throughout the world. This is a great day for Parliament and a great day for the animal kingdom.

5.39 pm

Dr Cameron: This is a truly historic day. We have worked extremely hard in Committee and at the Bill's other stages to bring the legislation to this point. I thank everybody who has been involved for working so well together. The Bill is historic because its purpose is to ensure that elephants and other at-risk ivory-bearing species survive and are effectively protected for generations to come. That is important for us, for our constituents right across the United Kingdom, and for future generations—our children and grandchildren, and beyond.

I am extremely proud to be able to speak today and commend the work that has taken place. I particularly thank the Minister for his careful consideration of these matters in Committee and today. He has worked very consensually. I also thank the shadow Minister for working very well. Across the House, we have all aimed to strengthen the Bill as much as possible to make sure that it has the maximum impact, because its impact is what is important and what we are aiming for. I would still like some assurances about funding for the National Wildlife Crime Unit, because we must make sure that the legislation is enforceable in the UK, and about how colleagues in DFID will work with the communities that will be affected.

I pay tribute to the environmental and animal welfare agencies and groups that have been so involved in this for so long: the International Fund for Animal Welfare, Tusk, Stop Ivory and the Born Free Foundation, to mention just a few.

People think that we spend our time in the House debating the same issues repeatedly, going round and round in circles—often quite literally—but the very best work is undertaken in cross-party form with significant cross-party agreement. This Bill is a perfect example of Parliament acting consensually in the interests of all people. I am proud to have played a part and to represent the SNP on this historic matter.

5.42 pm

Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con): I would like to put on record how pleased I am that this Bill is going through the House today, and very speedily—I am grateful for that.

At a reception at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office the other day, I watched a very sad film about Sudan, the last male white rhino, who, very sadly, died in March. There are two females left, but it looks as though they are going to die out. I do not want to attend a reception where we mourn the loss of the last elephant, so we must do all we can to protect them.

It is crucial to elephants that this Bill ushers in a vital change to bring us into line with other developed economies around the world that have already introduced their own bans. For too long, we have been overshadowed by the USA, China, France and some of the other biggest global ivory trade markets, which have already introduced comprehensive bans. I am pleased that we will now be part of that positive movement, because we have been absent for far too long.

I am delighted that the Bill will introduce a total ban on the sale of ivory, including, most importantly, antique ivory, because the antique ivory market in the UK is surprisingly large. Some so-called antique ivory is faked—it is aged and stained to look antique. We cannot allow that to happen, and that is why I am delighted that this Bill will be passed.

What is more, we must push for a global ban. In the aftermath of the Chinese ban, Ginette Hemley, the senior vice-president of the World Wildlife Fund, said:

“This ban alone won't end the poaching of elephants. It's equally critical that China's neighbors follow suit and shut down ivory markets across Asia.”

So let us in the UK lead the way with this Bill, and let other European countries follow us. I am very pleased with the Bill and I support it.

5.44 pm

Mr Jayawardena: It is rare that a Bill receives almost universal support, so it is terrific that it has been supported by Members on both sides of the House, despite a few amendments.

In the interests of time, let me cut to the crux of the matter: those awful, dangerous people who horrifically murder 20,000 or so elephants every year and are out of control. They will now see action being taken, with Britain playing its role as a leader in the world. We must act, and I am pleased that we are acting, because history will judge us on the action we take to protect these animals today and in the months ahead.

As we have heard, it is not only elephants that are endangered, so I was reassured by the Minister's confirmation that the Government intend to go further and to carry out a consultation. I know that Members on both sides of the House are grateful for that confirmation and will welcome an extension to species alive and extinct. We will watch the Government closely to ensure that that happens as soon as possible.

We are beginning to win this argument—and we must win it. There must no longer be any excuses for these murderers. There is so much money at stake, and they must not be allowed to sidestep our laws through little loopholes here and there and claim that their elephant ivory is from somewhere else. I thank all Ministers involved for taking this swift, smart action. I commend the people in my constituency who have said that they want this action and Members on both sides of the House who have called for it. Animals deserve the Bill. I am pleased that we are getting on and delivering it.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill accordingly read the Third time and passed.

Opposition Day

[15TH ALLOTTED DAY, 1ST PART]

Claim of Right for Scotland

Mr Speaker: We come to the motion in the name of the leader of the Scottish National party on the claim of right for Scotland. I inform the House that I have not selected the amendment. To move the motion, I call the leader of that party, ready in his place on the Front Bench, Mr Ian Blackford.

5.46 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I beg to move,

That this House endorses the principles of the Claim of Right for Scotland, agreed by the Scottish Constitutional Convention in 1989 and by the Scottish Parliament in 2012, and therefore acknowledges the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs.

Before I begin, I am sure the whole House will join me in congratulating the former Member for Clackmannan and East Stirlingshire and former Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, George Reid, who is celebrating his golden wedding anniversary today with his wife, Daphne.

“The principle of unlimited sovereignty of parliament is a distinctly English principle and has no counterpart in Scottish constitutional law”—

those words are not mine. They are the words of the Lord President of the Court of Session in 1953 during the case of *MacCormick v. Lord Advocate*. This Parliament, I accept, has a great deal of power, and rightly all of us who are democrats should respect the will of the people, but if we are to accept and respect that will in this place, why not in Scotland?

Why do the Tory Government think they can do whatever they want to Scotland and get away with it? Many people in Scotland are outraged that the Conservative Government have argued that times are not normal and that that allows them to change the devolution settlement in the teeth of the opposition of the Scottish Parliament. Put simply, the Conservatives have no mandate for their power grab on the Scottish Parliament. The case is this: in Scotland, it is the Scottish people who are sovereign.

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. He has spoken about a power grab. If there is a power grab, why did his leader in Scotland, the First Minister, have to increase her Cabinet from 16 to 26 because of all the extra powers coming to Holyrood, according to Nicola Sturgeon?

Ian Blackford: My goodness. We are talking about the sovereignty of the Scottish people and that is what we get. I am not even going to dignify that with a—[*Interruption.*] It is early in the debate. People will be watching, and it might be an idea—

Mr Speaker: Order. There is a tendency for there to be what I would call a gesticulation-fest whenever there is a debate between members of the Scottish National party and Government Back Benchers. The right hon. Gentleman must be heard, and I say gently to the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Ross Thomson), who is normally a model of the urbane representative of his people, that it is indeed an early stage, and he must remember above all the merits of calm.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The reason that we have chosen this debate for our Opposition day is the real anger that people in Scotland feel about what has taken place. The Parliament that Scotland voted for in the referendum in 1997 is being attacked and our rights are being attacked by a Conservative Government, backed by their so-called Scottish Tory friends, who went through the Lobby to take away powers from the Scottish Parliament. We are having this debate tonight. Let us look around us. I can see my colleagues from the SNP and, to be fair, I can see colleagues from the Liberal Democrats and the Labour MPs from Scotland are here as well. Where is the rest of the House? Where are the Conservative MPs who voted through those measures? They cannot even be bothered to turn up to defend what the Conservatives have done to Scotland. That is the reality.

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Ian Blackford: I am not going to give way. Sit down.

It is very fitting that the SNP is using our Opposition day on 4 July, Independence Day, to defend the interests, the rights and the will of the Scottish people.—*[Interruption.]* Listen, it may not be Independence Day to the hon. Member for Ribble Valley (Mr Evans), but I will tell him this: the way the Conservative party is treating Scotland, our independence day is coming and it is coming soon.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): The right hon. Gentleman says that Scotland's independence is coming. The right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael) and I tabled an amendment to his motion—unfortunately, it was not selected, but we understand why. I wonder whether he would agree with that amendment to the motion on the basis that the Scottish people did have a vote in 2014 and they agreed to stay in the United Kingdom.

Ian Blackford: As a matter of fact, the hon. Gentleman is correct. Of course the people of Scotland voted in a referendum in 2014 and I say to him and others who put their name to the amendment that, yes, we would have accepted it had it been taken this afternoon.

The fundamental issue, as many people have said, is that, when the polls opened in Scotland on 18 September 2014, between the hours of 7 o'clock in the morning and 10 o'clock at night, the people of Scotland had sovereignty in their hands. The difference between SNP Members and the Conservatives is that we believe the Scottish people are always sovereign. In the light of the change in the facts and the circumstances—those being that Scotland voted to stay in the European Union by a decisive majority, and that the wishes and the rights of the Scottish people are being ignored by a Conservative Government who want to drive us out of Europe—it is perfectly right that the people of Scotland have the opportunity to demonstrate their sovereign will.

Mr Nigel Evans (Ribble Valley) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman talks about referendums. I am getting a bit confused—it does not take a lot, I admit—but are we talking about the referendum on 23 June 2016, when the British people voted to leave the European Union

and, if they had decided to remain in the European Union, would those powers still be in Brussels, to this day?

Ian Blackford: For anyone watching this with subtitles, it might say, “Not for viewers in Scotland” because the fact of the matter is that the people of Scotland voted to stay in the European Union. That is the point. In the debate that took place during Scotland's referendum in 2014, we were told two things: that if we stayed in the United Kingdom, we were to lead the United Kingdom, but also that, if we voted to stay in the United Kingdom, then our part in Europe would also be preserved. What has happened? Any pretence of Scotland leading the UK has been thrown away by the Secretary of State for Scotland. He does not believe that we are a partner in the UK; he believes that we are a part of the UK. How can we have a Secretary of State for Scotland, who is supposed to represent Scotland's interests, when he is prepared to lie down and be walked all over because he does not see Scotland as an equal part of the United Kingdom? *[Interruption.]* He can shout and scream in this Chamber, but the reality is that he has failed to defend Scotland's interests. *[Interruption.]* Yes, you can point and gesticulate, but the people of Scotland—

Mr Speaker: Order. I am not pointing or gesticulating. I know that the right hon. Gentleman is breathing fire, with considerable eloquence and at some pace, but does he wish to take an intervention from the Secretary of State—yes or no?

Ian Blackford: I will not in this case. I am grateful, Mr Speaker. The Secretary of State will have an opportunity to speak later. I want to make progress because many Members wish to speak.

The claim of right acknowledges the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their need, and the obligation of elected representatives, in all their actions and deliberations, to ensure that the interests of the people of Scotland are paramount. The claim of right is not simply an historical document but a fundamental principle that underpins the democracy and constitutional framework of Scotland. The 1989 claim functions as a declaration of intent regarding the sovereignty of the Scottish people. It set the constitutional convention that, 10 years later, saw the people vote in a referendum for the re-establishment of a Scottish Parliament, which the UK Government now seek to undermine and ignore.

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): The right hon. Gentleman has referred to the Scottish Constitutional Convention and the claim of right in 1989. With the benefit of hindsight, does he think that it was a mistake for the Scottish National party not to sign the claim of right or take part in the constitutional convention?

Ian Blackford: I am going to come on to deal with that. I acknowledge the work of the constitutional convention, but let us not forget that the reason the SNP was in that position was that others in the constitutional convention would not allow the principle of independence to be discussed at that time. I am grateful for the enormous progress that we have made on the back of the constitutional convention. Before those

[*Ian Blackford*]

on Opposition Benches begin to jeer and snigger, yes, it is a fact that the Scottish National party was not present for the signing and did not take part in the convention. The SNP took part in early discussions, but withdrew when it became clear that the convention would not countenance independence. We believe, and continue to believe, that ruling out such an option was to deny a key principle of the claim to choose the best form of government, but we have always supported the sentiments of the claim of right. The SNP has committed, and recommitted, to its principle. We acknowledge the sovereign rights of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs.

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con): All heart.

Ian Blackford: I really, really hope that people in Scotland are watching this. A Conservative Member from south of the border who failed to be elected in Scotland says, “All heart.” This has nothing to do with heart—this is about the rights of the people of Scotland who voted for devolution and are finding that the UK Parliament is taking away their rights in the teeth of opposition from the Scottish Parliament and every single party there, with the exception of the Scottish Tories.

When will the Scottish Tories begin to listen to the people of Scotland? This is not about the SNP. This is about the Scottish Parliament. This is about the people of Scotland. Let us not forget that the Conservatives have lost every single election in Scotland since 1955. They have been defeated—[*Interruption.*] Yes, you can see—look at the 13 who have been elected. There are 35 of us here from the Scottish National party, which won the election for Scotland. That is the reality. The Conservatives are in a minority Administration in Parliament. They would love to have the majority of MPs that we have from Scotland, but it is not likely to happen.

We have defended the sentiment time and again, and we are here to do so again. “Why today?” some in the Chamber might ask. Well, the fact of the matter is that, over the past few weeks, we have seen the biggest power grab by this Government since devolution.

Douglas Ross *rose*—

Ian Blackford: Sit down. We have seen the Tory Government disrespect the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Government and the Scottish people. The interests and the democratic choices of the people of Scotland have been shoved aside by the UK Government. Devolution has been downgraded and the authority of our Parliament has been diminished. While the Tory Government in London seek to destroy our constitutional settlement and undermine the sovereignty of the Scottish people, we in the SNP will not let the Scottish people be ignored.

Alberto Costa: Turn up the volume.

Ian Blackford: I would simply say, just carry on, because what you have just done is insult the people of Scotland—[*Interruption*—] as you continue to do. We will do all we can to ensure that the wishes of the Scottish people are respected. Today, we ask—[*Interruption.*] I hear, “Scotland’s watching.” The question

to the Conservatives is: will you respect the sovereignty of the people of Scotland, yes or no? You have failed dismally to do it up til now.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): I hugely respect the fact that the right hon. Gentleman says that he will respect the wishes of the Scottish people. Will that extend to respecting the wishes of the Scottish people when they voted no in the referendum and that was to be an end to it?

Ian Blackford: I am not sure the hon. Lady has been listening to me, because I have made that point. Of course we respect the 2014 referendum result, but the simple fact of the matter is that the circumstances have changed: we are being dragged out of Europe against our will. I expect that she wants us to stay in the single market and the customs union. She talks about a second referendum on Europe. What she should do is get behind the Scottish National party because, let me remind this House, in 2016 the SNP went to the people of Scotland and sought a mandate on having a referendum on Scottish independence if circumstances in Scotland changed. Guess what? We have a majority for independence in the Scottish Parliament. If you want to protect Scotland’s interests in Europe, and if you want to stay in the single market and the customs union, it may well be the case that independence for Scotland is the only way to do that.

Christine Jardine: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Ian Blackford: I am going to make progress.

Today, we ask the House to consider the claim of right, to recommit itself to the spirit of devolution and to place the people of Scotland at the heart of decisions, not cast them aside. Only a few weeks ago, we witnessed the shameful Tory power grab. This House and this Government showed nothing but utter contempt for the devolved Administrations as the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill was pushed through without consideration of the views of the devolved institutions. The Scottish Parliament voted overwhelmingly, by 93 votes to 30, to refuse legislative consent for clause 15 of the Bill. As such, the Bill should not have been passed through the House of Commons with the clause intact, but the Tories decided this was acceptable. They trotted through the Lobby, voting against the will of the Scottish people—that’s what you did.

We all know that the Sewel convention established the long-held practice that the UK Government cannot legislate on devolved areas without the consent of the devolved Parliament—or at least we thought we did. [*Interruption.*] Well, there we are: this is the sovereign Parliament. You might want to say that to your voters in Scotland: that you do not believe it is the people of Scotland who are sovereign, as was defined in the court case in 1953. You are prepared to throw away the sovereignty of the people of Scotland and allow Westminster to do whatever it likes. Frankly, that is not acceptable to the rest of us. How can you be Secretary of State for Scotland if you behave in such a way? That is not the Secretary of State for Scotland; that is the Government’s man in Scotland.

The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell) *rose*—

Ian Blackford: Sit down! Sit down.

Mr Speaker: Order. Just before the right hon. Gentleman continues, may I appeal to colleagues to lower the temperature? Passion is fine, and of course the right hon. Gentleman has the floor and is perfectly entitled to refuse to take an intervention, but I think simply to say baldly, “Sit down” to any Member is less than the courtesy we normally get from the right hon. Gentleman. I know he may feel he is being provoked, but he must avoid being provoked. He is certainly not being provoked by the Secretary of State. Let us just try to lower the temperature and have the debate on the issues, rather than on personalities.

Ian Blackford: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Now, thanks to the Tories, we have reached a dangerous and difficult place, which has exposed their lack of commitment to the Sewel convention. Their Brexit power grab has basically ripped up the Sewel convention and plunged us into constitutional crisis. We are in unknown territory. Only if the UK Government act to recognise and respect the will of the Scottish Parliament can we repair some of the damage. I say again to the Government: you have acted without the consent of the Scottish Parliament.

Bring forward legislation that will protect the powers of the Scottish Parliament, and do it now. If the Secretary of State recognises his role in defending devolution, he should do so, and a failure to do that should mean, quite frankly, that he should resign because he is not standing up for the interests of the people of Scotland.

The House should know that it is not simply the SNP’s view that the Tory power grab has thrown the devolution settlement into crisis. In Scotland, the feeling is apparent everywhere you go. People right across Scotland want power in Scotland’s hands. Recent polling from NatCen revealed that a majority of Scots trust Holyrood to make decisions in areas that the Tories want to grab for Westminster. Over 60% want fishing decisions in Scotland following Brexit and 59% want farming powers in Scottish hands.

Of course, the Tories have form because we know that in 2013, the European Union voted to give additional payments to Scottish crofters and farmers—€230-odd million of additional support—86% of which was supposed to come to Scotland between 2016 and 2020. What has happened? Westminster has handed over 16.5%. The rest has gone into budgets across the rest of the United Kingdom, and crofters and farmers have been short-changed by a Government that have not accepted their obligations to Scottish farmers. It is little wonder that people in Scotland want to make sure that the Scottish Parliament have powers over farming and fishing, and not this Tory Government who have not just grabbed powers but have grabbed money out of the pockets of hard-working Scottish crofters and farmers.

A majority of Scots have lost confidence in the UK’s handling of Brexit, with a full 69% now saying that they believe it has been badly handled. During earlier debates, we heard the Tories trying to justify the UK Government’s shoddy power grab by falsely claiming that Scotland would not lose powers. However, the Scottish Government published a list of powers at risk. They include powers over fishing, farming, rail franchises and fracking licences, to name but a few, but this Government have shown

disrespect to our Parliament more than once. Their legal challenges to the Scottish Parliament’s continuity Bill, for one, clearly show the arrogance of the Conservative Government when faced with the will of the Scottish people. Why is it right that the Conservative Government believe that they can take the Scottish Parliament and, by extension, the Scottish people to court? That is exactly what is happening—what arrogance!

The Scottish Parliament voted by 95 votes to 32 to pass the continuity Bill, aimed at preparing Scotland’s laws for the impact of leaving the EU in the light of the refusal to grant a legislative consent motion to Westminster’s European Union (Withdrawal) Bill. The people of Scotland expect the two Governments to co-operate on these matters. They also expect that the decisions and responsibilities of the Scottish Parliament should be respected. The decision, therefore, of the UK Government to attempt to overturn the will of the Scottish Parliament in the courts is unprecedented and unacceptable.

Christine Jardine: On that point, those who were responsible for framing the devolution settlement have assured me that what is happening now is what was intended and is included—*[Interruption.]* It is what people voted for in 1997 and is included in the devolution settlement. If the right hon. Gentleman is so concerned about Scotland being “dragged” out of the European Union, why does he not join us in backing a people’s vote on the final deal?

Ian Blackford: I simply say that if the hon. Lady wants to stay in Europe and in the single market and the customs union, there is already a mandate in the Scottish Parliament for a referendum of independence. Join us in protecting Scotland’s interests!

Mr Carmichael: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

Ian Blackford: No, I will not—I am going to make progress.

Westminster cannot unilaterally rewrite the devolution settlement and impose UK-wide frameworks in devolved areas without consent. The truth of the matter is that right from the start of the Brexit process, we have seen the UK Government attempting to avoid all attempts at democratic engagement. It took a decision from the courts to force them to consult Parliament over the decision to trigger article 50. Similarly, the UK Government ignored all requests from the devolved Administrations to be involved in the process of triggering article 50, despite Scotland voting overwhelmingly to remain in the EU. Where was the respect? Where was the engagement? There was none.

The Tories have not just ignored the will of the Scottish Parliament; they ignore the interests of the Scottish people. For years, their austerity agenda has punished the people of Scotland. The Tory obsession with punishing the poor and protecting the rich has seen families struggle in hardship, women denied their right to a fair pension, and women who were victims rape made to justify their rights to child benefit. It is absolutely shameful. The policies of this Tory Government are morally repugnant and have no place in a civilised, compassionate Scotland.

[Ian Blackford]

On 26 January 2012, Nicola Sturgeon, the First Minister of Scotland, led a debate on the claim of right with the motion that Parliament

“acknowledge the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs, and do hereby declare and pledge that in all our actions and deliberations their interests shall be paramount.”

At that time, 102 MSPs voted for the motion, with 14 Tories voting against—the same old Tories voting against the sovereignty of the Scottish people. Even then, the Tories could not, would not, stand up for the Scottish people.

Ged Killen (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Lab/Co-op): The right hon. Gentleman is talking about the words of Nicola Sturgeon, and I just wanted to draw his attention to her words at the SNP’s Aberdeen conference in 2015, when she said:

“To propose another referendum in the next parliament without strong evidence that a significant number of those who voted No have changed their minds would be wrong and we won’t do it. It would not be respecting the decision that people made.”

What has changed since she said that?

Ian Blackford: For the hard of hearing on the Labour Benches: Brexit.

The Tories pay lip service to devolution, but they do not believe in it. They do not believe that the Scottish people should have the right to determine the form of government that best suits their needs. What are they afraid of? They are afraid of power being in the hands of the Scottish people. Surely, we are all democrats. Surely, even the UK Government must now accept that it is the people we serve, not they who serve us. That is the crux of this debate. As outlined in the quote I began my remarks with, in Scotland things are different because our view of government is different: it is not top-down; it is ground-up. The single job of government is to serve the interests of our people. It is to carry out their will and to improve their lives—something the Tories have yet to learn.

Today, let the Tories learn this. In Scotland, the people of Scotland are sovereign and the Scottish Parliament embodies the sovereignty of the Scottish people. Next year sees the 20th anniversary of the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament—something that was fought for by many for generations. [Interruption.] I hear someone shouting, “Not you!”

Mr Carmichael: It was one of your colleagues actually.

Ian Blackford: Well, if the comment was about the Conservatives, it was absolutely right. Let us not forget that Bill after Bill was introduced in this Parliament from 1913 right through to the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. In 1997, the Conservatives opposed devolution, and they are still opposing it, which is why they are attacking the Scottish Parliament’s powers with such glee, led by this so-called Secretary of State for Scotland. He should be ashamed of himself.

Our Scottish Parliament finds itself under threat of a power grab from the very party that opposed its creation in the first place. More than two decades after Scotland voted for a Scottish Parliament, the UK Government’s withdrawal Bill constitutes the biggest power grab since devolution. The Secretary of State promised a

“powers bonanza” to the Scottish Parliament, while his colleague the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs went as far as to suggest that immigration powers could be devolved to Scotland. Despite that promise, the Secretary of State for Scotland consistently failed to name one power in that bonanza coming back to Scotland. In December 2017, he promised that amendments would be made to the withdrawal Bill on Report, before going back on that promise and allowing amendments to be made only in the unelected House of Lords. The Secretary of State has not once apologised for the fact that the House of Commons never had that opportunity—that this elected Chamber never had the opportunity to discuss amendments to a Bill that affected the devolution of Scotland—thus showing utter contempt for our Parliament and for our people. Since then the Secretary of State has been missing in action, refusing to lead on an emergency debate on the Sewel convention that was called by the SNP following a refusal to allow time for us to debate clause 15 once the Bill had returned from the House of Lords.

If Members are not convinced of the Secretary of State’s inadequacy for the job, let them hear this. He recently removed all doubt about his views by saying, “Scotland is not a partner in the UK.” Scotland is not equal: that is exactly what this Government think of the people of Scotland, and their actions reflect that sentiment. The Secretary of State cannot stand up for Scotland, because he does not recognise Scotland as a partner in the United Kingdom. He has unilaterally downgraded our role. It is little wonder that he is without consequence when it comes to standing up for Scotland. What a damning indictment of the Tory party!

David Mundell: The right hon. Gentleman is setting out his case for independence, which is to be based on deceit and misrepresentation. I never once said—and I have *Hansard* here to prove it—that Scotland was not part of the United Kingdom, or was not a partner in the United Kingdom. What SNP Members claim is that Scotland is a partner of the United Kingdom, because they want Scotland and the United Kingdom to be separate entities. They are not. Scotland is part of the United Kingdom; Scotland is at the heart of the United Kingdom; and, ultimately, that is what the right hon. Gentleman objects to.

Ian Blackford: What we object to is a Secretary of State who cannot do his job in standing up for the people of Scotland. The simple fact is that what we are talking about today is the claim of right for Scotland. We are not arguing for independence for Scotland, although that day will come. We are simply talking about the principle and about where sovereignty lies. We are affirming the rights of the people of Scotland to be sovereign. Everyone can see what is going on here. Conservative Members seem to be denying the rights of the people to that sovereignty.

Let me issue this challenge to the Conservatives, here and now: we have placed a motion before you. Have the guts to come through the Lobbies tonight with us, affirming the sovereignty of the Scottish people, or, if you so dare, oppose the motion. Show that you have the guts to stand in the face of that motion. If you fail to do so, it will be the accepted will of this House that it has recognised the sovereignty of the Scottish people.

Tonight you have a choice. You can sit and chunter and shout and bawl and laugh, as you have done since the debate started, or you can go through the Lobbies later and stand up for the people of Scotland. You can affirm the sovereignty of the people of Scotland, or you can flunk it. History has shown that, on every step of the way, you have argued against the interests of the people of Scotland.

Bill Grant (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (Con): Let me just say that Members on this side never walked out and turned their backs on the people of Scotland from this Parliament, unlike those on the right hon. Gentleman's side.

Ian Blackford: The simple fact is that we were faced with a situation—and the hon. Gentleman should be ashamed—in which the Conservative Government pushed through the withdrawal Bill, which took powers from the Scottish Parliament without a debate in the House. The hon. Gentleman and all his friends went through the Lobbies to take those powers from the people of Scotland. I am proud of the fact that it is the Scottish National party that is standing up for the people of Scotland. What the Conservatives are doing is allowing Scotland to be walked all over, and the hon. Gentleman and his friends are guilty as charged.

The Conservative party has no mandate to speak for Scotland, but thinks it can do whatever it wants to Scotland and get away with it. The Conservatives opposed devolution in the first place. They have consistently voted against Scotland's interests, and now they want to dismantle the rights of our Parliament, downgrading devolution and dismissing the views of the people of Scotland. The people of Scotland asked for none of this. They voted decisively against leaving the European Union, yet now they face the socioeconomic chaos from a hard Tory Brexit.

Before she became Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) set out her view of a UK

“in which Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England continue to flourish side-by-side as equal partners.”

Yet the views of the people of Scotland are disregarded; instead the Prime Minister has shut out and silenced the people of Scotland from the Brexit debate. The Secretary of State for Scotland was not even invited to the meeting at Chequers where the Government discussed Brexit; his views were not called upon, inconsequential in the process the UK Government were going through.

While the Scottish Parliament is not yet 20 years old, it has made remarkable achievements in free education, personal care and prescriptions, world-leading climate change targets, the smoking ban, and huge strides forwards in attitude towards sectarianism, sexual equality and multiculturalism.

Meanwhile there is the question of waiting times. When we look at A&E in Scottish hospitals, we find that the record is far better than that of the Conservative Government in London, and the hon. Member for Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock (Bill Grant), rather than doing down the health service in Scotland, should be talking up the successes of the Scottish Parliament and Government in delivering for the people of Scotland.

Meanwhile in Westminster, the cruel and callous Tory policies, such as the rape clause, the bedroom tax, austerity and of course Brexit, stand in stark contrast

to our approach. In Scotland we do things differently, and this place needs to recognise that the first step is for Westminster to respect the will of the Scottish Parliament. Will this place do it? Will this House recognise that the Scottish Parliament has not given a consent motion to the withdrawal Bill? Will this Parliament now recant and make sure the powers that have been grabbed are sent back to the Scottish Parliament? That is what the people of Scotland expect.

We were promised this in 2014: Gordon Brown said a no vote in the independence referendum would lead to changes offering “as close to federalism as possible”. In the end nothing close to that was delivered. And before the Tories leap from their Benches, I say yes, we in the SNP respect the will of the Scottish people decided in 2014, but the claim of right is important, because it allows the sovereignty of Scotland to choose, and that means that if Scotland decides it wants change, then it should be respected. Why should Conservatives stand in the way of the sovereignty and rights of the Scottish people, and why should Scottish Conservatives allow that to happen? Is their responsibility not to stand up for their constituents—for their needs and their wishes?

The Scottish Government were elected in May 2016 on a manifesto which said in relation to independence:

“The Scottish Parliament should have the right to hold another referendum...if there is a significant and material change in the circumstances that prevailed in 2014, such as Scotland being taken out the EU against our will.”

Given events since 2016, there is therefore no question about the legitimacy of the Scottish Parliament and the people of Scotland to consider the question of independence. Everything has changed.

This Parliament today must show that it understands, recognises and respects the right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs, including during this time of significant change. I urge all Members to defend the interests of the people of Scotland and to vote to recognise the claim of the right of the Scottish people. Our people's sovereignty—Scotland's sovereignty—must be, and will be, respected.

6.24 pm

The Secretary of State for Scotland (David Mundell): May I begin by sharing the good wishes expressed towards George Reid, the former presiding officer of the Scottish Parliament? I voted for George Reid to be presiding officer in 1999 and again in 2003 because he was a man of substance. George Reid was not a man who would have come to this Chamber as an MP and dished out abuse to another Member and then failed to take an intervention. He was not a man who would have come to this Chamber and distorted the words of a fellow MP so that he could put forward his case. He was a man of principle who argued—and I am sure still argues—for independence on the basis of principle, not of deceit, abuse and misrepresentation.

This debate is a missed opportunity. We could have been discussing the future of Scotland. We could have spent the time talking about our plans to realise the sea of opportunity presented to our fishermen by leaving the EU. We could have talked about city deals, or our industrial strategy. Instead, we are having this debate, which says nothing about the future of Scotland but everything about the Scottish National party and their

[David Mundell]

obsession with independence. They are like a broken record. It is less than two years since Parliament debated the claim of right at the behest of the SNP. In the interim, we have had an electoral test in Scotland in the form of a general election. The result, as I recall, was that the SNP lost 21 seats and that there were 12 Conservative gains. That debate was a charade then—an excuse to talk about independence—and it is a charade today. But what else should we expect?

The leader of the SNP Westminster group, the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), set out his position very clearly exactly a week ago. Nothing else matters to the SNP—not improving Scotland's sluggish economy, and certainly not preparing Scotland for Brexit. For the right hon. Gentleman, Brexit is nothing more than a

“clear road map to a second independence referendum”.

That is his stated priority.

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): The right hon. Gentleman is arguing that this debate is all about a second independence referendum and about the SNP. Can I ask him this: does he agree with article 1 of the charter of the United Nations?

David Mundell: I am sure that I do agree with article 1 of the charter of the United Nations. I believe in people's right to self-determination, and I believe that the people of Scotland set out clearly what they wanted in the 2014 independence referendum. The problem is that the SNP cannot accept that most inconvenient of truths for them. The people of Scotland exercised their right to choose their future in 2014. They were very clear that they wished to remain in the United Kingdom. Shamefully, the SNP are determined to ignore them—the people they claim to represent. If the SNP truly believed in the rights of the Scottish people, would they not accept the result? Would they not listen to the Scottish people?

The claim of right in 1989 played an important part in the campaign for a Scottish Parliament. It was about devolution, and its authors were explicit in their aims. As we have already heard, the Scottish National party acknowledged as much when they refused to sign it. They refused to sign it because it had nothing to do with their own cause of independence. So in this debate we have not only the claim of right to consider; we also have the claim of rewriting history. That is a claim that has often been levelled at the SNP.

Rather than misrepresenting the claim of right as a means of justifying a second, unwanted independence referendum, the SNP should reflect on what it really means. It means that the UK Government respected the right of the people of Scotland to choose whether to remain part of the UK. It means that we worked with the Scottish Government to facilitate the referendum in 2014. It means that, together, we delivered a legal, fair and decisive vote. The decision of the people of Scotland—reaffirming their desire to have two Parliaments and two Governments—should be respected.

Joanna Cherry: Will the Minister give way?

David Mundell: Not at this stage.

The UK Government have consistently supported devolution. After the 2014 vote, we established the Smith commission with a view to expanding the powers of the Scottish Parliament. We delivered Lord Smith's recommendations in full, adding wide-ranging new powers over tax and welfare to the devolution settlement and establishing Holyrood as one of the most powerful devolved legislatures in the world. We are committed to working closely with the Scottish Government to transfer the last of the new powers smoothly and securely, and devolution will be strengthened further as we leave the EU and powers that have been held in Brussels for 40 years flow to Holyrood.

It is surely a strange kind of power grab that leaves the grabbed with more power than ever. I have been disappointed, but not in the slightest bit surprised, by the SNP's power grab scaremongering, their hot air and their grandstanding stunts. However, I was surprised when the whole confection of the alleged power grab was shot down by none other than Nicola Sturgeon during her reshuffle last week. She said, “I need more Ministers because of all the extra powers that the Scottish Government must exercise.” It was incredible.

The UK Government are working closely with the Scottish Government as powers return from Brussels, and I do not think that more than 80 powers returning directly to the Scottish Parliament should be scoffed at. It is a real opportunity for the Scottish Parliament to continue to shape what is best for Scotland. Throughout the process we have followed, and will follow, the Sewel convention—one of the pillars of the devolution settlement. It is a cast-iron commitment and not difficult to make because, unlike the SNP, we believe in devolution.

The people of Scotland voted for devolution in 1997. We accepted their decision and embraced devolution. The people of Scotland reaffirmed their support for remaining in the United Kingdom in 2014. In every election to the Scottish Parliament since 1999, a majority of voters have backed parties that support devolution. How much democracy does the SNP need before it gets the message?

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP): Was Ruth Davidson not spot on when she said after the independence referendum that it was entirely legitimate, even honourable, for the SNP to continue to argue its case for Scottish independence?

David Mundell: Indeed. It is perfectly legitimate and even honourable for the SNP to argue the case for independence, but not on the pretext that it is standing up for devolution, in which it clearly does not believe.

The SNP has neither accepted nor supported devolution other than as a stepping stone to independence. It does not want devolution to succeed and seeks any excuse to undermine it. Within minutes of the result of the EU referendum being declared, Nicola Sturgeon put her civil servants to work drawing up plans for a second independence referendum and, in the same breath, airbrushed from history the 1 million people in Scotland who voted to leave the EU—500,000 of them probably SNP supporters, whose views have been completely disregarded.

The SNP has sought not to deliver Brexit—that would be respecting voters across the UK, which it finds impossible—but to weaponise it in its campaign

for independence. I am pleased to say the Prime Minister has been clear about the SNP's obsession with independence. The PM said last year: "Now is not the time". Our position is exactly the same today. It will not be the time in the autumn; nor will it be when we leave the EU in the spring of next year. We will respect the wishes of the Scottish people which, as opinion polls have consistently shown, have not changed since 2014. The nationalists should do the same.

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): The right hon. Gentleman makes much of the result of the EU referendum, but he refuses to accept that the result in Scotland was different. Okay, assuming for a moment that he is correct, would he care to comment on John Major's analysis of the EU referendum? He said:

"Many electors now know they were misled" and that the leave campaign was verging on "squalid".

David Mundell: People have strong views about the EU referendum, but a vote was held throughout the United Kingdom, and it was clear from the outset that it would be. The majority of people across the UK voted to leave the EU, and I respect that decision.

Paul Masterton (East Renfrewshire) (Con): Does the Secretary of State agree that the crucial problem here is that SNP Members appear to be completely unable to distinguish between the will of the Scottish people and the whim of the Scottish National party?

David Mundell: Indeed, my hon. Friend is right. This is all about independence. Everything put to us this evening—the complaints about the current constitutional arrangements—is not about standing up against those arrangements or standing up for Scotland in the devolution settlement but about finding a way to put yet another argument for independence.

SNP Members are ignoring the wishes of the Scottish people, and they are losing the argument. In fact, they are no longer arguing at all, except among themselves. The speech by the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber was as much for an SNP conference, for a core SNP audience, as it was for this Chamber. I do not know, Madam Deputy Speaker, whether you remember the big tent that they promised to put up after their defeat in the 2014 referendum to encourage more people to support their cause—their promise to listen, for once, to the majority of Scots. Well, the big tent has been torn down. All we have now are manufactured grievances. They invent; they misrepresent; they abuse. They try to shout down those who disagree with them. They glory in childish stunts that embarrass the people they purport to represent. If we believe in democracy and the principle contained in the claim of right, the most important thing we must do is listen to the people. We must respect the votes they have cast. We must listen when they say they do not want a second, divisive independence referendum.

I am happy to support the motion this evening—I would have preferred it if the amendment had been selected and added—because I do believe that the people of Scotland determine their constitutional future. They have done that: they want to stay in the United Kingdom.

6.37 pm

Lesley Laird (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Lab): I have no doubt that today's debate simply sums up what passes as political leadership in Scotland. Indeed, we have already heard the gist of it from the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford). The majority of people in Scotland are entirely sick of it.

The people of Scotland are stuck between two competing nationalist Governments, which results in debates like the one we will hear tonight. For hon. Members who are not from Scotland: if people in the UK are fed up with listening to talk of Brexit, on which the referendum was only two years ago, just think how fed up people in Scotland are every time they hear the word "independence."

Before 2014, depending on who we listened to, we were told that the independence referendum was a once-in-a-generation or a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. We even heard that in the Scottish Government's White Paper—question 557 on page 566—which turns out to be one more piece of proof that the White Paper was a work of fiction, cobbled together at taxpayers' expense.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: If not cobbled together, what was Gordon Brown's description of Scotland getting the closest thing to federalism possible if it voted no?

Lesley Laird: As Members have touched on, the vow was fully delivered. The fact that the Scottish Government have had to increase the size of the Cabinet so much in the past few years simply reflects the fact that they have more powers and that they are recognised as the most powerful independent Parliament in the UK.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Lesley Laird: I will move on.

Here we are today, not four years after the referendum, and the issue has never gone away. Labour's position on the claim of right is unambiguous. We helped to write it; we signed it; we supported it in the past, and we will support it in the future. The claim of right states that the Scottish people have the sovereign right to determine the form of government best suited to their needs. Determining the form of government best suited to their needs is exactly what people in Scotland already do and it is exactly what they did in the 2014 independence referendum. People in Scotland were faced with a choice: to leave the United Kingdom and have the Scottish Government as their sole Government, or to remain in the United Kingdom and have two Governments. They chose the latter, by 55% to 45%.

Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP): The motion talks about the claim of right, rather than the votes we have had previously. Labour used to support this, so I wonder whether the hon. Lady feels she might be able to support the motion this evening.

Lesley Laird: Labour will always be happy to support the claim of right—I have just outlined that position.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Lesley Laird: If Members will allow me to continue, I will expand further on that point. The form of government that people in Scotland chose was that of dual governance,

[Lesley Laird]

something that the SNP has failed to accept. It is not what is best for Scotland that SNP Members are interested in, but what is best for their single obsession. If anyone thinks otherwise, the launch of a petition today on rewriting the claim of right to reference only independence should leave no one in any doubt about the SNP's priorities. The Labour party supported the current claim of right. In fact, I would argue that the claim of right was instrumental in the Scottish Constitutional Convention that led to devolution in Scotland. That fact goes to the heart of the issue we face today. Two parties did not sign the claim of right in 1989—the SNP and the Conservatives. Why did they not sign it? The Tories never signed it because they did not believe in devolution, and, as their recent performances show, they still do not. The SNP never signed it because the SNP has never been interested in devolution—it has always been, and still is, all about independence. The irony now is that the SNP is asking us to support the principles of something that it never signed up to in the first place! Again, I guess we are where we are.

Let me talk about where we are today. This is the SNP's half-day debate, one of only three Opposition day debates the SNP gets a year. Is it not extraordinary that of all the things that the SNP could have used this time to talk about this is what they opted for? It is absolutely extraordinary, except of course when it is seen through the narrow prism of the SNP's obsession. Politics will always be about priorities.

Stephen Kerr: It is extraordinary that the SNP has chosen this subject for its half-day debate. What is even more extraordinary is the performance of the leader of the SNP in this place. It is with great sadness that I reflect on how diminished a personage he now is in the eyes of this House because of the way in which he has conducted himself in these debates. He has been largely impolite. He has shouted abuse across the Floor of the House. Does the hon. Lady agree that the standards of Parliament demand that we set a high standard—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. Enough.

Lesley Laird: I think the Speaker set out clearly the standards that are expected of all Members. As the hon. Gentleman highlighted, the public are indeed watching.

As I was saying, politics is, as ever, about priorities. By neglecting so many serious issues today, the SNP has shown contempt for the real issue and the issues of their constituents. The SNP could have chosen to talk about issues of welfare as they affect Scotland, such as the unfair treatment of terminally ill patients or the motor neurone disease group that has come to London, even in the bitter snow, to plead for reform of the assessment programme. The SNP could have chosen to talk about the fact that 52% of people living in poverty in Scotland are actually in work. The SNP could have chosen to talk about the 1.8 million people on zero-hours contracts. The SNP could have chosen to talk about the unprecedented growth in the use of food banks. In my own constituency, Kirkcaldy food bank has seen its spend go from £3,000 a month to £8,000 a month now.

SNP Members could have chosen to talk about the one in four children in Scotland living in poverty, and they could have supported Scottish Labour's amendment to the Bill in the Scottish Parliament, but they did not. They could have chosen to talk about the thousands of 1950s women who have had their pension callously and cruelly cut by the Conservative Government. They could have chosen to talk about the need for investment in shipbuilding in Rosyth and Govan and the UK Government's decision to put the fleet solid support ships contract out to international tender. They could have chosen to talk about industrial strategy, or lack of it, and how that impacts on Scottish jobs, or about the hostile immigration policy that has seen Giorgi, a 10-year-old orphaned boy facing uncertainty and the Kamil family going on hunger strike, an issue raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow North East (Mr Sweeney). These are real people, with real-life issues, and they need MPs like us to use this platform to raise their issues. But no, instead, SNP Members chose to talk about what they always talk about; instead, they chose to debate the only thing that truly matters to them: the constitution and indyref2.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): The hon. Lady just listed a number of subjects that she wants to be debated; will she confirm which of them Labour will choose as the subject of its Opposition day debate next week?

Lesley Laird: I am happy to confirm that to the hon. Gentleman after this debate; I am focused on the matter at hand.

We are where we are. Labour is opposed to a second referendum. People in Scotland made their decision and they decided to remain part of the UK. YouGov polling from June shows that absolutely nothing has changed: it is still 55% to 45%.

In the light of the SNP growth commission paper, Labour would not stand by and see the people of Scotland being subjected to at least another 10 years of austerity just to balance the books. The reality of the "cuts commission" is there for all to see. Read it and weep about what the SNP is prepared to inflict upon the Scottish people, all in the name of independence. My colleagues in the Scottish Parliament will always oppose it.

Labour is clear that the fight against indyref2 is not for this place, because—let me be clear—at that point it is about process. If people in Scotland elect to the Scottish Parliament parties that wish to hold a second referendum, it is not for Westminster to deny them that right. That is exactly what the claim of right is about, and were we to vote against that, we would not be upholding the principle of the claim of right.

I wish now to make some points to Government Members and ask them to do something that they have failed to do so far, which is listen. I was delighted that the Secretary of State indicated that he was prepared to listen this evening. Your actions are fanning the fires of a second independence referendum. The UK Government's complete inability to negotiate Brexit, layered on top of their inability to engage in a meaningful way with the Scottish Government on Brexit, has led us down this path. That is what has led to the constitutional bind in which we find ourselves. I find that astounding for a party that claims to be the protector of the Union.

Government Members know that the SNP's cause is always furthered by grievance, so why would the UK Government allow grievances to occur and to be exploited, when they have it in their gift to address the concerns? Because Scotland's voice has been shut out of the Brexit negotiations. There has been no Joint Ministerial Committee for eight months. Discussions between the Governments have broken down entirely. There has been no debate on the final devolution amendments.

David Mundell: I know that some Opposition Members—I would not have thought the hon. Lady was among them—want to talk up this point about relations having broken down and to say that the Governments are not in contact, but there is a JMC meeting tomorrow.

Lesley Laird: I am absolutely delighted about that; let us hope it is more productive than the previous two meetings, which were cancelled.

The Scottish Parliament voted overwhelmingly to withhold consent for the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, yet the Government are still not listening. I simply say to Government Members and to the Secretary of State: what did the UK Government expect to happen?

Our constituents do not want us to stand in the House of Commons giving each other a history lesson. They want us to be here defending them and addressing the gross inequality that we see in our society. As we all know, we do not have to look very far to see that. Independence will not solve the problems that we face in our society. I argue that, based on the “cuts commission”, the inequality that we see in our society would become even greater.

People in Scotland do have the right to determine the Government best suited to their needs, and the choice is becoming very, very clear. A vote for the Tories is a vote for austerity, and a vote for the SNP is a vote for austerity. A vote for the Labour party is a vote for jobs, for investment in health and education and for a different way of doing things that addresses the fundamental issues that matter to people day in and day out.

Labour has committed to ending this austerity junket, and we commit ourselves to an economy that works for the people, rather than people simply working for the economy. We have committed to major investment in Scotland. In March, my right hon. Friend, the shadow Chancellor, detailed how Scotland would benefit to the tune of £70 billion over the course of 10 years if there were a Labour Government across the UK. Some £30 billion of that would be from Barnett consequentials, which means greater investment in our schools, our NHS, our local communities and our police and fire services. The only way that the people in Scotland will see the change that their society requires is from a radical Labour Government who have the political will to tackle poverty and inequality, extend public ownership and redistribute power from the few to the many. That is the economic and social transformation that Scotland urgently needs, and that will not come from another referendum on leaving the UK. The sovereign people of Scotland have already clearly expressed their view; it is time to respect it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. Before I call the next speaker, it will be obvious to the House that a great many people wish to speak this evening and that we have limited time. There will therefore be an initial time limit of eight minutes, though that might be reduced.

Before I call the next person to speak, let me say that I hesitate always to interrupt someone when they are in the flow of their rhetoric, but it has been very difficult not to do so when several people this evening have used the word “you” when they are talking about other people in this Chamber. In this Chamber, the word “you” means the Chair. There is a good reason for not saying “you”, because “you” is a very direct, personal criticism, whereas “the hon. Gentleman” or “the hon. Lady” is once removed, and that is how we do things in this Chamber. It is very important to keep that distance when we have a heated debate, so although I have not interrupted anybody so far for the use of the word “you”, I will from now on. You—I am allowed to say “you”—have been warned.

6.52 pm

Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con): Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. If I can use the word “you”, I will say that it is great to see you in the Chair for this important debate about Scotland.

I have to say that I love this place; I love the Chamber—*[Interruption.]* The hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) says that I love the Nou Camp. Yes, I do. It was a great honour and privilege for me, as someone from Moray who started on football pitches at Forres Academy, to reach the Nou Camp.

David Linden *rose*—

Douglas Ross: I will come to the hon. Gentleman in a minute.

I was very grateful for the support that I received in Moray from people who were not impressed by the antics of the SNP, which forced me to give up a lifetime ambition. That has happened, and I accept it—I am delighted to be here tonight to speak—but to make such petty remarks is really following in the footsteps of the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), and I hope that, as I give way to the hon. Gentleman, he will consider his tone in this debate.

David Linden: The point is that on the night when the hon. Gentleman was at the Nou Camp, he was not here scrutinising the Government on universal credit.

Douglas Ross: That debate on universal credit was one in which I was never intending to speak, and that night's vote was very interesting, because no one voted against the motion on universal credit. The debate was called for by SNP Members, and they then manufactured a vote. We will all be looking very closely at manufactured votes if there is consensus in the Chamber tonight on what we are debating.

I agreed wholeheartedly with the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr). I started off by saying that I love this place. I love this Chamber and I love these Benches, but tonight, for the first time, I have not enjoyed it. I like the cut and thrust of debate as much as anyone else, but I do not agree with the personal attacks on the Secretary of State for Scotland that we saw from the right hon. Member for

[Douglas Ross]

Ross, Skye and Lochaber. Hon. Members can disagree with the office and with what the Secretary of State is doing, but to get so personal—to play the man rather than the ball—does not serve the right hon. Gentleman well and does not serve his party well. When I tried to intervene on the right hon. Gentleman, he was throwing his arm at me disrespectfully and he had to be called out by Mr Speaker for his actions. I hope that after this Opposition day debate he will reflect on the way in which he performs in this Chamber, because Scotland is watching and Scotland wants to see its politicians in both Parliaments working together where they can, and constructively disagreeing when that has to happen, but not doing so in such a personal way. I hope that the right hon. Gentleman's current silence means that he is reflecting on what he said and, more importantly, how he said it.

Ian Blackford: I want to reiterate that my opposition to the Conservatives and the Secretary of State is entirely political; I have said nothing personal. I ask the hon. Gentleman to reflect on this: it is a matter of record that two weeks ago, I was asked to commit suicide by a Conservative Member of Parliament. I will also say to the hon. Gentleman something that I have not yet raised in this House. Last night, while sitting on these Benches—this was witnessed by other people—I was told what to do in very explicit terms involving a four-letter word beginning with F that has previously been used by the Foreign Secretary, so I am not going to take any lectures from Government Members about how to behave. I am the one who is being abused by the hon. Gentleman's colleagues by being told to commit suicide and being told to “F off”, so I am not going to take any lectures from him. [Applause.]

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. Let me just make it clear: no clapping; just shouts of “Hear, hear.” It is fine to support, but no clapping.

Douglas Ross: The point that I was trying to get at is that the mask is slipping with the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber and the SNP. He mentions actions that took place last night. I hope that his own Members reflect on what an hon. Lady—she is not here, so I will not name her—did at the conclusion of last night's debate with her actions towards my hon. Friend the Member for Stirling. I know that that will have been noted by SNP Members, and that behaviour also cannot be allowed to continue in this House.

Twenty-four hours is a long time in politics. Yesterday, a debate about the economy of Scotland—about the amount of money that Scotland gets from Westminster to spend in the devolved Administration—could only attract two SNP MPs. Yet a debate about the constitution and the SNP's obsession with independence can attract far more. However, I was really surprised that only 16 SNP Members were present at the start of the speech by the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber tonight. Half the parliamentary party could not even be bothered to be here for the start of the SNP's Opposition day debate. I wonder whether that is because, like many of us, they disagree with the subject that is being taken forward tonight.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Douglas Ross: I will give way in a moment.

I wonder whether many of the SNP Members wish that we were discussing other things. Today of all days, when the UK Government have launched their White Paper on fisheries, we could have been discussing fisheries. This would have been a great opportunity for the SNP to talk about fisheries, because the subject is very topical today. But SNP Members did not want to do that because of their policy on fisheries. The SNP lost Moray and 20 other seats around Scotland because of its policy on fisheries, which says, “We don't want these powers going to Westminster. We want to give them straight back to Europe.”

We could have been speaking about education, because SNP Members quite often say in this place, “This is what we will do in Scotland, so UK Government Ministers should replicate it in the UK.” [Interruption.] I am happy to give way to any of the ladies who are trying to have a conversation at the moment, but otherwise I will continue my speech.

I mention education particularly because SNP spokespeople and Back Benchers quite often stand up in the Chamber to ask the Government to do exactly what is being done in Scotland. Well, I hope that they never do that again with education, because in Scotland the SNP has had to withdraw its flagship Bill on education—its No. 1 priority, about which the First Minister and leader of the SNP said, “This will get all our attention.” That is how big a priority education is for the SNP. What about higher education? The First Minister of Scotland nominated someone who had deplorable views on transgender people, on black people and on Jews. That is also why SNP Members cannot discuss education in their Opposition day debate.

Patricia Gibson: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. It appears that the gentleman who is speaking is not paying any attention to the motion before the House. Could I have your guidance on whether his rambling remarks are actually in order?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I understand the point that the hon. Lady is making; several of her colleagues have been gesticulating to similar effect. I have been paying careful attention to what the hon. Gentleman is saying, and I have every confidence that having introduced various other topics about which this debate is not, he is now going to come to the motion before us and the substance of the debate, which is the claim of right.

Douglas Ross: I am very grateful, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am coming to that, but it is important that the Secretary of State for Scotland and the shadow Secretary of State for Scotland discussed the key issues that we should be debating today.

Before I move on, I will refer to a comment made by the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber. He said that Conservative Members should be praising the NHS. Well, I would have liked to have a debate about the NHS today, because I am quite happy to praise—[Interruption.] The hon. Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson) expresses great displeasure about that, but can she understand my anger today

as the Member of Parliament for Moray who got a phone call from NHS Grampian to be told that for the next 12 to 18 months, because of the way that the SNP has overseen the NHS in Scotland, pregnant women will have to travel to Aberdeen or Inverness to give birth? *[Interruption.]* That is an important issue, and whether we are in this place or in Holyrood, we should not try to talk—*[Interruption.]* The hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) should not try to talk me down, for I am standing up for pregnant women who are faced with these concerns.

Joanna Cherry: The hon. Gentleman has just been busy telling us how much he loves this place, but if he wants to debate the state of the Scottish NHS, he should be in the Scottish Parliament. Does he not understand the difference between reserved and devolved powers?

Douglas Ross: Again, this is the reaction we get from the SNP. If we disagree with SNP Members or say something they do not like, we are told that we do not understand things—so I am too thick to understand what is reserved and what is devolved. What I do understand is that I am a representative of my constituency, and when my constituents come to me raising these concerns, I should be able to shout—and loudly shout—about them in this Chamber, as colleagues could in Holyrood.

I will come to what we are debating: the claim of right—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber took 55 minutes to make his speech on this matter and I have eight minutes to make mine. It is important that we consider the motion. The claim of right is very clear and we all support it. It says that the Scottish people are sovereign and can choose the Parliament that best suits their needs. We gave them that opportunity in 2014, when the right hon. Gentleman, the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West and all the other SNP Members campaigned and voted for Scotland to be separated from the rest of the United Kingdom, and I, other Conservative Members, and people across Scotland and the UK, campaigned and voted for Scotland to remain an integral part of the United Kingdom. That decision has been taken. I went into the polling station in Moray and went to the count, knowing, I thought, that it was a once-in-a-generation event, because that was what we were promised by the former leader of the SNP and by its current leader.

But that is not good enough for SNP Members, because they are obsessed by independence. They will only speak about independence. They will not speak about healthcare, about education—about important issues for my Moray constituents and for Scotland. They are talking Scotland down by obsessing about independence rather than standing up for their constituents.

7.4 pm

Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): Today's debate is not just important for the people of Scotland, but of great importance to the many peoples and nations throughout the world—notably our friends in Catalonia and the political prisoners there, to whom I would like to pay my respects. At the heart of today's debate is human rights, and specifically a people's right

to self-determination. That is enshrined in international law under article 1 of the United Nations charter, which states that one of the purposes of the UN is to

“develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples”.

I do not believe that anyone in this place—not even Tory Members—would say that Scotland's people are not a nation. The only conclusion that can be drawn is that Scotland's people and Parliament have the power to decide their own future.

As the motion states—I am speaking to the motion—it is the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the

“form of government best suited to their needs”,

and no one else's right. I respect the opinion of people here who believe that Scotland should remain in the UK, and Scotland did vote to do so, but that was before it voted to remain in the EU. I ask those same people to respect the will of the Scottish people on that matter.

Mr Carmichael: What Scotland voted for was for the United Kingdom to remain part of the European Union. I campaigned and voted for that, but I did not want to see my vote then used as a lever to break up the United Kingdom. When the hon. Lady tries to do that, she does so not in my name or in the name of the majority of my constituents.

Marion Fellows: The right hon. Gentleman is looking very angrily at me.

Mr Carmichael: That is just my natural expression; you can't hold that against me.

Marion Fellows: In that case, I apologise.

We will never agree on this. We are talking about the sovereign right of the Scottish people. I choose not to divide my country. I love my country. When I talk to people in Motherwell and Wishaw, the one thing they say they really love is their Scottish Parliament. That is why we are talking about the claim of right.

We can exchange figures, numbers and percentages, but what is important is that decisions were made by the Scottish people based on the circumstances of the time. That is the very nature of democracy, from elections to referendums. Today's political reality is that there have been major upheavals to the fundamental political and economic circumstances of modern-day Scotland, and it is on that basis that Scotland must again reconsider its options.

Scotland is at a crossroads. We must decide not only what form of government best suits our needs, but what type of country we are. That discussion is going on in homes, communities and workplaces across Scotland as people slowly but surely decide. People in Scotland see the Prime Minister walking hand in hand with Donald Trump. They see the rich getting richer while their communities and neighbours struggle. They see this place treating Scotland with utter disdain, giving devolution only 15 minutes of consideration—and that time was totally taken up by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. With foreign wars, nuclear weapons on the Clyde, food bank use through the roof and precarious low-paid employment, people in Scotland imagine something better for their lives which Westminster has failed time and again to deliver: peace, security and more power over the decisions that affect their lives.

Christine Jardine: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Marion Fellows: No, because I have only three minutes left.

Scotland is not a country that is quick to take to the streets, but what the recent independence demonstrations have shown, as have the past demonstrations against Westminster's poll tax and Thatcher's decimation of Scottish industry, is that once Scotland has made up its mind, it will continue to pursue its interests in the face of adversity. Anyone who opposes Scotland's sovereign right is exposing a truth widely held in Scotland, and indeed by the Secretary of State for Scotland, that we are not an equal partner in the UK and that we must ask permission to make our own decisions.

David Mundell: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Marion Fellows: I only have three minutes left, so I cannot give way.

Those people are exposing the fact that a democratically elected Parliament's decision to hold a referendum—the most direct form of democracy imaginable—must be rubber-stamped by Westminster. Anyone who recognises and celebrates the no vote of 2014 but then seeks to undermine Scotland's sovereignty by discrediting any future vote exposes a crucial contradiction in their argument and does not understand the pride that the Scottish people take in their Parliament.

Christine Jardine: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Marion Fellows: No, I want to finish my speech.

Christine Jardine: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Marion Fellows: No, I am going to continue.

While the UK Government seek to evaporate the Sewel convention and rely on outdated principles of Westminster sovereignty, the people of Scotland will be the ones who decide where their legitimate government and interests lie. No politician, party or Parliament can; this is about the Scottish people. Whatever the outcome of this debate, it will always be the case that Scotland's sovereignty does not need to be recognised by parties that Scotland rejects or by Westminster; its sovereignty needs to be recognised only by the people of Scotland themselves.

I am sorry that the amendment that was tabled has not been selected, but as the claim of right exists, the only thing that is decisive is the will of the Scottish people as expressed through elections and referendums. That will is fluid and changing. We only need to look at the opinion polls—they have been taken all the way through from 2014—since the Brexit vote. The minority Conservative Government are well aware of those polls. It is undemocratic to bind Scotland or any other country to the decisions of the past, to protect the interests of the Tory party.

7.11 pm

Stephen Kerr (Stirling) (Con): May I begin by quickly repeating how disappointed I was by the performance of the leader of the SNP? I mean that sincerely, because he is someone for whom I have had respect since arriving in this House.

I want to put on the record that I am fully aware that it is the people of Stirling who are my boss. They put me here—and, of course, they can remove me from here—on

the basis of a manifesto that included a commitment from my party to work constructively to see our country progress from being a member of the European Union to leaving the European Union. That is what I am here to do and it is a privilege to do so.

I was reminded earlier today by the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman)—he is not of course in his place—about Adam Smith's saying on the Union. He described the Union as “a measure from which infinite good has been derived to this country.”

When he said “this country”, he of course meant Scotland.

Constitutional historians and scholars of religious tumult in 16th-century Scotland will realise that the foundation of the ideas in the claim of right comes from the works of George Buchanan on contractual monarchy. George Buchanan was from Killearn, a village in the west of my constituency and a superb place to visit. I heartily recommend the Three Sisters Bake bakery when Members visit Killearn. I do not know whether it is appropriate to refer to George Buchanan, a deceased person, as my constituent. He is buried in the kirk of Greyfriars in Edinburgh, but he was born, taught and preached in Stirling. In Killearn, there is a monument to its famous son for his work in establishing a constitutional framework for Scotland that would firmly allow the Scots to be governed by Presbyterianism. His assertion, appealing to biblical precedent, was that kings are in a contract with their people, who have a right—nay, a responsibility—to remove irresponsible, ungodly and tyrannical kings, lest the wrath of the Almighty fall upon the people. The great obelisk dominating the Killearn skyline is a testament to this great constitutional theorist, whose thoughts dominated Scottish politics in the 16th and 17th centuries.

These are the thoughts that the writers, preachers and revolutionaries of the Scottish Reformation espoused. Unlike the English, our Reformation was a bottom-up one inspired by the people, rather than a top-down one imposed by a tyrannical Tudor monarch. Preachers such as Knox, Melville and Henderson fought for the idea that the people should be able to set the direction of their country.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Given that the hon. Gentleman's party wishes to take back control from the European Union, why, in doing so, is it giving it to the episcopacy of the Church of England in the House of Lords?

Stephen Kerr: Of course, it is not the 1689 claim of right that is being debated today, but the 1989 one. The two are closely related as they both make reference to sovereignty resting squarely with the people—and I will vote for the motion tonight. These ideas build on the work of George Buchanan and the idea of sovereignty imbued with the righteous principle of *vox populi, vox Dei*.

The claim of right is specific and relates to the establishment of a Scottish Assembly, as it was then called—a promise delivered by the referendum of 1997, which returned a resounding yes vote. The principle is extendable, but it requires careful consideration. The principle of popular sovereignty must be used carefully. We should always seek to protect the views and interests

of minorities. We do not have to look back very far in our history to see how popular sentiment has been used to justify some of the worst acts of oppression against minorities. Let us not forget the 85% of Scots who opposed the recommendations of the Wolfenden report in 1957, compared with nearly 51% in England. The fear expressed in popular will led to homosexuality in Scotland remaining illegal until 1980.

I belong to a Church that, historically, has seen a great deal of persecution as a result of fear, misunderstanding and prejudice. I understand only too well the prejudices that can be used by politicians to incite bigotry. When politicians feed on our worst fears and play to the crowd, they whip up a monster that is often uncontrollable, and do so with the excuse of projecting the popular will. I saw that last week with bigotry expressed against my constituents, especially those who voted for me, with the so-called All Under One Banner march in Stirling being led by a banner that stated, "Tory Scum Out". That parade was attended by elected Members of the Scottish Parliament and, I think, of this place, too.

Joanna Cherry: The hon. Gentleman mentioned that the majority of Scots in the '50s opposed the Wolfenden report and seemed to make that an argument against popular sovereignty. However, did not the majority of Members in this House oppose the emancipation of homosexual men for many years? Was it not human rights that brought about that emancipation and adherence to the convention on human rights, which his party seemed to oppose? It is not about popular sovereignty and parliamentary sovereignty—it is about the rule of law.

Stephen Kerr: I think the hon. and learned Lady knows full well the point that I am trying to make. [*Interruption.*] Well, it should not worry her.

As politicians, it is our job to lead well, not pander to people's worst instincts, and to protect the principle that minority views and opinions must be respected. We have to remember that we are here, not to follow instructions from our constituents, but to lead. We have to make the case for a better country, a more tolerant country and a country that respects all. The representative democracy that we have in our country is worth preserving. It is representative democracy that has gone against popular sentiment in leading social change in our country, and long may it continue to do so. However, the popular will must always be in our mind.

Policy making by referendum is impractical. It does not provide an opportunity to secure real social change and poses a risk to the protection of minorities. In the history of our country, we have had an unprecedented number of referendums that have been constitutional in nature. Since 1975, people in Scotland have taken part in six referendums—on Europe; Scotland; Scotland; electoral reform; Scotland; and Europe. In other lands with different constitutional set-ups, referendums are more regular and more established in constitutional law. The Scottish referendum of 1997 still required a Westminster Act of Parliament to set up the Scottish Parliament.

This House is passing legislation to interpret and undertake the popular instruction to leave the European Union. The principle of respecting the will of the

people is one that I agree with fundamentally. Whether it is the people of the United Kingdom voting to leave the EU, or the people of Scotland voting to keep the United Kingdom together, I agree wholeheartedly with the principle of respecting the will of the people. It is for Government to remember that, and the fact that the SNP Government in Edinburgh are agitating for a second independence referendum is a betrayal of the principle of popular sovereignty. When the people have spoken, as they did, it is time for Government to shut up.

When I speak to people in my constituency, they talk about indyref2 and tell me that they want the SNP to stop talking about that and get on with running the country. When they talk about leaving the EU, they tell me that the Government should get on with it. It is for Government to get on with it. This debate feels like the exact opposite. Debating what to most people are somewhat obscure constitutional matters seems like navel gazing, rather than focusing on the real work of government. People want the Government to work together and they want the Government to be effective, so they can get on with their lives unencumbered by constant politics. We need governmental systems that allow for this at all levels of government—Scottish, UK and local government—to work together to build a future for our country.

As I have said many times, Mr Speaker, I am confident that the work of our Stirling and Clackmannanshire city region deal, by showing a true partnership between Holyrood, Westminster and our local councils, will bear fruit. It will build a common set of economic objectives and do so by people working together. We need similar partnership working to be implemented elsewhere. On policy frameworks, we need systems that allow for decision making without gridlock. We need democratic oversight and efficient government. The rancour and the grievance that is generated by the SNP are unhelpful to all this. This debate is unhelpful to all this.

Let me conclude by saying that this is a debate on an obscure statement that has virtually no impact on the day-to-day lives of the constituents I am here to serve. No doubt many Members will find much to debate and discuss over the constitutional efficacy of the claim of right—whether popular sovereignty is right or wrong, drawing heavily on legal precedent and historical principles—but I would rather focus on improving the lives of my constituents and having a down-to-earth working Government. Let us focus on the pragmatic. Let us focus on getting on with the work of government. After all, is that not what our constituents would expect of us?

7.21 pm

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to speak in this debate and to follow the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr).

At one minute past midnight this morning, the SNP Chief Whip, the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady), no doubt still up late celebrating England's win in the World cup, tweeted: breaking news, this is the very first debate we will have in Parliament on the claim of right. He obviously forgot that he had a debate on the claim of right, in his very own name, on 9 September 2016 in Westminster Hall.

[Ian Murray]

I agree with many colleagues across the House that I would rather be speaking here this evening on issues relevant to my constituents and my constituency. The dilution of local policing across Scotland is showing a crime spree of house breaking and car breaking in my constituency. There is a GP crisis in my constituency. People cannot sign up to GPs. They are on waiting lists and are being kicked out of surgeries. People are waiting up to two years for operations when they used to wait only 12 weeks. The train service is in meltdown and we have an economy the Secretary of State was right to say is sluggish.

After all the debates we have had since 2016, and everything in between, we still have no answers to the big questions about what an independent Scotland would look like. We have had a Growth Commission paper that is as big an act of fiction as the original White Paper. I agree with the claim of right. The shadow Secretary of State was right. Labour invented this process and drove it on back in the late 1980s. The late great Jimmy Hood, if he were still alive today, would be championing bringing back the Scottish constitutional convention so we could resolve some of these issues—wouldn't that be a bundle of fun, with 50-odd Scottish MPs on that particular body?

The claim of right states:

"We, gathered as the Scottish Constitutional Convention, do hereby acknowledge the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of Government".

The Scottish people have determined their own form of government. They determined to vote in 1997 for a Labour Government who promised to bring a referendum on a Scottish Parliament. They voted overwhelmingly to deliver that Scottish Parliament with tax-raising powers in the yes-yes vote. In the ballot box since then, they have delivered their sovereign will in choosing what they want to be achieved in terms of Governments and what they want to happen. Interestingly, they also do this at the ballot box for local government elections and lots of other elections.

I get so frustrated about these kinds of debates because it is about the sovereign will of the Scottish people for the Scottish National party, but only when it suits. The sovereign will of the Scottish people was to deliver a Scottish Parliament and stay in the United Kingdom. It was also the sovereign will of the Scottish people to deliver a Scottish Parliament where the Scottish National party does not have a majority, and that Scottish Parliament—if it is the sovereign will of the Scottish people—has over the last few years voted against the Government on fracking, cuts to the national health service, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, council funding, the Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Act 2012, failing educational standards and local government cuts. And what has the sovereign will of the Scottish people received in return? Nothing from the Scottish Parliament—disregard the Scottish parliamentary votes; these did not happen; turn the other way; do not implement the will of the Scottish Parliament, which is the will of the Scottish people.

Let me say why it is frustrating that it is about the sovereign will of the Scottish people only when it suits the SNP. Look at local government: it has been completely

and utterly diminished, demoralised and demolished by significant cuts from the Scottish Government, who have passed on 9% or 10% grant cuts from this place and doubled and trebled them for local government.

Stephen Kerr: Does the hon. Gentleman also agree that the 11 years of the SNP Government of Edinburgh has created a highly centralised state? The power grab that has gone on in Scotland is a grab to the centre by the SNP Government.

Ian Murray: I am glad to have taken that intervention, because it goes to the point—[*Interruption.*] People can start shouting, "Better Together!", but I am going to stand up for the people of Scotland and my constituency, because I disagree fundamentally with what the leader of the SNP, the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), said during his speech. He does not speak for the people of Scotland. We are entitled to have a different viewpoint. The hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) is right, because this Chamber, when the Scotland Act 2016 was given its Third Reading and Royal Assent, delivered one of the most powerful Parliaments in the world, but it is the most centralist Parliament in the world. Local government no longer exists in Scotland. It is merely an administrative arm of the Scottish Government.

Look at what we have seen today. An SNP leader of the City of Edinburgh Council wants to be given the powers to deliver a tourist tax in Edinburgh that would help hard-pressed Edinburgh Council ratepayers with all the issues that they are currently going through, and the Cabinet Secretary slaps him down on Twitter and essentially says, "No." Where is the sovereign will of the Edinburgh people who put Adam McVey in as leader of the council under the single transferable vote system? I do not want an SNP majority-led Edinburgh Council—I want a Labour majority-led council or a Labour council majority in a coalition—but that is what the people delivered. That is the sovereign will of the people who went to the ballot box. I think that we have to reflect—I say this very publicly—on what happened in Aberdeen, when voters went to the ballot box and delivered the numbers in Aberdeen to give us what we have there. There is an incredibly centralist Government and that is why it is the sovereign will of the Scottish people only when it suits.

Let me turn to what the sovereign will of the Scottish people is actually delivering. Again, that only suits the SNP when it suits its case. The SNP refused to back a people's vote in a referendum on the final deal from the European Union. There will be lots of different views across this Chamber—in fact, there are lots of different views among Labour Members about whether we should have a people's vote. However, the principle for me is that, if we believe in the sovereign will of the Scottish people, why not back an additional vote for the Scottish people and people across the UK to decide on the final Brexit deal that the UK Government bring back, and then let the sovereign will of the Scottish people decide? No. The SNP reluctantly fudges it and says, "Maybe we would back it, maybe we won't, but only if independence is on the table as part of it." It is only the sovereign will of the Scottish people when it suits.

I simply say, on the sovereign will of the Scottish people and the convention, that it is written down. It is being delivered. It has been delivered and everything

that will be delivered in the future, in terms of the sovereign will of the Scottish people, will happen at the ballot box when the people of Scotland go to vote. That is exactly what they have done. Before SNP Members start jumping up and down and saying, “What about the Brexit referendum?”, the rules of the game are as follows. There was a UK-wide referendum. People voted to leave. We are part of the United Kingdom. I hope that we do not leave. I always say, “If we leave the European Union”—I will do everything in my power to try to stop it, and if I cannot stop it, I will do everything in my power to try to soften it, but we are where we are. We cannot pick and choose votes when it suits us to pick and choose.

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): The hon. Gentleman is making a strong point about the EU referendum. Does he recognise that it was based on the total number of votes across the United Kingdom, not on geography? So had the SNP joined Britain Stronger in Europe and proactively campaigned for remain, we could have got those few extra votes and kept us in. [HON. MEMBERS: “We did!”] Not as part of Britain Stronger in Europe.

Ian Murray: I am sorry but I am not going to dance to the hon. Gentleman’s tune, because the Conservative party’s attitude towards Scotland at the moment is just as big a threat to the UK. It pushed through a referendum on Brexit, with the former Prime Minister betting everything on winning but losing. The attitude of the Scottish Conservatives is as big a threat to the Union at the moment. They are pushing through a hard Brexit as lobby fodder for the Prime Minister, rather than fighting for the interests of their own constituents. [Interruption.] I am happy for him to gesticulate and say, “Keep attacking the SNP,” but Government Members are just as bad on the sovereign will of the Scottish people as expressed at the ballot box. We were promised that Ruth Davidson would send Scottish Conservative MPs down to this Chamber to fight for the interests of Scotland, and not once has any of them taken a different view from the Chief Whip and the Prime Minister. So when Brexit happens and goes badly, you 12 will own it as much as the Prime Minister—sorry, the hon. Gentlemen will own it. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, will not own Brexit, because it will be owned primarily by the Scottish Conservatives.

On the theme of it being the sovereign will of the Scottish people only when it suits, I will finish with this. As we discussed, the SNP did not participate in this process, and they had no intention of ever participating in this process, regardless of the warm words we hear now, but now they grab on to this claim of right and talk about the sovereign will of the Scottish people, because it suits the SNP to do so. I suggest, very politely, that the UK Government and the Scottish Government desperately find a way to get around the table to improve the relations between two Governments so that they can at least try to work in the interests of Scotland, because while we have this flag-waving ceremony between the Conservative party and the Scottish National party, it is my constituents who lose out.

7.31 pm

Luke Graham (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Con): I will try to keep my points succinct tonight.

I think we lose the whole point of this place in some of our debates. It has been said by many Members across the House that we should be talking about the material issues, such as expenditure in Scotland, which we discussed last night in a debate that only two SNP MPs turned up for, or fishing, as others have said, but we are not; instead, we are back to the same old broken record from the SNP. What is really important is the original purpose of this Parliament: the unity of the United Kingdom that started with the vision of a Scottish king and was established in an Act of Union that abolished both the English and the Scottish Parliament and constituted this place, a United Kingdom Parliament where Members from across the entire country work together, pool their resources and make laws together for the benefit of people across the United Kingdom.

As the hundreds of years have passed, we have adapted. We saw that more powers had to be devolved. We have seen that power needs to be closer to the people who every day use the public services and goods being provided. It is disingenuous of SNP Members to say that somehow Scotland’s voice is not heard here. It is heard through their voices, through Conservative Members’ voices and through those of Liberal Democrat and Labour Members; it is heard right around this House—because this Parliament is Scotland’s Parliament as much as Holyrood is. That needs to be recognised.

My constituents need to stop being bullied by the SNP and pushed to make a choice between being Scottish and being British. They can be proud to be both, and they can have confidence in both their Parliaments to deliver their public services. I will take no lectures from the SNP about centralisation and ignoring the will of the people. A model diagram of centralisation is Edinburgh, where powers and moneys have been stripped away from our local councillors. We have record budget deficits in spite of underspends in the central Scottish budget, which in my constituency means music tuition being cut, health boards being stretched and public services suffering. And that is not because of Westminster; it is because of the Scottish National party. In fact, it should change its name. It is not the Scottish National party; it is the selfish National party. It has one reason for existing, and that is separation and division.

We are the Conservative and Unionist party. We have delivered on devolution, as we always promised, and we have stood up in this Chamber and challenged our own Ministers, as other Members have, on issues such as the EU to make sure we get the right deal on EU citizens, for example, or on the economic trade deal—and we will see how that comes out in October.

When we talk about devolution, we have to look at virtually every single policy area that has been devolved. After 20 years of devolution and 11 years of SNP management, every core area is underperforming. In education, we have gone from first to third in the United Kingdom, yet schools are still cascading through international rankings. In health, even after 20 years of devolution, we still have the lowest life expectancy in the United Kingdom.

Joanna Cherry: Does the hon. Gentleman accept the verdict of the BBC that Scotland under an SNP Government has the best-performing NHS in the United Kingdom?

Luke Graham: No, because it is still facing problems.

Stephen Kerr: It has missed six of its seven targets.

Luke Graham: Exactly—and it has missed its mental health targets.

Let the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) say that to the consultants. Let her say that to the constituents who have come to me because they cannot have certain kinds of surgery in Scotland that they can have in England. This is not just about saying, “England is worse than us, so we must be amazing.” There are challenges throughout the United Kingdom, and that is the point of this place. We pull together when there are common challenges, but we also deliver locally when we need to.

A lot is being said about respect tonight—about respect for the Scottish people. What I cannot understand is the fact that SNP Members do not respect this Parliament. They certainly do not respect my constituents, and I have to say that I do not think they respect themselves. That is clear from their conduct in the last weeks. They have walked out during Prime Minister’s Question Time, and have deliberately agitated in the Chamber. Some of that conduct may well have taken place on both sides of the House, and it should be condemned on both sides if it has. Such incidents do no credit to any hon. Member, but they are being led by the Scottish National party.

David Linden: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Luke Graham: Not just now, thank you.

If SNP Members were genuine in their love and their care for Scotland, they would not be agitating for a second independence referendum now, when Brexit has not even been decided. If they really cared about Scotland, they would wait until the deal is done and until we were very clear about the situation and what the Government had achieved for the United Kingdom, and then take a cold, hard look at the analysis and ask themselves, “Actually, are we better off in the United Kingdom, or are we better off breaking out of the United Kingdom and splitting into a separate country?”

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): I am listening to the debate as a fellow Celt who represents an English seat. My hon. Friend has mentioned the word “respect”. I am intervening on his speech, but I could have intervened on anyone’s. We see rampant nationalism and nastiness all over Europe and elsewhere. Does my hon. Friend agree that the best advertisement for this place, and for democracy, is for all of us, irrespective of our differences, to show respect and regard for each other? That, unfortunately, has always seemed to be missing over the last few months in any debate on anything to do with Scotland.

Luke Graham: My hon. Friend has made a very valid point from another part of this United Kingdom. It is not just Scotland that will be watching the debate this evening; more than 800,000 Scots residing in other parts of the United Kingdom will be watching it, too—as well as English, Welsh and Northern Irish people, and members of all the many other nationalities who live in the UK. For all British citizens, this is their Parliament. They are the ones who elect us, and they are the ones who pay our wages. I think that respect should be given

by both parties throughout the UK to our individual constituents, but also to those in the rest of the United Kingdom.

There has been talk of hope. SNP Members have said, “What exactly could we be if Scotland were free of this horrific United Kingdom? We would be able to achieve so much more without it.” I remind them that it is this place that delivers on hope. It is this place that established the national health service—the national health service that SNP Members now stand up and try to criticise, or indeed champion, was set up in this Chamber. *[Interruption.]* I am talking about this Chamber. We can debate whether things happened or not, but it is the output that matters.

We established the NHS in this Chamber. We established the welfare state in this Chamber. And, as we heard from another Secretary of State today, we are delivering international aid by pooling our resources—Scots, English, Welsh, northern Irish and everyone else. We are delivering for other countries around the world, and that is all through this Chamber. I will no longer sit here and listen to SNP Members do down the United Kingdom—do down Scotland’s Parliament—and say that we do not have a place in it. We do. We are here, and so are the Opposition, and we are here to represent our constituents and make sure that we pull together and contribute.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): Does the hon. Gentleman not realise that the legislation he is talking about was voted in in the 1940s here because there was not a Scottish Parliament, and there was not a Scottish Parliament because the Conservatives consistently voted against home rule?

Luke Graham: Perhaps I need to go back to the history lesson I gave at the beginning of this speech. There was not a Scottish Parliament because a Scottish king decided to unify the Crowns to make one United Kingdom, and then a voluntary Act of Union abolished both Scottish and English Parliaments and made this place. *[Interruption.]* Sorry, that is the historical fact. We are a unitary state with, under our current constitution, Westminster as the sovereign Parliament of the United Kingdom. That is why we have directly elected Members to this Parliament and that is why there are such hotly contested debates around the time of a general election in Scotland—because people know how important it is. They know they are sending Members to Westminster; they know the influence they will have; and they know the difference they can make. The hon. Gentleman must not do down my constituents and the energy they put into voting at a general election, because we matter, the Scottish Parliament matters, and so do our local authorities.

We are looking at a 21st century world: we are racked with challenges from climate change to technological developments to international fracture from various countries all around the world. Would it not be great if somehow we could look to a place that would bring neighbours together, enable us to pool our resources, decide how to advance our NHS and our welfare, make sure we get £20 billion extra for the NHS, and make sure we forward the cause of science and international diplomacy and international aid? We have it: it is this Parliament; it is this United Kingdom. That is what we have been sent here to represent, and that is what we will continue to fight for on this side of the House.

7.41 pm

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Since the principal creation of this political state in 1707—not through the Union of the Crowns in 1603—between the nation of Scotland and England and its subsequent expansion through the Acts of Union of 1800 with the nation of Ireland and the subsequent changes through the articles of agreement for a treaty between Great Britain and Ireland signed on 6 December 1921, as well as the creation of the three devolved Administrations—Wales, Northern Ireland and of course Scotland—there can be no doubt, and I think there is agreement, that the political structure of these islands and the political relationships within this present political state, and, yes, even through the Good Friday agreement with the Irish state, is a fluid and ever-changing story. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that this debate should be brought to the Floor of the House tonight. Indeed, the premise of the sovereign rights of the Scottish nation founded in its citizens is an agreed reality, given that this House recognised that position through the right of the Scottish nation to participate in the referendum of 2014.

The former right hon. Member for Finchley went even further: in her memoirs “The Downing Street Years”, the former Premier, whom I never thought I would quote, was clear. [*Interruption.*] Conservative Members should listen to this. She wrote that if the Tory party

“sometimes seems English to some Scots that is because the Union is inevitably dominated by England by reason of its greater population. The Scots, being an historic nation”—

not my words—

“with a proud past, will inevitably resent some expressions of this fact from time to time. As a nation, they have an undoubted right to national self-determination; thus far, they have exercised that right by joining and remaining”—

even in 2014—

“in the Union.”

The former right hon. Member for Finchley continued:

“Should they determine on independence, no English party or politician would stand in their way, however much we might regret their departure.”

There will be many on both sides in this Chamber, including myself, who will be uncomfortable quoting the former right hon. Member for Finchley, but the late Baroness’s quote illustrates the reality of the constitutional position of this existing political state. The reality of the claim of right—which, I must say, was written in 1988—is another example of the expression of that self-evident truth, acknowledging as it does the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs. It is a principle well-versed and affirmed in ancient right that neither monarch nor Parliament, not one individual or a select collective, has dominion over the people that is the nation that is Scotland.

Now more than ever, the importance of at least Scottish constituency MPs—I would be grateful, if there is a Division this evening, to see Members from across the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland—reaffirming that long-held ancient principle is critical, given that the nation of Scotland, including my own constituency, which also voted for the liberation

and regaining of the sovereignty of the nation of Scotland, is now being dragged out of the family of European nations.

In looking at the critical facts relating to centralisation and Scotland, and to the historical narrative, Members who have not been in local government in Scotland should be reminded that the last reform of local government in Scotland was of course led by the Government of the United Kingdom, when they rearranged the local governance of Scotland. The Government of Scotland was established through the devolved settlement, and it was the present Scottish Government that set out the concordat and the existing relationships with local government, supported the length and breadth of Scottish local government through COSLA. For those Members who do not know what COSLA means, it is the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities.

I am not going to take up any more time, except to mention a basic principle. This place, no matter how much Members love it, should never seek to limit those constitutional realities, whether they agree with them or not. This place must clearly understand that, no matter what is said or done, Scotland is, today and forever, a nation—a distinct, proud, historic nation, free and able to direct its governance and destiny.

7.48 pm

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I have enjoyed the debate this evening very much indeed, particularly the scholarly dissertation given by the hon. Member for West Dunbartonshire (Martin Docherty-Hughes). The subject tonight is the claim of right for Scotland, and let me put it on record right away that I stand full square with the claim of right. I may be many things, and they say that pride is one of the seven deadly sins, but I take pride in my involvement in Scottish affairs over the years. I am one of six Members in this place who has also served in Holyrood. I had the honour to represent Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross for 12 years in Holyrood, and it was the making of my life. I look back on those days with pleasure and as something I can tell my children and grandchildren about in the years to come. I hate to talk about pride, but I am proud of that.

Let me give the House an example. In my garden, I have a big piece of Kemnay granite, which is one of the types of stone that the Scottish Parliament at Holyrood is built from. When the building was completed, the builders very kindly gave me one leftover piece of Kemnay granite and it now stands in my garden. I was involved in building the physical structure of the Scottish Parliament, as the Secretary of State will recall, along with Linda Fabiani, who is now Deputy Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, and John Home Robertson, who once graced the Labour Benches in this place. It was not an easy task. We had the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune coming at us all the time, which made us good friends, but I take pride in the fact that the building is our Parliament in Scotland, and I think they do as well.

I also served on the Scottish Constitutional Convention, of which mention has already been made this evening. As one of the local authority reps on the convention, I represented what was then Ross and Cromarty District Council. Believe it or not when looking at this aged frame, I was the youngest member from the highlands—a callow youth—but I feel that I made my contribution nevertheless.

[Jamie Stone]

Against that background, I turn again to the subject before us: the claim of right. While I have enjoyed the contributions of the SNP Members on the Benches in front of me, I cannot help but wonder why the claim is being used as the peg on which to hang today's hat, because that gives me some trouble. Earlier on, mention was made of the fact that the SNP would not sign up to the Scottish Constitutional Convention. In fairness to SNP Members, their reason was that it did not include the independence option, and I accept that argument. Nevertheless, as somebody who worked hard on the constitutional convention, which involved difficult times, and on getting the scheme for the Scottish Parliament together, I greatly regret that the SNP did not take part. I must remind Members that there were times when Alex Salmond, a former Member of this place, was not unknown to make disparaging comments about the work of the constitutional convention, and I also regret that.

The inevitable logical follow-on from all that was that the SNP did not sign the claim of right. To me, the claim of right is one of the most important documents in recent Scottish history. The Chamber will not know this, but—I have already talked about my pride—my greatest pride is in the fact that my name is on that claim of right. No other Member of this place can say that, but I can, and I am not going to give away my pride in that fact for anything. I am therefore saddened that the claim of right, a document with which I am associated and in which the people of Scotland and I take great pride, is being used for the purposes of this debate. I say with respect to the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) that it demeans him and cheapens the tone of the debate, and I wish it were not so. I will leave my contribution there.

7.52 pm

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): It is quite useful for me to follow the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone), whom I congratulate on his distinction of being one of the few signatories to the claim of right who is still here. Picture the scene: the economy on the brink of recession; the Government hopelessly divided on Europe; the Labour party in turmoil; a woman Prime Minister in Downing Street; and Scotland living under yet another Conservative Government it did not vote for, pushing through damaging social policies against the will of the vast majority of Scottish people and parliamentarians. That was the situation in 1989, when the claim of right was signed and when the snowball of devolution that led to the Scottish Parliament began to gather speed. However, the more things change, the more they stay the same—but Scotland has changed and the United Kingdom has changed.

Like many others, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) made the point that for the 15 hours when the polls were open on 18 September 2014 Scotland truly was exercising its sovereignty as a true free independent country. The future of our governance was in our hands and nobody else's, and that is why we would have been happy to accept the amendment had it been selected by the Chair.

A decision was made, and of course we on the SNP Benches were disappointed that Scotland voted to remain in the Union, but voters were repeatedly told during the 2014 referendum that a no vote was not a vote for the status quo and that choosing to stay in the Union would bring about a new relationship in which Scotland would lead the UK, not leave the UK. A vow was made to deliver something as near to federalism as possible, and a guarantee was given that Scotland would remain a member of the European Union. Nearly four years on from that independence referendum, none of those promises has been kept.

There may have been a new status quo on the morning of 19 September 2014, but there was also a new status quo on the morning of 24 June 2016, when the United Kingdom for which people in Scotland voted ceased to exist. People in Scotland voted in 2014 for a United Kingdom that would be, and would remain, a member of the European Union; a United Kingdom that would guarantee people in Scotland freedom of movement for themselves and their goods, for their capital and their services, across the continent.

We were told by no less than Ruth Davidson herself, the leader of the Scottish Conservatives, that the way for Scotland to stay in the European Union was to vote no in 2014, and that has been ripped like a rug from under the feet of the people of Scotland. That is why there has been a material change in circumstances, and that is why it is right that this House now comes to recognise the sovereign right of the people of Scotland.

Stephen Kerr: I am struck by the sincerity and passion of the speech by the hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone), who said he wonders why the claim of right is being discussed now and why it is being used as a peg to hang a hat on. Will the hon. Member for Glasgow North (Patrick Grady), who is a figure of authority in the parliamentary Scottish National party, confirm that it is not the intention of the SNP in government in Scotland to move our country to an illegal referendum, that this debate is not an excuse and that the SNP is not looking to create a pretext for an illegal referendum?

Patrick Grady: The fact is that the Scottish Parliament was re-elected in 2016 and a new Scottish Government were formed with a mandate to reserve the right to request an independence referendum if there is a material change in circumstances. That request was made. A request for a section 30 order was agreed by a majority of Members of the Scottish Parliament, and that request is extant—it is still there. The First Minister said the request had been put on pause as a result of the 2017 UK general election, but the result of that general election was to return a majority of Members from Scotland who support independence and who, at the very least, support the right of the people of Scotland to choose.

Something interesting has happened in this debate, because the Secretary of State for Scotland and his Conservative colleagues have said, with a shrug of the shoulders, "Of course we accept this motion," as if it is not that big a deal. In 2012, Ruth Davidson and her Conservative colleagues were the only party actively to vote against the claim of right for Scotland when it was put to the Scottish Parliament. Although we hear from Liberal Democrat Members that the SNP did not sign

the claim of right in 1989, for reasons that are well rehearsed, it was endorsed by Scotland's Parliament in 2012 and the Scottish Conservatives actively refused to sign it at that point.

David Mundell *rose*—

Patrick Grady: If the Secretary of State will tell me what has changed and why the Conservative party is now prepared to assent to the claim of right, I will be happy to take an intervention.

David Mundell: I will just set out the evidence that it is always a matter of grievance. The grievance now is that we are supporting their motion. If we had not supported the motion, that would have been the grievance. This is not about the claim of right; it is about building grievance so they can build their case for independence.

Patrick Grady: As the Government have committed to producing a statement within 30 days of an Opposition motion being carried, we will no doubt hear that the motion is not binding, and this and that and all the rest. The Government can decide whether they want to accept the motion but, if what the Secretary of State and his Conservative colleagues are saying is correct, this sovereign Parliament is going to accept the principle of the sovereignty of the people of Scotland.

I am surprised that some of the Brexiteers who want to take back control, the hon. Members for the 18th and 19th centuries, have not come along this evening to defend their cherished and beloved parliamentary sovereignty. Perhaps it is because they cannot. As we saw during the passage of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018, it is not this House that is taking back control; it is the Executive who are taking back control. The power grab is not simply the one from the Scottish Parliament; it is also the power grab from this House, with the statutory instruments, the delegated authority and the ministerial fiat—

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): Diktat.

Patrick Grady: And diktat. This has been grabbed and taken by the content of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill. That is the real power grab that is going on and it undermines the sovereignty not just of the people of Scotland, but of the Westminster Parliament as it has been traditionally seen. We have heard from all these different Members asking why the SNP has not brought up this, that or the next thing. We talk on a daily basis about the issues that affect our constituents and the people of Scotland. Members talk about yesterday's estimates debate, but I say to the shadow Secretary of State that no Labour Member from Scotland was taking part in that debate, even though it was a debate on the devolution spend and the Barnett consequentials.

The hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) mentioned my Westminster Hall debate. I was proud to lead a debate on the claim of right in Westminster Hall, but that debate was on a motion saying "That this House has considered". Today's debate is on an actionable, votable motion and the Government have indicated, for the first time, that they are prepared to accept it.

Ian Blackford: My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. If the Government accept this motion tonight, are they not then accepting the principle of the sovereignty

of the Scottish people? If that follows, and if the Scottish Government have a majority and a mandate to ask for a referendum on a change of circumstances, are the Conservatives opposite not duty bound to follow that and make sure the Government push through a section 30 licence?

Patrick Grady: Precisely. [*Interruption.*] The Minister will have a chance to respond and sum up at the end of the debate. This is why the Government have to—

Lesley Laird: On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The hon. Gentleman has suggested that no Labour Member was present or spoke during the estimates debate. As he will of course know, I was sitting on the Front Bench and I am unable to intervene in that debate in that way.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): The hon. Lady has put that on the record and I am sure everyone in here will accept it.

Patrick Grady: Yes, that is a very helpful statement of fact, but it does not change the reality of the situation: nobody from the Scottish Labour Benches spoke. I simply say that some of the partisanship that has been shown in this House is not ideal, because we make no special claim to the claim—

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. I would like to point out, for the record, that I did speak in that debate yesterday—I made an intervention.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The point of order should be addressed to me. I will respond again by saying that the hon. Gentleman has put what happened on the record and made it very clear. I will also say that the debate is coming to a close and other people wish to speak, so I urge Members not to have endless points of order.

Patrick Grady: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. They come here and complain that we want to talk about process and that we are obsessed with individual constitutional issues, and then that is what we get.

When the Scottish Parliament debated and adopted the claim of right in 2012, it did not endorse, and it was not being asked to endorse, the principle of independence; it was asked to acknowledge the principle of deciding on independence. So the claim of right is not just an historical document, a scholarly debating point or an "obscure document", as the hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) said; it is a fundamental principle on which our democracy rests. The UK Government, in accepting this tonight, are making a serious and important point about maintaining the Union as a partnership of equals—they need to understand that.

In closing, we, and this Tory Government in particular, should reflect on the famous words of the convenor of the Scottish Constitutional Convention, Canon Kenyon Wright, who said at the opening of the convention:

"What if that other voice we all know so well responds by saying, 'We say no, and we are the state'? Well, we say yes—and we are the people."

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I am afraid I am going to have now to impose a six-minute time limit.

8.4 pm

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): I am delighted to speak in this debate on the claim of right for Scotland, which asserts the sovereignty of the Scottish people, declaring their right to determine the form of government that best suits their needs. This is a timely debate, although I know some people in the Chamber have questioned why we are debating this issue. This debate could not be more timely, because we need to do all we can to ensure that the wishes of the people of Scotland are respected. Twenty years into devolution, the Scottish Parliament's powers are under threat from a power grab by the party that fought tooth and nail against the very establishment of that Parliament and has never fully got behind it or truly believed in it.

I am not going to talk about independence, because the Tories and the Labour party have talked about nothing else—and they accuse us of being obsessed. They can talk about independence, as they do incessantly, but I remind them that in 2016 the SNP Government got a mandate to hold a referendum, given the material change in circumstances. If they are so concerned about the will of the people, perhaps they should reflect on that.

We had a referendum in Scotland on EU membership, but there was no evidence that the people of Scotland wanted one. We in Scotland voted to remain in the EU by a very convincing majority, and we are now being removed against our will from a family of nations of which we wish to remain a part. We have been told by Government Members that we should wait to see how Brexit unfolds. Let us look at how Brexit is unfolding. The Chancellor disagrees with the Foreign Secretary; the Foreign Secretary disagrees with the Prime Minister; the Prime Minister disagrees with the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; the Secretary of State for International Trade has his head stuck firmly in the sand and says it is all going well and there is nothing to see here, so just move along; and the Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union does not seem to know how final the final deal on Brexit will be. All that is before we even get to this week's antics, in which the hon. Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) was involved. Members think that we should wait to see to see how Brexit is unfolding; I think we should buy some popcorn, if it were not so serious.

We have heard the Secretary of State unable, or perhaps unwilling, to explain why the Tories are now to support the claim of right but could not support it in 2012. With the passage of the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill in the teeth of opposition from the democratically elected Scottish Parliament and the withholding of consent for that Bill from every political party, save the out-of-touch Tories, the contempt for Scotland, her people and her democratic institutions is as clear as it can be.

Let us talk about the claim of right. Consent for clause 15 of the withdrawal Bill was withheld by a huge majority in Holyrood of 93 votes to 30. As a consequence, as we know, it should not have passed through this House with that clause intact. In the event, it did remain

intact, with a mere 19 minutes allocated for debate, and with not one Scottish MP able or permitted to speak. And Members ask why we are debating the claim of right. They should be ashamed of themselves. When they ignore the entire concept of consent, when they ride roughshod over democratic institutions elected by the people of Scotland—remember, the Tories have not won an election in Scotland for 55 years—and when they ride roughshod over the Scottish people and their will, they do so at their peril.

We have heard about the affect for the Scottish Parliament and the esteem in which it is held; Westminster enjoys no such reputation in Scotland. We have repeatedly heard the powers that are being clawed back by this Government being diminished, but Government Members know exactly how important those powers are. They include agriculture, fisheries, food labelling and public procurement. I remind Government Members that the public are watching. The clawing back of powers over public procurement could constitute an attack on our public services. I have listened to MPs in the Tory ranks rubbish such concerns; their constituents will have something to say about that.

I know all this is inconvenient for those who oppose the very concept of devolution and who want to deny Scotland's very nationhood. They wish us pesky Scots would stop using our voices to decry the injustices and acts of contempt being perpetrated on Scotland, but we will not go quietly. Tonight, we reassert the claim of right for Scotland, without apology, despite all the blistering attacks from Government Members. Scotland is watching. I say to Government Members: you are swimming against the tide of history and you will soon find yourselves engulfed in the waves.

8.9 pm

Martin Whitfield (East Lothian) (Lab): It is a great pleasure to discuss this matter and to contribute to this debate. The concept of the claim of right dates back to the Claim of Right Act 1689, which referred then to the right of appeal to the sovereign and the monarch against perceived judicial injustice. The 1689 Act gave access to the then Parliament of Scotland where the monarch in Parliament sat. The Act of Union 1707 led to the abolition of the Parliament of Scotland and the right then transferred to the House of Lords, which is now, of course, the United Kingdom Supreme Court. The concept of that right was taken by the Scottish Constitutional Convention in 1989 to grant the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs. The idea itself dates back to the thinking of my predecessor, J. P. Mackintosh, an honourable Member of this House who died far too young, 40 years ago this month.

The claim of right draws on the principle of empowering communities, and it is a criticism only of Governments that they appear far too happy to accept new powers, but are very reluctant to pass them on downwards to their communities, to the local authorities and even lower.

The claim of right has developed into the devolution debate that we have heard today. Again, my predecessor, J. P. Mackintosh, shared with his great friend, Donald Dewar, a passionate commitment to the cause of Scottish devolution. As Donald Dewar said, articulating

Mackintosh's view, devolution is, at its core, about democratic control. It is the empowering of people; it is not for the nationalistic glorification of the nation state. He said:

"It was never Scotland right or wrong...it is about good government, an equitable democracy that borrows, elevates and creates opportunity for the citizen."

It is the idea of a union state made stronger by the diversity of its communities and constituent parts rather than creeping uniformity. The shouts of, "Conform! Conform!", implying that it should all be put in a meat mincer so that it all looks the same, should be battled against.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): I thank my hon. Friend for giving way on that very important point. Is not the reality in practice that this Parliament, far from being at odds with the principles of the claim of right, has actually energised and activated the claim of right by repeatedly using the practice of devolving powers down through numerous examples over the past 50 years from the European economic area to the devolution referendums of recent years?

Martin Whitfield: I am grateful for that intervention. It is right to say that powers have gone down, but, too often, powers stick in one place instead of being handed down. We can look at the crisis in our local authorities in Scotland where they have had powers taken back into centralised government.

We stand here today between a party whose sole aim is a nationalistic independence of flag waving and shouting and a party which, with all respect, failed to see the true potential of devolution. I am talking about the goal of a stronger, kinder Union, a fairer Union in which our communities have a stake not just in the results of a decision but also in the decision-making power. We live in a time of world challenges. A choice was made to stand differently from Europe. It is a decision that saddens me, but it is one that I respect. None the less, we must still stand as part of Europe. The claim of right does not underpin a set type of governance; it is a reality that the form of governance should be influenced by and borrowed from, and it should elevate and create opportunities for the citizens who sign up to it. These words by J. P. Mackintosh stand in testament to the fluid ideas that underpin the demands of a citizen:

"It is not beyond the wit of man to devise institutions to meet these demands."

8.13 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): Earlier in this debate, I intervened on the Secretary of State for Scotland to ask him whether he supported the principle of self-determination in article 1 of the charter of the United Nations, and I was very pleased that he said that he did. For those who need reminding, this is what article 1 says:

"All peoples have the right to self-determination; by virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development."

We have this motion today because of what has occurred since the people of Scotland last voted in relation to their self-determination, which was in 2014, because the implications of Brexit for Scotland's economic, social

and cultural development are enormous. That is why we wish to reassert today the right of the Scottish people to self-determination.

It has been very pleasing that there have been a number of significant concessions from other parties during this debate. The hon. Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) said that he accepts the sovereignty of the Scottish people. I am sure that that may come as a surprise to some of his colleagues from English constituencies who are not here this evening and who so often tell us that it is this Parliament and this Parliament alone that is sovereign, but he has made that concession so that is one concession from the Government Benches.

Douglas Ross: Will the hon. and learned Lady give way?

Joanna Cherry: I will take an intervention in a moment.

The hon. Member for Stirling (Stephen Kerr) has said that he will vote for this motion tonight. I was delighted to hear that and I very much hope that all his colleagues will go through the Lobby to vote for the motion. The support for this principle will become very important when the First Minister of Scotland once again approaches the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom looking for a section 30 order.

The hon. Member for Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath (Lesley Laird), who speaks for the official Opposition, also made an important concession, if I heard her correctly. I think that she said that if there was a mandate for another independence referendum in Scotland, she would support it. Well, that is very good. In fact, it is music to my ears because there is already a mandate for another independence referendum in Scotland. It comes from the democratically elected Scottish Parliament in which, in the light of the Brexit vote, the SNP and the Greens together voted to give the First Minister of Scotland a mandate—[*Interruption.*] Let me finish my point. The SNP and the Greens voted to give the First Minister of Scotland a mandate to request from this Government a section 30 order to hold another independence referendum. If Government Members and Labour Members have not twigged already, let me spell it out for them: that is what this motion is about tonight. It is about protecting the right of the Scottish people to take necessary steps to protect themselves from the consequences of Brexit because, unlike the people's vote, the vote for a second independence referendum in Scotland already has a mandate. That is a distinction that the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray) and the Lib Dems, who are no longer in their place, do not seem to understand.

Before I go any further, I want to take this opportunity to defend our group leader, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford). There has been a concerted attempt by Conservative Members this evening to assassinate his character by putting into *Hansard* allegations about him that cannot be upheld. Madam Deputy Speaker, I note that neither you, nor anyone else in the Chair this evening, has ruled his conduct disorderly. In speaking up passionately for the viewpoint of the Scottish National party, he is simply exercising his mandate and doing his job. In so doing, he has our support, the support of his constituents and the support of the Scottish National party.

Douglas Ross: The hon. and learned Lady mentioned what Conservative Members had said and put into

[Douglas Ross]

Hansard. Will she accept that what I said about the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber was that he made it all far too personal—that he was playing the man, rather than the ball—and that if SNP Members really want to have a constitutional debate in which they engage people from all sides, they have to stop these petty attacks on individuals?

Joanna Cherry: Yes, I did hear the hon. Gentleman say that, but I do not accept that he was right. I suggest that he gets a mirror and looks in it more often, because it is he and his colleagues from Scotland who have been playing the man, not the ball.

This debate—as well as the debate around Brexit and Scottish independence—is really about what it means to be an independent nation in the modern world. People often ask why the Scottish National party wants to leave the United Kingdom but stay in the European Union. The answer is very simple. We do not have to look very far to see an example of what it is to be a partner in the European Union, as opposed to what it is to be a member nation in the UK. Just look across the Irish sea to Ireland, and see the treatment that the Republic of Ireland has received from the European Union. Ireland's economic and social considerations are put at the heart of the negotiations by the EU27. Contrast that with the economic and social concerns of Scotland and, indeed, Northern Ireland, which both voted to remain but whose concerns are utterly sidelined. In Scotland's case, we were given a total of 19 minutes to debate amendments to the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill, accompanied by much sneering and condescension from the Government Benches when SNP MPs dared to protest. I would say to Conservative Members that their sneering and condescension is not a good look.

Simon Hoare *rose*—

Joanna Cherry: No, I will not give way—I want to develop my point.

I ask Conservative Members to reflect on the impression that their behaviour is likely to have on voters in Scotland when, as seems likely—for the reasons admirably adumbrated by my hon. Friend the Member for North Ayrshire and Arran (Patricia Gibson)—the current Tory Government collapse under the weight of their own divisions and are forced to go to the country again in another general election. I suggest to Conservative Members that their role as Lobby fodder, and the way in which they have sneered and condescended when SNP Members have attempted to protest about the lack of time given in this Chamber to the impact of Brexit on devolution, will not serve them well.

The disparity between the treatment of the Republic of Ireland within the European Union and the treatment of Scotland within the United Kingdom illustrates very clearly why I and my colleagues and wish to leave the Union of the UK but remain within the European Union.

Simon Hoare *rose*—

Bill Grant *rose*—

Joanna Cherry: No, I am not going to give way—I do not have long left.

The European Union is a union of equals. The United Kingdom is not a union of equals, because Scotland is not treated as an equal partner within it. We want to be in a union where we are an equal partner. [*Interruption.*]

If Conservative Members would just for a moment stop trying to shout me down, I want to finish by answering a point made by the Secretary of State for Scotland when he said that the Sewel convention was a pillar of the devolution settlement. I suggest to him that the insertion of the word “normally” put a pretty big crack in that pillar. I would like to leave him with this thought: if he was building a house to live in, would he build it on top of a pillar that only normally stood up?

8.21 pm

Hugh Gaffney (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (Lab): Today I have been dealing with the death of a young constituent, Alesha MacPhail. I offer my condolences and support to her family and friends at this dark time.

I have been in a meeting of the Scottish Affairs Committee dealing with very important issues around immigration, and I have been making representations to Ministers on the future of our trading policy if and when we are able to negotiate a deal to leave the European Union. Those important issues have an impact on the day-to-day goings on of the people of Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill, people across Scotland, and indeed people across the United Kingdom. They are far more important than the narrow obsession with constitutional issues that seems to occupy SNP Members.

I am firmly of the view that the people of Scotland are sovereign—they have the ultimate say; they are our boss—and that the people of Scotland have the right to determine the form of government best suited to their needs. That is a principle I believe in and, importantly, it is a fundamental principle that the Labour party is very proud of. It was a Labour Government who restored power to the people of Scotland, and it was a Labour Government who allowed the people of Scotland to vote in Scottish Parliament elections and to elect a Scottish Government. In September 2014, that principle was honoured. The people of Scotland decided that our country was stronger together, and the values and objectives of the Union were held together. My socialism has no borders.

The motion asks us to endorse the principles of the claim of right as it was endorsed in 1989. I just wonder if any SNP Members could remind us how many members of the SNP signed the claim of right in 1989. In fact, only two parties did not sign the claim of right—the actual Tories and the tartan Tories. If SNP Members wanted to demonstrate their commitment to standing up for Scotland, they should have chosen another topic, because their record on this issue is not strong.

The House will be interested to know that the claim of right was signed in 1989 by all Labour MPs, with the exception of Tam Dalyell. The Tories did not sign up to the Scottish constitutional convention or the claim of right because they were opposed to devolution, and the SNP did not sign up to the Scottish Constitutional Convention or the claim of right because independence was not considered.

The people of Scotland are tired of constitutional debates. They want the Governments here and in Holyrood to work together. A Labour-led Government in Scotland and in Westminster will do that. I welcome the opportunity to remind the House of my belief in the people of Scotland and my passion for representing and standing up for them. That means focusing on jobs, welfare and Europe and ensuring that the people of Scotland do not pay the price for the Tories in London and the SNP in Scotland.

8.25 pm

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP): I find it rather interesting that, in the course of a debate of almost three hours, we have not heard anyone speak against the notion of the claim of right. However, I caution colleagues against being deluded by any faux agreement on this matter, because I am confident that many Members who are not in the Chamber tonight would find it presumptuous that a group of citizens in one part of this island should assert the claim to be able to control their own destiny. They would do that because they regard this as a single nation, and they regard the people of Scotland, while important, as having no other rights than the people of the west midlands or East Anglia.

I am pleased that most contributors to the debate have realised that the basis of our constitution is different from that. We may have a single polity, but we have a multinational country that is based on serial Acts of Union that bring its component parts together. Once we understand that, the claim of right has to be the intellectual corollary of that position. A Union can be maintained only by consent, and if the people of Scotland do not give their consent to maintaining it, it will naturally fall.

The idea of popular sovereignty for the people of Scotland is quite old fashioned. In two years, we will celebrate the 700th anniversary of the declaration of Arbroath, and that document is worth looking at. It was in fact a letter from the nobles of Scotland to the then Pope to ask him to intervene. Much of the language is archaic, and much of it is reverential, but in that document is the grain of something that was never before expressed. It says clearly that if the King of Scotland does not represent the wishes of the people, the people will find themselves a King who will. It is the first expression in modern times of the notion of popular sovereignty.

That idea has ebbed and flowed over the seven centuries in between. Three hundred years ago, it inspired the dissenters who were resisting the fledgling Union because they felt it was a matter of being sold out by the Scottish aristocracy. Two hundred years ago, it fuelled the friendly societies and people such as Thomas Muir who were working for popular democracy and universal franchise. One hundred years ago, it motivated the Red Clydesiders and people such as John Maclean. The idea of Scottish popular sovereignty has been consistent throughout the centuries, but never more so than the present day, and never more so than 20 years ago, when the Scotland Act 1998, for the first time in all those centuries, actually asked the people what form of government they would like. A massive majority of them—three quarters—voted to establish the Scottish Parliament.

We are having this debate about the claim of right for Scotland because we believe that the devolution settlement

is very much under threat, and we wish to alert the House and the country to what is going on. The Secretary of State for Scotland says that there is no power grab, but in fact a powers bonanza. In a previous debate, the hon. Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) listed a whole range of things that would become the responsibility of the Scottish Parliament after Brexit. However, we misunderstand if we think that responsibility is the same as power. At the same time as those areas of responsibility are being transferred to the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Parliament's ability to do anything about them is being limited and constrained like never before. It is intended that so many areas—not just the ones transferring from Brussels, but those that are currently the exclusive competence of the Scottish Parliament—will in future be subject to UK-wide frameworks.

We do not yet have an idea—I see that today's fisheries White Paper does not have an idea—of exactly how those frameworks will work. We have so far been talking about the principle, but it is the principle that is important. If we picture a UK-wide committee to talk about fishing policy, the interests of Scottish fishermen would be represented by the Scottish Government, and likewise for the Welsh and Northern Irish, but who will speak for the fishermen of England? That will be the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—a Department in Westminster. At the same time, if there is a divergence of opinion or a difference of view, DEFRA will determine what actually happens. That is not a partnership; it means that the devolved Administrations will be subject to and subservient to the will of the majority. The Secretary of State may say that Scotland is part of the UK, but I tell him that Scotland is not part of England, although that is in effect what such an arrangement would lead to.

David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con): I would like to take issue with the hon. Gentleman's statement about Scotland not being part of England, given that in fact Scotland has never been—certainly in the life of this Parliament—part of England, and that was not what the Secretary of State said.

Tommy Sheppard: I think that the hon. Gentleman might have prepared that better. The point I was making is that, in effect, such an arrangement will make Scotland—and Wales and Northern Ireland for that matter—subservient to the will of the Government in this place, which is contrary to the whole spirit of devolution.

Twenty years ago, when the architects of devolution—Donald Dewar in this place, and John Sewel in the other—were framing the proposals, they understood the need to try to make sure that the process was seen as a genuine commitment to the decentralisation of political power. They therefore enshrined a principle saying that if matters were devolved to the Scottish Parliament, this place would not interfere in those matters and would not determine anything about them without the consent of the Scottish Parliament. That principle has stood for 20 years and has not been challenged across the House. Yet, last week, we made history, because for the first time, a United Kingdom piece of legislation that required the consent of the Scottish Parliament was made law although that consent was not given. That is a problem for everyone and it will have to be addressed.

Luke Graham: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Tommy Sheppard: I fear we are running out of time, so I will not take the hon. Gentleman's intervention.

Many Members have talked about the 2014 referendum and the idea—my leader expressed this so well in his opening remarks—that for those 15 hours on 18 September 2014, sovereignty was genuinely in the hands of the people of Scotland. They had a choice to make between two alternative futures, and they chose one. I did not agree with the choice that they made, but I fully respect it—I respect it completely as a decision that they took. However, I tell the House that in the same way that a dog is not only for Christmas, sovereignty is not only for 18 September 2014. Sovereignty means having the ability to change your mind if circumstances change—the ability to adapt and take a new view.

The shadow Secretary of State asked us to imagine a situation—my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) commented on this—where a Scottish Parliament was elected in which a majority of its Members had stood on a manifesto suggesting that the people should be consulted in a referendum. She suggested that if the majority voted for that to become the policy of the Scottish Parliament, it would be inappropriate for this Parliament to stand in its way. That was the hon. Lady's suggestion, and I agree with it. The problem is that this is not a matter of hypothesis for the future; this is real, because that was exactly what happened in the Scottish general election 26 months ago, when a mandate was sought and a mandate was given.

As others have said, that mandate is extant, but it will be for the judgment of the Scottish Parliament to determine, when the dust settles on this Brexit mess we are currently in, whether it believes that it is in the best interests of the people of Scotland that they be consulted again on their constitutional future and on whether they wish to remain part of an isolationist United Kingdom or to be part of opening up to the world and playing their role as an independent country. That day will come, and the claim of right for Scotland means that the people will have the right to exercise their decision on that matter when that time comes.

8.35 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stuart Andrew): May I begin by referring to the hon. Member for Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill (Hugh Gaffney), who rightly mentioned the sad death of his constituent, Alesha MacPhail? It is right that we all send our condolences to her family and say that we are with the community at this very difficult time.

I am beginning to realise that these debates become incredibly lively. Last week's debate in Westminster Hall was just as enjoyable, and I am pleased to be responding to today's debate. As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Scotland suggested, the debate has served no real purpose for Scotland. As he said, we could have debated our preparations for leaving the EU, the economy, or how to address the many and varied failings of the Scottish Government. I would add that we could have debated the expansion of Heathrow airport, and the many benefits that that will bring to Scotland through extra routes and greater opportunities for exporters.

It is no surprise that we are not debating that issue, however, because SNP Members refused to support the proposal. It did so not because that is not good for Scotland—they agree that it is—but because they believed that that stance would be good for the Scottish nationalist party. That, I am afraid, is this debate in a nutshell. It is not about what is right for Scotland; it is about what serves the self-interest of the Scottish National party.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): Can the Minister name one route that was guaranteed by the UK Government to Heathrow in the national planning statement?

Stuart Andrew: As the hon. Gentleman knows, 15% of the routes are guaranteed for regional connectivity. He has turned down the opportunity for his country to have better connectivity to the rest of the UK and the rest of the world. He says that he wants to stand up for Scotland, but he should take part in the debates that happen here and vote in Divisions, rather than walking out, as he did at Prime Minister's questions.

The claim of right was about devolution, and we support devolution. This Government have consistently supported devolution ever since it was backed by the people of Scotland in a referendum in 1997. It was the Scottish people who reaffirmed their support for devolution in the independence referendum of 2014. We have shown our support in the Scotland Act 2016, which transferred wide-ranging powers over tax, welfare and much more to Holyrood.

We continue to show our support for devolution as we prepare to leave the EU. Scores of powers previously held in Brussels will flow to the Scottish Parliament, and we are working with the Scottish Government to ensure that Scotland and the whole UK are ready. In doing so, we are listening to the people of Scotland. We respect the votes that they cast in 1997 and in 2014. We are respecting their rights, as expressed by the authors of the claim of right.

The truth is that SNP Members cannot bring themselves to show the same respect. They refused to sign the claim of right because it had nothing to do with their cause of independence. They saw devolution only as a stepping stone to independence, and they have shown themselves to be equally opportunistic when it comes to breakfast—*[Interruption]*—Brexit. Yes, breakfast, dinner and tea, as we say in the north.

Shamefully, SNP Members have no interest in preparing Scotland and the UK for leaving the EU. They see Brexit only as a chance to scaremonger and manufacture grievances in a bid to boost calls for independence. That is their purpose in holding today's debate, but people will see it for what it is. They will see through the SNP's games and they will understand that it is not acting in Scotland's interest, but in its own narrow party interests.

Ian Blackford: Will the Minister give way?

Stuart Andrew: No, the right hon. Gentleman spoke for far too long at the beginning of the debate. In fact, I will come on to a point he made right at the very beginning of his speech. He let the cat out of the bag in the very first few sentences of his contribution when he almost lost his temper. It was clear that this is all about pushing for another Scottish independence referendum. He said that there was a majority for independence in

the Scottish Parliament, but the point is that there was a majority of the people of Scotland who voted no in the independence referendum.

The right hon. Gentleman said that we ripped up the Sewel convention. I really do not understand how he can say that. It does seem that the Scottish Government and some right hon. and hon. Members, when taking part in this debate, appear to have read “not normally”, which is written in the convention, to mean not at all, never, in no circumstances whatsoever. Some Members may wish to change the terms of the convention, but this is the convention that we have.

The right hon. Gentleman talked about this Government wanting to attack the poor. I find that a really quite disgraceful comment. We have done an enormous amount to turn the economy around. *[Interruption.]* He can continue to heckle, but I will come on to his behaviour in this debate in a moment. We have record employment. We have lowered taxes. We have taken the poorest out of tax altogether, and our national living wage has given the poorest people in this country the biggest increase in their wage for a long time.

The right hon. Gentleman said that we were all about a power grab and that the Secretary of State could not name a single power that would be going to the Scottish Parliament. I really do not understand that. In a previous debate, my hon. Friend the Member for East Renfrewshire (Paul Masterton) spent about half his speech listing all the powers that will be going to Holyrood. In fact, due to the time limit on his speech, he did not have time to list them all.

Douglas Ross: Does the Minister also accept that, in a debate last week, not a single SNP MP could tell us any powers the Scottish Parliament was losing? Today, every time I tried to intervene on the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) about the power grab, he would not accept it because he knows Scotland is getting a huge number of powers from this Westminster Government as a result of Brexit.

Stuart Andrew: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is part of the process the SNP is trying to use. It is trying to create an image that the Government are trying to take powers away from Scotland when the fact is that, when those powers come from Brussels, when we leave the EU, we will transfer those powers to the Scottish Parliament. That is why Nicola Sturgeon herself has had to increase the size of her Cabinet: because it has more responsibility. Those are not my words, but her words in answer to why we were increasing—

Ian Blackford: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Can I just clarify what has been going on here? Through the withdrawal Act, powers that are reserved under the Scotland Act are being taken back by Westminster. That is the reality and that is the fact. No powers are being gifted by Westminster. The Minister is simply wrong.

Mr Speaker: Unfortunately, the right hon. Gentleman's point of order suffers from the grave disadvantage of not even approximating to or imitating a point of order. As the cheeky grin on the right hon. Gentleman's face testifies, he knows. He was declined when he sought to

intervene and he therefore opted for the somewhat cheeky ruse of a bogus point of order, but he has made his point.

Stuart Andrew: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I want to challenge the assertion made by various Members of the Scottish nationalists that my hon. Friends who represent Scottish seats should stand up for their constituents. I have the privilege of working with them on a regular basis and I can say that that is what they do day in, day out with great force. They regularly meet Ministers from all sorts of Departments in this Government to fight their corner not just for their constituents but for the whole of Scotland.

Let me refer to other points that were made. My hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) talked about the tone of this debate. I was surprised at the way interventions were rejected by the leader of the SNP, the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber. There are ways that we behave ourselves in this House. He talked about important issues about education and health—

Joanna Cherry: On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I hope that it is a point of order, not a point of frustration.

Joanna Cherry: Repeatedly this evening, Government Members have sought to suggest that my right hon. Friend the Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) has done something disorderly. Can the Speaker confirm for the record that he has done nothing disorderly and has not been ruled disorderly this evening? It is character assassination, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker: I did not find the right hon. Gentleman to be disorderly. I think I said to him at one point that it was perhaps a bit off to say, “Sit down!” to the Minister, but in terms of the right hon. Gentleman's general conduct, it has been abrasive, but not disorderly.

Stuart Andrew: Mr Speaker, I did not say that the right hon. Gentleman was disorderly. I simply said that I did not think the tone and the behaviour were appropriate for this debate—

Patrick Grady *claimed to move the closure (Standing Order No. 36).*

Question put forthwith, That the Question be now put.

Question agreed to.

Main Question accordingly put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House endorses the principles of the Claim of Right for Scotland, agreed by the Scottish Constitutional Convention in 1989 and by the Scottish Parliament in 2012, and therefore acknowledges the sovereign right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs.

Mr Speaker: I was genuinely sorry that the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon. Member for Pudsey (Stuart Andrew), was not able to conclude his speech. I say that simply because he is the very embodiment of courtesy in the House, but I am afraid that is sometimes the way the cookie crumbles. No personal discourtesy is intended to the hon. Gentleman.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

That the draft West Midlands Combined Authority (Business Rate Supplements Functions and Amendment) Order 2018, which was laid before this House on 7 June, be approved.—(*Amanda Milling*)

Question agreed to.

PETITIONS

Closure of Sandfield House

8.46 pm

Nic Dakin (Scunthorpe) (Lab): Mental health services are a very important part of the provision in north Lincolnshire. I pay tribute to Catherine Lydon and others who have helped to pull this petition together of many hundreds of people locally, who are concerned about the closure of Sandfield House, which provides important and effective mental health services to local people.

The Petition states:

The petition of residents of North Lincolnshire,

Declares that Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber Mental Health NHS Foundation were given notice to cease operating at the site of Sandfield House by North Lincolnshire Council; and further notes that the closure of the community resource would affect more than 1000 people who are being treated there.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to intervene with North Lincolnshire Council to stop the closure of Sandfield House.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002167]

Mr Speaker: There are a number of petitions to be presented on home education: draft guidance and consultation. I hope that it will be of assistance to the House if I set out how we shall proceed. John Howell will present his petition in the usual way and bring it to the Clerk at the Table, who will read out the title. Subsequent Members should proceed directly to the petitions bag at the back of the Chair. I shall call the next Member immediately after the previous Member has finished speaking. I am advised, so I hope that this is correct—some people may be doing this for the first time; the Chair is your friendly assistant, here to help—that John Howell, Sir Oliver Heald, Laura Smith and Colleen Fletcher will read their petitions to the House in full. [*Interruption.*] The right hon. Member for Chesham and Amersham (Dame Cheryl Gillan) looks positively horror-struck at the prospective denial of her opportunity to so expatiate. I was going to say, but I cannot be sure that things will turn out this way, that subsequent Members should give a brief description of the number and location of the petitioners and state that the petition is in the same terms. It is fairly obvious why I intend to proceed in this way—so that we can avoid an excessively protracted experience.

I call the hon. Member for Henley (John Howell) to present his petition, to which I know the Whip on duty will be listening most attentively and with intense interest.

Home Education: draft guidance and consultation

8.50 pm

John Howell (Henley) (Con): I wish to present a petition on the subject of home education. The petition is from constituents of Henley. Also included in this mass petition are constituents of my hon. Friends the Members for South Derbyshire (Mrs Wheeler) and for Beverley and Holderness (Graham Stuart), my right hon. Friends the Members for Bexleyheath and Crayford (Sir David Evennett), for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) and for Chingford and Woodford Green (Mr Duncan Smith), the hon. Member for Coventry South (Mr Cunningham), my right hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Claire Perry), the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Stephen Lloyd), my hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), the hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq), my hon. Friend the Member for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman), the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), my hon. Friends the Members for Lichfield (Michael Fabricant) and for Maidstone and The Weald (Mrs Grant), my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Dame Caroline Spelman), my hon. Friends the Members for Newark (Robert Jenrick), for Nuneaton (Mr Jones), for Reading West (Alok Sharma) and for Rochester and Strood (Kelly Tolhurst), my right hon. Friend the Member for Sevenoaks (Sir Michael Fallon), my hon. and learned Friend the Member for South Swindon (Robert Buckland), my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith), my right hon. Friend the Member for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley), my hon. Friends the Members for Stone (Sir William Cash) and for Tewkesbury (Mr Robertson), my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) and my hon. Friends the Members for West Worcestershire (Harriett Baldwin), for Wimbledon (Stephen Hammond) and for Woking (Mr Lord).

The petition states:

The petition of residents of Henley constituency,

Declares that the “Home Education - Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated; further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002166]

Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire) (Con): The petition of residents of Letchworth garden city shares the same concerns as explained by my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell). The petitioners are 24 in number.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable

complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,

Declare that the “Home Education - Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002168]

Laura Smith (Crewe and Nantwich) (Lab): I present this petition on behalf of home educators in my constituency who feel that there has been a failure to consult them as stakeholders in the creation of the new guidelines, going against Government policies on consultation.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of Crewe and Nantwich constituency,

Declare that the “Home Education - Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002169]

Colleen Fletcher (Coventry North East) (Lab): I rise to present a petition on behalf of Juliet, Larry and Jemma English, and many others from across my constituency, on home education. The petition relates to the signatories' concerns about the Government's

consultation on draft guidance on elective home education. The crux of their concerns relates to the Government's failure to include the home education community in the consultation process, the lack of safeguards for parents who home-educate their children, and the imposition of officious regulation on home educators.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of Coventry North East constituency,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002170]

Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con): I rise to present a petition with the same title. It has 42 signatures from Clacton constituents.

The petition states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of Clacton,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further

[Giles Watling]

has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002174]

Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con): It is with pleasure that I rise to present a petition from residents of Chesham and Amersham, following in the footsteps of my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell). Home-educating parents play a very important role in our education system. They deserve to be consulted, and they deserve to have an input in the home education that is so important throughout this United Kingdom. The wording of the petition is the same as the wording of the petition presented by my hon. Friend.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of Chesham and Amersham,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002192]

Mr Speaker: Thank you. That was a very brief oration from a distinguished Dame.

Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con): I rise to present a petition in very similar terms, on behalf of my constituents. It has been signed by 75 people with similar concerns about local authorities and consultation. It states:

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of United Kingdom,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P002193]

NHS Complaints System: Wales

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Craig Whittaker.)

8.57 pm

Ann Clwyd (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I am pleased to have the opportunity to talk about something that has been on my mind for a long time.

It is nearly six years since the death of my husband. Some Members will know that he spent his last two weeks on the respiratory ward at the University Hospital of Wales in Cardiff. He was admitted on Tuesday 9 October 2012 to what should have been a caring and safe place. Instead, what we found was the opposite. I left Owen in what I thought was a place of safety, thinking that the hospital could care for him better than we could at home. How wrong I was. Owen went into the hospital mobile, yet spent two weeks crammed in a bed, on a cold, uncaring ward.

Despite the poor care that Owen received, his condition initially settled. In fact, there were provisional plans for him to come home towards the middle of the second week. Sadly, his condition took a turn for the worse. In the early hours of Monday 22 October, I was advised that there was no reasonable chance of his surviving. He lost his final battle the next day. It was then that my battle began: the battle to find out what had happened to him and why.

Many Members will have heard of my concerns regarding the 27 hours he spent on a trolley in the A&E department. A later inquiry identified a number of nursing deficiencies. Sadly, my efforts to obtain information regarding his medical care have been met with considerable obstruction from the board of UHW.

Some time ago, I received help from an experienced NHS consultant, someone who has prepared numerous cases over a period of 30 years when there are allegations relating to clinical negligence. He said—we normally converse in Welsh:

“Ann, roedd gofal Owen yn esgeulus. Hyd yn oed pe fyddai wedi goroesi ei salwch y tro hwn, byddem yn dal I deimlo fod ei ofal yn esgeulus. Yn esgeulus nid yn unig yn ôl safon 2012 ond yn ôl safon 1948, amser dechrau'r Gwasanaeth Iechyd.”

That is, in his opinion, Owen's care during his hospital stay was negligent. In fact, he said that even if Owen had survived his in-patient stay, his level of care would be considered unacceptable, not only by the standards in place in 2012 but by the standards in place at the inception of the NHS in 1948.

My medical friend has pointed out his concerns. He was astonished to find that no doctor saw Owen on either weekend, no consultant saw him and no junior doctor saw him. I should point out that he was on a respiratory ward in Wales's flagship teaching hospital. He was not in a convalescent ward; he was not recuperating from an acute illness. My late husband was an unwell man with MS, whose long-term disabilities had been made worse by what turned out to be pneumonia that he acquired at that hospital.

Most concerning, according to my medical friend, was the failure of the medical department to have any kind of effective handover arrangement, whereby the doctor going off duty would hand over all the clinical information to the doctor coming on duty. Formal handovers are far more important these days, as the

shift systems of junior doctors means reduced hours. This means that over a weekend a patient may be seen by half a dozen different doctors, all working for the same firm.

Since continuing my inquiries about Owen's care, I have learned a number of medical terms. I now know about a “low grade temperature” and that this may indicate that there is an infection somewhere, without the doctors being able to find out exactly where. I have also become familiar with the term “inflammatory markers”. Inflammatory markers are blood tests that indicate the presence of infection. When the clinical markers change, and in particular when they increase, it suggests that there is an infection somewhere that is not under control. I will refer to just two.

One is known as the CRP—the C-reactive protein. The normal CRP is less than 10; Owen's CRP was 22 on admission. Now, 22 is not particularly high, but it suggests that there may be an infection somewhere. Eight days later Owen's CRP had crept up to 41. The fact that it was increasing—“going the wrong way” as the medics would put it—indicated that he could have an infection that could be going out of control. Owen's neutrophil count—the type of white blood cell that increases during an infection—was also “going the wrong way”. The normal is less than six. It was 8.7 on his admission—*[Interruption.]* Excuse me, Mr Speaker; I am sorry, but that is my phone.

Mr Speaker: That is an extraordinary musical intervention on the right hon. Lady, but I am not sure it is up to her high intellectual standards—but the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) has come to the rescue, being a selfless public servant as he is.

Ann Clwyd: The normal is less than six; it was 8.7 on Owen's admission, and eight days later it was 10.6.

Doctors will tell us that they do not just look at the results of blood tests; they also look at the patient. In Owen's case, they failed to look at the blood tests and they failed to look at the patient. Members will no doubt be surprised to hear that although Owen's inflammatory markers had increased during his second week in hospital, this was not recorded in his clinical notes. The tests that noted the increase in CRP and the neutrophil count were done on the Friday. That was four days before his death from hospital-acquired pneumonia. No one saw the results. No one saw Owen. No doctor saw him on Saturday. No doctor saw him on Sunday. By Monday, it was too late. I think it is reasonable to assume that if Owen had received effective antibiotics when his inflammatory markers were increasing, he would have stood a fighting chance and would have survived that infection.

I continue to be shocked by the way the hospital board has dealt with my concerns. Members might have heard of so-called independent reports. There was nothing independent about this particular report. All the members were employees of the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board. The chair was the deputy nursing director, Mandy Rayani. The board's investigation failed to comment on the medical deficiencies that I have mentioned, but it very quickly acknowledged my “adverse perception” of what happened.

Most of my claims of poor care were denied. Of the 31 concerns that I raised, 21 were rejected. This was despite the fact that a few weeks after my husband's

[Ann Clwyd]

death, Health Inspectorate Wales, the body that inspects Welsh hospitals, visited the ward where my husband had been a patient. While it was inspecting the ward, it noticed that senior nurses went off for their lunch leaving patients who needed assistance to eat without any help, that some patients were found without buzzers to call for assistance, and that individual care plans were not in place for the patients, yet my concerns were dismissed as my “adverse perception” by the deputy director of nursing, Mandy Rayani, in UHW’s so-called independent report.

I remain unhappy with the attitude of the health board. When Owen died, the chief executive was Adam Cairns. He has now left the country and is working in the middle east. When he left, I took my complaint up with other executives and I have found—as I did when I was writing my report for the Government on hospital complaints—that the culture of deny, delay and defend has continued.

I wrote to Maria Battle, the chair of the health board. I wanted to know why no one had spotted the abnormal blood results. I wanted to know why Owen’s low grade temperature did not appear to be of concern to anyone. The first meeting was postponed. We eventually met on 2 August last year. Despite my PA telephoning the board to ask for a copy of its response a week earlier, my medical colleague and I were not allowed to see the report until we arrived in the building for our meeting. I was astonished to hear Ruth Walker, the senior nurse, saying that she had taken it upon herself not to release the report prior to the meeting. I would have expected such a decision to be made by Maria Battle as chair of the board, by Dr Graham Shortland, the medical director, given that the matters mainly related to medical care, or by Dr Sharon Hopkins, who at that time was the acting chief executive.

I believe that the decision of the board to refuse to release this document beforehand reflects its dismissive, insulting and gratuitous attitude to members of the public and to the families of loved ones. It reflects the overall cover-up mentality that is all-pervasive in this health board.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the right hon. Lady on securing this debate and on the very personal and poignant way in which she has told the story of her husband’s last few days in hospital. Has she at any stage considered referred this matter to the medical ombudsperson and asking them to investigate her complaint? Hopefully, they would come up with an answer that would satisfy her and perhaps give the Minister a way of taking this forward.

Ann Clwyd: I am grateful for that kind intervention, and I can assure the hon. Gentleman that I have been down all the official routes.

At the meeting, I soon discovered that it was impossible to get straight answers to my straightforward questions. Ruth Walker, for example, said that the problems of Owen’s care have been addressed by the introduction of the EWS—early warning signs—system. When my medical colleague pointed out to her that all the nursing notes were entered in the EWS format, she could not come up with an explanation. I was also astonished that Dr Shortland was unable to give a straight answer when

asked about the arrangements for weekend medical cover. The board members were prepared to hide behind another independent report, but the report was incomplete, failing to comment on Owen’s continuing low grade fever, the rise in his white blood cells, the rise in his C-reactive protein count, the failure of an effective handover process between medical staff and why no doctor saw Owen during his two weekends in hospital.

I have always been a strong supporter of our national health service. I can be proud of representing Cynon Valley, a constituency that is both geographically and philosophically close to the community that bred Aneurin Bevan. It was the community that formed Bevan’s views on the need for an effective health service that is free at the point of need and where the quality of care is not influenced by one’s ability to pay.

Long before becoming a politician, I was on the Welsh Hospital Board from 1970 to 1974 with people such as Arianwen Bevan-Norris, who was Aneurin Bevan’s sister, and Archie Lush, his agent, and I know what they would be saying to me today: “Carry on. Keep on going.” They would not have accepted these kinds of answers. I was also the only Welsh member of the royal commission on the national health service, which met for three years from 1976 to 1979. We made many recommendations at the time, but they were unfortunately not acted upon. If they had been, I am sure that some of today’s problems would have been avoided.

The House will understand my sorrow at the loss of Owen. It is heartbreaking to find that the people whom we appoint to safeguard our services, and who benefit from a significant income and a highly respected position in our society, are unable to address the failings of their organisation, engaging instead in obfuscation and half-truths. The cover-up mentality has to stop. We all make mistakes, but we should be ready to admit them.

My case is not unusual. I have previously told the House of the thousands of letters I received from people from all over the country when I was producing a report for the Government on complaints in England. I knew that the NHS did not treat its complainants well, but I did not expect to be here still looking for answers nearly six years later. In the past, Mr Speaker has allowed me to read out letters that I have received, and more than 4,500 people have written to me about NHS complaints, 500 of which related to the University Hospital of Wales. I am sorry to say that two of my close friends have since died at the same hospital, and complaints have been made about their treatment as well.

In the introduction to the shocking report on Gosport War Memorial Hospital, which was published a few weeks ago, Bishop James Jones of Liverpool said that

“what has to be recognised by those who head up our public institutions is how difficult it is for ordinary people to challenge the closing of ranks of those who hold power. It is a lonely place, seeking answers to questions that others wish you were not asking.”

I will continue to ask those questions on behalf of my family and of the many others who are grieving and who have not had answers.

9.14 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (Stuart Andrew): I begin by thanking the right hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Ann Clwyd) for securing this important debate. I know how incredibly personal this is for her. Her being able to stand in this Chamber

to talk so movingly and so passionately about her late husband's time in hospital, and her dedication to trying to bring about a service that is fit for everybody, is commendable.

Prior to being elected to this House, I had the great privilege of working in the hospice movement. One thing I take from that time is that, when a relative is as poorly as the right hon. Lady's husband was, it is not just the patient who we need to think about. We need to think about family members, too, because it is an incredibly stressful time, and I am sorry to hear her account. I have read some of the reports of interviews she has given over the years since the death of her husband, and giving those interviews takes an enormous amount of inner courage. She certainly has my admiration.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss the important matter of NHS complaints in Wales, and I commend the right hon. Lady for her excellent work over the past few years, particularly her review of NHS complaints handling in England. The review was welcome, and many of its recommendations have been put into action in the NHS across England.

This has obviously been an interesting debate because of that aspect, and the right hon. Lady will know, as other hon. Members will know, that the national health service in Wales is, of course, primarily a devolved area and responsibility for it lies with the Welsh Government. Generally, this Government have responsibility only for the NHS in England. As I hope the House will appreciate, there is a limit to the extent to which I can comment on some of the issues under discussion today, but I will respond to as many points as possible. I am also more than happy to ensure that a transcript of this debate is sent to the responsible Minister in the Senedd in Cardiff.

Our national health service is hugely valued by people in Wales, as was clearly demonstrated over the weekend by the townspeople of Tredegar, who marched through the streets to commemorate its 70th anniversary. Millions of people in Wales and the rest of the UK access the NHS every day and receive the excellent service they deserve and to which they are entitled. We should recognise the unstinting efforts of all those working in all parts of the NHS across the UK who contribute to that service, but that should not prevent us from looking at ourselves critically when things go wrong and from putting those things right.

My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has put an awful amount of emphasis on improving standards. Of course staff across the NHS in Wales and the rest of the UK want to do their best, and I am the first to acknowledge that that is often in very stressful situations.

Frankly, patients and their loved ones can be nervous about complaining. Older people, in particular, often do not want, as they see it, to make a fuss. They can sometimes worry that, by complaining, their care may

somehow be adversely affected, which is clearly not what the right hon. Lady, I or anyone else wants. By putting in place an open, transparent and confident complaints system, we can assure patients, young and old, that their complaints will be dealt with fairly and openly, and they need not fear raising them. Both patients and staff within the NHS need to be assured that they are being listened to and properly supported through the complaints process. We need an effective complaints system operating within a supportive organisational structure and led by strong, confident leadership at all levels—that is an important part of an effective complaints process. Only an organisation with an open culture that is willing to look seriously at itself can be trusted to investigate properly how it operates.

Complaints need to be handled promptly and in a timely manner, and, of course, responses should be accurate and should fully address the issues raised in complaints. An open culture with strong leadership can prevent a hospital or health board from responding defensively to a complaint, seeking to limit damage to its own reputation at the expense of patient care. Many people across the UK, including the right hon. Lady, complain not just to gain redress for themselves or a loved one, but to help to ensure that others are not faced with the same, often painful and traumatic issue in the future.

As my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Development said yesterday,

“one of the strengths of having a four-nation healthcare system is that we learn from each other and share good ideas while providing the service that is best tailored for people in their particular locality.”—[*Official Report*, 3 July 2018; Vol. 644, c. 183.]

I completely agree with her and with that sentiment, and I think we can and should all learn from each other. I want the health services in Wales and in the rest of the UK to be known as learning organisations and to be known across the world for providing the best healthcare in the world. I believe that the extra funding that we have announced, which will come to the Welsh Government, too, over the next five years, will present us with an opportunity to improve the patient experience across the country.

In closing, I want to say to the right hon. Lady that I appreciate the time she has taken to bring this debate to the House. As I said, I will make sure that a transcript of this debate and the points and concerns she has raised is given to the Ministers in the Welsh Government. I pay tribute to her remarkable dedication to making sure that the service provided in hospitals in Wales and across the UK is second to none and that people can feel confident in the care that they receive.

Question put and agreed to.

9.22 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Wednesday 4 July 2018

[Ms NADINE DORRIES *in the Chair*]

Speech, Language and Communication Support for Children

9.30 am

Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con): I beg to move, That this House has considered speech, language and communication support for children.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries, especially given your own interest in communication, reading and writing.

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. I am sorry to interrupt, Ms Pow, but I notice that a lot of Members are wearing jackets. There is a temporary air conditioning unit in the room, but I am not sure how effective it will be. If anybody wishes to remove their jacket, they should feel free to do so.

Rebecca Pow: Thank you, Ms Dorries.

The most fundamental life skill for children is the ability to communicate, which has a direct impact on their ability to learn and develop friendships, and on their life chances. There are huge benefits to getting communication—speech and language development—right from birth, not just to the individual but to society and the economy as a whole. However, despite the best efforts of many involved in supporting children and young people, and some tremendous individual projects and programmes, such as the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, which I welcome here today, the communication champion Jean Gross, the Communication Council, the charity I CAN, and many more, including individual teachers and early years staff, awareness of the importance of children and young people's speech, language and communication among the public and decision makers still seems sadly lacking. That has a serious impact on individuals and society, hence this debate.

Mr Speaker must be commended for his dedicated interest in this area, and for the Bercow report, a seminal piece of work that was carried out 10 years ago. It was an independent review of the state of provision for children with speech, language and communication needs—that is a bit of a mouthful, so I will refer to it as SLCN. Much good work flowed from that excellent report, including the better communication research programme, and the communication champion I mentioned. However, the recent follow-up report, “Bercow: Ten Years On”, which was published in March by the children's communication charity I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, and launched in style in Speaker's House with, I am pleased to say, the Minister in attendance, revealed that despite pockets of great achievement, not enough progress has been made, and that it is a Cinderella sector.

I surmise that that may be linked to the fact that the whole area seems to fall between two stools: health and education. Somehow, it fails to be allotted the place it

deserves in this country's national policy. The second report highlights that, as a nation, we are yet to grasp the significance that not fully focusing on the importance of speech, language and communication has on younger generations and therefore on society as a whole. As a result, thousands of children and families suffer needlessly.

Evidence gathered in the report from thousands of contributors concluded that 1.4 million children and young people in the UK have SLCN. That is 10% of children and young people. Of those, 7.6% have developmental language disorder, which is a condition where children have problems understanding and/or using the spoken language and there is no obvious reason, such as a hearing problem or a physical disability, to explain those difficulties. The rest of that 10% have language disorders associated with other conditions, such as autism or a hearing impairment, plus other difficulties, including stammering. I will not address those conditions; this debate will concentrate on the 7.6% with developmental language disorder. Left untreated, it will adversely affect them for the rest of their lives.

I am interested in this area for a raft of reasons. Much of my career has been spent as a journalist and broadcaster, so communication has been a crucial part of my world and I appreciate how important it is. I also ran a small business. Even as MPs, we are employers, and when we are looking to take someone on, we are often looking for someone who can communicate—someone who is pleasant, amenable, good with words and able to converse and write clearly. Speech, language and communication skills are essential in our world. Most importantly, I am interested in this area as a parent. I have brought up three children with my husband, Charles, who I hope might be listening, so I am aware that parents can make a real contribution to helping their children develop their communication skills.

Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con): My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech on an interesting topic. To pick up on her point about the value of communication in all professions, we should not forget teachers and the ability to train them through voice coaching. Two Essex multi-academy trusts have invested heavily in voice coaching for their teachers, and they have a much enhanced retention rate of 90%. Ensuring that teachers are educated, coached and assisted helps retention, and it provides a powerful example for the children in their care.

Rebecca Pow: I will move on to talk about teachers and their role, including the things they have noticed and how we might help them. It is such an important point. I am particularly interested in those voice coaching projects.

I mentioned the detrimental effect that poor communication skills can have on children. Affected children do less well at school. From the get-go, they make less academic progress in the early years foundation stage than their contemporaries, and when they leave primary school their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is much lower than those without SLCN. The report states that only 15% of those identified reached the expected standards. Unsurprisingly, those children are also affected at GCSE level; only 20.3% of SLCN children gain a grade 4 or C or above in English and maths at GCSE, compared with an expected 63.9% of all pupils. The pattern is clear: poor SLCN attainment will directly affect their academic progress.

[*Rebecca Pow*]

On top of that, unfortunately, there is a high chance that those children will develop mental health issues. In fact, young people referred to mental health services are three times more likely to have SLCN. There is also a strong correlation between emotional and behavioural disorders and language difficulties.

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): I thank the hon. Lady for her leadership on this subject, and it is great that she has secured the debate. The report's recommendations on youth justice are really important, and it is clear that speech and language therapists can play a big part in reducing the risk of reoffending. Does she agree that it is important that those services are provided as early as possible to young people in the youth justice system?

Rebecca Pow: I know that the hon. Gentleman is particularly interested in this area. He makes a valid point, which I will move on to, because it all links up.

Everything I have mentioned so far affects children's life chances. As the hon. Gentleman just said, that is borne out by the fact that 60% of young offenders have unidentified speech, language and communication problems, so the link between the two is stark. Children with poor vocabulary skills are twice as likely to be unemployed in later life. Young offenders are often put on courses, such as anger management and drug rehabilitation, to try to help them, but if they do not have good reading, writing and communication skills, it is difficult for them to take advantage of those courses. I am sure that you will agree, Ms Dorries, that none of those things is desirable in a 21st-century society.

There is even more to these findings, because many of these children come from areas of social disadvantage. There is a very high prevalence of SLCN among vulnerable children, particularly looked-after children. Again, looked-after children are highly represented in the criminal justice system—the 60% figure emerges again. Unsurprisingly, many excluded children are also found to have SLCN, particularly boys—one study found that 100% of excluded boys had some sort of communication or behavioural disorder.

Unsurprisingly, the children of mothers who sadly have mental health issues, that develop just before or after birth, are often found to display SLCN, probably because as babies they did not receive the crucial stimulation they needed, which is so important from the absolute outset. Such children do not develop the essential language skills. Again, that highlights how important it is to pick up mental health issues in mums as early as possible, because they can have a knock-on effect on the babies.

Parenting is really important, so I will talk about that for a moment—it is not a digression, because it is all directly related. This issue affects not only people from disadvantaged areas, but all of us, wherever we come from. It was motherhood that prompted my interest in the importance of early communication. My sister is a speech, language and communication therapist specialising in early years children—I may have to register an interest. She made me aware of how I ought to engage with my babies from the word go. I do not think I had even held a baby before I had my own children, so I was pretty

ignorant about children. I am not saying that my children are model success stories, but I have to say that the tips I was given really helped.

They were just simple things. For example, from birth to three months, parents should get very close to their baby, so that it has eye contact and starts to recognise the mouth, and learns that that is where sounds come from. If children are just sat down in front of a television or a laptop, they will not start to realise that. At six months, a baby starts to become very aware of its environment, so parents should start to talk about the things they are looking at. Obviously, they are not speaking at that point, but they are looking, so parents should start naming the object they think their baby is looking at, whether it is a dog, a cat, a mug or a cup. Then, from nine to 12 months, parents can start to expand on that. Their baby might be in a high chair and pointing at a cup, so the parent should say the word, and they should say it many times, because repetition is how our children learn. Many people think that children do not really communicate until they start talking, but of course they are; they are picking up all those vital signals that will help them to start forming words. It is an utterly fascinating subject.

I am told that dummies really are a no-no. Nursery staff I have spoken to have borne that out. If a dummy is put in a child's mouth too often, it can affect the way the mouth develops. I discussed that only recently with a specialist facial consultant at Musgrove Park Hospital, and she agreed that we do not want to influence what happens in a baby's mouth, because that has to grow and develop as well.

I will turn now to an area that I know is close to your heart, Ms Dorries: reading stories, poems and even songs. We can never do enough of that with our children, starting from the word go. I recently read an article by the author Philip Pullman, in which he bemoaned the fact that, sadly, not enough children are read to anymore and that the bedtime story is disappearing. Indeed, staff at a nursery in Taunton that I visited recently told me that many parents are ditching the bedtime story. The bedtime story is a crucial way for children to learn how to communicate, and again it is not to do with how wealthy someone is, or how smart they are. It is a cheap activity—almost free—that can help our children so much.

Some very interesting research on teaching effective vocabulary produced by A. Biemiller has shown that at age seven relatively high-performing children have an average of 7,100 words in their repertoire and that they can learn, on average, three words a day. However, relatively poor-performing children have an average of 3,000 words in their repertoire and learn, on average, one word a day. That is an enormous gap to fill if those relatively poor-performing children are to catch up when they get to school—I am told on good authority that it is almost impossible for them to catch up. Vocabulary at age five is the best predictor of a child's outcomes at GCSE level.

Ruth Smeeth (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab): I thank the hon. Lady for securing such an important debate. Stoke Speaks Out is one of the national exemplars of how to engage with this issue. Does she agree that we need sustained funding for such programmes? We have seen engagement in this work. In my constituency,

84% of children were 12 months behind in oral skills at the age of two. There was heavy investment and they eventually did well in their GCSEs, but funding was pulled for the children in the next years and we saw an exact inverse relationship in their long-term attainment. Does she agree that, in order to break the cycle, we need sustained funding for every year?

Rebecca Pow: I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention; she makes a good point. I have heard about that extremely good project, and there are others. I know that the matter is on the Minister's agenda. I think that this is a process of joining up the dots, so that we can make good progress, because it is really coming to light how important this issue is for society as a whole. We cannot expect teachers to do it all. They must be able to pick up where they have to, and rightly so, but there is a lot that parents can do, and we could give them many more pointers when they have children. We must engage society on the whole issue

To pick up on the hon. Lady's point, many nurseries and primary schools in Taunton Deane have joined me in supporting the idea that we ought to engage with parents to encourage them to do a little more. For example, staff at Topps Nursery at Musgrove Park Hospital, which I visited last week, are really concerned about the number of children arriving at their door who simply do not have the expected communication skills, whatever their age. Many of those children are not potty-trained, which is a problem, but many also lack basic communication skills. It was the staff at that nursery who mentioned dummies and said, "Please don't use them." They also expressed concern about too many children being dumped in front of gadgets, so that they are not stimulated and do not have normal levels of human contact.

I also met a couple of headteachers from two of my really excellent primary schools, St George's Catholic School and Trull Church of England VA Primary School. When I mentioned that I had secured this debate, both of them said that they had experienced a marked rise in the number of children who do not talk when they start school, who cannot hold a conversation, who do not listen, who have speech problems and who therefore have poor social interaction skills. I was quite taken aback when they so quickly came up with this list of issues that our teachers are clearly facing. Of course, those issues put an added burden on our already hard-working and professional nursery and teaching staff and practitioners.

Fiona Onasanya (Peterborough) (Lab): I thank the hon. Lady for securing this important debate. She is eloquently explaining the factors that inhibit our children's development of communication skills. It is more than 10 years since Mr Speaker produced his first report, so does the hon. Lady agree that it is now time to implement its recommendations? In my constituency there is a lady called Helena, who was diagnosed with selective mutism and social anxiety. It is felt that if she had received the support she needed as a child, she would now, as an adult, be better able to contribute to society. However, she has great difficulty communicating and so is unable to work or go out alone. Does the hon. Lady agree that implementing the report's recommendations would help such people?

Rebecca Pow: I thank the hon. Lady for that intervention. Of course I agree; early intervention is very much what we are talking about today. Intervention happens across the board in so many areas, but the earlier we can intervene to prevent an issue from escalating, the better—not only for the individual, but for society and the economy, because ultimately we will spend less money sorting it out. I spoke to one of my constituents, Clifford Mann. He heads up Musgrove Park Hospital A&E, but he is also the national clinical adviser for A&E. Although one might not think that this is his area, he expounded vociferously on the need for proactive pre-school engagement with this agenda—and others, such as tackling obesity—because it will pay dividends later for the NHS.

I do not want to be wholly negative, because there are already some exceptionally good programmes out there, doing good work and showing that we can improve in this area, not least the programme that my sister was involved in with Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust, which is quoted in the report as a model project. It references lots of other very good projects, such as the Time to Talk project in Warwickshire, the No Wrong Door project in North Yorkshire, and Better Start Southend. Another excellent project in my constituency is A.R.R.O.W. Tuition, run by Dr Colin Lane. It is a very good model that works really well: a multi-sensory blend of techniques combining established and innovative learning strategies, with the student's own voice central to the approach. That touches on what my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin) mentioned—using the voice to train and encourage—and it really does work.

Dr Lane has run a trial project—he has projects all over the place, but I suggested that he speak to Taunton Academy, which is in a very disadvantaged part of Taunton. The academy has its issues, but it is really turning things around. It got in touch with me the other day to say that they took on Dr Lane's project and it is working absolute miracles in the school. I am going back next week to present some prizes to the children, who have made so much progress with their speech and language. This is a project to help children once they are in school, so there are good projects, and I would appreciate the Minister's views about how more of these projects can be harnessed and how we might integrate this very good practice and make the most of it. We do not need to reinvent the wheel; we could just engage some more of these projects.

However, despite clear evidence of the huge benefits that improving children's communication skills can bring, the second Bercow report highlighted that many parents and carers found it difficult to find help for their children. They were not sure where to go, and I have to admit that I had difficulties trying to find out where one would go in Somerset. When those parents and carers did get appointments, waiting times were long and many found the support wanting.

What needs to be done to tackle the clear communications crisis among our children, and thereby improve social mobility, health inequality and employment for so many people? There are some pretty straightforward steps, building on the good foundations that this Government have already put in place and are working on. First, there should be clear messages from the start, raising awareness of the real difference that addressing the issue could make. Secondly, simple guidance should

[Rebecca Pow]

be provided to parents. For example, I am going to put something on my website. How about writing to all parents who have just had babies, offering ideas and suggestions? I am sure that there are some simple things we could do.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham mentioned, there should also be training for practitioners, including health visitors. Health visitors are so often the ones on the frontline who get sent in; it is largely they who spot the really difficult cases and deal with them. I recently spoke to Alison Kalwa, one of the wonderful health visitors in my constituency. She said, “Just give me a few more hours and a bit more time, and I could make so much difference with language development skills with the mum or dad and their baby.”

Having been to the launch of the Bercow report, I raised a lot of these issues in a letter to the Prime Minister, and I was really pleased with the interest she took in her response. She referenced the Department for Education’s plans to work with Public Health England to enable health visitors and early years practitioners to identify children’s SLCN early and put the right support in place. I would very much welcome the Minister saying a little more about that.

Overall, we need an overarching strategy with speech, language and communication at its core, and with a recognition that early identification is key. I very much welcome the recent announcement of an additional £20 billion for the NHS. One of the planks of that is mental health, so perhaps we have an opportunity to engage and harness some of that funding to work on communication needs so that we can prevent people from developing mental health issues in the first place. That is where it would be so important for health providers to link together, with all the public bodies playing their part, including Public Health England, NHS England, the Care Quality Commission, NHS Improvement, Ofsted and the Youth Justice Board, which brings in the point that the hon. Member for Blaenau Gwent (Nick Smith) made about offenders.

How about including children’s SLCN in those sustainability and transformation plans we keep hearing so much about? Of the 44 sustainability and transformation plans published in 2016, only three mention the issue. Surely there must be scope there. Perhaps Ofsted inspectors can be trained to ensure that children’s communication is part of everyday life. What is overridingly apparent to me is that the issue must be approached jointly by the health and social care sector and by the education sector—even in deciding which Minister we might like to answer us. It causes a slight dilemma: should it be the Department for Education or the Department of Health and Social Care? Who would it be better to raise the issue with? I am optimistic that this Minister has great links and communication skills and will hotfoot it to the Department for Education so that they can work jointly. I would love to hear his views on that.

I am optimistic that the Government can work on the issue, and it is brilliant that all these things are coming to light and so much work is being done. While I am at it, I have to put in a bid for something. In Parliament I often focus on issues relating to the environment, nature and the countryside, and one thing I have noticed is that many teachers and nursery practitioners have said how

our children adore forest schools and getting outside to commune with nature. That is a great way to stimulate them and get their communication skills going, so let us work some of that into what we do as well. Things should not all be separate. Forest schools are a great way of engaging our children.

To sum up, if communication was given the priority it deserves, the 1 million-plus children in England who are suffering with communication problems could be helped. We should be thinking about the 7.6% whose life chances could be improved. Not addressing the issue will be a cost to society and the economy. If there are things out there that we can do to help, we must try to do them. If the issues are addressed, by engaging some of the excellent recommendations outlined in the second Bercow report, we will have wins for the individuals, for society and for the economy as a whole.

9.58 am

Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries.

I start by acknowledging the tremendous support and activism there has been throughout the country to raise the profile of the “Bercow: Ten Years On” report and the need to improve speech, language and communication support for children and young people. That support is essential in improving the lives of the more than 1.4 million children and young people in the UK who have communication difficulties, too many of whom are not getting the support they need.

I welcome the representatives of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists who are here today, and thank it for all the work it has done. I also put on the record my thanks to Gillian Rudd from Birmingham City University in my constituency for her work raising awareness of this matter.

The petition on Parliament’s website regarding the “Bercow: Ten Years On” report has more than 10,500 signatures. That demonstrates the public’s desire to ensure that support for children and young people with speech, language and communication needs is improved, along with the support for their families, carers, teachers and other professionals.

The nationwide figures are stark. More than 10% of children and young people in the UK—some 1.4 million—have some form of persistent, long-term SLCN, and in areas of social disadvantage up to 50% of children can start school with delayed language or other identified SLCN. Across Birmingham, that translates to more than 21,000 children and young people with communication needs, 7.6% of whom will have a developmental language disorder and at least 1% of whom will stammer. Those children and young people would likely benefit from long-term support to enable them to achieve their full potential.

Let us not forget that we are also talking about the need for parents, carers, teachers and other professionals to be supported and equipped with the skills that they need. Those who have difficulty communicating can have problems with understanding and expressing themselves, including in social interactions. Imagine for a moment not being able to make yourself understood, not being able to understand what is being said to you, and not being able to make friends or develop positive relationships; it is a truly frightening thought.

Left unidentified and unsupported, difficulties with speech, language and communication can have a huge impact on children and young people's life chances across a wide range of areas: educational attainment, behavioural issues, mental health and wellbeing, health inequalities, employment prospects, and interactions with the criminal justice system. "Bercow: Ten Years On" has demonstrated that more needs to be done to ensure better speech, language and communication support for children and young people who have SLCN.

The Minister has written to me outlining some of the things that the Government are doing, including focusing on closing the word gap at age five and working more closely with Public Health England to support health visitors and early years practitioners. That is a good start, but more needs to be done, particularly for the children and young people who need help beyond the age of five. Can the Minister confirm what discussions his Department has had with the Department of Health and Social Care, the Ministry of Justice, and the Youth Justice Board regarding the report? Furthermore, what plans does his Department have to extend the proposals to improve identification and support in respect of SLCN to children over the age of five?

As the Minister knows, I have written to the Prime Minister asking what the Department of Health and Social Care is doing in response to the report, given the need for specialist services. Joint commissioning between education and health, and the impact of communication difficulties on mental health and health inequalities, is absolutely integral.

In separate correspondence, the Minister for Care told me that

"more needs to be done to ensure that children with a stammer are able to access the communications support they need",

and that

"the Department of Health and Social Care and the Department for Education will be considering what more could be done to strengthen commissioning of communication support."

That interest from the Department of Health and Social Care is encouraging because, as the Minister knows, many children with SLCN are identified initially by health visitors. As speech and language therapy services are most often commissioned and provided as part of the health system, it is essential that the Department of Health and Social Care plays its full part in responding to the report. Only with cross-Government action can we improve the life chances of all children and young people with speech, language and communication needs.

"Bercow: Ten Years On" makes numerous recommendations to improve speech, language and communication support for children and young people, the most central of which is a cross-governmental strategy for children with speech, language and communication at its core. I wish to place on the record my support for the recommendations in the report. With that in mind, will the Minister commit to introducing a cross-Government strategy for children with speech, language and communication at its core? When will the Government formally respond to the "Bercow: Ten Years On" report? The Prime Minister committed to responding at Prime Minister's questions on 21 March.

Finally, I thank the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) for securing this very important debate and, of course, the Speaker of the House, the right hon.

Member for Buckingham (John Bercow), for his leadership in this area. We all recognise how important communication is to our children, and I look forward to continuing to work with colleagues to ensure that we all play our part in helping to improve the life chances of all children and young people with speech, language and communication needs. If we do not, it is clear that we will be failing the next generation of children and young people.

10.4 am

David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) on securing this important debate on a very important topic. As soon as I became aware of the topic, it reminded me that the subject of speech, language and communication needs—she is right that it is a bit of a mouthful, so I will refer to it as SLCN—is a key factor in supporting patients of a condition that has come to be very close to my heart.

I chair the all-party group on a condition called 22q11.2 deletion syndrome—again, a bit of a mouthful—which is sometimes known as DiGeorge syndrome. For the purposes of this speech, I will refer to the condition by the abbreviation 22q. The genetic condition is not so rare, but it is often misdiagnosed or undiagnosed, and is estimated to affect anything from 1 in 4,000 to 1 in 1,000 births. It is the second most common chromosomal disorder after Down's syndrome and is often described as "the most common genetic disorder you've never heard of".

In the APPG meeting that I chaired last week, we were fortunate to be joined by clinical experts on the condition from Great Ormond Street, including Dr Debbie Sell, the principal speech and language therapist who specialises in speech disorders associated with cleft lip and palate, which is very common in 22q, along with developmental issues.

As a condition, 22q exemplifies the problems of SLCN. Indeed, speech and language disorders are a hallmark of 22q. Furthermore, given the very high incidence of mental health difficulties in people with 22q, irrespective of communication issues, combining the existing risk with the common existence of SLCN makes the group hugely vulnerable. Maximising their speech and language potential is especially important to their ability to benefit from non-pharmacological mental health interventions. Children with 22q frequently have developmental challenges, with language and speech disorders. Their understanding is often relatively intact, but words and sentences do not come at the expected age.

For example, three to four-year-olds might have only a handful of words and simple phrases. As pre-schoolers, they might need to be taught a gesture or signing system as an alternative means of communication until their verbal language starts to develop. During this period, therapy is essential in addressing attention and listening skills; developing the basic early communication skills of taking turns and making eye contact, much as my hon. Friend described helping parents interpret their child's non-verbal communication cues and oral attempts; and supporting parents in learning and implementing a gesture system.

Once sounds and simple words start to emerge, therapy changes to developing vocabulary and sentence structure. Speech is often severely unintelligible, with atypical

[David Duguid]

consonant production often associated with a problem with the soft palate or the back of the throat. Some 75% of cases need surgery from cleft lip and palate teams. Surgery to correct the problem is less likely to be successful than the same surgery in children without 22q, and often more than one surgery is required. Although surgery will improve the anatomy in order to speak clearly, speech therapy is still required to eliminate consonant errors. That is not an overnight or easy task and often requires intervention over at least two to three years and often more. Therapists need expert advice on how to correct the abnormal articulatory patterns from the cleft team's speech and language therapist, collaborating with the community-based SLT.

Unfortunately, we know that access to intervention is often woefully inadequate and becoming more difficult. In 2017, a report on behalf of the clinical reference group for cleft lip and palate for NHS England showed unacceptable inequalities in SLT provision and outcomes across the UK, with large differences in the timing, intensity, regularity and quality of therapy for each child. The "Bercow: Ten Years On" report, which I will refer to later, concluded that therapy provision is a "postcode lottery", based not on evidence but on costs and demand.

Children do respond to intervention and they can do well in the resolution of their early speech and language difficulties if they can access help. However, persistent expressive language difficulties and impaired abstract language are common in the school-age years. They struggle particularly when the school curriculum starts to become more abstract. Their language skills, involving humour, inferencing and sarcasm can drop off, and their academic skills can drop off too. My constituents who have children who suffer from a range of conditions often find that their frustration increases when their children move from one school year to another, and new teachers have to learn about the condition.

Accessing language therapy at school age is very difficult, and even worse in senior-school settings. The children start to fail educationally just at the time when their mental health issues can kick in. In the 13 months since I was elected to this place, I have had several constituents come to me who are affected by even rarer conditions than 22q, including genetic disorders such as Edwards syndrome, CHARGE syndrome—coloboma, heart defects, atresia choanae, growth retardation, genital abnormalities and ear abnormalities syndrome—and others. In those cases, I, along with the families affected, have been disappointed that clinicians sometimes view those rare cases as the statistical rarity that they represent, rather than treating the person as an individual patient in their own right.

The "Bercow: Ten Years On" report, which has been mentioned, states:

"Poor understanding of and insufficient resourcing for SLCN mean too many children and young people receive inadequate, ineffective and inequitable support, impacting on their educational outcomes, their employability and their mental health",

as well as leading to an over-representation in the justice system. I, too, support the report's recommendations, which are highly relevant to children and young people with 22q. It is critical that the Department of Health and Social Care plays its part in taking those recommendations forward.

10.11 am

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries, and thank you for letting me indicate my wish to speak at such a late stage. I congratulate the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) on securing this important debate, and on the tenacity with which she has pursued this issue pretty much every time I have been in the Chamber for questions and she has been able to raise it. The perspicacity of her speech demonstrates that she clearly has this issue in her heart; it is not something that she is doing simply because she can.

I want to touch on the Stoke Speaks Out scheme, which my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth) mentioned. It is a wonderful scheme, which Janet Cooper and her team have run for a number of years. The purpose of the scheme is to identify at a very early age young people in Stoke-on-Trent for whom speech and language could be a barrier to their overall development, aspiration and further opportunity.

The team at Stoke Speaks Out do wonderful work, but they have the never-ending problem of constantly having to reinvent the service that they are trying to deliver in order to qualify for new rounds of funding from various different funding agencies and bodies. The reality is that they have a model that works. It has been statistically proven to work, and they have a quantified dataset that shows that their interventions cause improvements. In fact, the baseline for readiness in Stoke-on-Trent schools in 2016 showed that only 35% of our young people were ahead or on track for speech standards, but after intervention by the Stoke Speaks Out team that figure had risen to 54% by July 2017. I think we would all agree that that is a remarkable achievement in such a short period of time for an organisation that was operating on a shoestring.

This is not an issue with our schools. The schools in our city are rated good or outstanding overall. This is a community issue and a societal issue, and it is a problem that is often missed. The most pertinent point that the hon. Member for Taunton Deane made was about early intervention outside school years. We have a disproportionate number of young people in Stoke-on-Trent for whom the 30 hours of nursery provision or pre-school arrangements simply are not available, because of work arrangements or the hours threshold. That means that a lot of young people go directly from a home situation into a reception class. Headteachers around the constituency consistently tell me that young people benefit from provision in a nursery school setting, and that there is a marked and quantifiable difference in readiness for speech and language skills between children who come into school aged four and those who have been through nursery provision aged three.

The simple fact is that early intervention teams within the community health team cannot pick up every case where somebody may have an issue with speech and learning development. Stark statistics suggest that around half the young people in the constituencies of Stoke-on-Trent North, Stoke-on-Trent South and Stoke-on-Trent Central have up to a 12-month delay in their language skills by the age of three. As the hon. Member for Taunton Deane pointed out, that is a huge impediment to their future success.

Schools also talk to me quite readily about the fact that they struggle to get some parents to engage with at-home reading. That is sometimes down to parents not making the effort—we must be honest about that—but it is also because adult literacy rates in some parts of my constituency mean that parents do not have the confidence to sit down and read with their children from a very young age. Again, that can cause issues around how people parent. The hon. Member for Taunton Deane rightly pointed out that the “digital corner parent”, as we call it in our house, sometimes has a much greater presence in the young person’s life than it should, to the extent that a headteacher in one of my schools said that one of their problems was children coming in with American accents, because they watch American cartoons and TV, and that has become dominant. In some of my local schools, the words “soda” and “elevator” are now more commonly used than “pop” and “lift”, because that is the way that some parents arrange things.

Ruth Smeeth: I hate to interrupt a narrative about American television, but one of the most important things that Stoke Speaks Out has done is to deliver 3,000 free books to children across our city as part of the Stoke Reads project. Does my hon. Friend agree that that is as vital for parents as it is for children, as those parents start reading to their children?

Gareth Snell: I thank my hon. Friend for her inevitable intervention. She is right: the more we can get parents reading, the better. My predecessor, Tristram Hunt, did a piece of work with every primary school child in Stoke-on-Trent Central. He arranged for them to receive a copy of H. E. Marshall’s “Our Island Story: A Child’s History of England” as they transitioned from primary to secondary school, so he could be certain that they would have something to read over the summer period. Those small things can go on to develop language skills.

There is also a wonderful organisation in Stoke-on-Trent called Beanstalk, which arranges for volunteers to go into school and read with children. I believe that the mother of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North is a volunteer with that programme. Whenever I go round schools I see teachers and headteachers who have used their pupil premium money in very innovative ways to get young people reading and understanding where language comes from. I must admit that I was somewhat confused when my seven-year-old daughter came home, having done phonics in her year 1 class, with “oohs” and “aahs” and lots of new language sounds that I certainly did not learn when I was at school.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): We can tell!

Gareth Snell: Yes, thank you—I was almost there.

That demonstrates to me that there are some wonderful ways in which we can start to tackle this problem, but the work has to be systemic and it has to be continued.

I will ask the Minister some important questions. How do the Government see early intervention work continuing, particularly for young people who are not in nursery provision before going to school?

Rebecca Pow: On the subject of different charities doing good work, in my constituency we have two really good branches of a charity called Read Easy, which

work with adults on adult literacy. A lot of adults are scared to admit that they cannot read, but it is a really gentle, lovely way of engaging adults, because of course they cannot help their children if they cannot read properly themselves. The hon. Gentleman made a very good point about that.

Gareth Snell: Once again, the hon. Lady is absolutely right. The headteachers I have spoken to in Stoke-on-Trent say that once they can get parents, who may have had quite an unpleasant time at school themselves, into the school and show them that it is a safe environment for them as well as their children, the engagement levels with those parents increase. Suddenly, the child’s homework gets better, the reading diary is filled in, there is more interaction with the school for pastoral and social events, and the family becomes a much more engaged part of the school community rather than simply dropping their children off and picking them up in the afternoon.

I would be grateful if the Minister explained what the Government can do on early intervention, because it looks as if many of the future funding promises will be geared towards schools, which are already overstretched. If we can reach young people before school, we can close the gap and ensure that their opportunities for learning are increased.

I would also be grateful if the Minister, if he is unable to answer today, could at least think about longer-term aspirational plans. Stoke-on-Trent is an opportunity area, with two wonderful co-chairs, Professor Liz Barnes and Carol Shanahan, leading the way. They know that early intervention and breaking the cycle early on is important. Will the Minister tell us how he sees that programme being funded sustainably? The opportunity area is a three-year programme and they will do what they can in their three years, but that period will run out. How can we embed that work into our culture and society?

The schools in my constituency are working absolutely flat out to address this issue. I know that this is not a debate about fairer funding arrangements, but is there anything that the Minister could do to consider schools in areas such as Stoke-on-Trent, where deprivation levels are higher than we would like them to be on every metric? Might there be longer term intervention programmes for our city? We need to make sure that the generation of MPs who follow me and my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North are not also discussing this issue.

10.20 am

Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I congratulate the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) on securing the debate. She gave a wonderful, learned speech and talked of her own experiences. I found it really interesting.

Everyone who has spoken agrees that it is important that speech and language is set early on, and hon. Members have spoken of the different ways in which we can do that and how much it affects children’s life chances. That is also really important for the economy. I also give credit to the Bercow report and the follow-up report.

The hon. Member for Taunton Deane talked about how many young offenders have speech and language difficulties, and that is an important point. I enjoyed

[*Marion Fellows*]

how the hon. Lady spoke about teaching our children to speak. I have three children and three granddaughters, and I have always talked to my children. Sometimes now I notice that some of my grandchildren and some of my friends' grandchildren—I am not pointing any fingers—are, as the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) said, growing up with an American accent. In some cases in Scotland, they are growing up with an English accent because they listen to English TV programmes made in England. Really, children should be speaking their own language—it makes it much easier for them all round.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Preet Kaur Gill) highlighted the problems across England and congratulated the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists on its work. I am glad to see so many members of the Royal College here today.

The hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid) is chair of the all-party parliamentary group on 22q11 syndrome. I have had dealings with a constituent who left Banff and Buchan and moved to Motherwell and Wishaw, who has spoken to me at great length about that issue. I will help her, but am unable to help as much as I would like, because that is a devolved issue in Scotland. I have signposted her to the local Member of the Scottish Parliament so that she can get the help she needs. Some of the stories she told me are heart-rending—the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan exemplified that point.

Language is such an important foundation for the whole education process. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central mentioned that 50% of under-threes in his area have up to a 12-month delay in language skills. The UK cannot afford those delays, which affect the life of the children and which, as we have heard, can lead to offending. That must be addressed. The hon. Gentleman talked about the importance of early intervention, which is a keystone of Scottish Government policy. If, as the First Minister hopes, we are to close the educational attainment gap, it is before children go to school that a lot of work needs to be done to help them.

The Scottish Government believe that it is vital that speech and language communication support for children is evidence-based and responds to the needs of the child. The “Getting it right for every child” plan is Scotland-wide and is at the heart of early intervention.

People talk about the crossover between health and education. Great progress has been made on that in Scotland. NHS Education for Scotland has recently announced a new educational resource to help to meet speech, language and communication needs. It is an interactive, portable tool that people such as health visitors can take into family homes to pick up on language difficulties early on. It helps them to signpost parents to where they can get more help and support for their children, in order to prevent the gap and language delay before children start school or nursery.

There are many free book schemes in Scotland for young children at nursery age and in primary 1. Sometimes, if a child brings home a book, the parent is more likely to be pestered into reading to the child. That is also something that the Minister might look at. There has been some co-operation with Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, which also gives out free books. It is vital that

children are read to and learn to read as quickly as possible so that their whole education has a much more sound basis.

In 2016, the Scottish Government held a communications summit jointly with the RCSLT, and work is ongoing. They have called for an action plan to support the changing and growth of speech, language and communication assets and have asked for key stakeholder support.

The Bookbug club runs in my constituency, as it does in many Scottish libraries. I do not know whether they run in England, but in Scotland, almost all local libraries run Bookbug sessions, to which parents with children as young as three months can go along. They work on language and singing. I attended one in Perth with my granddaughter and it was great fun. At one time, I wondered what the benefit was so early on—she was six months old when I took her—but it is of great benefit and supports the point about children picking up early on language.

I have a wonderful resource in the Wishaw part of my Motherwell and Wishaw constituency at Orchard Primary School. It has a language unit for children with a wide range of language difficulties. Some children need to be taught in the unit, but many go into the mainstream primary school. I have had great reports from constituents whose children are autistic or somewhere on the spectrum, who have been able to go on to a mainstream secondary school because their language skills have been so much improved by the unit.

The Scottish Government are still working with the Royal College, which is helping them to go over the submissions that have been made, to get the action plan up and running across Scotland to aid the development of our young children. The working group is looking forward to producing that action plan.

I ask the Minister to look at what the Scottish Government are doing and use that as part of the evidence. In Scotland, we sometimes do things differently—not always better, but differently—in a number of areas. Since I came to this place, I have noticed that there is sometimes a reluctance to look close to home, at what is being done north of the border, to see where it might help improve the situation. We are not exclusive. We want to help everybody, and we might help children in England as well, so I encourage the Minister to look at that. It is vital that our children acquire these skills, and I am happy to speak to him about anything he wishes to know. From my service on the Education Committee, I know that such discussion does not always happen. This is about children's life chances and giving them the best possible start in life so that the whole economy can benefit. Children can benefit, and their families will too—everyone will benefit if we can put that into practice.

10.30 am

Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. I thank the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) for securing today's debate, 10 years on from the Bercow report, on this important topic. I pay tribute to Mr Speaker, I CAN and the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists for their groundbreaking work in this area, and to all hon. Members who have spoken today.

Many of us take communication for granted, but imagine being unable to express how you feel, what you think and what you need. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Preet Kaur Gill) described

that scenario eloquently. The effects can be debilitating and can last throughout childhood and adolescence and well into adulthood if someone is left unsupported. I know myself how frustrating that can be. Growing up with dyspraxia—being different and standing out—caused me to have chronic low self-esteem and to isolate myself from my peers. Of course, I did all right in the end—I ended up in this place—but that is because I got lucky and have had the benefit of being surrounded, then and now, by some phenomenal people. For the 1.4 million children who struggle with speech, language and communication needs, it is vital that the right support is there when they need it, but it is often lacking. Our children are being let down to the degree that, at present, six children in every classroom do not meet the expected levels of communication and language skills at age five.

Children with speech, language and communication difficulties can access speech therapy and support via a number of avenues, including their health visitor, GP or school, but the Government have presided over a decline of more than 2,000 health visitors in the past two years. Fewer GPs are in place than in 2015, and our schools are facing the first real-terms funding cuts in 20 years—more than £2 billion is being cut from their budgets. It is little wonder, then, that the “Bercow: Ten Years On” report highlighted that 73% of parents and carers found it difficult to get help with their child’s speech, language and communication needs, and 52% thought their family’s experience of speech, language and communication support was poor.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell) said, the original Bercow report called for early intervention that prioritises speech, language and communication therapy in Sure Start children’s centres, 500 of which the Government have closed. The report called for the workforce to be strengthened, but senior and specialist language posts are being lost due to a restructuring of NHS speech and language therapy services. It called for the primary and secondary curriculum to emphasise speech and language communication. Instead, speaking and listening has been removed from the national curriculum, the judgment of communication has been removed from the Ofsted framework and there is no assessment of spoken language in the curriculum after the age of five. Some 49% of early years practitioners receive little or no initial training in typical speech, language and communication development.

The Communication Trust—a large consortium of speech and language and communications skills charities—saw demand for its services increase by 33% last year, but in March this year the Department for Education told us that its contract would be ending. The tender to replace it has no mention at all of speech, language and communication. The “Bercow: Ten Years On” report highlighted that only 15% of survey respondents said that speech and language therapy was available as required in their local area. It is little wonder that, last year, only 234,076 children with speech, language and communication needs actually received any support.

The pattern of Government neglect is more apparent when children have needs in addition to speech and language difficulties, or get support via education and healthcare plans. The hash the Government have made of those plans is well documented. They were supposed to encourage joined-up planning between healthcare professionals and schools, but in reality that is not

happening. It is often said that health is missing from the plans. At least 65,000 children were not moved on to the new plans by the Government’s deadline of March this year. A damning report by the local government and social care ombudsman, which looked at a large sample of plans, found many flaws in their execution.

A report by the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists noted that children without plans are being left completely without support. Just 40% of respondents said that they have the capacity to deliver services to children without a plan, and 43% said that speech and language therapy is not being commissioned for the crucial age group of nought to two, or for people aged 18 to 25 who are preparing for work or further education.

The Bercow report revealed that more than half of parents and carers had to wait longer than six months for their child to get the help they needed. Six months is a long time in a child’s developmental cycle. My six-year-old constituent, Penny Whyte, has a speech disorder and has been receiving blocks of speech therapy since the age of three, but she has to wait an average of nine months between blocks. She was also referred to intensive therapy, but has had to wait three years for a place. Imagine being Penny’s mam, Donna, who knows that her little girl is just as bright and capable—perhaps more so—than everyone else, but she is falling behind her peers. Her true potential is masked because the support she needs is being withheld by a fragmented system that cares more about marketisation and the profit that can be gleaned from health and education services than about their delivery.

The Government talk a good game when it comes to social mobility, but the reality is different. In areas of social disadvantage, 50% of children start school with delayed language and communication skills. Children eligible for free school meals are 2.3 times more likely than their peers to have language difficulties. Only 51% of those pupils achieve a good level of development at the end of their early years foundation stage, compared with 69% of their peers. Children with special educational needs or disability remain stubbornly over-represented in alternative provision and exclusion figures. Three quarters of pupils in pupil referral units have special educational needs. Last year alone, more than 4,000 were left without a school place. Some are subject to informal exclusions, and some are being home-schooled. The fact is that the Government have not bothered to keep track of those children, so we do not know where they are and what support, if any, they are getting.

I want to give a shout out, if you will permit me, Ms Dorries, to some of the non-verbal children I worked with in the past, who are now adults. They taught me the power of communication, which is so much more than words. It can be a smile, a sparkle in the eye, a nod of the head, a hand movement, a laugh or a cry. What they all had in common is that, once they had the right support and were able to use words, they were like different children. One boy I remember in particular transformed from being stoic and withdrawn into being a massive chatterbox—the life and soul of his classroom. That is the power of consistent and sustained speech and language therapy. That power is in the gift of the Minister and the Government.

The Prime Minister said months ago that she would respond formally to the report. She has not done so. The Minister said a few weeks ago in Education questions

[Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck]

that he was looking closely at the recommendations. I have not asked the Minister any questions today, because I simply want him to respond to my comments, those of my hon. Friends, and the report's findings and recommendations. The children struggling to get by, my constituent Penny Whyte and my younger self at least deserve that.

10.38 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries.

The hon. Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) started well by asking us to imagine what it would feel like to be unable to communicate or explain one's own feelings, and the hon. Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Preet Kaur Gill) said the same thing. I do not need to imagine that, because I was that child. I came to this country with my parents as immigrants in 1978 at the age of 11, and I could not speak English. I sat at the back of the class. Initially, my teachers thought I had learning difficulties, but within six months I had picked up the language. I guess I am the embodiment of what speech, language and communication skills can do for a young child immigrant in this country who cannot speak the language properly.

I feel, however, that the hon. Member for South Shields let herself down by politicising this debate—we have had a good debate today—and attempting to weaponise it, whereas the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell), and his colleague the hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth) in an intervention, spoke eloquently about the work being done by Stoke Speaks Out and in the opportunity area. I must say to both hon. Members that the opportunity areas are the best infrastructure I have seen, of any Government intervention, and have a real chance of working for those disadvantaged communities because they are bottom-up, with real, measurable targets and outcomes. My ambition is to ensure that we meet those targets over three years so that I can make the argument that we should keep supporting opportunity areas.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow) on securing this important debate, and I am grateful for this opportunity to set out the Government's position on supporting children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, including those with speech, language and communication needs. I am determined to see children and young people with SLCN receive the support they need to achieve in school and in independent life.

I was pleased to be able to speak at the launch of "Bercow: Ten Years On", and I am grateful for the work that the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, I CAN and, of course, Mr Speaker himself have done. It was a good coming together of all the specialists, and I put it on the record that the Government will respond formally to the report in due course. I have recently accepted an invitation from the all-party parliamentary group on speech and language difficulties to discuss how we can work together to best support children and young people with SLCN. I hope hon. Members here, and others, will join me in attending the seminar.

Our latest figures show that SLCN is the second commonest need for pupils with an educational health and care plan, with 14.3% of pupils having that need. It is also the second commonest need for those with special educational needs support, at 22%. I know that the "Bercow: Ten Years On" review reports that there is a poor understanding of SLCN and insufficient resourcing for the sector, and many colleagues have talked about that. Of course, that is neither my nor the Government's expectation. I expect children and young people with SLCN to receive the support they need to help them fulfil their aspirations alongside their peers, and we are taking action to make that a reality.

A lot of progress has been made over the 10 years since the original Bercow review was carried out. The Government have introduced, through the Children and Families Act 2014, the biggest change to the system in a generation. The reforms are about improving the support that is available to all children and young people with SEND. We are doing that by joining up services for ages nought to 25 across education, health and social care, and by focusing on positive outcomes in education, employment, housing, health and community participation. The move to a more child-centred, multi-agency and participative education, health and care needs assessment is improving the support that is available to children and young people with SEND, including those with SLCN.

As of 31 March, over 236,000 children and young people had had their statement of SEN converted to an EHC plan, which equates to 98.4%. That is great news, but we know there is much more to do. The completion of the statutory transition period to the new system is a great achievement, but it is not the end point for the reforms. We are only part of the way to achieving our vision. The biggest issue we now have to address is changing the culture in local government, clinical commissioning groups and education settings.

Mrs Lewell-Buck: Will the Minister give way?

Nadhim Zahawi: I am short of time and I have a lot to say about this subject, so the hon. Lady will forgive me if I do not.

Supporting schools to respond to the needs of all their pupils is crucial to achieving our ultimate goal of culture change. We know that spoken language underpins the development of reading and writing, and that the quality and variety of language that pupils hear and speak is vital for developing their vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing. The national curriculum for English, which colleagues mentioned in their comments, reflects the importance of spoken language in pupils' development across the whole curriculum. At primary level, children should be taught to ask relevant questions, to articulate and justify answers, arguments and opinions, to participate in collaborative conversation, to use spoken language to develop understanding and to speak audibly and fluently, with an increasing command of English. Teachers should ensure the continual development of pupils' confidence and competence in spoken language and listening skills.

Having developed those resources and many others relating to other specific impairments, we are now taking a more strategic approach to better supporting the educational workforce and equipping them to deliver high-quality teaching across all types of SEN. We have

recently contracted with the Whole School SEND Consortium to enable schools to identify and meet their SEND training needs, and I am delighted that the Communication Trust is part of that consortium.

Through that work, the Whole School SEND Consortium will create regional hubs across the country to bring together local SEND practitioners. The hubs will work to encourage schools to prioritise SEND within their continuous professional development and school improvement plans. The resources provide leaders, teachers and practitioners with access to information about evidence-based practice that can be effective for SEN support, including for those with SLCN.

In terms of joint work and joint commissioning at local authority level, the duty to commission services jointly is vital to the success of the SEND reforms. We recognise that unless education, health and social care partners work together, we will not see that holistic approach to a child's progression or the positive outcomes that the system aims to achieve. Joint working is one of the best ways of managing pressures on local authority and NHS budgets. Looking for more efficient ways to work together, to share information and to avoid duplication will work in favour of professionals and families.

Some areas are demonstrating excellent joint working. Wiltshire is an example, with positive feedback on the effectiveness of its local joint commissioning arrangements. It was reported that senior officers across education, health and care worked together effectively, adopting a well-integrated and multi-agency approach to plan and deliver services to children and young people with SEND. We want to learn from those examples. The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central mentioned the evidence gathered through Stoke Speaks Out. It troubles me that that particular group of people have to keep reinventing and going back for different pots of money, rather than our looking at that evidence and beginning to scale it for the rest of the country.

Ruth Smeeth: One of the challenges with Stoke Speaks Out is that when it started in 2006 it had 30 staff, but in 2015 it went down to half a member of staff. Now it has gone back up to nearly 10, but its funding is being cut again. That inconsistency is not delivering for the children of Stoke-on-Trent.

Nadhim Zahawi: I hear the hon. Lady's point; I know she is a great champion of the project, and I pledge to her that I will look at this evidence and see what more we can do to ensure that there are consistent outcomes.

The hon. Member for Stoke-on-Trent Central talked about early years education. It is fundamental that we identify SLCN as early as possible, as we know that can have a profound impact later in life. Children who struggle with language at age five are six times less likely to reach the expected level in English at age 11 than children who have good language skills at age five, and 11 times less likely to achieve the expected level in maths. By age three, disadvantaged children are, on average, already almost a full year and a half behind their more affluent peers in their early language development. That is also why, from a social mobility perspective, the case for addressing SLCN in the early years is so important.

In our social mobility action plan, "Unlocking Talent, Fulfilling Potential", we announced our ambition to close the word gap in the early years between disadvantaged children and their peers.

Mrs Lewell-Buck: Will the Minister give way?

Nadhim Zahawi: I will make some progress and then, as I think we might be all right on time, I will give way.

We have announced a range of measures worth more than £100 million to address word gap, including £20 million for school-led professional development for early years practitioners to support early language development, and a £5 million "what works" fund in partnership with the Education Endowment Foundation. The evidence is clear that parents have a crucial role in this area. The "Study of Early Education and Development" report showed that, aside from maternal education, the home learning environment is the single biggest influence on a child's vocabulary at age three. We will therefore invest £5 million to trial evidence-based home learning environment programmes in the north of England.

On 1 July, we launched a £6.5 million fund and invited voluntary and community sector organisations to bid for grants to run projects that help disadvantaged families and children with additional needs, and improve children's early language and literacy skills. Local authorities sit at the centre of a wide range of services and workforces that make a big difference to SLCN. We will work with local authorities through a peer support and challenge programme to deliver better early language outcomes for disadvantaged children, learning from the best evidence so that we can scale it. We will also publish an early years dashboard showing local authorities' performance in early years outcomes, with a focus on disadvantaged children and early language and literacy.

We recognise the important links between a child's early health and development and their later education outcomes. That is why we have formed a partnership with Public Health England, which my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane mentioned, and the Department of Health and Social Care to improve early language outcomes for disadvantaged children. In May, Public Health England launched a call for good local practice and pathway examples. At a workshop in London today, it will set out the key components of a model speech, language and communication needs pathway built on the best evidence and experience of implementation in practice. Those resources will provide health visitors with additional tools and training to identify and support children's SLCN, and ensure that the right support is put in place early.

Let me turn to the mental health Green Paper. Mental health was another key feature of the "Bercow: Ten Years On" report, which highlighted the links between SLCN and mental health issues and made a number of recommendations about how the proposals in the Green Paper link with SLCN provision. The Government published the Green Paper, "Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision", on 4 December last year. The consultation closed on 2 March and we are currently considering responses. We will issue a formal response in due course.

The Green Paper creates clear expectations about the changes every area should seek in order to improve activity on prevention, partnership working between

[*Nadhim Zahawi*]

children and young people's mental health services and schools, and access to specialist support. As part of that, we are incentivising every school and college to train a designated senior lead for mental health to co-ordinate a whole-school approach to mental health and wellbeing. We expect the designated senior lead to liaise with speech and language therapists to ensure that children with SLCN receive the help they need.

Mrs Lewell-Buck: I thank the Minister for eventually giving way. He said that I had let myself down by making this issue political. I respectfully say that he is letting me and other hon. Members down. I listed a litany of failures by this Government towards children with speech, language and communication needs, and not once—

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. Mrs Lewell-Buck, please make an intervention, not a speech.

Mrs Lewell-Buck: Sorry. Not once has the Minister responded with anything practical. All he says is, "In the future we will". What about now? This is urgent.

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): I call the Minister. Please remember to leave a minute for Ms Pow to wind up the debate.

Nadhim Zahawi: Of course, Ms Dorries.

The Department of Health and Social Care recognises the need to support children and young people with SLCN who are in the justice system. Liaison and diversion services at police stations and courts identify and assess people with vulnerabilities and refer them to the appropriate services—where appropriate, away from the justice system altogether.

A comprehensive health assessment tool care plan is undertaken for all children, setting out their needs and the provision of health services. All sites have access to the full range of comprehensive child and adolescent mental health provision for children with mental health or neuro-disability needs, including child psychiatrists and psychologists, specialist nurses, occupational therapists and speech and language therapists.

Let me address the point that was made by the hon. Member for Motherwell and Wishaw (Marion Fellows) about the devolved Scottish Government. I am more than happy to come up and learn what the Scottish Government are undertaking, and to share good practice from England.

My hon. Friend the Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid) mentioned the niche chromosomal deficiency 22q11.2. I am happy to discuss that with him to understand it a little better. I already work closely with my colleagues in the Department of Health and Social Care to raise the issue of practitioners treating people as statistical outliers, rather than as real children with real families, and I will take what he said on board.

I am grateful for the support right hon. and hon. Members have given this agenda. My hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane raised important concerns and I hope that she is happy with my update. The steps the Government have taken show the importance of SLCN, and I hope I have demonstrated that we remain firmly committed and have a real strategy, real funding and real commitment to ensure that children and young people with SLCN receive the support they need.

I thank my hon. Friend again for giving me the opportunity to speak about this subject. I look forward to seeing some colleagues who are present at the APPG on speech and language difficulties.

10.56 am

Rebecca Pow: I thank the Minister, in particular for sharing his experience—I had no idea that he could not speak English until he was 11; it is remarkable how far one can go—and for his clear passion. I hope that stands us in good stead to answer some of the questions that have been raised. I hope that we can work together.

I thank all Members who took part in the debate: my hon. Friends the Members for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid) and for Horsham (Jeremy Quin), and the hon. Members for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell), for Stoke-on-Trent North (Ruth Smeeth)—Stoke had a good showing—and for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Preet Kaur Gill). There is clearly great interest in this area, and I hope that the debate has highlighted that there are far too many children with speech, language and communication disorders, which affect their life chances.

Too many children end up having mental health issues, being excluded from school and being young offenders—and ultimately, many end up unemployed. That is not good enough, and we ought to be able to address it. The debate, the Bercow report and, indeed, many of the excellent people watching the debate demonstrate that things do not have to be like this.

As the Minister outlined, a great deal of excellent work is in progress, and there is much more in the pipeline. I get the feeling from speaking to him and from what he said today that he is committed to improving the situation, and there are some simple steps that could improve it. I was pleased to hear that there will be a particular concentration on joint working and joint commissioning of services between health and education, which was one of the things I wanted to ensure came out of the debate.

The continuity of programmes and good projects is also important. I know—especially from my sister's input—about the awful drama and time-wasting that is involved in having to keep reapplying for funding when people already have a good thing going. That wastes time and everybody's effort. Perhaps we could try to smooth that out a little.

I am pleased that the all-important issue of parenting was raised. I touched on that because it is not only about very disadvantaged people; it is about everybody. If we engaged a little more on that front, we could make huge progress together. I am optimistic that, with the commitment of the Minister and his Department and of the Department of Health and Social Care, we can make a change.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That his House has considered speech, language and communication support for children.

Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Will Members please leave the Chamber quietly? The next debate is about to start.

Management of NHS Property

11 am

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the management of NHS property.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Dorries. *[Interruption.]*

Ms Nadine Dorries (in the Chair): Order. Mr Zahawi, the debate has started.

Karin Smyth: I recognise that the management of NHS property is not the most enthralling subject, but many hon. Members from across the country will recognise that it is a growing problem in their constituencies. The problems are varied and many. My focus today will be on the community and primary care estate.

I will not talk about bricks and mortar or leaking pipes, or outline the detailed and manifold operational challenges posed by an NHS estate that in many parts of the country still relies on pre-1948 infrastructure. Instead, I want to talk about the places our constituents go to when they need care, where they welcome their children into the world and where they say a final goodbye to those they love. They are places where some of our most precious memories are forged, capable of delivering huge happiness and hosting unimaginable grief. They are hard-wired into our emotional DNA and the fabric of the communities in which they sit. They are places that are paid for by our constituents through their taxes, which our constituents feel ownership of and an enormous attachment to. It is in this difference that the notion of local or personal ownership is blown apart. The harsh reality is that our constituents do not own these properties. Moreover, they do not even have a say in how they are run or in their future.

Who owns them? Who runs them? How do they operate? How can users or stakeholders such as MPs influence change? Those questions are hard to answer as control of these special buildings is opaque to the point of absurdity. The lines of accountability are unfathomable and, as so many colleagues will know, incredibly frustrating to deal with. I have spoken to numerous colleagues across the House about these issues.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way, and grateful to the Minister for listening to my concerns about the Bootham Park Hospital site and intervening on that. A real programme of change for healthcare in York has now been put together. Does my hon. Friend agree that when looking at the estate it is important to develop plans that improve healthcare rather than seeing it just as buildings?

Karin Smyth: I agree. The building that my hon. Friend has been working on is iconic, and that case is a good illustration. My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire) has been dealing with a GP surgery in her constituency for a long time and can get no resolution. I have also spoken to my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Gareth Snell), for Stroud (Dr Drew), for Bishop Auckland (Helen Goodman) and for High Peak (Ruth George)—these problems are happening across the piece.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): Will the hon. Lady join me in condemning how the parking company Smart Parking operates its fines system at the Townlands Hospital in Henley? It is a monstrous way of dealing with people; intimidating them when they are at their most vulnerable.

Karin Smyth: I cannot comment on the specific company, but trying to understand accountability and how systems work is frustrating for local people. Many of us are trying to make sense of it.

The estate was an afterthought for the coalition Government and their disastrous Health and Social Care Act 2012—the Lansley Act. Their laissez-faire approach, which bordered on contempt, has saddled communities across the country with burdens and consequences ever since. The current Government recognised that in their response to the Naylor review, stating:

“The structural changes in recent years have distracted attention away from the importance of the estate as an enabler of high quality care, and the NHS has lost valuable expertise and knowledge in strategic estates planning, development and management.”

As we are developing the 10-year plan to transform our NHS into a more community-based, joined-up system, the function of the community and primary care estate as an enabler of service transformation becomes more critical. Although the Government said in response to Naylor that they want to incentivise local action, in practice there are no mechanisms to do so. My focus is therefore on the local roles of two national bodies: NHS Property Services and Community Health Partnerships.

The Lansley Act nationalised health centres, GP premises and, in my constituency, the South Bristol Community Hospital overnight. When the Government realised that no one was responsible for property managed by primary care trusts—mainly GP premises and health centres in poorer areas—they set up NHS Property Services, which became the landlord and asset manager on behalf of the Secretary of State. Community Health Partnerships took over the primary care trusts’ 20% control of local infrastructure finance trusts—LIFT companies—which were public-private partnerships for new GP premises and community-based services, such as South Bristol Community Hospital.

A key part of the LIFT incentive was that the companies made a profit and from that a dividend was returned to all shareholders, including the primary care trust. The Lansley Act passed that 20% local share to the Secretary of State. That LIFT company is still operating, as others are across the country. Bristol Infracare LIFT paid dividends totalling £823,000 last year and £2,344,000 in 2016. Community Health Partnerships received 40% of that, but 20% should have been retained in the Bristol health economy. In the last two years, that amounts to £633,400 in Bristol alone, and that is replicated across the country. I am here today with a simple message for the Secretary of State, via the Minister: I want control of this asset to be given back to the local health economy, and I want our money back.

The closer one looks at the labyrinthine structures that govern NHS properties, the more it seems that the opaque and impenetrable way in which these companies operate is not accidental. They appear to be purposefully disenfranchising and disempowering local people. Whatever

[*Karin Smyth*]

the merits of the Lansley Act—I contend that there are not many—it was supposed to drive devolution, liberation and accountability.

Julian Sturdy (York Outer) (Con): The hon. Lady is making a powerful argument. One of the real problems we find in York is that NHS Property Services is very distant and difficult to engage with. It needs to sit down with local communities, whether in York, Bristol or elsewhere in the country, and engage with them about the assets that need to be reinvested back in those local communities.

Karin Smyth: That is exactly the point I want to make, but I will go on to show how that is difficult to do and make a difference.

Patients and frontline practitioners were supposed to be front and centre of the new NHS, but that has simply not happened because, as we have heard, control is ever more centralised. It really did not have to be that way. NHS Property Services was set up as a national body, losing a wealth of local expertise and institutional knowledge in the process. With expensive London headquarters, its teams across the regions are stretched. It spent its first period of existence creating a register of assets and a new market rent system. That resulted in disputed and unpaid rents, which necessitated additional loans from the Department of Health to keep the company afloat and a complicated parcelling of subsidy via NHS England to clinical commissioning groups and GP surgeries. The early years have been an expensive disaster, with GPs and managers across the country not knowing what they were being charged for or who to call to sort out the problems. The profligacy of the system is matched only by its utter uselessness, and that is why I have been pursuing this scandal since I was first elected.

In my constituency two GP health centres and a healthy living centre are directly affected by these problems. The Knowle West healthy living centre was set up in a joint arrangement on Bristol City Council land, with public health services delivered based on the needs of a community that has some of the highest health inequalities in the country. It is no exaggeration to say that for many in the area the centre is a lifeline. However, with public health taken out of the NHS into local government, and the services now largely contracted via a third party, NHS Property Services soon came knocking on the door, bringing with it a charges bill increased by more than 200%. There was no discussion, no legal lease was in place and there was no service level agreement. Not only has the charity that runs the centre been forced to operate under the constant threat of closure, but it is unable to access the simplest forms of support. It recently asked if the windows could be cleaned, only to be told that that was not in the contract.

It has taken me three years to get even a modicum of progress—lobbying the clinical commissioning group and Bristol City Council, talking to local media, and raising the issue at the Public Accounts Committee and actively on social media, which finally resulted in a helpful meeting with the chair of the NHS Property Services board. The issue is still not resolved, however, and we still have some way to go. It has been a battle. It is tiring for everyone concerned—frontline practitioners in particular—debilitating and, most frustrating of all, entirely avoidable.

South Bristol Community Hospital has a similar story. This facility was the focus of a 60-year campaign by local people, and it finally opened in 2012. Established by a partnership between the primary care trust, private equity and Community Health Partnerships, the local link was severed by the Lansley Act, as I said earlier. Now the board that oversees the community hospital meets far away from Bristol and with no Bristol involvement. An employee of Community Health Partnerships supposedly represents us in overseeing the management of the company that runs the hospital. Community Health Partnerships, like NHS Property Services, is an arm's length body within the Department of Health and Social Care. The lease of the hospital is managed by a local foundation trust, University Hospitals Bristol, cobbled together in a last-minute deal with the primary care trust. Two other NHS bodies and a social enterprise are also tenants in the building. If that sounds confused, conflicted and convoluted, that is because it is.

I have been campaigning as the local Member of Parliament to get more services into the new hospital. It is a superb new building, with 96 community beds and an urgent care centre. A poll that I carried out among my constituents showed that 90% either were unaware of the services available in the building or felt that it was underused. A 2014 Care Quality Commission report found that the operating theatres were utilised only a quarter of the time, and the out-patient department only 55% of the time. We have made great progress since then, but the building is still underused as part of the health economy—on entering the building, people are faced with a whole floor with just a reception desk, and the corridors and lifts are typically empty.

The rehab unit, by contrast, is always full. The nurses, porters and other staff who keep it going all work tirelessly, but there is no escaping the sense that this facility is only rented or temporary. Everything is contractual and faceless, with rules abounding, while stroke patients spend their days and months staring at white walls because, according to the nursing staff, there are limits to what the landlord will allow—for example, there are no pictures.

The community hospital is on the southern fringe of our city, where 30% of residents do not have access to a car and the public transport links are historically among the worst in the United Kingdom. That same community has the highest rates of cancer, diabetes and asthma in Bristol, yet people are still expected to travel miles across the congested city for services that could easily be on their doorstep. I keep repeating the need for local health organisations to see sense, and my hope is that the logic is finally getting through and that we will see more facilities, such as diagnostics and perhaps even scanners, in the near future. Yet why has it taken such effort and such a long time?

South Bristol Community Hospital is perfectly placed to deliver the vision in the five year forward view and the aspiration of the 10-year plan—integrated with social care, providing a front and back door to other services to support the flow in the rest of the health system. However, progress towards those achievable goals is constantly frustrated by the fragmented ownership, the complicated money flows and the unfathomable accountability arrangements. My constituents, without fail, suffer as a result.

Time does not permit me to outline similar problems relating to the shady use of wholly owned companies, but chief among my objections to such companies is that every one of them is a lost opportunity to look at NHS estate management locally on a more joined-up basis, with some local accountability in the system. How can we promote a collaborative approach across healthcare systems when individual trusts go down their own selfish route?

The Naylor review offered some interesting recommendations to simplify the national management of the estate. The Government chose to establish a ministerial board chaired by a Minister at the national level, and it includes everyone—every NHS organisation seems to be on that board. I tried to map the board, who sits on it and how it links back to local communities, but I am afraid I gave up. Perhaps the Minister will help us with that.

Some big and controversial decisions need to be made about the estate, particularly in London, but they are being considered without any engagement with local communities. Not only does that ignore the wellspring of local knowledge that could help avoid a repeat of previous failures, but it fosters a feeling of communities being “done to”, and it makes any change hard—in most cases, impossible—to deliver. Hence, efficiencies that could be ploughed back into local health communities will not be realised.

Communities have been asked to submit estate strategies across their local health communities via the sustainability and transformation plans. They are now being asked to submit bids to a new capital programme, but how will estates run by NHS Property Services and Community Health Partnerships be factored into the mix? In addition to that complicated picture, NHS foundation trusts have their own schemes in play. Control and leverage of community and primary care estates cannot be done at the national level. That simply will not work. We cannot achieve the transformation for the next 10 years that is being talked about without local control of the architecture to deliver it.

When local leaders plan services as part of the sustainability and transformation plans, or whatever the next iteration of that is called, local people must have a say in how those services are delivered. There must be a mechanism to bring those properties, places and assets—and the people running them—back into the sphere of accountability of local health service communities.

Those are not bits of internal housekeeping; they are ways of doing business that are bad for the local health economy, bad for staff and, most importantly, bad for patients and taxpayers. Local communities across the country would like their voice back, and our local NHS would like its money back. The debate needs to do more than shine a light on a problem. I would like the Government to acknowledge that there is a problem and commit to fixing it, because anything less is a dereliction of responsibility and a huge opportunity wasted.

11.17 am

The Minister for Health (Stephen Barclay): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship once again, Ms Dorries. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) for bringing such an important issue before the House.

The hon. Lady opened by saying that property may not be the most exciting of topics but, as her speech set out, it is integral to the healthcare service offered in local settings. The substance of her remarks was whether we can better align the property estate with a place-based approach to healthcare. As we move to a more integrated and place-based approach to health, I think there is cross-party consensus that property has an important role to play as an enabler of that. The hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) kindly recognised that that is very much the approach that I have taken in my post, and my hon. Friend the Member for York Outer (Julian Sturdy) recognised it in expressing his frustration with one or two meetings and asking whether decisions on property are aligned with the place-based approach.

The first point I will make to the hon. Member for Bristol South is that the long-term plan and the future discussions about the NHS give us the opportunity to look at wider system changes around integration and place-based healthcare, and how property aligns with that—for example in York, which has been discussed—as an enabler of change in a more holistic approach. As such, her remarks are timely as part of that wider debate.

The hon. Lady mentioned Knowle West health park, which, if I am honest, I looked at for the first time when preparing for the debate; I was not as sighted on that as I might have been. The issue is that, if NHS England provided that service, the additional market rent costs would have been reimbursed, but because it is provided by the county council they are not. However, as she recognised, there has been progress in recent weeks, thanks in part to her work. I am happy to take forward a discussion on that offline if that would be helpful, because I recognise that it is an important service and that we need to ensure that, where market rents are applied, it is not counterproductive to those services.

However, that should not get in the way of the wider point. The hon. Lady suggested that the new approach is a backwards step. I simply point out that there has actually been significant progress by NHS Property Services. The previous model had the inherent conflict that the primary care trusts were both the landlord and commissioner of the property, and therefore the use of the estate was quite opaque. As a result, we did not get transparency on the true cost of the estate, meaning that inefficiencies were not being flushed out and estates were not being utilised in the most effective way.

One driver of NHS Property Services applying market rents has been the need to encourage better utilisation of the estate by being more transparent on the actual costs. I point out to the hon. Lady that there has been significant progress as a consequence. Some £200 million in capital receipts has been unlocked, 500 capital investment construction projects are being launched each year and running costs have been reduced by £120 million. On balance, as we look forward to the long-term plan and pick up on some issues that the hon. Lady quite rightly highlighted, it is also important to recognise that the old system often allowed estates to be utilised inefficiently. Having truer market rents has actually enabled more transparency and driven efficiencies, with savings then able to be reinvested into the service.

The hon. Lady also mentioned salaries and bonuses, which again are part of a wider question. On the one hand, these are big businesses and their leaderships

[*Stephen Barclay*]

compete in a competitive market. There is a wider debate within Parliament on the right value to assign to senior salaries in the public sector in order to attract talent. These are big budgets, so we need to attract people of the right ability; it is a false economy to save a relatively small sum on lower salaries for people who then make incorrect decisions that waste much larger sums. At the same time, salaries should reflect the values of the NHS and should not be out of step with others in the NHS. There is a cross-party debate on that, and I am interested in the hon. Lady's points about it.

The hon. Lady also raised NHS Property Services' new offices. My understanding is that the previous model was highly inefficient. It had five different properties, so the move to Gresham Street was a consolidation of those five properties into one. That drives productivity, which is a key issue that we need to unlock within the workforce. Two thirds of NHS costs are in the workforce, so driving workforce productivity is a key objective. I am sure the hon. Lady will agree that the workforce being consolidated in one office enables a degree of productivity and efficiency that would be harder to achieve if they were disparate across five areas.

The hon. Lady mentioned the impact of the rent adjustment on Bristol. Some 15 GP practices in and around the city of Bristol occupy NHS Property Services sites. NHS England has been working with the Avon local medical committee, practices, NHS Property Services and the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire clinical commissioning group and has facilitated negotiations between GP practices and NHS Property Services on reviewing the levels of rent and service charges invoiced to GP practices, to ensure that there is transparency on them.

However, as the hon. Lady will be aware, rent and business costs incurred by practices are reimbursed to GPs under the premises cost directions, and GPs should be compensated for any rent changes through that route. The Department has provided an additional £127 million to the NHS England mandate, with effect from the 2016-17 financial year, to fund the increased costs in the NHS of this policy change.

Karin Smyth: I am grateful for the Minister's comments about, and work on, Bristol. I agree that the estate was not always particularly well managed in the local health system previously, and that the correct incentives are needed. However, does he agree that he has outlined a merry-go-round of money keeping the entire system afloat? NHS Property Services exists on a large and continuing Department of Health loan, so it is not, in any sense—as the Minister described—a successfully run property business.

Stephen Barclay: I was trying to make the point that greater transparency on the true cost of the estate drives behaviour to use the estate more effectively. Part of the difficulty has been that, because the estate was not adequately charged market rents in some areas, moving to a fairer and more transparent assessment of market rents—these things are independently assessed, I hasten to add—is a difficult adjustment. However, a consequence of correctly assessing the value of the estate is the

unlocking of efficiencies where the estate is not being utilised, and that money can then be reinvested into the system.

I absolutely agree with the hon. Lady's wider point, which I took as the substance of her remarks, that property is the enabler of system change. That also came out in the points raised by my hon. Friend the Member for York Outer, and has been inherent in points made by the hon. Member for York Central in our previous discussions. Property does not sit in a silo but is inherent in the wider service offering, and it also plays into reconfigurations. A key part of clinically led reconfigurations of estates to drive productivity will be what property there is to enable that and how to utilise it.

The point on which there is a degree of cross-party consensus, as my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) recognised, is that decisions need to be accountable. Likewise, I am happy to pick up on the point he raised on behalf of his constituents about there being no accountability. That is an absolutely fair challenge to the Department and one that I am very happy to look at. However, I am mindful, as I know he will appreciate, that these are often independent bodies making independent decisions, and we need to look at how they fit into the system.

A further point raised by the hon. Member for Bristol South, although it is slightly outside of the scope of the debate, was about wholly owned subsidiaries, which she also raised in more detail in the estimates debate. I make two points. First, as she knows, subsidiary companies actually give greater flexibility to trusts that want to compete in a local market and perhaps offer higher salaries offset by changes to pensions. That is one way in which trusts are empowered and enabled to hire in a competitive market, for instance in the case of maintenance staff. It is an enabler, and it often results in people getting paid more for a role, although there may be other, less favourable terms and conditions to offset that. I merely point out that those were exactly the arrangements reached for Members, and I do not remember too many press headlines suggesting that Members were being exploited by that change.

Secondly, I remind the hon. Lady that, as I am sure she is well aware, legislation introduced by the last Labour Government enabled wholly owned subsidiaries. Again, I do not recall Labour Ministers, when taking that legislation through the House, suggesting that it would provide a way of exploiting NHS workers or privatising the NHS.

I commend the hon. Lady for the points she raised. This is a timely debate given our discussions with the NHS leadership on the long-term plan. She is absolutely right—Government Members and other Opposition Members also recognised this—about the centrality of property to the place-based approach that we seek to take. I am happy to have a separate discussion with her on Knowle Park to check whether that is now in the right place or whether further work is needed. I look forward to further discussions with her on how we should utilise the property estate in the most effective way.

Question put and agreed to.

11.29 am

Sitting suspended.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

[IAN PAISLEY *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

Mr Gavin Shuker (Luton South) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That this House has considered tackling demand for commercial sexual exploitation.

I move the motion on behalf of my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion).

This cannot go on. Our laws against commercial sexual exploitation are failing. They are failing to deter traffickers, failing to prevent pimps—those who profit—and failing victims. Crucially, we have known that for a long time. I have been fortunate to chair the all-party parliamentary group on prostitution and the global sex trade for six or seven years, and I have grown increasingly frustrated that many political parties fail to engage with the issue. It forces us to examine a fundamental question: what do we believe prostitution inherently to be? Personally, I have moved to a position where I feel that it is a form of violence against women and girls; it is institutionalised exploitation for profit. We are forced to examine that question, and that is what this debate is about.

In 2014 the APPG conducted an inquiry into prostitution laws in England and Wales. Our conclusion was stark: because the law sends no clear messages about the nature of prostitution and what the goal of legislation is, it is by default those who are most visible—women selling sex—who are targeted, while men who create the demand in the first place walk away without being held legally accountable for the immense damage they do to individuals and communities.

Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): To underline my hon. Friend's point, does not the fact that 50% of women in prostitution in the UK are estimated to have started being paid for sex acts before they were 18 years old expose more than anything the vulnerability of people in this trade and how the almost rosy image that is sometimes given to it is very far away from the reality of what faces them?

Mr Shuker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This goes right to the heart of the question of consent. How is it possible, under our current law, for someone to fail to give consent the day before their 18th birthday, but then to be in a position in which consent is assumed the day after?

Mr Jim Cunningham (Coventry South) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend on introducing the debate. I have watched documentaries about the situation around Europe, and whether we are dealing with sex trafficking or the slave trade, for want of a better term, because women are forced into a form of slavery. Things break down at the point of prosecuting men, whether they are just an individual using a prostitute or somebody running a gang. That is where the weakness is, and the law has to be strengthened to start to tackle that. Does my hon. Friend agree?

Mr Shuker: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. As I will go on to say, and as other hon. Members will set out, one of the biggest single drivers of trafficking into

this country and of child sexual exploitation is commercial sexual exploitation, which is why we need to take all measures to tackle it. Central to my argument, however, is the idea that by failing to tackle demand we perpetuate the inequality of focusing on the most visible part of the transaction, rather than on those who create the demand in the first place.

Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) on securing the debate, and the hon. Gentleman on all the work he does with the all-party group. He mentioned consent. There is a parallel issue of choice. Sometimes it is said that there is a choice. Does he agree that there is more to the question of choice than initially meets the eye, and that “choice” is often driven by poverty, addiction or abuse?

Mr Shuker: I could not agree more. I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. There are all sorts of vulnerabilities that would cause someone who would not normally choose to go into the very violent and difficult world of prostitution to do that, but we must take responsibility for all those issues. Equally, prostitution is not a phenomenon driven by an over-supply of women—I am going to talk in gender terms, because this is a highly gendered phenomenon, although obviously we accept that a wide variety of people are involved. It is fundamentally caused not by an over-supply of people growing up wishing to go into prostitution, but by an over-supply of men who think that it is acceptable to purchase sex and to drive the scale of this trade.

Mr Paul Sweeney (Glasgow North East) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate my hon. Friend—a fellow Co-operative Member—on the excellent case he is making on this terrible problem of exploitation in our society. Does he agree with me—I am looking at this particularly in terms of a Co-operative analysis of the economy—that many of the issues are driven by the insecure environments in which women find themselves? What we are talking about is the result of, in particular, poverty, addiction and coercion, but also of insecure work, zero-hours contracts and poor wages. All those things contribute to in-work poverty and are the reasons why women find themselves in those situations.

Mr Shuker: Again, I completely agree. As I will go on to say, a comprehensive model of legal reform would be one in which women who sold sex were decriminalised and those who bought it were subject to criminal sanction, but programmes to boost exit and allow people to go into other, much more secure forms of work are also hugely important.

Today, the Crown Prosecution Service rightly recognises women's involvement in prostitution as a form of sexual exploitation, yet under existing law women involved in street-based sexual exploitation are criminalised for loitering and soliciting, creating a barrier to exiting and rebuilding their lives. It is currently illegal to place a call card advertising prostitution in a phone box, yet apparently it is perfectly legal for companies to make millions of pounds by knowingly hosting prostitution adverts online. We have an Act to combat modern slavery—the Modern Slavery Act 2015—but it has a huge hole in it, because it fails to acknowledge that prostitution drives sex trafficking

[Mr Shuker]

in the first place. We have a law that prohibits men from soliciting women for sex on the street, but it gives them the green light to walk into a brothel and sexually exploit them behind closed doors.

That is not good enough. As I said to the Minister here this morning, when she very kindly appeared before the Women and Equalities Committee, it has profound implications not just for women involved in prostitution, but for all women, because it perpetuates the myth that men have an absolute right to sex and therefore their sense of entitlement should overwhelm many others in society. The Minister for Women and Equalities, who is also a Secretary of State, put it best when she said earlier this year:

“You cannot help and support people, you cannot give them hope and a chance, you cannot promote human rights or the dignity of every human being—whilst paying them for sex, and whilst funding an industry that exploits them.”

I wholeheartedly agree.

The United Nations, which is having to confront sexual abuse and exploitation within its own ranks, has published a “Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse” for anyone who is not clear what that means. It states:

“‘Sexual exploitation’ is a broad term, which includes a number of acts...including ‘transactional sex’”.

Transactional sex is defined as:

“The exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex”.

Offering someone money—or drugs, food or a place to stay—in exchange for them performing sex acts is abusive and exploitative. It is never acceptable. The aim of our law must be to end commercial sexual exploitation, not to “manage” it, not to regulate where it happens, not simply to pick up the pieces and not to prevent only the most heinous acts. Our responsibility as lawmakers is clear: it is to end sexual exploitation. And to end sexual exploitation, we have to end the demand.

How to combat demand is not a big mystery. As with any other form of violence against women, it starts with the law sending a clear signal that exploiting someone by paying them for sex is never acceptable, and that those who do will be held to account. We have to shift the burden of criminality away from women who are exploited in the sex trade and place it where it belongs: on those who create the demand. The “end-demand” approach is often referred to as the Nordic model or the sex buyer law. This three-pronged strategy involves criminalising paying for sex, decriminalising selling sex, and providing support and exiting services for people exploited through the sex trade.

France, the Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Iceland and Norway have all adopted end-demand legislation. The first country to do it—this is important—was Sweden, which in 1999 criminalised paying for sex and decriminalised selling it as part of a Government Bill to tackle violence against women. Mia de Faoite, a survivor of prostitution, has said of Sweden’s decision to introduce the law:

“Prostitution is, was and always will be an absolute affront to human dignity and I know that because I have lived and witnessed it. Sweden didn’t do a radical thing or a controversial thing. Sweden just did the right thing in the name of freedom, justice and equality.

Colleagues will speak about the clear and substantial evidence that end-demand legislation works, in Sweden and elsewhere. However, I want to make this point, to the Minister and to the Government: if neighbouring countries are adopting legislation that makes it harder for people to be trafficked and sexually exploited, we run the risk that it will become easier to do that in England and Wales—on our streets and behind closed doors in every community we represent—because there is such a clear basis on which money can be made. We cannot divorce ourselves from what is happening in this great move across much of western Europe.

It is sometimes claimed that making paying for sex a criminal offence would drive prostitution “underground” and make it inherently unsafe. First, it is not possible to make sexual exploitation safe. The moment the money goes on the side or the counter, someone is buying consent and that sex buyer believes that they have an absolute right or entitlement. Secondly, as a recent European Commission study on trafficking points out about that policy, there is

“a logical fallacy at its heart since some level of visibility is required.”

In other words, if I can leave this room today and purchase sex by finding someone’s details online, so can the police. If sex buyers can locate women in prostitution, so can the police and support services.

To quote Detective Superintendent Kajsa Wahlberg, Sweden’s national rapporteur on trafficking in human beings,

“prostitution activities are not and cannot be pushed underground. The profit of traffickers, procurers and other prostitution operators is obviously dependent on that men easily can access women who they wish to purchase for prostitution purposes. If law enforcement agencies want to find out where prostitution activities takes place, the police can.”

In Sweden they have been doing that for nearly 20 years. We can look at the evidence of what has happened in that country.

The second myth I want to address is that by fully decriminalising the sex trade—an argument advocated by some—including brothel-keeping and pimping, women are made safer. That could not be further from the truth. It legitimises and fuels demand. Demand is met by significantly increased levels of trafficking. A cross-sectional analysis of up to 150 countries found that trafficking flows are larger into countries where prostitution is legal. That seems logical. Similarly, an analysis of European countries found that sex trafficking was most prevalent in nations with legalised prostitution regimes. The researchers suggested that

“slacker prostitution laws make it more profitable to traffic persons to a country.”

Take the Netherlands, for example. Third-party profiteering was decriminalised there in 2000. Seven years later, the national police force estimated that between 50% and 90% of women in the country’s legal prostitution trade “work involuntarily”. An evaluation of the law in 2007, commissioned by the Dutch Parliament, found that pimping was still “a very common phenomenon” that

“does not seem to have decreased.”

Fieldwork researchers reported that a “great majority” of women in Amsterdam’s infamous window brothels, “works with a so-called boyfriend or pimp.”

Let me make this point: there are few women directly involved in selling sex who profit from it. There is undoubtedly a huge supply of money, estimated by some to be £5 billion or £6 billion of our economy, but that money is not finding its way into the pockets of women who are exploited through this trade; it ends up in the pockets of pimps, exploiters and those who benefit from trafficking.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): I congratulate my hon. Friend on his speech. I am using this intervention to say that I have been advised that it would be inappropriate for me to speak today, given certain things that are happening in west Yorkshire. He knows that I have been campaigning on this issue for a very long time. This is my opportunity to say that I am here absolutely supporting him.

Mr Shuker: I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend.

The Government cannot continue to kick this can down the road. To some degree, all of us are culpable on that. We need comprehensive legislative reform with the aim of tackling demand as its underlying principle. We have a duty as parliamentarians to confront and take action against sexual exploitation, however difficult or uncomfortable that may be. The Government must tackle demand by criminalising paying for sex and decriminalising those who are exploited.

Ian Paisley (in the Chair): If hon. Members wish to remove their jackets—including the Clerk and the *Hansard* Reporters—they are entitled to do so, because of the rudimentary cooling system that we have today. I will, unusually, call Sarah Champion from the same side, because I know that she has been very significant in getting this motion to the House.

2.45 pm

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): It is not only a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Paisley; it is also a relief to be able to do so and I thank you for your kindness in enabling it to happen.

We need to recognise that there is a crisis of commercial sexual exploitation in this country. The trafficking and exploitation of vulnerable women and girls around the UK to be sexually abused is taking place on an industrial scale. That is for one simple reason: demand. There are a minority of men in this country who are willing to pay to sexually access women's bodies. Currently, the law gives them licence to do this. For too long, Parliament has turned a blind eye to the suffering and societal carnage that these men create.

I am here today with two clear messages for the Minister. First, there is a sexual abuse scandal happening right now on her watch. It is enabled by prostitution advertising websites and driven predominantly by heterosexual men who pay for sex. Secondly, there is a solution: making paying for sex a crime to help to stem demand and then helping the women exploited in the sex trade to exit it, by removing penalties for soliciting and providing them with properly resourced support services. The Government and the officials who advise them cannot claim that they did not know what was going on or were not aware of the scale of the problem. To end the exploitation, we have to end the demand.

Let me contextualise the scale of this problem. A recent inquiry into organised sexual exploitation by the all-party parliamentary group on prostitution and the global sex trade, of which I am a member, found that sexual exploitation of women and girls by organised crime groups is widespread across the UK. There are at least 212 active, ongoing police operations into modern slavery cases involving sexual exploitation in the UK. Our inquiry suggests that this represents just a small fraction of the true scale of organised sexual exploitation.

While most police forces do not proactively work to identify all the brothels in their area, some do track them. The scale that they find is astonishing. Leicestershire police visited 156 brothels, encountering 421 women in the year ending 31 December 2017. Some 86% of those women in the brothels were Romanian. Northumbria police visited 81 brothels between March 2016 and April 2018. Of the 259 women they met in the brothels, 75% were Romanian. Over half of those brothels were recorded as connected to other brothels, agencies or non-UK organised crime groups. Greater Manchester police has identified 324 potential new brothel addresses since March 2015. It told our inquiry:

“the majority of those identified reflect the hotspot areas for modern slavery in Greater Manchester.”

Let me quote Detective Sergeant Stuart Peall from Lancashire constabulary:

“From what we can evidence there nearly always appears to be a man or some sort of control involved. The females we encounter very rarely pay for their own advertisements. They also don't pay for their own flights into the UK. There is clear organisation from what we have seen”.

The methods used by these organised crime groups to recruit women include deception, coercion and the exploitation of women and girls' pre-existing vulnerabilities.

Let us be clear: women who are trafficked by organised crime groups are being subjected not to forced labour, but to rape. Based on evidence from the Poppy Project, Equality Now calculated that, on average, victims are exploited into prostitution for between eight and 20 months. Most women who are trafficked in the UK reported being forced to have sex six or seven days a week and see an estimated average of 13 sex buyers per day. From that, we can extrapolate that the average victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation is raped anywhere between 2,798 and 6,828 times. Those rapes are committed by men who pay for sex. If we scale that figure up to the 1,185 women referred to the national referral mechanism for sexual exploitation in 2017, we start to see the scale of the problem.

We must recognise that commercial sexual exploitation is part of a continuum of violence against women and girls. Commonly, it begins when they are just girls. Many women who are involved in prostitution experienced different forms of abuse, often sexual, when they were children.

The grooming process, and the beginning of a girl's experience of the continuum of violence, is worth reflecting on. For many girls, it begins with something seemingly innocent, such as getting a slightly older boyfriend and going for car rides with him. Things then become more risky, and she might drink alcohol or smoke cannabis at the boyfriend's insistence, and the pressure to return the favour with sexual acts then begins. Very quickly, as happened repeatedly in my constituency of Rotherham, that becomes organised sexual exploitation where the

[Sarah Champion]

girls are passed between adult men who systematically sexually exploit them in the most horrific ways. Since the events in Rotherham came to light, attitudes in the UK have started to shift towards recognising that those girls are not prostitutes who willingly choose to sell their bodies, but victims who are exploited by men operating in gangs.

Now that child sexual exploitation is viewed as a national crisis, it is time for us to recognise that sexual exploitation does not stop when people turn 18. Instead, the girls who do not get the support they need to escape and repair their lives continue to be sexually exploited, perhaps by the same organised gangs or pimps, into their 20s, 30s and beyond. Finally, after years of campaigning, we consider the grooming and subsequent exploitation of a child to be abhorrent, but we must ask why society's attitude is that when they turn 18, they are suddenly consenting adults who make a choice about selling sex, even when we are aware of past childhood abuse, trafficking, slavery, coercive control, intimidation, violence or drugs and alcohol dependencies in the background.

Let us confront the fact that the term "free choice" rarely, if ever, accurately describes a person's path into prostitution and the sex trade. Sometimes we are talking about girls who have not escaped their early life trauma, who were perhaps in and out of care, groomed under the influence of drugs in their teens, or repeatedly raped and sexually assaulted throughout their lives. That may sound emotive, but it is corroborated by the supporting statistics. Home Office research shows that 50% of women became involved in prostitution before the age of 18, and three out of four women involved are aged under 21. Another Home Office study in 2016 showed that 70% of the women had spent time in care, and 45% had previously experienced sexual abuse. Do we really believe that those women and girls can give informed consent when many are inherently vulnerable or trapped in a cycle of abuse?

Commercial sexual exploitation is happening on a staggering scale, and prostitution procurement websites, where women are advertised to sex buyers, are key enablers of it. A buyer can go to sites such as Vivastreet or Adultwork, casually search for women in his area and contact the mobile number provided to arrange an appointment. It is quick, easy and highly profitable for the web companies. The Joint Slavery and Trafficking Analysis Centre, which is hosted by the National Crime Agency, says that those prostitution websites

"represent the most significant enabler of sexual exploitation in the UK".

Claims that the sites enhance women's safety are deeply misguided. Prostitution advertising websites significantly increase the ease and scale of organised sexual exploitation in this country.

Thankfully, other countries have started to act. Since the United States signed into law the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act of 2017 earlier this year, Adultwork and a host of other sites have shut down their prostitution adverts there. In France, the Paris prosecutor launched an official investigation on charges of aggravated pimping into Vivastreet, which has since shut down its prostitution adverts in France. In Britain, our inadequate laws against commercial sexual exploitation prohibit a person from

placing a call card for prostitution in a phone booth but allow companies such as Vivastreet to make millions advertising women online. That has to change urgently. This week, Vivastreet claimed that it is

"working closely with the Home Office to help develop an industry-wide approach to identifying and preventing online trafficking."

That is not enough. The Government must take on corporate pimps, not collaborate with them.

Our law needs to be updated so that it clearly sets out that it is a criminal offence to facilitate or profit from someone else's prostitution. Under section 53A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003, it is already an offence to buy sex from a person who has been subject to force, coercion or exploitation by a third party, which means it does not have to be proved that the buyer was aware of the exploitation of the person they were paying for sex with. Sadly, research by Dr Andrea Matolcsi of Bristol University in 2017 suggested that there was only a low level of awareness of the offence and that the maximum fine of £1,000 did not deter buyers.

Our laws are simply not fit for purpose. To reduce demand for prostitution and sex trafficking, the law has to send a clear message that it is never acceptable to exploit someone by paying them for sex. To do that, the Government should urgently extend the existing prohibition against paying for sex in a public place to make it a criminal offence in all locations.

Although prostitution websites facilitate commercial sexual exploitation, they are not the root cause. The root cause is demand. Only a minority of men pay for sex. A study of 6,000 men by University College London found that 3.6% of men reported having paid for sex in the last five years. The men who were more likely to have paid for sex were young professionals with high numbers of unpaid sexual partners, which quashes the myth that the sex trade is a place of last resort for the lonely few. It is the demand of those men that drives the supply of mainly vulnerable women and girls into the sex trade. It is the money of those buyers that lines the pockets of the pimps and traffickers. The sex trade, and all the harm and suffering it entails, exists because of them.

Let me be clear: someone paying someone else to perform sex acts on them is abuse, just as exchanging accommodation, employment, services or other goods in return for sex is sexual abuse. A man who pays for sex is not a regular consumer, innocently availing themselves of a worker's services. Offering someone money, goods or services for sex is sexual coercion. It is a form of violence against women.

Globally, 96% of victims of sexual exploitation are women and girls. When people pay for sex, they undergo a convenient act of forgetting. Only 44% of sex buyers who took part in a London-based study thought that prostitution had a very or extremely negative impact on women, which shows that many people who pay for sex ignore the fact that the women they pay for are likely to be vulnerable, may be in desperate need of money to pay off debts to their pimp, and have little or no agency in the situation. They do not think about the life or events that lead a woman to being in a brothel as opposed to working in an office or a shop.

There has rightly been outrage about the recently publicised cases of men working for aid agencies who exploited women overseas by paying them for sex, but

where is the outrage when they come back to this country and sexually abuse in our own backyard? Across the UK, men are paying to sexually exploit vulnerable women and girls who they have shopped for online. We need to join the dots between prostitution, modern slavery, sex trafficking and child sexual exploitation. The common thread is men who pay to sexually access the bodies of women and girls.

There is no separate and distinct market specifically for sex-trafficked victims; the market is for sex. Detective Constable Julie Currie of the Metropolitan police's modern slavery and kidnapping unit told the APPG:

"In the vast majority of cases, males paying for sex would give no thought to where the woman has come from or what circumstances have led her into prostitution."

As Dr Maddy Coy from Florida University states:

"Policy approaches which presume a distinct market for the purchase of girls' bodies for sex from that of the adult women are blinkered to the myriad of connections that span the age of majority."

What links these forms of exploitation is the men who pay to abuse women and girls, their sexist attitude of entitlement and objectification, and the sex inequality that underpins it. Crucially, we need to acknowledge that there is nothing inevitable about this exploitation, and that we can and must take action to tackle demand from men who exploit vulnerable people by paying for sex.

I say to the Minister today that to reduce the demand for prostitution and sex trafficking, the law has to send a clear message that it is never acceptable to exploit someone by paying for sex. To do that, the Government should urgently extend the existing prohibition against paying for sex in a public space to make it a criminal offence in all locations. At the same time, it is vital that people exploited through prostitution are not criminalised, but instead supported to exit prostitution and access the services they need. As a result, penalties for loitering and soliciting should be removed from the statute book.

This "end demand" approach to prostitution is often referred to as the Nordic model, or the sex buyer law. So far it has been adopted in Sweden, Norway, France, the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, so it is already in operation on UK soil. We urgently need to extend this legislation to the rest of the UK.

There is extensive evidence of the effectiveness of the sex buyer law in reducing demand. In Sweden, which was the first country to adopt an "end demand" approach back in 1999, anonymous surveys conducted in 1996 and 2008 revealed that the proportion of men in Sweden who reported paying for sex dropped from 13% to 8% in that period. The most recent study of prevalence rates found that 0.8% of men in Sweden had paid for sex in the previous 12 months, which is the smallest proportion recorded in two decades and the lowest in Europe.

Crucially, public attitudes have changed. In 1996, 45% of women and 20% of men in Sweden supported criminalising paying for sex. By 2008, support for such criminalisation had risen to 79% of women and 60% of men. That is the point of the law—it changes attitudes and prevents commercial sexual exploitation from happening in the first place.

Reducing demand also makes countries more hostile destinations for traffickers. A review of the sex buyer law in Norway concluded:

"A reduced market and increased law enforcement posit larger risks for human traffickers... The law has thus affected important pull factors and reduced the extent of human trafficking in Norway in comparison to a situation without a law."

Similarly, the head of Stockholm police's prostitution unit has pointed out:

"How will the traffickers survive without sex buyers? The sex buyers are the crucial sponsors of organised crime. The traffickers are not into this because of sex... They are in this because of the money."

Paying to sexually access another person's body is a choice—a choice to abuse. The law must serve as a deterrent and send a clear message that society will not stand idly by while a minority of men exploit vulnerable women and girls.

Changing the law around the selling and buying of sex is crucial to prevent sexual exploitation, but there are other ways in which we can reduce demand. We should seek to change attitudes towards women, exploitation and abuse through education. We need to confront the uncomfortable truth that many children are being groomed for sexual exploitation from an early age, so we really need age-appropriate relationship education in primary schools. When it comes to reducing the demand for commercial sexual exploitation, we should also educate boys about respecting women's bodies, about gender-based violence and about negative gender stereotypes. That is why I am very sad that last week the Secretary of State for Education rowed back on his commitment to introduce relationships education in 2019; now it will hopefully be introduced in 2020.

Providing routes out of commercial sexual exploitation is also important. Solutions are required that provide wraparound care at the moment that a woman presents in crisis. The Modern Slavery (Victim Support) Bill, which proposes the provision of up to 12 months of rehabilitative care, recovery and support for victims, could be vital in ensuring that vulnerable women and girls are fully supported in their exit from prostitution.

In line with that, the Government need to properly fund sexual violence support services, such as Rape Crisis, which are struggling to keep up with demand. As the MP for Rotherham, I have witnessed to what happens when, confronted with the evidence of widespread sexual abuse, those in authority have looked away; when they have described exploitation as a choice; when they have dismissed it, or minimised it; and when they have known about it but failed to do all they could to prevent it.

We have a duty to act now, not to look away. It is time for this Government to recognise that prostitution is a form of violence against women and girls. I urge the Minister to legislate now to end demand by criminalising those who pay for sex and by closing the loophole that enables websites to facilitate abuse. Being abused is not a choice, but our seeming indifference to it is.

Ian Paisley (in the Chair): Before I call the next Member, Fiona Bruce, I will just say that I do not intend to put a formal time limit on speeches. I think everyone will have time to speak, provided that they bear in mind that I intend to call the first winding-up speech at 3.28 pm. Members therefore have about six or so minutes, without a formal time limit.

3.6 pm

Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con): I commend the speeches of the hon. Members for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) and for Luton South (Mr Shuker), who are my colleagues in the all-party parliamentary group, and I wholeheartedly support their powerful expressions of support for women who are in prostitution and trapped in prostitution.

Although prostitution is often referred to as the oldest profession, it is more accurately viewed as one of the most enduring forms of exploitation. It has been my privilege to meet and talk with several women who have lived through prostitution. The stories they tell of being treated as an object or commodity, and of feeling that they had no choice but to sell sex in order to survive, are a sobering contrast to the fictional glamour in the popular myths surrounding the industry. As one of those survivors, Rachel Moran, has written in her excellent autobiographical book, “Paid For: My Journey Through Prostitution”:

“I pay no respect or accommodation to the glamorising or sensationalising of prostitution. These are not true depictions of prostitution...My assessment of prostitution and my opinions of it I take from the years I spent enduring it and everything I ever saw, heard, felt, witnessed or otherwise experienced at that time. There was no glamour there. Not even the flicker of it. Not for any of us”.

No one reading Rachel’s book could believe anything other than that women involved in prostitution are abused women; no one could doubt that prostitution is an utterly exploitative experience.

As we have heard, circumstances in early years—such as homelessness, family breakdown, problems with drugs or alcohol, or being in local authority care—are often precursors to young people entering prostitution, which then becomes a trap for years.

Michael Tomlinson: I, too, have met Rachel more than once and read her book; it is truly compelling. Will my hon. Friend say a little more about the evidence that we both heard on this issue on the Conservative party human rights commission—that it is wrong to describe prostitution as a genuine choice, because there are so many underlying reasons for it that it would be wrong to say that those in prostitution are there out of choice?

Fiona Bruce: Absolutely; I thank my hon. Friend for raising that issue. The argument that women—it is mainly women—who are engaged in prostitution and being paid for sex are consenting is a fallacy. They are never consenting; they are coerced. They are coerced by their circumstances, such as those I have described, and then exploited by those who use them for sex and by the pimps who sell them for sex.

Research for the Scottish Government has shown that

“most respondents who provide services and support to those involved in prostitution emphasised a range of risks and adverse impacts associated with prostitution in the short and longer term in relation to general and mental health, safety and wellbeing and sexual health.”

The loss of self as a result of being objectified time and time again comes across profoundly when one talks to or about women who have been involved in prostitution. The techniques that they operate to block out from their minds what is happening to them, so that they think of themselves as an object, are so profound that they often cannot then move on with their lives.

Although some British nationals, especially young people, are affected, as we have heard, commercial sexual exploitation now often affects foreign nationals who have been trafficked here and are vulnerable. A Police Foundation study in Bristol found that only 17% of the people providing sexual services in the city’s brothels were British.

Prostitution and the commercial sex industry are intrinsically linked with modern slavery. As we have heard, the market for commercial sex operates as a pull for traffickers and organised crime groups. It is heart-rending when one hears accounts from organisations such as Hope for Justice. I believe that the daily figure of 13 sex buyers a day mentioned by the hon. Member for Rotherham is often a gross underestimate. I remember an account from the founder of Hope for Justice, which rescues trafficked women from prostitution. On one occasion he was told about a young girl who had been rescued. One day she had decided she would count how many men had abused her that day. After 100 she stopped counting.

To reduce modern slavery we must reduce the demand that creates the market in which so many people are exploited. That is why I support what has been said here today. At the same time, we must also provide real exit routes for women who are trapped in prostitution. It is not enough to say, “You can have health checks and clean condoms.” They need genuine opportunities to gain education, to be rehoused, and to understand how they can support themselves in a different way, because they often see themselves as having no alternatives at all.

The Conservative party human rights commission, which I chair, is in the middle of its own inquiry into the different legal approaches to prostitution and the impact they have on the fight against modern slavery. I am very pleased to see the evidence coming through now from the countries where “end demand” legislation has been implemented, including in Northern Ireland, where the law is fairly new. The police have found the offence much more effective than the partial offence that existed before, which we still have here. I congratulate the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland on securing its first conviction two weeks ago in a contested court case following the implementation of the new law.

The culture has been changed in Sweden, as we have heard. It is now considered almost demeaning to pay for sex there. Only a minority of men in this country pay for sexual services—only about 11% of men have ever paid for sex and only 3.6% have done so in recent years, according to the most recent survey data published. However, their behaviour harms individuals, fuels organised crime and contributes to the global networks of modern slavery.

Many people suggest that the law should not intervene in matters of prostitution. They say that that would stray into regulating the behaviour of consenting adults, but, as we have heard, one of those people, often not an adult, is not consenting. The law needs to be looked at again. If the cost of protecting such extremely vulnerable people from exploitation and modern slavery is to reduce the choices of a small group of people, it is a cost we should be prepared to pay.

I welcome the research that the Government have commissioned into the scale and nature of prostitution in England and Wales, and I commend the Minister for

her own interest in the subject. I look forward to the findings of that report. I hope that perhaps during the summer recess the Minister will have an opportunity to read Rachel Moran's book and that the researchers undertaking work of the inquiry will look at it, too.

3.14 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to speak on this issue, which I have a great interest in. I congratulate the hon. Members for Luton South (Mr Shuker) and for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) on setting the scene. I will give the Northern Ireland perspective and describe what we have done legislatively. I suggest the Minister does the same here on the mainland, because it is the way forward.

Two weeks ago a court in Northern Ireland convicted a man in the first case to be contested under the legislation introduced in 2015, under which it is an offence to pay for, or, in this particular case, attempt to pay for, the sexual services of another person. One might be forgiven for thinking it has taken some time for the first conviction to be made, but, in addition to that case, data up to the end of March this year records 13 individuals who have been cautioned or received another discretionary disposal having admitted their guilt.

Would I like to see the Police Service of Northern Ireland making greater use of the offence? Yes, I certainly would, and so would you, Mr Paisley. However, the arrests show that this simple offence is much more effective than the more complex offence we had before. Previously our law targeted kerb crawlers who seek to buy sex in public and those who purchase sexual services from a person subjected to force, which are the laws that England and Wales still have. The kerb crawling offence has limitations because it can address only those who seek to purchase sex in a public place, yet research suggests that the majority of prostitution in the UK now happens indoors in brothels, private residences and hotels. The offence that applies where a person is subjected to force is difficult to apply because, although there is no requirement that the offender know about the coercion, there needs to be proof that the coercion is happening, which is not always easy to document in the time required by a relatively low-level offence. PSNI statistics show that no one was arrested or charged for that offence in the whole time that it operated, so the change in legislation has given the PSNI the power it needs to be effective and to change attitudes. I respectfully suggest to the Minister that we need such changes here on the mainland.

Michael Tomlinson: One objection to the sex buyer law is that it has been used only in Nordic countries that have a different jurisdiction from our own. The examples that the hon. Gentleman is giving are powerful because they show that our own jurisdiction can cope with such laws and that they work.

Jim Shannon: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his intervention, and I agree wholeheartedly with him.

We changed the law in Northern Ireland because we needed a law that would enable us to tackle the demand for commercial sexual exploitation more effectively. The Northern Ireland Assembly overwhelmingly supported the provision by 81 votes to 10, with the four largest

parties in the Assembly—the Democratic Unionist party, Sinn Féin, the Social Democratic and Labour party and the Ulster Unionist party—in support. Both Unionists and nationalists supported the legislation. Lord Morrow, who was a Member of the Assembly at the time, was one of those who did the good work.

People are easily moved around the UK, across the border with the Republic of Ireland and more widely within Europe. Germany and the Netherlands, which have legalised prostitution, have become destination countries for so-called sex tourists and also for traffickers and their victims. Legalisation has not stamped out organised crime or trafficking. It has not worked. The change that we have had in Northern Ireland is needed here. Fighting sex trafficking by using the criminal justice system might even be harder in the legalised prostitution sector.

Some might ask, “Why tackle the demand at all?” The simple answer is that without the demand for paid sex there would be no need for a continuing supply of women tricked, bullied or forced by circumstances into prostitution. Reducing the demand is the key to reducing the number of people who end up in commercial sexual exploitation and is the key to reducing human trafficking.

I want to quote from a lady who addressed the Northern Ireland Assembly and came here as well. Her name is Mia de Faoite. She spoke powerfully at an event in Stormont to mark the coming into force of the offence of purchasing sex, and spoke in this House as well. She said:

“It is my firm belief that everybody on this Island be they born here or not is entitled to live a dignified life, and prostitution is the systematic stripping of one's human dignity and I know that because I have lived and witnessed it, and it must no longer be tolerated and now in Northern Ireland the next generation of girls, will grow up knowing that the bodies to which they have been born into are respected and at no time will they ever be up for sale.”

She spoke at an event that took place here in Westminster, which I co-hosted with the hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) and the former Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi). Women and girls across the whole of the UK deserve the same freedom. Northern Ireland has led the way in the British Isles. The Republic of Ireland followed suit, and it is now time for England, Scotland and Wales to join us. Taking action to tackle the demand for commercial sexual exploitation is the first step, and I encourage the Minister to follow the actions of those in Northern Ireland. That is the way forward.

3.19 pm

Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP): I shall keep my remarks short, and hopefully then the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) will be able to speak. While I was gathering my thoughts for the debate, I was reminded by a number of people of the importance of the terminology and language I should adopt. I discovered that two groups of people on the same side of the debate disagree about that language and terminology. Experience tells me that as a man I am walking on eggshells, but we shall never change the world for the better if we cannot enter into open and honest debate about issues that matter. The issue we are debating matters, and we all want a better world, so I apologise to those whom I may be about to offend. It is not my intention to disrespect them or their views, but I am

[*Ronnie Cowan*]

putting my views as a man attempting to help, in a world where people—primarily women—are abused by men.

Most sex buyers are male, and that group pays predominantly for sexual access to the bodies of women. Therefore it is important that young men should be raised not to see women as a commodity to be bought and sold. If we do not deal with that, women will, as has happened in other countries, be trafficked and sold into a deeply exploitative trade, to supply the demand. A five-country study, led by the Immigration Council of Ireland, of men who paid for sex concluded that

“irrespective of a buyers’ knowledge of human trafficking as a crime and as a phenomenon, it is unlikely that they will consider the possibility that a seller may be a victim of trafficking when purchasing sex.”

We need to educate those doing the buying, before they even start.

The overwhelming majority of people exploited through the sex trade are highly vulnerable even before they become involved, and suffer acute harm as a result. Prostitution is about violence and control. Mia de Faoite—sorry, Mia; four or five people have butchered your second name this afternoon—is an activist and survivor of prostitution. She said, when asked why men pay for sex:

“I think it’s partly the fact that they can and society says they can and the law says they can... You must ask yourself what are they buying? It’s power. It’s a very powerful thing to have control of someone else’s body in that way. It’s a power-fix and they know it”.

We can legislate, and we may get it right. In that case we help, even if we do not completely resolve the situation. If we legislate and get it wrong we could drive prostitution underground, and that would be disastrous for those being trafficked and abused.

Criminalising paying for sex while decriminalising selling sex has been shown to reduce demand for sexual exploitation, change public attitudes, and make countries more hostile destinations for traffickers. In recognition of the centrality of combating demand in preventing sex trafficking, the Council of Europe recommended that states adopt that approach

“as the most effective tool for preventing and combating trafficking in human beings”.

I acknowledge that it is not perfect, but I believe it is the best path forward. The only way we can guarantee to resolve the issue is by reducing demand to zero. Demand for prostitution is not inevitable. Prevalence rates vary over time and between countries. Demand is context-dependent, based on a decision-making process by each man who pays to exploit someone sexually.

Most men do not pay for sex. It is a minority who do. We should have a UK-wide education programme, counteracting the growing normalisation of sexual exploitation. Through a concerted body of education we should aim to create a society where the concept of buying a person is inconceivable.

3.23 pm

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): It is, as ever, a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Paisley.

I ask the Minister to reflect on the fact that in the main Chamber today Members are considering a Government Bill to stop the sale of part of an animal from other countries. They are legislating to reduce demand for ivory. They are acting, by means of a Bill. At exactly the same moment, there are women face down being abused in this country, who have been trafficked from somewhere else or exploited here. Ivory is an important subject for me, but it is not as important as the girls in my kids’ class, and it never will be, so I ask the Government to act and not to keep kicking the matter into review after review. We can act for elephants; we should act for women.

Normally I spend time in this place giving voice to victims, or to women—standing up and speaking the voices of people who have got in touch with me. Today I want to give voice to some of the punters of sex work, to try to prove that paying for sex is not like paying for any other service; it is abuse. I apologise, because some of this is not particularly pleasant. I have three quotations from men who reviewed women they had exploited on the prostitution review website Punternet. The first states:

“This is a classic case of ‘the pretty ones don’t have to work hard’. Vicky is beautiful, but frankly can’t be arsed. She’s Polish, and her English is not good... I was reminded of the Smiths song ‘Girlfriend in a Coma’... All the while she seemed completely disinterested and mechanical... After a while, during which she remained completely unresponsive, I offered to lick her—she was stubbly, which I dislike, but carried on regardless, and got the same lack of response... I finally decided to fuck her, in mish. Her pussy was hot and tight and I came after less than ten minutes. All the while, she kept her face turned to one side.”

The next stated:

“Very pretty and young girl. Approximately 165 cm tall, nice legs and beautiful breast, nice skin. Very young... If you want to try a fresh, young (says she is 18) and pretty girl is ok, but maybe as she just started to work, is quite passive, scarcely kiss without tongue, doesn’t want to be kissed on the neck or ears, can’t do a decent blowjob and really rides badly on you, i had to stop her several times when she tried to use her mouth or when she got up on me. She really can’t speak a word of English”.

The writer says that he thinks she is Romanian “or something like that”, and that her English is “zero”.

The third stated:

“Saw this girl’s pictures on the other site and thought she looked nice. How wrong I was. She does NOT offer any of the services offered and actually had the cheek to ask for more money to perform things that she is advertising as part of her services!! Her attitude was derisory... I did have sex with her which was a bit like shagging a blow up doll. I should have asked for my money back but given the very dodgy looking bloke with a very aggressive dog downstairs I thought it best to just get out as fast as possible.”

Lovely. So that is just like any other service then. I would ask all Members of the House to think about people speaking of their daughters, wives and mothers, and the women who live in their constituencies, in that way.

There is a significant parallel between domestic violence and prostitution. The all-party parliamentary group on prostitution and the global sex trade found that the “boyfriend” model described by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) was a common way to coerce women into the sex trade from existing relationships. It is fairly uncommon that people get caught for that, but the following text message conversation is between two men who were convicted of sex trafficking

in the UK last year. It is between Razvan Mitru, the lead member of the trafficking gang, and Alexandru Pitigoi. They are discussing recruiting Pitigoi's girlfriend to brothels in the UK and openly acknowledge what they want to do.

Pitigoi texted:

"let me talk to her too cause she doesn't really want anymore".

Mitru replied " why:))". Pitigoi answered:

"cause she is not happy about it".

Mitru:

"what the fuck is she not happy about?"

Pitigoi:

"and she doesn't really like it as you can imagine it's hard on her bro".

Mitru:

"she doesn't have a penny in her pocket and she is being fussy maybe it is hard for her but if she fucked at least she knows what for not for nothing".

Pitigoi replied, "I know that:))"

I have met that woman hundreds of times. A review is not enough. I ask the Minister to do everything that was set out by my hon. Friends the Members for Luton South (Mr Shuker) and for Rotherham, and to do it now.

3.28 pm

Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Paisley. I congratulate the hon. Members for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) and for Luton South (Mr Shuker) on securing the important debate. They have both campaigned relentlessly on this issue. It is unfortunate that it is happening in Westminster Hall, because it should be in the main Chamber. Too often such important discussions happen here first, when they deserve to be on the Floor of the House.

As we have heard, prostitution is a form of gendered violence. It is both a cause and a consequence of sexual inequality. It is interesting that the debate has so far focused not purely on tackling commercial sexual exploitation, but particularly on demand. As we have heard from the hon. Members for Luton South and for Rotherham, the demand from sex buyers fuels sex trafficking and organised crime. Without the demand from sex buyers, there would be no need for a supply. We are therefore looking at tackling the root cause of that form of sexual inequality, rather than a symptom.

The demand for commercial sexual exploitation is not an inevitable fact. Most men do not pay for sex, and the figures for those who do vary over time and between different countries. However, those who pay for sex are predominantly men, and although they are a minority, they make a conscious choice to do so. The hon. Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) quoted the words of Rachel Moran, who said that there is no glamour in prostitution. There is sometimes a false element of choice, but the majority of people who have been exploited through the sex trade were highly vulnerable before they entered the sex industry, and often suffered acute harm as a result.

We have already heard a number of statistics and I do not want to bore Members with yet more, but it has been estimated that 152 sex workers were murdered between 1990 and 2015. Although sex workers are often

victims of violent crime, such incidents often go unreported to the police. If those are the statistics we have for murder, I hate to think about how many times a day women are sexually exploited and physically abused because of this industry. My hon. Friend the Member for Inverclyde (Ronnie Cowan) rightly points out that in order to begin to tackle this problem it is essential to educate young men and boys. This is an issue of violence against women and the abuse of power. As we heard from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips), the words used by those men are abhorrent; and if that is the language they use, their treatment of these women on a daily basis must be unimaginable.

The issue is not exclusive to this jurisdiction. The Scottish Government recognise that prostitution is a form of violence. As a result, the "Equally Safe" campaign in Scotland seeks to create a strategy to prevent and eradicate violence against women and girls. The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Scotland) Act 2015 made it an offence to exploit another human being. Exploitation is defined within the Act, which covers sexual exploitation and makes specific provision for support and assistance to victims of trafficking.

There are clear links between human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation, and Europol representatives have suggested that the trafficking of human beings, particularly women and girls, has increased in countries where prostitution has been legalised. I do not believe for a single second that such measures go far enough, which is why I advocate doing more, and not only in Scotland but across the UK. We should be led by the example of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, which have taken swift action in this regard. We must be careful not to allow this form of abuse to increase as a result of measures that aim to protect victims of that abuse.

As the hon. Member for Rotherham said, this is a crisis of commercial sexual exploitation on an industrial scale, and more must be done to protect vulnerable individuals from this criminal activity. Such exploitation cannot and must not go on, and I hope that the Minister will heed the comments from across the House and take further action.

3.32 pm

Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab): I congratulate all Members who have spoken on their passionate and moving speeches. I, for one, was extremely moved.

Prostitution is a nationwide issue. Women are selling their bodies on streets up and down the country, putting their health and safety at risk. Prostitution is violence against women and girls. Each time a woman is met by a purchaser to trade a sex act for money, drugs, food or some other commodity, she is in a potentially life-endangering situation. Prostitution causes damage to those involved with it, and it can never be made completely safe.

Prostitution is the abuse of vulnerable women. Last summer I spent quite a lot of time in Swansea talking to women who were engaged in, and victims of, prostitution. One lady I met had lost her six-year-old daughter in a road accident 30 years ago. Thirty years ago I lost my eight-year-old son in a road accident. Thirty years ago the woman I met turned to alcohol and drugs to numb the pain because she had no support or family. She needed

[Carolyn Harris]

something to take the edge off it, which led her into prostitution. I, thankfully, had a loving family around me. I was cosseted and nurtured, and I am standing here today. The maxim, “There but for the grace of God go I” is so true when we do not know what is around the corner. I also noted that this woman was heavily bruised. She is in her late 50s, and I commented that she had really bad facial scarring and bad black eyes. She said, “This happens all the time. This is because I didn’t give good service.” These women hold themselves entirely responsible for not giving the service that is demanded of them by the purchasers.

Young women and girls are on the street or in backstreet brothels, selling their bodies for as little as £5, or in exchange for drugs and alcohol or, in some cases, for food or bed for the night. Those women are not dressed in expensive clothes and fancy shoes; they are in grubby tracksuits and trainers. The idea that prostitution is a choice that women have is simply not true. People are pushed into exploitative and harmful situations because they are trying to survive.

We must understand and address the root cause of prostitution, which is normally a man’s demand for sex. Using prostitutes has become so normalised that men now go to brothels with their friends before a night out. The stigma of men paying for sexual services has vanished, yet the stigma of women selling their bodies remains. As we have heard, the sex buyer law on prostitution decriminalises all those who are prostituted. It provides support services to help people to exit prostitution, and it makes buying people for sex a criminal offence, in order to reduce the demand that drives sex trafficking. It makes it clear that buying people for sex is abhorrent and wrong, and it sanctions discouraging people from doing it.

Education programmes in schools, and training for police, other emergency services and frontline professionals, is vital to target sex traffickers and help those women who need support. A lack of understanding could put women straight back into the hands of their abusers—every woman I met who had been involved in prostitution was there because she repeatedly went back into the same abusive relationship, time after time, as if it was her only option and there was nothing else for her. Women need to feel that they have a place to go, and that help, support and people are available to help them break that cycle.

Women involved in prostitution should have access to excellent, reliable and life-changing information and support. They should be treated fairly, positively and—most important—respectfully, and they should be given genuine alternatives to a life of prostitution, regardless of where they find themselves. If that is not provided, those women will never break away from the situation they are in. Britain must become a hostile place for sex traffickers and other third-party profiteers of sexual exploitation. That requires a holistic approach that puts prevention at its heart, while mobilising all available measures to disrupt and robustly respond to sexual exploitation. There is no argument other than that prostitution is violence against women and girls, and we must always fight to protect women and girls from living a life of violence and abuse. These women need

help and support; they do not need prison sentences or criminal records. They need our help, and they need it now.

3.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Paisley, and I thank the hon. Members for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) and for Luton South (Mr Shuker) for securing this important debate on tackling the demand for commercial sexual exploitation. We have a full Public Gallery, and I am sure this debate is being watched on television. The accounts that have been given have clearly touched many people, and they have shown in an incredibly compelling way the risks, harms and agony that prostitution can cause to those who are most vulnerable. I also thank the all-party group on prostitution and the global sex trade for its work in this area. I am pleased to see so many of its members present in the debate, and I thank them for their report, which I read with great care.

I thank Members for addressing the House in a compelling but hard-hitting way. My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Fiona Bruce) talked about the fallacy of choice and the loss of self. Those are phrases that were borne out in the quotations that the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) gave from websites, and in the description the hon. Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris) gave of a lady whose life path changed 30 years ago and who has suffered the terrible consequences of that. I also thank the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), who has brought the developments occurring in Northern Ireland to the Chamber. I will be watching with interest the results of that change in their law.

The Government’s priority is to protect those selling sex from harm and exploitation and to target those who exploit vulnerable people and those involved in exploitation. Just this afternoon, a group of people are meeting just along the corridor to discuss how we can prevent exploitation in hand car washes. We know that nail bars are another area rich for exploitation. Of course, the most difficult area of exploitation is the sex industry involving adults and children.

I come to this matter drawing on my experience outside the House. I used to prosecute serious organised crime. I remember a woman who I defended many years ago. She was caught because she had illegal documentation. This was back in the 2000s, when sadly we had a different attitude towards victims of slavery. I am pleased to say we have much improved it since. She told me her story, through her interpreter, of how she came to be in our country. It was a tale not dissimilar to the tales we have heard already today. She showed me her wrists—I remember this; it haunts me—and they bore the physical scars of her experience in a brothel that she had managed to escape. She was treated as a criminal for having documentation papers that were not legitimate, and I am genuinely so pleased to say I have complete confidence that now she would be picked up, put into the national referral mechanism, treated as a victim and supported through her journey to a better life. I feel as though she and the many, many other women we have heard about are sitting in this Chamber with us as we debate this topic today.

As a Minister, however, I cannot proceed only on the basis of compelling, heartbreaking stories; I have to proceed on the basis of evidence. That is why we have commissioned research through the University of Bristol to understand the scale and nature of prostitution in the 21st century. We know it is different from how it was 10 years ago through the proliferation of the online sites that the hon. Member for Rotherham described, which I will deal with in a moment.

Jim Shannon: The Minister said clearly that she would look at the legislation in Northern Ireland. Will those who are doing the research to which she has just referred look at the evidence of what Northern Ireland has done, the change it has made, including in attitudes, and its success?

Victoria Atkins: It is a team of respected academics in the field, and it would not be right for me as a Minister to their research. I am sure they will be looking at the example the hon. Gentleman mentions, as they will look at other examples across Europe. It is something I can look at, too.

Before I descend into the details, I add that I am pleased that colleagues have talked about the role that education has in tackling demand. Colleagues will know that I spend a lot of time talking about that when it comes to how some crimes are perpetuated against women and girls. Relationships education is absolutely key. The hon. Member for Rotherham mentioned the Secretary of State for Education. My understanding is that while some schools will be in a position to provide this education very quickly because they have the teachers and skill sets available, other schools are not quite at that place. We are trying to help them get to that place so that the policy is consistent and high-quality across the country.

The acts of buying and selling sex are not in themselves illegal in England and Wales, but many activities that can be associated with prostitution are offences, and we have heard about them today. When those offences were designed, the basis of them was to protect vulnerable people involved in prostitution. They relate to activities such as controlling prostitution and buying sex from someone who has been a victim of trafficking. We are aware of the different legislative approaches taken elsewhere, including the Nordic model and the regulated decriminalised approach in Germany and the Netherlands. We are seeking unequivocal evidence as to whether any one approach is better than others at tackling harm and exploitation. That must remain our priority.

Mr Shuker: The Minister has referred to the research that is going ahead. Does she not agree that if a large number of women who are involved in prostitution are being exploited—however we define that—and a small minority appear to work relatively freely and not under those same conditions, that small minority should not be able to outweigh the huge number of people being exploited? Should public policy not seek to reduce the impact on the most vulnerable first and foremost?

Victoria Atkins: That is a perfectly fair and proper question. It is a question that I will have to answer when we have the independent research, which we will be able to analyse. I understand why colleagues are anxious to act immediately, but I have to act on the basis of academic research and evidence.

Jess Phillips: I know that the Minister cannot direct the research, but I have read various reports in my time working in this field. Amnesty's report is one that is often cited against my viewpoint as someone who worked with women in the national referral mechanism. Can the Minister ensure that women in the national referral mechanism, which the Government have access to, are taken account of in the research? I cannot remember a single trafficked woman ever being asked their opinion in any research piece that I have ever seen.

Victoria Atkins: I am conscious of the independence of the researchers and of giving the research the weight and respect I hope and expect it to be given. I am a little bit cautious about trying to interfere. With my modern slavery responsibilities, I am conscious of the impact of sex trafficking on people in the NRM. There is that body of evidence there as well, and the hon. Lady is absolutely right to point it out.

I am conscious of time, and I want to give hon. Members time to respond.

Ian Paisley (in the Chair): You don't have to.

Victoria Atkins: I am grateful, Mr Paisley.

Members have spoken compellingly about what can be done by criminal gangs who traffic and pimp women. We are looking at whether prohibition is the most effective policy response to that. We know there are some evaluations and research pointing to the benefits and negative impacts of the Nordic model. It is a contentious area, and a lot of conflicting and contradictory evidence is cited on both sides of the debate. That is why I am currently having to tread the path that I am. As I say, we are doing more to develop our evidence base. We have commissioned research from the University of Bristol. We anticipate that it will take a year to complete, with a final report expected in April next year. From that, we can look at the evidence and analyse what the best approach is.

As I have said, we know that the picture on prostitution has changed from what it was even just 10 years ago. We need to understand the nature and scale of the issue, so that we understand the potential consequences, both intended and unintended, of any changes to legislation.

Fiona Bruce: The Minister is responding very thoughtfully to the comments that have been made, but will she give us her view on whether prostitution is fundamentally exploitative and the act of prostitution is a form of violence against women and girls? Whatever the researchers say, those of us who are concerned about this matter would be interested to know her view on that, having heard today's debate.

Victoria Atkins: My hon. Friend puts me in a difficult position, given that we have commissioned the research and are very clear that it has to be respected by people from across the spectrum of views, and that we will review it appropriately. I do not feel able to give my personal view given that I am speaking on behalf of Her Majesty's Government. I will say that I sat on the Home Affairs Committee some time ago when it conducted a report into prostitution. That report came to a certain viewpoint, but there were many shades of view in that report. I feel it is right that colleagues know that.

We are clear that we have to help victims, by protecting them and helping them to leave prostitution and get into the way of life that they seek outside prostitution.

[*Victoria Atkins*]

We are not waiting for the publication of the research for that to happen. We have provided more than £2 million to organisations supporting sex workers, including the £650,000 from the violence against women and girls service transformation fund that we have given to the police and crime commissioner of Merseyside to provide a victim-focused service for sex workers—

Jess Phillips: Prostitutes.

Victoria Atkins: And prostitutes who are victims of, or at risk of, sexual or domestic violence, abuse, exploitation or human trafficking. I have used both words deliberately through my speech.

Sarah Champion: Only one is correct.

Victoria Atkins: Forgive me. In that case, may *Hansard* note that when I have said “sex workers”, I was referring also to prostitutes, and vice versa? I do not want to fall over on the language, as other hon. Members have mentioned.

In addition, our focus on protecting victims extends to the £13 million trusted relationships fund, which we launched in February. [*Interruption.*] I am sorry about my microphone, Mr Paisley—it seems to be doing something. I do not have Siri on me, just in case anyone is wondering. The trusted relationships fund will provide funding over four years for initiatives to protect the most vulnerable young people from child sexual exploitation and wider forms of criminal exploitation. We have received more than 100 expressions of interest from local authorities for initiatives aimed at developing the protection that builds resilience in children and increases the consistency and quality of support for children and young people who are at risk.

The Government’s strategy to tackle sex trafficking facilitated via online classified advert sites, otherwise known as adult service sites, comprises three main strands of activity. First, the National Crime Agency is leading a multi-agency operational plan to investigate, disrupt and prevent sex trafficking facilitated via such websites. I have visited the unit at which that work is done. Again, I thank the officers involved in that work. They sit at computer screens, see the websites, read words very similar to those that have already been cited in the debate, and they then have to find a way of dealing with that when they leave the office and go home to their loved ones. My eternal thanks and gratitude go to them for doing that.

Secondly, the operational push is supported by the development and use of innovative technological capabilities to identify trafficking online. Thirdly, in support of the work the Home Office has spoken to the largest adult services websites operating in the UK so that it takes a

proactive role in identifying trafficking-related material and preventing such material from being hosted. I am clear that the websites have a responsibility. Through engagement with such industries, we seek to ensure that they do what they should to ensure that their sites do not host criminal and exploitative behaviour.

Colleagues have mentioned the United States’ approach. Alongside our current work, we continue to monitor the impact in the US of the recent change in legislation brought in by the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act, known as FOSTA. The Act gives sex trafficking victims more power to sue websites that knowingly support sex trafficking. Although such an approach has much to commend it at first blush, we are conscious of some emerging evidence that the prohibition of such sites results in the displacement, rather than the prevention, of abuse, and disperses trafficking-related advertisements across myriad smaller websites where they are harder to investigate. However, we will keep looking at that and see whether there are lessons to be learned from that approach, and from approaches elsewhere.

Sarah Champion: Will the Minister give way?

Victoria Atkins: Yes, although I am just about to finish so that the hon. Lady has a chance to respond.

Sarah Champion: I will give my time to the Minister, because I would really like her to answer three questions. First, will she legislate to ensure that websites cannot financially benefit from exploited women? Secondly, will she stop criminalising women who are forced into prostitution? Thirdly, will she criminalise both the buyers and those who force women, and benefit from forcing women, into prostitution?

Ian Paisley (in the Chair): The Minister has two and a half minutes.

Victoria Atkins: I am so sorry—I was unable to note all the questions. I suspect and hope that this is the first of a programme of debates that we will have on this issue in the period while the research is being developed. May I take those questions away? The hon. Lady will appreciate that I cannot commit to legislate on my feet in Westminster Hall—would that it were so—but I undertake to write to her on those points. She knows, given the work that she has done in other areas and on other matters, that I am always more than willing to listen; indeed, it is my privilege to do so. I will take away her questions and consider them, and we will see where we get to.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered tackling demand for commercial sexual exploitation.

Palestinian Education System

[SIR CHRISTOPHER CHOPE *in the Chair*]

4 pm

Joan Ryan (Enfield North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered incitement in the Palestinian education system.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher.

The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians provokes strong passions and much disagreement on all sides of the debate. Wherever we stand, I hope we can all agree that to bring that tragic conflict to a close, it is vital that old hatreds and prejudices are not passed on to new generations of children and young people. That is why I requested this debate.

I unreservedly support a two-state solution and I believe that a strong and competent Palestinian Authority have an important part to play in achieving that goal.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): I am sorry to interrupt the right hon. Lady just after she has started, but she made an excellent point. Has she noticed, as I have, that textbooks for Palestinian children contain the phrase that cities in Israel such as Tel Aviv are in occupied Palestine? That goes completely against the two-state solution.

Joan Ryan: I cannot but agree with the hon. Gentleman. There are some terrible examples of what appears in the textbooks, which I will come to shortly.

Given Britain's long-standing advocacy of the two-state solution, I believe it is appropriate for us to provide aid to the Palestinian Authority, but as is recognised in the memorandum of understanding between the Department for International Development and the PA, and the partnership principles that underpin it, British aid is not a blank cheque. Crucially, it demands that the PA adhere to the principles of non-violence and respect for human rights, and requires DFID to take action when they do not.

Dame Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): Is my right hon. Friend concerned that the textbooks she talks about call on children to

“annihilate the remnants of the foreigners”,

as well as talking about sacrificing blood? They call on young children to believe that “death is a privilege”. Does she believe that that kind of teaching to very young children is compatible with seeking co-existence?

Joan Ryan: I do not believe it is compatible with seeking co-existence; to warp the minds of young children is a serious form of child abuse.

Ian Austin (Dudley North) (Lab): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Joan Ryan: For the last time, I think, yes I will.

Ian Austin: We find extremists and people who foster hatred in all communities on all sides of all conflicts. What worries me about this is that some of the material

is in books that are officially sanctioned by the Palestinian Authority. Is the answer not to use more of Britain's aid budget to promote projects that bring young people together, such as the Middle East Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow project that I have visited in Jerusalem, where young Israelis and young Palestinians work together, co-operate and discuss the issues? Is that not a building block for the peace process that we all want to see?

Joan Ryan: My hon. Friend is right. There is no question that co-existence projects work. They are crucial in building that constituency for peace and in demonstrating that Palestinians and Israelis can live alongside each other.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Richard Burden (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab) *rose*—

Joan Ryan: I will give way one more time, to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon). That is going to be it.

Jim Shannon: I congratulate the right hon. Lady on bringing this debate forward. Does she agree that texts for a science class phrased as has been described can do nothing other than teach hatred? Does she agree that we should use all the diplomatic pressure available to press for textbooks that teach facts and methods, not hatred and rage?

Joan Ryan: Absolutely. It is completely indefensible that officially sanctioned textbooks used in school and sanctioned by the Palestinian Authority contain material that is really harmful to children. It certainly does not bode well for building peace.

Richard Burden: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Joan Ryan: I will make a little bit of progress and will come back to my hon. Friend—I do not want to leave out the last person who wants to intervene.

There are many instances where the PA have clearly and repeatedly flouted the principles I referred to. Perhaps most egregious is its payment of salaries to those who commit terrorist attacks—a truly grotesque policy that further incentivises violence by rewarding those who are serving the longest sentences, and thus have committed the most heinous acts, with the highest payments. The official PA media are also saturated with vile anti-Semitism and the glorification of those who commit acts of violence against Jews.

I fail, for instance, to see how children's television programmes in which poems are recited that refer to Jews as “barbaric monkeys”, “wretched pigs” and the “most evil among creations” do anything to advance the cause of peace, reconciliation and co-existence. Neither do I view the naming of summer camps and sports tournaments after so-called martyrs who murder Israeli schoolchildren as in any way conducive to furthering a two-state solution.

I confine my remarks today, however, to the question of incitement in the Palestinian education system in general and the new PA school curriculum in particular. In 2016 and 2017, the PA published a reformed curriculum covering both primary and secondary school students.

[Joan Ryan]

It represented the most substantial revision of the curriculum since the establishment of the PA in the wake of the Oslo accords. As the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education outlined in a series of reports, the new curriculum represents a significant step backwards. Based on standards for peace and tolerance derived from UNESCO and UN declarations, it found that the new curriculum

“exerts pressure over young Palestinians to acts of violence in a more extensive and sophisticated manner”

and has expanded its focus

“from demonization of Israel to providing a rationale for war.”

It is

“more radical than ever, purposefully and strategically encouraging Palestinian children to sacrifice themselves to martyrdom.”

The incitement is pernicious and pervades subjects across the curriculum and across every age group. Children of 13 are taught Newton’s second law through the image of a boy with a slingshot targeting soldiers. For the avoidance of any doubt, I have here the textbook and can show hon. Members the relevant photograph. The evidence is not difficult to come across. Children of 10 are asked to calculate the number of martyrs in Palestinian uprisings in a maths textbook, and I have that here too.

Sir Christopher Chope (in the Chair): Order. I would advise the right hon. Lady that it is not possible to use exhibits. Apart from anything else, how is that to be recorded in *Hansard*? The right hon. Lady should use her expertise and education to describe in words, rather than use exhibits.

Joan Ryan: Thank you for your guidance, Sir Christopher. I shall abide by it.

Children of 11 are told that martyrdom and jihad are the

“most important meanings of life”.

They are taught that

“drinking the cup of bitterness with glory is much sweeter than a pleasant long life accompanied by humiliation”.

To ram home that terrible lesson, martyrs such as Dalal Mughrabi—who led the infamous 1978 coastal road massacre in which 38 Israelis, including 13 children, were brutally murdered—are held up as role models. Let us be absolutely clear. This is, as Hillary Clinton once suggested, a form of child abuse: teaching children to hate, to kill and to sacrifice their own lives. Palestinian children deserve so much better than to be taught that the best they can aspire to in life is death.

Those are just a few of the dozens and dozens of examples of incitement that litter Palestinian schoolbooks. Less obvious, but no less malign, is the fact that the curriculum continues to suggest that Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque is under threat. That false and incendiary claim has frequently triggered violence. The curriculum offers no education for peacemaking with Israel or any suggestion that the path of peace is preferred to the path of violence. It implicitly argues that Palestinians will return to a pre-1967 Israel through violence. For instance, it teaches nine-year-olds the necessity of “sacrificing blood”, “eliminating the usurper” and annihilating the “remnants of the foreigners”.

Richard Burden: I thank my right hon. Friend for her generosity in giving way once again.

“Building a house is like killing 100 Arabs. Building a whole settlement is like killing 10,000 non-Jews.”

Those are the words of settler leader Moshe Zar, not at an unofficial gathering but at an official Israeli Ministry of Education event, and reported in Ynetnews. Does that not indicate that incitement exists on both sides and has to be tackled on both sides? Was not the suggestion made in 2014 of a tripartite committee to look at all incitement, involving the PA and the Israeli Government and chaired by the Americans, a useful way forward? Why did the Israeli Government reject it?

Joan Ryan: I am not making an argument for the Israeli Government. I have stood on a platform with Benjamin Netanyahu and said to his face—I think my hon. Friend knows this, because I have said it before—that I do not agree with settlement building and that I think there should be a settlement freeze. I think it is a barrier to peace. I do not think it is the only barrier and I do not think it is insurmountable, but I do not agree with it. Israeli textbooks see peace as the ultimate goal and depict it as highly desirable and achievable, while war is a negative, although sometimes necessary, occurrence.

This is not some unfortunate tale about events in the middle east, for which Britain has no responsibility. British aid to the PA helps fund the salaries of 33,000 teachers and Ministry of Education and Higher Education civil servants. As the Minister clearly stated in answers to parliamentary questions I tabled in March:

“According to the Palestinian Authority...Ministry of Education and Higher Education, all of their schools in the West Bank are using the revised 2017 PA curriculum.”

UK-funded public servants and teachers under the Ministry of Education and Higher Education are therefore involved in the implementation process. Moreover, as the former Secretary of State for International Development, the right hon. Member for Witham (Priti Patel), stated in correspondence with me last year:

“The MOU...includes a commitment from the PA to take action against incitement to violence, including addressing allegations of incitement in the education curriculum.”

I first brought the new curriculum to Ministers’ attention last September. With my hon. Friend the Member for Dudley North (Ian Austin), who is here today, and my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock), I wrote to the International Development Secretary and the Prime Minister, whose intolerance of extremism does not appear to extend to her own Government’s expenditure. Since then, the Government have blustered, prevaricated and delayed. They first dismissed the objectivity of the IMPACT-se report. They then claimed that IMPACT-se was, in part, basing its view of the curriculum on a report published three years before the new curriculum was introduced. Seven months on, they announced that they would conduct their own independent assessment of the Palestinian curriculum. The net result is that Palestinian children have been served up this diet of hate for another year.

Given that a new set of school textbooks will be distributed in September, the Government’s review risks being out of date by the time it is completed. The big reforms introduced last year mean that those books are likely to contain very few changes. However, that will still allow the PA to argue that there are new books—

a tactic they have successfully deployed with international donors in the past. I simply cannot understand why Ministers have been so slow and reluctant to confront the Palestinian Authority. We could and should have prevented this by saying, “No,” and stopping the cheques. It really was not a hard call.

In the time the Government have been stalling, the European Union has passed legislation requiring that all teaching and training programmes financed through EU funds, such as PEGASE, must reflect common values such as peace, freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination within education. The legislation

“asks the Commission to ensure that European funds are spent in line with Unesco-derived standards of peace and tolerance in education”.

Once again, I urge the Government to take action. First, they should suspend all aid to the PA that directly or indirectly finances those teaching and implementing this curriculum until the PA commit to wholesale and urgent revisions of it. Secondly, I have suggested previously that Britain cut its aid to the PA by 14%—double the percentage of the PA budget that is used to pay terrorist salaries—and invest that money in a Palestinian peace fund aimed at young people. It would support education projects in Palestine not tarnished by the PA’s anti-Semitism. While money that would have paid the salaries of teachers and Education Ministry public servants remains suspended, it can be redirected into that fund. I am suggesting not a cut in the funding but a change in where it goes. Palestinian children and young people must not suffer due to the acts of their leaders.

Finally, given that the UK is so heavily invested in education, we must ensure that we monitor far more closely what is going on in Palestinian classrooms. I urge that, in keeping with new legislation being considered by the United States, the Secretary of State for International Development be required to issue a written statement to the International Development Committee each year to confirm that she is satisfied that the content in the PA curriculum does not encourage or incite violence, that it conforms with standards for peace and tolerance derived from the UNESCO declarations, and that no UK aid is being used directly or indirectly to fund educational materials that do not meet those standards.

I recognise that the Government have decided to conduct their own review, so I request that the Minister addresses the following questions in his response. In their correspondence with me, the Minister and the Prime Minister have emphasised that the Government regularly engage with the PA on issues of incitement. First, will the Minister give us two or three concrete examples of action taken by the PA, as a result of that engagement, to curb incitement? Secondly, will he tell us when the DFID review will be completed? Will he agree to place a copy of it in the Library of the House?

Thirdly, will the Minister confirm that, as IMPACT-se did, the DFID review will examine every page of every PA textbook through the prism of defined methodologies? I have a list of 133 textbooks, which I am happy to furnish him with. When the review is completed, will he place in the Library a list of all the textbooks that DFID officials examined? Fourthly, will he confirm that the DFID review is being given access to the full curriculum?

Fifthly, I know the Minister will wish to ensure that the DFID review is stringent, robust and evidence-based. Will he therefore confirm that DFID’s methodologies,

like those deployed by IMPACT-se, make reference to or are in accordance with articles 1, 4.2 and 5 of the declaration of the principles on tolerance proclaimed and signed by the member states of UNESCO on 16 November 1995; principles 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the UN declaration on the promotion among youth of the ideals of peace, mutual respect and understanding between peoples, signed in 1965; and articles 9 and 18 of the integrated framework for action on education for peace, human rights and democracy, approved by the general conference of UNESCO at its 28th session in Paris in November 1995? Finally, will the Minister undertake to place in the Library of the House a copy of the research methodologies that DFID’s review is utilising?

It is highly regrettable that the Government have effectively made British taxpayers complicit in the delivery of this curriculum of hate. We must stop funding this incitement to violence and terror; we must cease subsidising this abuse of Palestinian children and young people; and we must do so before young minds are poisoned, thus perpetuating a tragic conflict that has gone on for far too long.

4.19 pm

The Minister for the Middle East (Alistair Burt): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher, as always.

I thank the right hon. Member for Enfield North (Joan Ryan) for securing the debate. I shall not be able to answer all her questions this afternoon. The time I had available to prepare was cut short because earlier in the main Chamber I had to deal with an urgent question about the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar. Some Members present were there for that, but not everyone. I am afraid that it ate into my time, so I have not been able to do as much preparation as I would have liked. None the less, I am grateful to her for raising a subject that is, across the House, of considerable interest and concern, which is shared by me and all Ministers.

The UK strongly condemns all forms of violence and incitement on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We continue to urge the Israeli and Palestinian leaderships to avoid engaging in or encouraging any type of action and language that makes a culture of peaceful co-existence and a negotiated solution to the conflict more difficult to achieve. Nowhere are the values of peace and tolerance more important than in education.

It was perfectly right and proper for the right hon. Lady to cite a series of examples. None of them was justifiable, and the United Kingdom would not seek to justify them in any way, but we have discussed such matters too many times in this place, and too many attitudes are born out of the conflict’s history and context, making them difficult to escape. None the less, if a future generation is to have the opportunities that we want for it, that will have to start in schools—all the schools, and all the teaching of those who go to school. As I mentioned earlier, one of my concerns is that over time the distance between young people and others, between Israelis and Palestinians, becomes greater, because of the length of time the conflict has gone on and because of a hardening of attitudes on all sides. We have to start with that, but we have to see what we can do about such an important issue.

In May, in Ramallah, I raised incitement with the Palestinian Education Minister in a meeting about the UK’s future support to the Palestinian Authority. To give

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the right hon. Lady the concrete example she is looking for, I sat across a desk from the Education Minister and asked him about incitement in textbooks. We talked about what to do and he answered me. It is that direct—straightforwardly, with a colleague. I shall move on to what we will do in a moment, but British officials hold similar conversations with other Palestinian counterparts, so it is done and it is done directly. The Education Minister welcomed the prospect of an independent international review of Palestinian textbooks and assured me that the Palestinian Ministry of Education and Higher Education would take seriously the findings of any such review. I shall move on to that in more detail in a moment.

The UK is a long-term supporter of Palestinian education. Last year UK aid helped up to 24,000 Palestinian children in the west bank go to school. I saw for myself the positive impact of our money on the lives of just a few of those boys and girls during my recent visit. The children I met at an elementary school in Ramallah showed me with pride their school garden and artwork, and told me about their hopes and aspirations for the future—to be doctors, engineers and teachers. They need our help to have a fair chance of making those dreams a reality. They are the peace-builders of tomorrow, and that is why it is vital that the UK and other international partners support them.

Our continued support will come with a continued strong challenge to the Palestinian Authority on education sector incitement. Let me be very clear: education has no place for materials or practices that incite young minds towards violence. I have seen the reports expressing concern about the content of new Palestinian textbooks, and I take the findings of those reports seriously. Our response must be rigorous, evidence-based and made in the company of other international supporters of the Palestinian education system, in order to ensure that the Palestinian Authority hear a strong, credible and unified voice about what must be done so that their textbooks support peace and do not incite violence.

That is why we are in the final stages of discussions to establish an independent textbook review jointly with other donors. The plan at the moment is for the review to be completed by September 2019. Department for International Development officials have begun preparation for that independent review. It will be evidence-based and rigorous, to ensure that the Palestinian Authority hear that strong, credible voice. In the interim, we shall continue to express concern about incitement with the PA.

A specific concern was the new pilot textbooks, which is why they are the most appropriate focus for analysis and our immediate work with the PA. Separately, we are interested in the role that education can play in promoting tolerance and inclusion. We shall, accordingly, look at other aspects of the education system, including the broader curriculum.

Why are we seeking a joint review instead of doing it ourselves? We think that joining up with other donors will provide a rigorous analysis of Palestinian textbooks and a unified voice from the international community about what the PA need to do. That will also deliver value for money and avoid the risk of two different analyses from competing authorities.

I did have one concern when the right hon. Lady mentioned the review. She suggested that in some quarters the review of the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education was disregarded, but I too was concerned at some of the findings. The Department has met IMPACT-se to investigate further, but we thought that an objective review was also necessary. It is right to have done that.

In answer to the hon. Member for Dudley North (Ian Austin) on co-existence, as I think the House knows, I value such projects very much. Some are proceeding at the moment with £3 million in support, but we might well have more in future. I have listened to the right hon. Lady, the hon. Gentleman and indeed the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Richard Burden) on that, because if such co-existence projects are to work, they must come with support from all sides. There is more that we can do, and that is important.

Our ambition for inclusive education must be much greater than simply to ensure that textbooks do not incite violence. To contribute towards a just and lasting peace, we must promote positive portrayals of others to instil the values of peace and tolerance in the minds of young people. That is why the UK will continue to seek ways of ensuring that our current and future support for education brings young people together to build confidence, trust and understanding across communities.

To conclude, I reiterate that the UK condemns incitement in all its forms. I shall continue to raise the issue directly with the leadership of the Palestinian Authority, both during and upon conclusion of the textbook review. I shall also continue to encourage positive portrayals of others on both sides of the conflict, because that is vital to deliver a two-state solution that will lead to a just and lasting peace.

To repeat one or two of the things that I said in the earlier debate, a lasting and just peace is based not only on words but on actions. Actions that are detrimental to a two-state solution and look likely to make it more difficult will be condemned by the United Kingdom Government—we do make such condemnations, such as that of the demolition of Khan al-Ahmar, which started earlier today. On both sides of the conflict, things are done that make peace more difficult. Incitement is wrong and should not be any part of the situation. Each party to the conflict, whether Hamas pushing people towards the fence to be killed or those involved in actions likely to make a two-state solution more difficult, bears responsibility for the peace we need in the future.

This House is clear in its determination that a two-state solution is the only viable future. We have to continue to be clear and determined about that. We have to ensure that those we talk to know that we mean it seriously. Removing incitement will play a key part, and it cannot be ignored by those who may think that the experience of occupation is so severe that in some places it can be condoned. No, incitement cannot and will not be condoned. We will be clear about speaking out on everything that gives rise to the perpetuation of a conflict that, as the right hon. Lady concluded, has gone on for far too long.

Question put and agreed to.

Five-year Land Supply

4.29 pm

James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con): I beg to move, That this House has considered the five-year land supply.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher, and to have been selected to introduce this important debate. I welcome my hon. Friend the Minister. It is great to see so many colleagues here—their presence underlines the importance of this issue.

The phrase “five-year land supply” sounds innocuous, but it cuts through to one of the most critical parts of the planning system. We all know the national picture. There is consensus that we need to build more homes because of the crisis of home ownership and the fact that housing is very expensive in large parts of the country. Those houses have to be built somewhere. There is often tension in communities about where properties should go, so we rely on our planning system to come to fair decisions about how sites are allocated and developed. I fully accept that the Government require a method for measuring the extent to which councils deliver those homes, but the five-year land supply system—although it is understandable in the way it is set out—is fundamentally flawed. Rather than encouraging the delivery of homes, it encourages speculative development. That is true not only in my constituency; a number of colleagues have spoken to me about it.

Let us understand why the situation arises. If the council or planning authority in question does not have a five-year land supply, rather than local policy taking priority when planning applications are considered, the national planning policy framework becomes the priority. Neighbourhood plans fall away and local policies become far less important.

John Howell (Henley) (Con): Let me correct my hon. Friend. Neighbourhood plans do not fall away. The law was changed, under ministerial guidance, to bring the five-year land supply down to three years where there is a neighbourhood plan that allocates sites and is two years old. My constituents have made a lot of that important concession.

James Cartlidge: I know that my hon. Friend was influential in neighbourhood plans. I was going to make that point, which is certainly true, so that was not so much a correction as a preview. I always say to my communities, “If you’re going to do a neighbourhood plan, allocate sites, because it will still be relevant if there is only a three-year land supply.” That incredibly important development was confirmed by Gavin Barwell when he was Housing Minister.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con): I fully support my hon. Friend. In Wokingham we have 11,000 outstanding planning permissions and a required build rate of 900 a year. People might therefore think that we had a 12-year supply, but until recently the Government said that we had less than a five-year supply. They do not want to endorse our decision, which makes a lot of sense, to have four major sites with infrastructure and other support.

James Cartlidge: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend. That chimes with the situation in my area and many others, as I have heard from colleagues. I will come back to that point.

To understand why the system leads to speculative development, it is important to understand that when I say local policy becomes less important in the absence of a five-year land supply, I basically mean that it becomes far easier for a developer to get an application through on appeal. That is the nub of the issue. The district may still reject the application, but the point is that a developer with savvy lawyers and all the rest of it can game the system and get their application through on appeal. When it goes to appeal, the local community and local democracy have almost no say and the system becomes unaccountable. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right about that.

One might say, “Hold on a minute, we want to build more homes. Isn’t that the way we should be doing things?” Let me use as an example the district of Babergh, which is entirely within my constituency. Babergh has been charged with providing 7,820 homes over the next 20 years. It has already granted unbuilt permissions for almost 5,000, so almost two thirds of 20 years’ worth of permissions have already been granted, yet we are seen as not having a five-year housing supply. That is extraordinary.

Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con): The irony is that that land is sitting on balance sheets rather than being delivered. That precludes smaller builders and developers from taking on sites. Does my hon. Friend agree that we need to find a way to resolve that and allow some of our smaller builders to deliver?

James Cartlidge: I know that my hon. Friend is passionate about that issue and has come up with some radical suggestions in that regard.

The experience in Babergh is common around the country, and it underlines my main point. It sounds good in principle to say to councils, “Nimby councils will be held to account—you must deliver the homes,” but they are doing the right thing. They are granting permissions—in fact, they are granting way more than they are meant to—and going through the pain of taking controversial decisions in planning committees and so on, but sites are not being built out.

George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con): I led a debate on this issue earlier this year, which my hon. Friend supported. Does he agree that although we must get the detail right, there is also a question of principle? Through the Localism Act 2011, we set out to be the party that, when in government, gave local communities the chance to shape their future. We are now in danger of looking like we are in favour of speculators, profiteers and out-of-town developers, who dump housing estates that we legislate for, with no responsibility being taken locally. That is not what our party should be about.

James Cartlidge: That is an excellent point. The key word, which we will hear a lot in the coming days, is “control.” We call it speculative development because the community loses control. Let us be honest: if an area has a five-year land supply, there will still be controversial planning applications, but those will be

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determined by the local authority. People will be unhappy about homes being built in—this is a terrible phrase—their backyard, but the point is that the local community will have a say; it will have control.

Colleagues know what speculative applications are like. They come forward, often from a new breed of company called the promoter of a development, rather than from a builder. Those companies work the system to their advantage, putting out brochures that often boast, “Your local district doesn’t have a five-year land supply.” We get extraordinarily unpopular applications that get people marching down our streets, yet we find there is nothing we can do about them. It is not like councils are not doing the right thing; they are giving out thousands of planning permissions.

Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on securing the debate. As he rightly says, there is a need for local councils to deliver housing where that is appropriate. Mid Suffolk and Babergh failed for a number of years to address housing provision. Only under new leadership, with a new chief executive, did they take the issue forward and look at developing a local plan, underneath which neighbourhood plans will sit. What does he say to those councils, and how can we make councils look at their local housing need and deliver homes for people who need them?

James Cartlidge: That is a perfectly fair point. Many councils will have been seen as recalcitrant in the past. My point is about build-out rates. The councils I am talking about are delivering permissions; the issue is the build-out rate. No one disputes that. The Government themselves appointed my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) to review the delivery of permissions, and I very much welcome that.

I am not going to speak for much longer, because colleagues wish to contribute and I think we will be interrupted by Divisions. I have a simple ask. The Government are looking at what measures to bring in to compel, incentivise or encourage development, so that permissions become properties in which people can live. While those powers are not at hand, there should be a transition period during which councils are assessed purely on the number of permissions they grant. If councils do not have the power to compel development, how can we punish them for sites with permission not being built out? That is the core of my ask.

What effect would that have? What would happen if we said tomorrow, “Councils will now be measured purely on the number of permissions they grant rather than on the build-out rate”? The answer is simple: builders would have to build out the sites for which they had been granted permission—hey presto! That is surely how the system should work. The Government clearly do not want this to happen, but as many as 60, 70 or 80 councils do not have a five-year land supply, which means that, rather than more delivery, they get speculative applications that undermine consent for the planning system.

What does this issue boil down to? It is about having sustainable development rather than speculative development. Sustainable development does not mean

that everyone welcomes development in their backyard and is excited about 150 new houses being built in their village or market town, but it at least means that they trust the system is legitimate and give it their consent. That is being squeezed out by the five-year land supply system. I simply say to the Minister that he should listen to me and to colleagues when we say that we need to look seriously at reforming this area.

4.39 pm

Dr David Drew (Stroud) (Lab/Co-op): I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. I shall be brief, because we are likely to be interrupted by Divisions.

I am pleased to say “ditto”, because we have exactly the same problems in Stroud district. We face the dilemma that for all the houses we might want to build, we have a huge number of extant planning permissions—more than 5,000—but no ability to force recalcitrant developers, promoters or landowners to develop those sites, whoever they may be. That is depressing, because we have acute housing need.

There are two other elements. First, the Government have substantially increased the number of houses that we are expected to get built. We are mystified by how they came to the number they did. Hopefully the Minister can do some work via his civil servants to find out why our numbers increased so dramatically when other authorities in Gloucestershire have had minimal increases, a standstill or actually a reduction. That would be helpful, because we think we are being punished for the simple fact that we have been quite good at delivering on our housing, despite all those extant sites.

Secondly—we all know about this—there is the viability assessment. Developer after developer comes back to us and says, “We can no longer afford to build those affordable units. The scheme is now very different from when we got planning permission. We cannot afford to provide the infrastructure we said we would and, more particularly, we will have to reduce, or indeed remove completely, the affordable units that are part of the existing planning permission. If we can’t do that, we will appeal or—worse—move ourselves off the sites,” and then we get no housing at all.

Those two elements make it difficult for a small district authority to keep up with demand—we are trying to build houses, as the Government and the Opposition want—while dealing with those people who say to us, quite rightly, “This was the planning permission. We might not have liked it, but we were getting some affordable houses out of it, so we stomach it. And what have we got? We’ve been kicked in the teeth.” It is as simple as that. Therefore, parish councils that might have proposed innovative schemes say, “Well, that other parish council got turned over big time. Why should we even consider this?” The process and environment are totally negative, adversarial and difficult.

George Freeman: The hon. Gentleman is making a powerful point. Does he agree that one injustice in the current system is that those councils—parish councils, in my case—that lead and put together a neighbourhood plan normally propose more housing than the district council had done, but they end up being punished for doing so, not rewarded? Three villages in my constituency

did so and have ended up with a Gladman-led development forced through against their wishes. That destroys rather than enhances public trust in planning.

Dr Drew: We actually beat Gladman in my constituency, so there is at least one aspect where we are slightly different, but the reality is exactly that. It is most difficult to persuade parish councils that they can do more when they have seen their neighbouring parishes turned over big time.

There is a generic problem, so I appeal to the Minister to look at the process—and in particular at Stroud district, because we have a specific problem with our increase. We will never build anything like the numbers of houses we want unless we solve that quickly. We need clarity so that people know that what is promised will be delivered. Dare I say that we could get rid of some of these extant sites? If the developers do not want to use them, they should lose them. We will find other people who will come and build on them appropriately, and then we will begin to deal with our housing problems.

4.43 pm

Nick Herbert (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): The last time I was in this Chamber, I had cause to warn the rail Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Joseph Johnson), that in Sussex we have a habit of burning an effigy of people who have particularly irritated us. At the moment, those who run Govia Thameslink Railway are at the top of that list, but running a very close second are those responsible for undermining the neighbourhood planning policy, which should be heralded as such a great success for this Government. It was the policy by which power was to be returned to local people, who were to have control over where development went. Decisions taken in neighbourhood plans are entered into by the whole community, having been drawn up by volunteers and then voted on by that community in local referendums. Just as we are now debating nationally the importance of honouring a referendum result, so it gravely undermines democracy locally when decisions taken by local communities can be so easily overridden. I am afraid that is exactly what is happening.

I very much welcome my hon. Friend the Minister to his place. I hope that he will take this message back to his Department. This is like groundhog day: we have had this debate endlessly in this Chamber and on the Floor of the House, and we are constantly told, “Yes, the Government understand the problem and will do something about it.” Indeed, in December 2016 Gavin Barwell, then the excellent Housing Minister and now the Prime Minister’s excellent chief of staff, introduced helpful new guidance precisely designed to deal with the problem, ensuring that neighbourhood plans would be respected and that speculative developers could not win in the way my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) has ably described. The problem with that guidance is that it can apply only to neighbourhood plans made up to two years before the date of that guidance, and if local authorities did not have a three-year land supply it did not work at all.

Subsequent to the introduction of those new measures, I have had at least two decisions taken right up to the Planning Inspectorate or the Secretary of State and then lost on appeal because that guidance could not be used. It offered no protection to the local community

on those technicalities and the speculative developers won. It is important to underline my hon. Friend’s point: that is not the way to increase house building in this country. We stand united in our desire to increase housing supply, which is a political, economic and social imperative. Everybody gets that, but the whole point is that neighbourhood plans delivered significantly more housing than was anticipated and, best of all, they did it with local consent.

Local communities were brought together and told that they would be given power. They were asked to accept responsibility and they did so, taking difficult decisions, sometimes in the face of strong local opposition, and agreed that development should go in certain places while other places should be protected. Those communities worked on the assumption that what they had been told was true, so those areas were to be protected for the 15-year life of the plan. However, almost within months they see that meant absolutely nothing; the developers could simply charge in.

Worse, those communities were given promises by their local Member of Parliament that everything would be made better by the new guidance, from December 2016, which the Campaign to Protect Rural England, I and hon. Friends who worked on it all said would help. No doubt it has helped in some circumstances, but by no means all, as I indicated. What happens then is support for neighbourhood plans collapses. In West Sussex, I now find it difficult to persuade communities that have not done neighbourhood plans to enter into them. They say, “Look at what happened in the neighbouring village. They went through this process, which costs a lot of money and costs the volunteers a lot of grief. Is it really worth it? The developers come in and simply overrode the plans anyway.”

George Freeman: My right hon. Friend is putting a powerful point to the Minister about the undermining of trust in the system. Does he agree that something else is going on? Where, in my case, the district council agreed to put housing in the right place, down by the main road—the A11 in this case—the developers are banking those permissions for later, because they know that they will get them, and using the five-year land supply to force the wrong development in the wrong places. Not only is trust in the system undermined, but we are getting the wrong development in the wrong places, which is deeply undermining people’s ability to say yes to new housing. It is compounding the problem.

Nick Herbert: My hon. Friend puts it incredibly well, and I strongly agree. That is why this is so cynical. We have to understand that developers are not just taking advantage of a loophole but gaming the system. As a consequence, I believe we are building fewer houses than we could if developers had to do what policy should require and deliver. I know that my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) has been charged with looking at this, and that is important, but there are changes we could make in the meantime, as my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk has suggested.

I will make two final points to the Minister. First, the Government are incorporating the guidance they issued in December 2016 into the new national policy framework. Could they look again at the threshold for the three-year

[Nick Herbert]

land supply and the longevity of the test? Under both those things, the suitability of this as a remedy is being lost. It is not as effective as it should be. Could the Government also look at the wording they are using to incorporate it? It defines “recently brought into force” neighbourhood plans as meaning

“a neighbourhood plan which was passed at referendum two years or less before the date on which the decision is made.”

That is leading some to believe that neighbourhood plans simply fall after two years, which I am sure is not what the Government mean. It would be helpful to clarify that they do not mean that.

Secondly, and more important, our policy needs to change and we need to move away from five-year land supplies to delivery as the test. That is the fundamental change that needs to be made if we want to build houses and we wish to do so with public consent. I suggest that is the better way to do it.

4.51 pm

John Howell (Henley) (Con): I will say first of all that I am fully aware of companies such as Gladman gaming the system. Gladman did exactly the same in my constituency, and I am pleased to say that on one occasion we managed to fight it off and turn it down. The question that my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) asked initially was how many councils there are without a five-year land supply. When I have asked that question of the Department, the answer that has come back is that they do not know—they do not collect the information in that format; they do not collect that information at all. My first request is that they start collecting that information, because without it the whole system has a gap in it. What makes that important is that we have changed the way we calculate the housing need for communities. It has been brought down to a much more robust formula, which is having a big effect on communities. This is a suitable opportunity to address the issue full time.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk already mentioned the three-year housing land supply, which is important to bear in mind. I have also asked that it be given permanence and that the arguments that have been made about whether it lasts for two years and whether renewed neighbourhood plans have it for an extra two years be settled. The assurance I have been given is that that is being looked at.

4.53 pm

Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.

5.23 pm

On resuming—

John Howell: It is very rare for me to be cut off in the middle of a sentence, so allow me to sum up where I was before the Division bell rang. In relation to the consultation on the national planning policy framework, I have had conversations with members of the Department about the three-year housing land supply figure. The Department is looking at whether that should be permanent, or, if not, how long it should apply for.

The other change that I have called for as part of my work with the local plan expert group is to ensure that we do not continue to lose the millions of pounds that

are lost each year through councils having to go to law to defend their five-year land supply. I have suggested that the five-year land supply becomes part of the council’s annual report, and that once it is in there it is not challengeable in the courts for that year. That gives the council a year’s breathing space each year, once the figure is agreed. As for the calculation of the land supply, I am perfectly open to whether it is based on planning permissions or delivery. I can see the logic for it being a calculation based on delivery.

Members have spoken about how neighbourhood plans are delivering about 10% more houses than were predicted. That is actually quite a lot of new houses. There are something like 2,500 communities across the country that are going through or have been through the process of producing a neighbourhood plan. The results of the referendums have been North Korean in style, as was witnessed in the village in which I live, where the approval rate in the referendum was something over 90%. I think that is a great triumph for everyone who was involved in it.

I remain positive about neighbourhood plans. I have been around the country speaking to those involved in them, and if hon. Members want somebody to come and talk about neighbourhood plans, that is the job that I have, and I am happy to do that for any hon. Member who asks me to do so.

James Cartlidge: On a point of order, Sir Christopher. In the great excitement of commencing my speech, I failed to draw the House’s attention to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests.

Sir Christopher Chope (in the Chair): That is noted; thank you.

Several hon. Members rose—

Sir Christopher Chope (in the Chair): Order. To inform hon. Members of the timings, we will now finish at 6.8 pm, which means that we will start the wind-ups at 5.53 pm. That means that there is time, between now and 5.53 pm, for the four hon. Members who seek to catch my eye.

5.27 pm

Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con): The simple truth is that our constituents, the public, have no faith left in the planning system. That is hardly a surprise when one is dealing with, to be frank, the rank incompetence of a council such as Leeds City Council. It has created a totally over-inflated housing target figure, which even the academics at Leeds University have claimed simply could not be built in the timeframe laid out, yet in the next couple of weeks we are to go into a public inquiry in which we assess whether Leeds City Council’s site allocations plan is sound. How can something be sound if it is based on fantasy figures?

Leeds City Council has lost almost every single Planning Advisory Service appeal; every time, the PAS says, “You don’t have a five-year land supply.” But the figure is being inflated to say that we need tens of thousands more houses than we actually need. It is, therefore, very difficult to come up with the land supply for houses that are never going to be built.

What are the consequences of that? Sites are being put forward to be built on that should never have been involved. They are the prime sites, where a developer will say, "I'm going to build on that site and get the housing numbers up." They quite legitimately do not have to build on the brownfield sites, because the council has said, "This is a site you can build on." The developer then starts to build on that green-belt and greenfield site, and they get far more revenue from that. There is no incentive for them to move elsewhere.

In the past five years, Leeds City Council has granted 25,148 planning permissions. Of those, 4,429 expired—they were not built within the specified timeframe—and only 3,680 were built. Therefore 17,039 remain unbuilt, yet Leeds says that we need to find planning and space for another 70,000 houses.

I realise that the Minister cannot respond to this, but his constituency neighbours mine, and the councils in his constituency, especially Harrogate Borough Council, are planning to build tens of thousands of houses on the border of my constituency. At the moment, Leeds City Council is not taking any notice of that, and it is saying that we need to expand. Councillor Alan Lamb from Wetherby, Councillor Ryan Stephenson from Harewood, and Councillor Matthew Robinson have been at the forefront of fighting back against Leeds City Council, but it is a Labour majority council by quite some margin. Even the independents—I pay tribute to Councillor Mark Dobson, who is an independent in Garforth in my constituency—have been fighting against the Labour council on those numbers, but they just get ridden roughshod over.

On 1 August, I will be at a site allocations plan inquiry arguing why a grade II listed parks and gardens site should not be built on. I will be doing that because Leeds City Council refuses to reassess the numbers it came up with on the basis of totally out-of-date migration figures from the early and mid-2000s, when numbers were much higher than they are now. Even now, demand is declining, although the council says that it is going up. The inspector has said, "It is not my job to assess the numbers. That was done in 2012. We are here to judge the soundness of the SAP." How can we possibly judge the soundness of the plan when we are dealing with fantasy numbers?

We have lost every PAS site appeal in my constituency. The only one left is Scholes. The plan to try to save that PAS site and build somewhere else on the Parlington estate would increase the traffic flow through that village by 300%—that is Leeds City Council's highways department's own figure. Even the solutions that Leeds City Council comes up with to try to save a village actually destroy that village by shifting the problem elsewhere.

I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge), and I congratulate him on securing this debate. I also congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Nick Herbert). It has to be about how many houses we build, not how many permissions we have. Quite simply, in my constituency alone, almost 75% of the planning permissions have gone unbuilt. How on earth can someone put forward a plan that says, "Actually, Elmet and Rothwell needs another 12,000 houses," when 75% of the permissions granted have not yet been built? The whole thing needs to be reassessed.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister to feed back to his Department that, unless the numbers are accurate, these processes are completely unsound. All we are doing is giving a licence to build on the green belt and greenfield land, rather than tackling brownfield land, which consequently means there is no affordable housing.

5.32 pm

Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) on securing the debate. The problem is countrywide and it affects North East Derbyshire. At times, this debate has seemed like a self-help group where we all put our concerns and difficulties on the table.

We are experiencing similar difficulties in my constituency, because a council has abjectly failed to discharge its responsibilities over several years—more than a decade. Just as my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet and Rothwell (Alec Shelbrooke) described, that will bring about a plan loaded with too high a number of houses to be built in my part of the world. At the same time, because the five-year housing land supply has only just been put in place, it has caused a significant number of speculative planning developments to be submitted in places that are inappropriate under the plan and objectively inappropriate for people who live in the area and know it best.

Over the past couple of years, North East Derbyshire has experienced 11 separate planning applications in areas that the local plan would not allow to be developed under any other circumstances. Those applications are for more than 1,300 homes. Given that our district has to build only 6,600 homes over a 15 to 20-year timeframe, 1,300 homes that should not have been applied for in the first place represent a significant increase in the number of houses that are needed. The area in the bottom half of my constituency is already slated to take 3,000 new houses that local residents have accepted and, in some ways, embraced, so this is not about nimbyism. It is about houses being built in the wrong place because councils are failing to put in place the right plans and failing to discharge their responsibilities. As a result, we are seeing the loss of greenfield sites and other places where houses would otherwise be considered completely inappropriate.

I draw hon. Members' attention to two problems with the five-year housing land supply. The first is methodology. My hon. Friend the Member for Elmet and Rothwell made the point about over-inflated numbers. In the same way, my district council did not get the target figure of 280 houses a year right in the first place, and it is now about to replace that with a figure of 332 houses a year, which will further undermine local residents' confidence that our planning system knows what it is doing.

Despite not having the correct top-line figure, when the council assesses the deliverability of the planning permissions that have been put in place, it talks to the developers themselves, so the developers get a second opportunity to say whether they will build in places where they already have planning permission. That retards the overall five-year housing land supply and gives developers more opportunity to get housing planning permissions through. That methodology is a huge problem.

[Lee Rowley]

The second problem is competence. The political leadership in my local council has been thoroughly incompetent in ensuring that North East Derbyshire is protected from inappropriate and speculative housing developments. The authority monitoring report, which my hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell) outlined to some extent, is a publication that appears and disappears at will. The 2014 version appeared a year late—a full year after the council decided it had a 2.15-year housing land supply. The 2015 version did not even appear, and was just amalgamated into a 2015 and 2016 report. Again, that appeared nine months after the number was calculated.

We did not know what our housing land supply was until a special report was taken to the council in October. I am pretty sure, because I spent some of last summer trying to calculate it, that the council knew many months beforehand that it had hit the five-year housing land supply, but it chose not to report or announce it until October. When some planning applications went through, including one on Fanny Avenue, Killamarsh, it was stated that the absence of a five-year housing land supply was at least partly why they were approved.

My council is clearly completely failing, not just on the plan as a whole, but on the five-year housing land supply, and as a result I have to go and talk to residents in Wingerworth, Old Tupton, Ashover, Killamarsh and North Wingfield, where another 250 houses have just been put on a site that should not be developed on, and never has been, because the plan is not in place. That is unacceptable. I support the Government's localism angle, and I accept that it works in principle, but when councils do not discharge their responsibilities, we reach the point that North East Derbyshire has got to. A huge number of houses are being built, potentially in the wrong places, and the only way to stop them is a huge amount of heartache and angst and huge numbers of planning inquiries.

Alec Shelbrooke: On the point about councils' incompetence, Leeds City Council has been heard to say that it simply cannot be bothered to reassess the numbers. It has now moved to a position of saying, "We will assess the numbers after the site allocations plan." If it reduces the numbers, it makes it even easier to build on the green belt and greenfield land.

Lee Rowley: My hon. Friend makes a correct and important point.

The only way that we can have any semblance of control over the planning system is by extraordinary displays of public opposition to applications that should never have gone through in the first place. Hundreds of hours of residents' time are lost on many meetings that should not have to happen. Hundreds of thousands of pounds are allocated to planning inquiries that should never have started. All of that retards confidence in a planning system that is quite rightly trying to deliver the houses we need in this country for the long term. I understand that this is a challenging area, and hon. Members from both sides of the House have outlined why, but when councils do not discharge their responsibilities, we get to the place that North East Derbyshire has got to, which totally undermines the trust and belief that councils and the planning system can deliver.

5.39 pm

Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. I, too, congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) on securing this important debate. I concur with everything he said—in the interests of brevity, I will not repeat his comments. I will use my contribution to give the example of Milton Keynes, our surrounding authorities and indeed the whole Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge arc, to show why there is an urgent need for much greater flexibility in the five-year supply requirements.

Milton Keynes has over 20,000 housing permissions granted, yet our build-out rate is such that we have recently been judged by the inspector as not having a five-year supply. As my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk and others have suggested, that is the open door for speculative developments, both small and—ironically—large ones. It defies common sense that, if there is an inability to build out existing large developments, developers will have the resources, skills and raw materials to develop new large sites. It just defies logic.

In addition, and as my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet and Rothwell (Alec Shelbrooke) mentioned, there are neighbouring authorities to consider. Aylesbury Vale District Council, which is next door to Milton Keynes, is planning substantial new developments right on our boundary, which will be technically part of its authority but for all intents and purposes part of the urban footprint of Milton Keynes, using all our infrastructure and services without those being enhanced to take account of the additional population.

Within the whole Oxford-Cambridge corridor, for which I am the Government's champion, there is a complete misalignment of timescales and objectives. The National Infrastructure Commission has an ambition for 1 million new homes—the Government are yet to publish their formal response to that. This is an area of the country where there is a need for new homes, and in many parts of it there is an appetite for them, but not for homes that are just scattered around the place randomly. They must be properly planned, they must be sympathetic to the existing urban and rural environment, and they must have proper infrastructure and public services.

Yet all the timescales are misaligned. Councils have to make short-term decisions on their housing allocations without knowledge of, for example, where the new Oxford-Cambridge expressway is going to be routed. That does not make sense. So there is an urgent need to realign these timescales, and to pause the current local plan and five-year supply timetables, so as to give a space in which to properly sequence all these decisions.

That is not to say that we do not need houses now; we absolutely do. Many areas in the Oxford-Cambridge corridor have an overheated property market, which is not just pricing people out of living there but is actually inhibiting economic growth, because employers cannot recruit the people they need, because the people they need cannot find a place to live that is affordable or suitably connected.

We have to find a way of accelerating the build-out rate of existing developments. As has been mentioned, my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) will bring forward a range of solutions

to the problem, and I urge the Government to implement urgently what he proposes. That would give us the space, if the Government are willing to give some leeway on the targets, to align properly all these decisions that have to be made. People have an appetite for development, but only if the houses are of good quality. We need to look not only at overall numbers, but at the types of housing that we build—social housing, houses for the elderly, and traditional, family-sized homes. Much more careful thought and planning needs to go into these long-term developments.

Development must be sympathetic to existing settlements and the rural environment. People will not just accept endless, soulless, identical housing estates being scattered across the countryside. However, we can use our knowledge and expertise in this country to build good-quality, attractive places that people will actively welcome, which will enhance existing settlements and provide the homes for future generations. That is within our gift, but we have to get away from our current rigid and inflexible system, which does not have public consent. Indeed, it is undermining the whole process of neighbourhood planning and local accountability.

5.44 pm

Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartledge) on securing this important debate and on his thoughtful speech.

Let me take a step back. Why is it that the centre of Government in the UK has felt the need over successive generations—from the planning by appeal of the 1980s, to the regional spatial strategies of the 1990s, to the five-year land supply—to have some vehicle to ensure that councils come up with local plans and that they deliver housing? Why is it that so many people oppose new housing in our country and so many councils oppose what developers come up with?

I think that there are two underlying reasons why people oppose so much new development. First, we build in the wrong places. Too much development is tacked on to the end of existing villages and towns, without the proper infrastructure—the new roads, parking spaces, GP surgeries and school places—that is necessary to support it. There is a terrible example of that in my own constituency on the Gartree Road, where the local Lib Dem-run council has decided to put in its own local plan a proposal for a large site on a road that is already congested, with the proposed houses being pushed right up against existing residents' homes, when there is no need for that to be the case.

Secondly, there is no benefit or compensation for existing residents who are affected by new development. On Farndon Fields in my constituency, residents have to put up with construction traffic coming past their new homes, as well as dust and noise from the construction site, and there is no pay-off or compensation of any kind for them for putting up with all that.

How can we remedy these underlying reasons why so many of us oppose new development? The first thing we need to do is capture more of the benefits of development for the community. At the moment, only around a quarter of that huge uplift in value that we see when planning permission is granted is captured by the local community, with the overwhelming majority going to the lucky landowner and the developer. Other countries

capture far more value from development for the community, which is then ploughed into decent landscaping, greater separation areas, more green space and better infrastructure for the community.

The second thing we need to do is give councils greater discretion over how they spend the revenues they get from the community infrastructure levy and section 106 agreements. Although we capture more value than we did 10 years ago, once we take out the amount that is spent on social and affordable housing, less money is actually being spent now in real terms than 10 years ago on landscaping, community infrastructure and all the things that benefit existing residents. Therefore, let us give councils more discretion over the way they spend those revenues.

Finally, let us make sure that councils have the powers—be it through compulsory purchase order, or through their ability to buy and control land—to do what local councils in other countries in Europe, the US and Asia already do: provide a lead role in assembling and preparing land for development. That is the norm in most of the rest of the world; the UK is unusual in not having that arrangement. That is why a UK council cannot control the speed with which a developer builds out.

In fact, in the UK the one thing that is not up for negotiation is the price paid to the landowner. Everything else can go hang. The amount of social contributions can be pushed down by the developer, and the speed of build-out can be extended over many, many years in order to keep the price up. The only thing that is fixed in our system is the price paid to the landowner. Let us turn the system around and have a more European-style approach to the matter.

As well as doing all those things, let us have a different approach to the way we go about development. In more rural or suburban areas, such as mine, I would love to see more development happening in stand-alone developments, so that we can provide infrastructure and a whole planned approach to a new community, rather than tacking things on and overloading all of our existing villages and towns. Let us build new communities where we will disturb fewer people.

Alec Shelbrooke: On that point, I share my hon. Friend's view that when there is the demand to build such huge numbers of homes, there should be a stand-alone community. However, the phrase "stand-alone" must mean stand-alone, and not a community that is dumped in a place, such as the Parlinton estate in my constituency, which would have a massive effect on the villages around it? Development needs to be stand-alone.

Neil O'Brien: My hon. Friend is absolutely right and we are lucky to have with us here today one of the Members for Milton Keynes, because Milton Keynes shows us what proper, planned development can do; it can create nice places that lots of people want to live in.

I would like to see more of the development in this country happening in our cities. Changes such as the development of the modern knowledge-based economy mean that our cities are both where support for new development is highest and where the demand for new development is highest. Let us try to build more in our cities. Let us help inner-city councils build more, by liberalising building up, by giving them devolved powers

[Neil O'Brien]

over public transport, and by giving them the powers to assemble land, in order to unlock fragmented brownfield sites, so that we can actually get more built in our cities. That is how we can have a new approach.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk is right to raise the issue of the five-year land supply. At the moment we have three tests on local councils: the requirement to have a local plan, the five-year land supply and the new delivery test that will be coming in over the coming year. Effectively, we have a belt and two braces. Of those three tests, the most opaque is the five-year land supply. It is extremely difficult for a council to know whether it has a five-year land supply, and it is extremely easy for developers to game that process and keep councils deliberately below the five-year land supply to stop them getting control over development in their area. It is the weakest of the three existing tests.

I end by agreeing strongly with my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk. He said, "It is perfectly reasonable to expect our councils to have a local plan, but how can we impose these tests on them without giving them the tools to control developers, development and where things happen?" The heartbreaking thing in many constituencies is where a council wants to do good development and build a real new community with proper infrastructure and a real heart, or the community has worked for two years to come up with a neighbourhood plan that works for the specific circumstances in that area, and developers come along, game the system and cut off at the knees our local elected representatives and the people who have worked hard to build neighbourhood plans. That is the killer in those situations. There is nothing more corrosive for public support for our current planning system than when we see councils that want to be brave and do good new development have their good plans cut off at the knees by developers gaming the system.

5.51 pm

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Christopher. It is also a pleasure to bring some gender balance to this debate. I counted 15 men and one woman when we started. I do not know what it is about planning that attracts men more than women, but we need to consider that, because this is such an important subject and it is vital for our communities. Why are there not more people here today?

I am grateful to the hon. Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge) for bringing this debate to the Chamber and for giving us early sight of what he was going to say in *The Times* "Red Box" this morning, which was very helpful. The debate comes at an important moment for local planning policy, as we look towards the Government's new revised NPPF. Sadly, there is not much time to debate that in much detail.

We all agree on the problem, which is that we need to build more homes and that the current systems are not working. Since 2010, home ownership has fallen to a 30-year low, rough sleeping has doubled and the number of new homes being built has still not recovered to pre-recession levels. We know that it is not just politicians who want to build more homes, because public opinion has shifted in recent years. The public now do not just

support more homes; they support more homes in their local area and more council and affordable housing in their local area. We have the public's support when it comes to building.

We know that the planning system is not working. Members have mentioned the lack of trust in the planning system, which is significant. I have it in my constituency. The number of homes that have not been built despite receiving planning permission soared last year, as has been said.

Sites for hundreds of thousands of new properties are being left undeveloped. In February this year the Local Government Association published an analysis that showed that more than 400,000 homes were granted permission in 2017 but were still waiting to be built. That is a huge number and a rise of 16% since 2016. More than a quarter of authorities with a local plan cannot demonstrate an adequate five-year land supply, and 61 local authorities lost an appeal in the year to April 2018 due to not having a five-year land supply. Under the new NPPF, the conditions on authorities will become tighter. The five-year land supply requirement will be combined with the need for a local plan and a new housing delivery test.

In a recent analysis, Savills projected that 110 local authorities will fail on two or more of those required measures by 2019. Those local authorities account for 37% of national housing need and risk losing control of where and what housing development will take place in their areas. The hon. Gentleman raises a problem that we all accept, and the evidence bears out his argument. When vague national policy takes precedence over local priorities with this presumption in favour of sustainable development, it entrenches a bias in favour of speculative developers. That does not just cause an issue for communities that are sidelined in the planning process; it threatens to sideline any significant affordable housing in those areas, too. We see more slow build-out from developers and an inability for councils to influence that—councils have no levers to pull.

We agree on the problems, but we perhaps disagree on some of the solutions. We want more homes to be built—particularly affordable homes—but measuring councils on build-out rates rather than permissions will not necessarily help. As hon. Members said, if developers are gaming the system, do we not have to change the system? Should we not instead focus on giving councils the mechanisms to ensure that homes are built once planning permission is given, and to guarantee that affordable homes are part of that equation, which is a particular issue for the Opposition? That is one of the big problems with the proposed NPPF.

It is vital that, once local need for affordable housing has been properly assessed, mechanisms are in place to ensure that it is delivered. We would introduce a "use it or lose it" policy for permissioned but unbuilt sites and a new duty to deliver affordable homes, linked to a better measure of local need for affordable housing. We would establish an English sovereign land trust to work with local authorities to enable more proactive buying of land at a price closer to existing use value. As part of that, we would consider changing the rules governing the compensation paid to landowners.

We would introduce a presumption that there is no development without affordable housing, and a Labour Government would lift council housing borrowing caps

to their prudential limits to kick-start the highest level of council house building in 30 years. Finally, we would remove the viability loophole that allows developers to dodge affordable housing obligations, and we would consider a range of wider reforms to overhaul the system.

I could say so much about quality, infrastructure, design and need, but we do not have time, so I conclude by saying that it is clear that we in this place and the wider population agree that we need more homes. I urge the Government, after eight years at the helm, to consider creating the climate and the local levers for that to happen.

5.57 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Nigel Adams): It is a pleasure to serve under you, Sir Christopher, for the first time in this hot seat. It is also a great pleasure to have listened to some fantastic contributions from colleagues from across the House.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge). Everyone who has contributed to the debate has been an outstanding champion for their local area. It was heartening to hear so many passionate speeches from right hon. and hon. Members. Before I respond to some of the points made, I thank my hon. Friend for his continuing work to raise such important issues. He has great knowledge of the area and has spent many years of his professional life in the sector. I also read his well-informed “Red Box” piece in *The Times* today.

Many years before I was elected—before I had even considered going into politics—I asked the Member of Parliament for Selby at the time, the late Michael Alison, “What takes up most of your time?” He told me about the various issues, and I asked, “What about planning?” He said, “Planning is simple—I ignore it, don’t get involved in it and leave it to the council. That’s the way forward.” Times have changed a bit, because I think we can all agree that planning takes up an enormous amount of our time in this day and age.

I should point out that the Secretary of State, as Members know, has a quasi-judicial role in the planning system. I am sure everyone understands that it would not be appropriate for me to comment on the detail of individual decisions or plans, but I can talk about the issues that have been raised more broadly. I will set out our national policy aims and then speak more generally about the technical points of each case. I just need a steer on when I am meant to be finished by, following the 25-minute suspension.

Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con): Eight minutes past.

Nigel Adams: I have about nine minutes left—that is about right. My thanks go to a great Parliamentary Private Secretary.

Issues with the current five-year land supply model and slow build-out were a key feature of the housing White Paper. The Government are seeking to address that through a package of reforms to the planning system, including revising the national planning policy framework, which will be published this summer. The review of the NPPF is fundamental to delivering the 300,000 homes a year we need, and sets out a comprehensive approach to ensure that we get the right homes, built in the right places and to the right quality.

The revised framework implements around 80 reforms that were announced last year, and retains the emphasis on development that is both sustainable and locally led. Those changes include clearer expectations of local authorities and developers to deliver their commitment to unlock land, fulfil planning permissions, provide essential infrastructure, and ensure that homes are built to meet the diverse needs and expectations of communities. The measures include a standardised way of assessing local housing need; reforming the plan-making system to ensure that every part of the country produces, maintains and implements an up-to-date plan; and an opportunity for local authorities to have their five-year housing land supply agreed on an annual basis. The last two points are particularly relevant to today’s important debate.

It is important that local authorities plan effectively for the new housing required in their areas. Ultimately, new homes need to be provided through up-to-date local plans, produced in consultation with local people and communities. These are a vital element of the planning system. They are the starting point for planning decisions by planning authorities and inspectors. I welcome the progress that Babergh District Council, working with Mid Suffolk District Council, has made with their local plan preparations. I understand that the local authorities are aiming to submit them for examination by the Planning Inspectorate in spring next year.

It is important that adequate land is available to build the homes we need. Local authorities play their part by producing up-to-date local plans and identifying a five-year supply of housing sites. That provides clarity to local communities and developers about where homes should be built so that development is planned rather than the result of speculative applications. Every right hon. and hon. Member in the Chamber will have had experience of that. I have great sympathy with communities that feel that they have no control over planning, and nobody wants to see companies overtly gaming the system. However, we need more homes, and that is why communities should consider a neighbourhood plan—championed by many right hon. and hon. Members here today—to give them more control over the issue.

Demonstrating a deliverable pipeline of housing sites has been a long-standing Government policy. Since the existing NPPF was introduced in 2012, local planning authorities have been asked to identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites, and to demonstrate a five-year land supply. Where the local authority cannot demonstrate that, the lack of supply means that plan policies are not considered to be up-to-date, and applications are assessed against the presumption in favour of sustainable development. However, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not, and should not, mean development at all costs. Any adverse impacts of the development will still need to be taken into account.

The housing White Paper acknowledged that the current policy has been effective in bringing forward more permissions but has had some negative effects, as we have heard today from my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk. In response, we have proposed reforms to how land supply is calculated. The draft revised NPPF includes proposals to allow local authorities to agree their five-year housing land supply position on an annual basis and to fix it for a one-year period. The

[Nigel Adams]

Department believes that taking up that opportunity should reduce the number and complexity of appeals, and provide greater certainty to all parties.

James Cartlidge: The Minister is making a fantastic speech. I am glad he has reached that point about appeals, because it seems to me very welcome that once someone has the five-year land supply and it has been signed off, they then have 12 months of security. At the moment, as soon as a council says, “We’ve got the five-year land supply,” there can be an immediate appeal by a developer and the certainty goes away. The issue therefore arises with councils that do not yet have the five-year land supply and do not have that security, but are giving many permissions. Can there be greater flexibility on that, as my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart) suggested?

Nigel Adams: My hon. Friend raises a valid point. We are hopeful that that will go a long way to eradicating some of the issues that he and right hon. and hon. Members have experienced. The idea is that it can be fixed at a one-year period. We will also see what other reforms are proposed as part of the review that my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir Oliver Letwin) is planning.

It is worth mentioning that in return for being allowed to agree their five-year housing land supply position on an annual basis and to fix it for a one-year period, local authorities will need to be more realistic in planning to meet housing needs. The draft NPPF includes further clarity on how to calculate five-year land supply, and we intend to provide further guidance to support local authorities in their role.

I know my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk has concerns about the time that it takes to build homes after sites are identified and permission is granted. The Government want homes to be built faster, and expect house builders to deliver more homes, more quickly and to a high standard. However, as my hon. Friend mentioned, it is important to recognise that after planning permission for new homes is granted, a variety of factors can prevent development from starting and can slow down delivery.

Last year, my right hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset was commissioned to examine what can be done to speed up building on major sites. The review has been looking into the build-out of sites that have been granted planning permission. The aim is to close the significant gap between housing completions and the amount of land permissioned for new homes. The initial analysis, which was published last month, has presented some interesting findings on the delays in building out large

sites and what helps to speed up build-out rates. I look forward to reading the final report, which is due in the autumn.

Coming on to the points raised by right hon. and hon. Members, my hon. Friend the Member for South Suffolk talked about local communities not having a say on speculative development. Applications for speculative development are still subject to local consultation, as are all planning applications. He also mentioned, as others did, that existing permissions are not being taken into account. The draft NPPF encourages the use of shorter timescales for starting development before the permission will expire, to encourage developers to build the permitted homes more quickly.

The hon. Member for Stroud (Dr Drew), who is flying the flag brilliantly for Her Majesty’s Opposition, talked about viability assessments. We recognise those concerns and, again, the draft NPPF includes new policies on viability assessments. My right hon. Friend the Member for Arundel and South Downs (Nick Herbert) talked about burning effigies at the start of his speech; that was slightly worrying, as I live in York, where Guy Fawkes was from. I hope my right hon. Friend takes that into account. Neighbourhood planning protection was included in the draft NPPF. We consulted on the draft wording, and I thank him for his continued work and suggestions in this area. We are considering those responses and will publish the final NPPF in the summer.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Cornwall (Scott Mann), who I cannot see in his place, talked about what we are doing to encourage small developers. We need to support small and medium-sized house builders and bring forward a greater variety of sites. My hon. Friend the Member for Henley (John Howell), who does a fantastic job as the champion of neighbourhood plans, said that the Government do not know how many authorities have a five-year land supply. Guidance is being produced to advise local planning authorities on how to publish their supply figure, so it will be publicly accessible.

I thank and pay tribute to Councillors Lamb and Stephenson, the hard-working councillors of my hon. Friend the Member for Elmet and Rothwell (Alec Shelbrooke), who continue to fight for their local communities but appear to be being ignored by their local council, Leeds City Council. I hope that Leeds will have heard today’s debate and my hon. Friend’s excellent contribution. My hon. Friend the Member for North East Derbyshire (Lee Rowley) talked about the reporting of a five-year land supply. Alongside the—

6.8 pm

Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).

Written Statements

Wednesday 4 July 2018

EDUCATION

Publication of Guidance

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Nadhim Zahawi): Today I am publishing two pieces of statutory safeguarding guidance which set the framework within which all practitioners should operate in order to protect children from abuse and neglect and promote their best interests.

These are:

revised “Working Together to Safeguard Children” statutory guidance;

new “Local Safeguarding—Transitional Arrangements” statutory guidance.

“Working Together to Safeguard Children” (2018) has been revised to implement the safeguarding reforms introduced through the Children and Social Work Act 2017 and related regulations.

In broad terms these are:

the replacement of local safeguarding children boards with new local safeguarding arrangements, led by three safeguarding partners (local authorities, chief officers of police, and clinical commissioning groups);

a new system of local and national child safeguarding practice reviews, which will replace serious case reviews; and

new arrangements for child death reviews, to be led by clinical commissioning groups and local authorities.

The opportunity has also been taken to make other minor changes to clarify processes or to reflect recent changes to policy, for example through the insertion of guidance on contextual safeguarding which includes protecting children from threats such as criminal and sexual exploitation.

In parallel, we are also publishing updated practice guidance, “Information sharing advice for safeguarding practitioners”, which reflects these safeguarding reforms and changes made through the Data Protection Act 2018.

This is an important piece of guidance which sets out the drive on the left rules for agencies, organisations and practitioners to know what they must do individually and collectively to safeguard children. It sets out how they should work together in fulfilling this responsibility, including taking a child-centred and co-ordinated approach to safeguarding. At the same time, these documents support practitioners to exercise their expertise and judgment on how best to protect children and young people, and promote their welfare.

Protection from abuse and neglect is a fundamental right for all children. Nothing is more important than keeping children safe. These documents will help all those working with children to do just that.

[HCWS828]

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Ivory Bill: Analysis of Government on Report

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (David Rutley): I have today published a written submission outlining the Government’s analysis of how the English votes for English laws principle relates to all Government amendments tabled for report stage of the Ivory Bill.

The Department’s assessment is that the amendments do not change the territorial application of the Bill.

The analysis holds if all the Government amendments be accepted. I have deposited a copy of the submission in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS826]

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION

European Union (Withdrawal) Act: Publication of Negative SIs

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union (Mr Steve Baker): With the Royal Assent of the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018, the Government have started laying affirmative statutory instruments to prepare the statute book for exit. The Government will not lay negative statutory instruments requiring sifting until the necessary procedures for establishing the new Committee in the Commons and the expansion of the remit of the House of Lords’ Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee are concluded. However, the Government are starting to publish final drafts of the negative statutory instruments that require sifting (“proposed negatives”) on www.gov.uk as they are ready. This is to increase transparency and to allow Parliament and the public to have early sight of the forthcoming legislation.

[HCWS829]

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Hurricane Preparedness: Caribbean Overseas Territories

The Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs (Boris Johnson): The United Kingdom is strongly committed to working closely with the British overseas territories in the Caribbean, to support their efforts to be as well prepared for the hurricane season as possible. In that context, the UK and the overseas territories share a collective responsibility for hurricane preparedness and are therefore working together to prepare for this year’s hurricane season. The hurricane season runs from June to November, with the period of highest risk from August to October. Following the devastating impact of hurricanes Irma and Maria last September, there remain some serious challenges in preparing for

this year's season, especially in those territories still recovering from the last year's category 5 hurricanes. The UK remains fully committed to supporting their ongoing recovery, while also helping with preparations and resilience.

We have learned important lessons from our response last year, and are working to ensure an even stronger response to any hurricane this year. This includes strengthened co-ordination and communication with the overseas territories themselves, with regional countries and institutions, and involving other partners with territories in the region. We have prepared clearer guidance on command and control structures, and mechanisms for earlier escalation once there is a reasonable possibility that a hurricane is heading to the region. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) (alongside key partners) will monitor the impacts that any severe weather event during the hurricane season could have on the overseas territories. The FCO in consultation with Number 10 and the civil contingencies secretariat in the Cabinet Office, will work together to understand the nature and complexity of the situation and the severity of the impacts that are likely to be seen. As required, the Government will stand up crisis response systems, to co-ordinate and drive the response to the affected overseas territories.

The FCO, DFID and MOD are working closely to prepare for the hurricane season, drawing in other Departments and agencies as necessary. This year, the Met Office has also developed improved advisory arrangements for the Caribbean, and we are working more closely with them to gain a better understanding of the technical data as tropical storms are identified and develop.

Through the conflict, security and stability fund (CSSF), the FCO has boosted its disaster preparedness capability in the region through the contracting of experts from the stabilisation unit, who are leading on negotiations in advance of peak hurricane season on a number of commercial contracts to deliver essential recovery needs. This will complement the emergency provisions based on RFA Mounts Bay, and free up military assets to concentrate on key tasks such as helping to get ports and airports reopened for the delivery of supplies. We are also drawing up agreements to ensure that other services can be deployed rapidly if needed. This work is complementary to longer term strategic planning work over the next three years under the FCO-run overseas territories disaster management programme and the Anguilla and British Virgin Islands (BVI) recovery programmes, funded by the CSSF. This also follows on from CSSF funded work over the past six months to boost early recovery efforts including but not limited to re-electrification for Anguilla and BVI; infrastructure support to Anguilla's airport; and security agency support, which includes infrastructure, capacity building and social housing. A project under way to hurricane-strengthen the hospital on Anguilla is a good example of increasing resilience and "building back better".

We are also planning to pre-position more resource in theatre during the hurricane season and to have a greater range of specialist capabilities on stand-by. The MOD has carried out reconnaissance and analysis in the overseas territories, building links and familiarity with local and regional disaster management personnel, conducting professional analysis of selected critical

infrastructure, and gaining a detailed understanding of the overall state of the overseas territories. A multi-national co-ordination cell located in the Caribbean (MNCCC) will be set up to provide integrated logistical co-ordination between partner countries and organisations, including the UK, USA, Canada, the Netherlands and France, working alongside the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). This will enable a single integrated process for assessing, communicating, deciding on and responding to needs in the independent Caribbean and the overseas territories.

MOD'S preparations and planning for hurricane relief in the Caribbean in 2018 have been extensive. The Defence contribution will be more specialised than in 2017 and will exploit MOD'S unique capabilities to best effect. The response will be scalable dependant on need and rely upon specialist forces positioned in the region—including RFA Mounts Bay, already on station. This will enable immediate assistance and damage assessments, informing the carefully tailored response force to follow. The priorities of any response are threefold: to clear a path for others, to support communications, and to ensure security should it prove necessary. Essential aid and supplies cannot enter the affected islands, or be effectively distributed, unless ports and airports are reopened and public order and a sense of security are upheld.

The Caribbean catastrophe risk insurance fund (CCRIF) paid out over \$50 million to Caribbean countries and territories affected by the 2017 hurricanes. However, not all islands were insured. This year, the UK has supported BVI and Montserrat to join as new members. Now, all of the islands which were affected last year are covered by CCRIF, which DFID originally helped develop.

DFID is preparing hands-on help as an early response mechanism, in the form of fast mobilisation of humanitarian and logistics experts and essential supplies if required. DFID has embarked emergency supplies in RFA Mounts Bay, and can air-lift other essential humanitarian items and work with professional humanitarian partners on the ground if required. DFID is supporting CDEMA to improve its procurement and logistics capacity and stands ready to fund its first responders to disaster affected countries. DFID has well established programmes in the poorer Commonwealth countries of the Caribbean and, in addition to humanitarian assistance, is supporting reconstruction efforts in the hurricane-affected islands of Dominica and Antigua and Barbuda. DFID has also fielded a preparedness mission to the region from 5 to 17 June to co-ordinate UK preparations with both national and regional institutions.

We have engaged with the Governments of the overseas territories to ensure that their plans are as robust as possible, and to bolster their command and control capabilities as well as their capacity to deal with early humanitarian requirements. We are also planning to deploy certain skills and additional support to the islands in advance of a storm's arrival or immediately thereafter. Staff with relevant skills who can be deployed at short notice have been identified.

The UK hosted an event on 28 June with a number of partner countries (France, the Netherlands, Canada, and the USA). Several countries in the region, including the Cayman Islands, Jamaica, Barbados and Mexico, attended together with CDEMA. This meeting covered

three key areas: military assistance, emergency humanitarian assistance, and political/communications, as well as how we best support affected individuals. The UK is hoping to have the outcomes endorsed at a meeting at ministerial level before the end of July. Greater co-operation in these areas will lead to a stronger and more effective regional response in the event of a hurricane hitting our overseas territories in the Caribbean.

[HCWS827]

JUSTICE

Courts Update

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Justice (Lucy Frazer): Today, I am laying before Parliament legislation reducing court fees for certain proceedings in the civil courts and the Court of Protection in England and Wales. As a result, claimants bringing these proceedings will pay less to access the courts.

The reduction to these fees follows a thorough and detailed review undertaken by officials in the Ministry of Justice into the cost of these proceedings. Our review has identified a number of cases where the fees charged were above full cost recovery levels. We are therefore taking action to reduce those fees. We will also be establishing a refund scheme to reimburse people the amounts they have been overcharged. We are also taking action to refund those who have been overcharged fees to commence certain low-value personal injury claims, known as “stage 3” claims. Officials are working on the detailed arrangements and full details of the scheme, including the types of case affected, and how to apply, will be announced in due course.

These changes affect the fees charged for certain proceedings in the Court of Protection; a number of civil proceedings in the magistrates courts; fees for general applications in insolvency proceedings; and the fees charged for High Court judges sitting as arbitrators. The intention when these fees were prescribed was that

they should be set at, or below, full cost recovery levels and it was on that basis that they were approved by Parliament.

As part of our ongoing improvements we are making to the justice system, including the Government’s £1 billion investment in court reform, we will continue our review of court fees, including the methodology for setting those fees, to minimise the risk of this issue reoccurring in future. The vision of the reform is to modernise and upgrade the court and tribunal system so that it works even better for everyone, from the victims of crime, witnesses and litigants to judges and legal professionals.

[HCWS830]

TRANSPORT

HS2 Phase 2b Eastern Leg Rolling Stock Depot Location

The Secretary of State for Transport (Chris Grayling): I would like to update the house on plans for the HS2 phase 2b eastern leg rolling stock depot. I am today confirming the depot should be located at a site in the Aire valley, adjacent to the M1, to the east of Leeds. This decision is laid out in today’s publication of the HS2 phase 2b eastern leg rolling stock depot consultation response.

It was originally proposed that the depot be sited near Crofton, east of Wakefield. Due to operational and community concerns after the M18/ eastern route decision was announced, I asked HS2 Ltd to review alternative options for the depot site. The east of Leeds site was identified and a consultation seeking views on this proposed location was launched on 17 July 2017 and ran until 12 October 2017. The consultation revealed broad support for the new location.

This decision has been made with local development plans on the wider site in mind. HS2 Ltd will continue to work with stakeholders to support local regeneration proposals on the wider site.

[HCWS825]

Petitions

Wednesday 4 July 2018

PRESENTED PETITIONS

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

Home Education: draft guidance and the consultation

The petition of residents of Thirsk and Malton,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to withdraw the draft guidance and the consultation, until it has put in place an accessible and workable complaints procedure and further has consulted with home educating parents, as it has with Local Authorities, what the contents should include.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Kevin Hollinrake.]

[P002180]

The petition of residents of Bridgwater and West Somerset,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

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And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger.]

[P002181]

The petition of residents of St Albans,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently

for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

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And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mrs Anne Main.]

[P002182]

The petition of residents of Hertford and Stortford,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

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And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr Mark Prisk.]

[P002183]

The petition of residents of Erith and Thamesmead,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

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And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Teresa Pearce.]

[P002185]

The petition of residents of Keighley,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

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And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by John Grogan.]

[P002186]

The petition of residents of Maldon Constituency,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

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And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr John Whittingdale.]

[P002187]

The petition of residents of Stafford,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

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And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Jeremy Lefroy.]

[P002191]

The petition of residents of Stockton North constituency,

Declare that the “Home Education—Call for Evidence and revised DfE guidance” has been written following significant consultation with local authorities and no consultation whatsoever with the home education community; further that the consultation is consequently for little more than show as an intention to implement the content has already been stated: further that it seeks to encourage local authorities to breach the ECHR Article 8 and the GDPR; and further that the report provides no accessible means for a parent to address ultra vires behaviour by their local authority, where many of those authorities already act routinely in an ultra vires manner.

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And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Alex Cunningham.]

[P002172]

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**not later than
Wednesday 11 July 2018**

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