

Monday
4 November 2019

Volume 667
No. 14



HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 4 November 2019

House of Commons

Monday 4 November 2019

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

Election of Speaker

The right hon. and learned Kenneth Clarke, the Member for Rushcliffe, took the Chair (Standing Order No. 1(1)).

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): I have to acquaint the House that Her Majesty, having been informed of the resignation of the right hon. John Bercow, lately Speaker of this House, gives leave to the House to proceed forthwith to the election of a new Speaker.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): The House will now proceed to the election of a new Speaker in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 1B. In a moment, I will call the candidates to address the House in the order in which I drew their names by lot this morning. The order of speaking was published this morning and has, I think, been visible on the Annunciator to all Members, but it is purely random. I have asked each candidate to speak for no more than five minutes. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] The candidates will no doubt be further advised by that response. When all candidates have addressed the House, we will proceed to the first ballot.

2.31 pm

Dame Rosie Winterton (Doncaster Central) (Lab): I am sure that all the other candidates in the election today will agree with me, Mr Clarke, when I say that none of us can match the experience that you have in this place, or the esteem in which you are held. You are leaving us after half a century of service, and we thank you for that service, but others are leaving in part because of what our politics has become. As the House is the crucible of our politics, that should concern us all, which is why the role of Speaker matters so much.

I am putting myself forward after 22 years of diverse experience as a Back Bencher, a Minister, a shadow Leader of the House, a Chief Whip and a Deputy Speaker. Restoring public confidence in Parliament is all our responsibility, but the Speaker sets the tone. My view is that the Speaker's job is not to dominate proceedings or speak for Parliament but to facilitate debate and allow Parliament to speak for itself, with all its different voices and in all its diverse voices.

During my time as Opposition Chief Whip, I worked with the majority and minority parties to build consensus where we could, and I made sure that we did not fall out when we could not agree. As Deputy Speaker, I have been struck by the fact that in so many of our debates there is consensus, with members of different parties working together to find common ground. Of course, there will always be times when the House is rumbustious; that is fine. What the public do not like is ill temper and intolerance. The turbulent time in our politics has put this institution, and all of us, under great strain. [Interruption.] Order! [Laughter.] The phone ringing was not a set-up, I promise you.

The Executive must be allowed to carry out their mandate when it is given by the people, but Members of Parliament must also be allowed to scrutinise legislation and hold the Government to account. The Speaker has a crucial role in getting that balance right. If there is a logjam, the Speaker should help Parliament to find a way through—to bring parties together to solve the problem. In all the posts I have held, I have been a conciliator; as Speaker, I would douse the flames, not pour petrol on them—a stabilising, unifying Speaker, and a Speaker from the north so that the public see that Parliament is about the whole country, not just London. And the last woman from the north did a pretty good job.

To gain respect from the public, we must show each other respect. The next Speaker must lead by the example she sets, changing the tone and lowering the temperature when the House gets overheated. As Deputy Speaker, I have tried to do that; I hope Members feel I have been impartial, not impatient.

As Deputy Speaker, I have seen tempers rise if there is too much disruption of business. Urgent questions are an important innovation of our last Speaker, but I have seen Members become frustrated, having worked hard on a speech only to end up being squeezed by a three-minute time limit. Urgent business must be debated when it is urgent, but UQs and statements should not take hours, neither should PMQs—[HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] If a Member does not get called, they should get priority next time, and newer Members should not always have to wait until last to be called. All our constituencies have the same right to be heard.

Parliament should be a workplace free from bullying and harassment. The Commission must be at the centre of changing the culture of Parliament. It should be accessible to Members and staff and the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority should stop getting in the way of Members doing their jobs. MPs who are parents or have caring responsibilities need proper support; we must become a modern, family-friendly workplace.

My dad was a headteacher in Doncaster and I bump into people he taught all the time. He is remembered not as a fierce disciplinarian, but as someone who was fair, encouraging and trusted—not a bad legacy. My ambition as Speaker would be to follow his example: not seek the limelight, but build trust.

2.37 pm

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab): Politics can be cruel. A young lad came up to me in Tonypany the other day. He could not quite place who I was, but he knew he had seen me somewhere, maybe on telly. I said, "Well, maybe it's because I am the MP for the Rhondda," and he said, "No, that's Chris Bryant—and he's much younger than you." For the record, I am 57, older than John Bercow.

Politics has, however, felt especially cruel in the past few years. Many of us feel battered and bruised, and many of the public feel that Parliament has been a bit of a bearpit, but we speak as we find and my personal experience from earlier this year, when I was wandering around looking like I was auditioning for the part of the monster in "Frankenstein", was that there are untold, countless moments of personal, enormous generosity in this House, and most of the country would be enormously proud of the way we do our business if only they knew.

[Chris Bryant]

The truth is that politics is an honourable profession. Every single one of us in this House entered politics because we wanted to change the world for the better, and often the individual campaigns that we run touch millions of lives: just think of the campaign to get Brineura for children with Batten disease; think of the work that has been done on getting an inquiry on contaminated blood, or for that matter on children's funerals or on people trafficking. There are so many different campaigns, including the one I dedicated myself to on acquired brain injury and melanoma. That is why it is so important that we revitalise and stand up for parliamentary democracy and return to the rulebook—stitch it back together.

I am standing because I love Parliament—I believe in parliamentary democracy and I want to do things properly. That means being a Speaker who has absolutely no favourites, who believes in standing by the rules, who is completely impartial, and who knows “Erskine May” inside out and back to front—I have it lying by my bedside—[*Laughter.*] All right! It means being a Speaker who is an umpire, not a player.

This is one of the most demanding jobs in British politics. For centuries it was said that it could be done only by a top-rate lawyer, and that is because the decisions that are made by the Speaker are of constitutional significance. You have to be quick on your feet. You have to be able to defend the decision and explain it in plain English.

There are things I want to do. I want to get Prime Minister's questions back to 30 minutes. I want to publish a speakers list for debates so that you know when you will be called, and if you do not get called today you will get called first tomorrow. I want to call colleagues according to their relevance to the subject, rather than according to some idea of seniority. I want to stop the clapping—[*Applause.*] Yes, very funny! Can we return to waving the Order Papers? That is the traditional way. For that matter, I also want to stop the hectoring and the addresses to the Gallery.

I want to make sure that every single MP, their families and, importantly, their staff are safe in their constituency offices and in their homes. I want to make the timing of the parliamentary day more predictable, I want to increase the human resources department, and I want to—no, I do not just want to, I will sort out the wi-fi and the mobile signal.

Let me end with three Speakers from the past. The first is Betty Boothroyd, who, when she stood for Speaker, said:

“I say to you, elect me for what I am and not for what I was born.”—[*Official Report*, 27 April 1992; Vol. 207, c. 15.]

I was taught as a child to judge somebody not according to the colour of their skin, their religion, their gender or sexuality, what school they went to, what accent they spoke with or what part of the country they were from, but according to the strength of their character and whether they could do the job well. I hope you will all judge me in exactly the same way today.

The second speaker is Speaker Onslow who, in the 18th century, was the first speaker to say that he would “be respectful and impartial to all.”

That will be my motto.

Most famously of all, the Speaker you all know, I guess, is Speaker Lenthall, who told Charles I:

“I have neither eyes to see, nor tongue to speak, in this place, but as the House is pleased to direct me, whose servant I am”.

That is all I ask: the chance to serve.

2.43 pm

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): What an honour it is to stand for this job. Like all those standing, I love this place and I only wish to serve it. I think that it is pretty good training to be Speaker to have been, as I have been, a Back Bencher for 33 out of the last 36 years—although, to be absolutely honest, nobody asked me to serve any longer on the Front Bench.

One of the reasons many people enjoy their service on the Back Benches is that they love holding the Government to account and being sincere to their beliefs, however unpopular those beliefs are. That is the sort of Back Bencher that I want to encourage.

That is enough of me. I just want to take a moment to talk about what I believe the Speaker should be. I am with Chris and Rosie on this. I think the Speaker should submerge his or her character in the job. The Speaker should be the servant of the House. The Speaker should be a dignified and quiet voice, and I believe that all the candidates standing today can achieve that.

I believe that we in this Parliament should not be contemptuous of what we have achieved over the past three years. Insults have been hurled at us, but Chris mentioned our famous forebear and how he, as our Speaker, made it clear that he was only the servant of the House. We who sit in this House should be proud of what we have achieved over the past three years as the cockpit of the political nation, where every point of view can be heard, debated and thrashed out. I believe that we can make this place even better. It is no accident that the great speeches in history in this place were precisely that: speeches. They were not interminable self-regarding interventions or points of order or statements that go on forever. We should recreate the great debates in this place and allow adequate time and be fair to everybody, so that everybody gets a fair crack of the whip, literally, to put their point of view.

We can go from strength to strength, but this place is not just about words—important as they are—or votes; it is also about a sense of history and a sense of place. I particularly wanted to stand in this election to make this point: we must preserve this world heritage site, but we must preserve it in a way—here I speak as somebody who served for 18 years as Chairman either of the Public Accounts Committee or the Public Accounts Commission—that looks after the interests of our paymasters, the taxpayers. We cannot waste billions of pounds. We have to do the job properly, but we have to do it right. You have all received a letter from SAVE Britain's Heritage, which proves that we can do the job cheaply and efficiently with the erection of a temporary Chamber, rather by demolishing Richmond house and wasting billions of pounds. I particularly wanted to make that point, because we have a duty of care to our constituents in terms of the money.

Those are my priorities, and I want to ensure that once again this place can be the forum of great, determined and sincere speeches. I end by saying that nobody here should worry about what they have done or what they have achieved in recent years. Be of good heart, be of

good cheer, be sincere to your beliefs and above all, dear friends, hold the Executive to account whoever they are, because that is what this place is all about.

2.47 pm

Dame Eleanor Laing (Epping Forest) (Ind): When I was growing up in the small village of Elderslie in the west of Scotland, who would have thought that little Eleanor from across the road would one day end up standing to be the Speaker of the House of Commons? I certainly did not. It is a great testament to our country and to our democracy that this moment is even possible.

I begin, Mr Clarke, by paying tribute to you on this your last day in the House after nearly 50 years. Thank you for your service. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I imagine that you are finding that the House looks rather different from where you are now sitting compared with your usual seat up here. Well, I know how you feel.

Standing where I am today, for the first time in six years, reminds me of how easy it is to see ourselves as "us and them", whereas for the last six years, sitting there in the Chair, it has seemed to me just to be us—us, the House—because that is how it should be from the Chair. It is the role of the Speaker not to create division or rancour in this House, but to seek consensus and to remind us of the things that unite us all: our rules, our procedures, and our precious conventions. As Rosie and Chris rightly said, and despite what our detractors say, the House of Commons is full of good people—

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): Hear, hear!

Dame Eleanor Laing: Hear, hear!—[*Laughter.*] In all corners of this place there are good people who genuinely want to make the world a better place. Of course we all have different ideas about how we would do that, but even if we sometimes fall short, our intentions are, in a word, honourable.

I am very sad that so many hon. Members, whom I see as I look around the Chamber, have decided to leave the House tomorrow. It is time someone had the courage to defend Members of Parliament, not just inside this House but outside it as well. Defending Members of Parliament is what I will do if the House makes me Speaker, because failing to stand up for the honourable men and women who come to this place to do their public duty not only harms the individual MP but weakens Parliament in the eyes of the nation.

We all know that, beyond the Westminster bubble, there is real anxiety about the health of our democratic system. We need to rebuild confidence and trust in our politics, and it must begin with this election today. There are times for continuity and there are times for change. This is a time for change, and I want to be that change.

This is the 21st century, for goodness' sake. We need to escape the overbearing and hierarchical structures that have made it all too easy for a culture of bullying to take root. As Deputy Speaker, I hope I have always discharged my duties with consistency, with courtesy and with kindness.

Despite being a lawyer, for which you will have to forgive me, I always try to remember that we are dealing not merely with rules and laws here; we are also dealing with the welfare of people. That is why the most urgent change I want to see is making the Speaker more

accountable than at any time in our history. While I am at it, may I just say that it is not the role of the Speaker to say any more than needs to be said nor to take up time in this Chamber, especially when that robs Back Benchers of their precious speaking time? [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] Well, I am glad someone agrees with allocated minutes.

The Speaker is not the ruler of the House of Commons but its servant. It is in that spirit that I ask the House to entrust to me this most historic and special role.

2.52 pm

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I think we all know there is a lack of trust in Parliament and politics right now, with everything from the behaviour in the Chamber to the allegations of bullying and sexual assault—we have had three such allegations since this race for the speakership began just six weeks ago—and the general state of politics out there in the nation. So the next Speaker has a key role in setting the tone, yes, in the Chamber but also with colleagues in this place who support us in our work and in the country.

I would be a Speaker who speaks less, but when I speak it will be with the clear intent of standing up for MPs. The House has heard from other candidates today and at the hustings that we are in broad agreement on how to manage the Chamber. We want to be champions—I certainly would be—of better conduct. I would be an impartial Speaker, a director rather than an actor. We also want better time keeping. Urgent questions and statements are going on too long, and that greater discipline would give greater certainty on timings so we can plan the rest of our lives. We need an end to short time limits.

I have a track record of fairness and of delivering what I promise. I have chaired the Public Accounts Committee for the last four and a half years, and I have introduced a new way of working on the Select Committee corridor. As a Minister, I dealt fairly with all MPs, whatever their party, because, let us not forget, we are all here only because our constituents elect us. We respect each other, we respect our constituents—it is as simple as that. Some time ago, I was mayor of a hung council in London, where I had the casting vote, while also being the first citizen, so I had to handle some pretty difficult situations in a fraught council chamber. But I am not a grandstanding politician. I would speak little, and, as many of you know, I am incredibly discreet when you come to see me about matters in your constituency. I would not seek self-publicity, but would speak up only for MPs, and for Parliament and our democracy.

We need better support for MPs. There is too little personal development and careers advice, and that shows up starkly when so many Members are leaving with short notice and we have Members losing seats. Of course, on restoration and renewal, it was my amendment that moved us forward, so we will be leaving the building. We need to tackle that, and I am already working up plans on how we monitor the cost—of course that is important—but this is also an opportunity to rekindle trust in our politics and our democracy, to rekindle how we do things and how we change the culture of this place. As Speaker, I would have your back—on unfair publicity, on expenses. More than that, I would work to

[Meg Hillier]

educate the public about what great work MPs do in this place, and I would step up the approach to personal security and online bullying, which is leading to too many colleagues leaving this place because it is intolerable.

However, the main thrust of why I am standing is about the bullying and harassment that is still too rife in this building. It is just over a year since Dame Laura Cox reported and, yes, we need an independent process in place, but we need more than that. Gemma White's report earlier this year highlighted problems in our own offices. There is a good list of MPs to work for and a bad list of MPs to work for—staff know this, we know this. It may be an uncomfortable message. It may not be a vote-winner today, but we should not be complacent even if we are on that good list. We should not rest while young staff in this building are fearful and tearful and afraid to raise concerns about how they have been treated. We need better HR, and supported and trained senior office managers; and we need to tackle this now. It has to stop; it is going to be the next expenses scandal, colleagues, if we do not tackle this. We have to lead by example. We have to put our own house in order and call out bad behaviour where necessary—but we need to prevent it before it gets to that point. We do that externally and we need to do that here. I would be utterly committed to this. I have worked up plans, and I have talked to staff and unions about how to deliver on this. We need to work with staff. We cannot talk about them without them. We need a culture shift. We have to lead by example. Don't let this moment pass.

2.58 pm

Sir Lindsay Hoyle (Chorley) (Lab): I will say, as has everybody else, that you will be missed in this House, Mr Clarke, but I do know one thing: I don't think it will be the end of your voice—I think your voice will continue to give us advice for a lot longer in time.

A great hero of mine is here today: Baroness Boothroyd. She was the white rose; she was the voice of the north, and what the white rose brought, hopefully the red rose will follow.

Of course, it is an absolute privilege to speak again from these Back Benches. These are the Back Benches that matter. These are the Back Benches that hold the Executive to account, and there has been no better time than the 13 years I spent here, sometimes with the Labour Government and shortly afterwards with a different Government. But this is about making sure, whoever is in power, that those on these Benches have the right to question and hold to account. That is what matters. Of course, this is about having an accountable Speaker to back to that up: it is not just about the Back Benches; it is about a Speaker who endorses and supports the Back Benches. That is what I hope I have always shown during my nine years as Deputy Speaker. I have tried to ensure that not one part of this House has not been called to speak, and whatever the size of a party I have encouraged Members to make sure that their voice is heard, and I want to continue to do that.

This is not a club for people who have been here for 35 years—do not take that the wrong way, Mr Clarke. The fact is that when I look at people who have been in this House for 35 years, I think, "I've heard that speech

before and will do again many more times." That speech is important, but the person who walked through the Chamber door yesterday is just as important to their constituents. Their voice must be heard as well and there ought not to be a pecking order. It is about equality. We are all equal in this House when we come to speak. That is the point that we must retain, and I promise that that is what I will do.

A Speaker has to be trusted, and I hope that I have built up that trust. It is about having a proven track record, and I hope the House will agree that I have that track record. People say, "Well, I'll do this in such an amount of time for Prime Minister's questions," or that they will do something else, but I have done it. I have been there and yes, we did reduce the time, because it is not about me; it is about the people on these Benches. That is why we can do it in good time and that is what I want to continue to do. When I say, "I have done it"—I have done Prime Minister's questions, I do the Budget and I have done many other things in this House—it has all been done with fairness, which is what matters to us all.

Other Members have touched on reform. We need to continue to reform. We need to support the people in security. When I took over responsibility for security, there were no measures for MPs. There was so little for us—we did not matter. I hope people will recognise what I have done: I have stood up and made sure that we can feel safe. That job has started, but it has not finished; I want the House to give me the chance to finish it as Speaker. I promise that I will continue to fight to make sure that we are safe, our families are safe, our staff are safe and the House is safe. That is what matters.

It is about delivering for all and I assure the House that that is what I will do. It is about experience and drive. I will make sure that reform continues for the best of all. I believe that the Chamber is underused; we ought to look seriously at how much more we can get out of it. We can come forward with great ideas.

My pledge to the House and its Members is that I will be here for you. I will make sure that a Deputy Speaker can become Speaker and will not let you down. I will be accountable.

3.2 pm

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): These are difficult, even dangerous times for our parliamentary democracy. The country is divided and the House is divided. The public view of this House is at an all-time low. Too often, this Chamber descends into shouting and abuse. Relations between this House and the Government are broken. Many of us work under a hail of threats of violence—against us, our families and our staff. So Members' choice of the next Speaker is really important.

I know that the House wants a Speaker who will be, and who will be seen to be, scrupulously impartial and fair to every MP from every party. When I was Leader of the House, I was exactly that. But it is not just about being fair; it is about perception. We cannot go on with huge decisions being made by one person, behind closed doors. I would reform the Speaker's powers to make them transparent and accountable to this House, and I would be fearless in standing up for the rights of the House.

I know that the House wants a Speaker who understands what it is to be a Government Back Bencher and an Opposition Back Bencher, and a Government Minister and a shadow Minister, and I have been all those things. My guiding principle would be that all constituencies are equal and, because of that, all Members are equal and owed equal respect. So as Speaker, I would regard it as my responsibility to help you wherever you are in the House, and however long you have been here, to be the best that you can be.

One thing that I have not been is a member of one of our minority parties. That is why, if I were Speaker, I would want a fourth deputy in my team, drawn from the members of the minority parties, so I would have that perspective right at my side.

I know you want a Speaker who will help Parliament change with the times. I have fought for and won reform: making our Select Committees powerful and independent by giving us the right to elect the Chairs rather than their being appointed by the Whips—I did that when I was Leader of the House; setting up the Backbench Business Committee so that we can choose the subject of debates—I did that, too, as Leader of the House; changing the voting system for election of Speaker to make it by secret ballot—I hope that that was a good idea; and just this year, by working with Members across parties, getting the right for new mothers and fathers to vote by proxy when your baby is born.

I am running for Speaker in these difficult times because I have unparalleled experience and an unparalleled record of reform of this House, but there is one other reason I want your vote. Parliament has changed. It is nothing like the old boys' network it was when I first came in—when I was one of only 3% women Members among 97% men. Now, there are 211 women in every party in the House, and men here who speak up for women's rights, too, but, in 600 years, there has only ever been one woman Speaker. I do not actually agree with making reference to the Gallery, but I will break with precedent here and pay tribute to Betty Boothroyd. So, in 600 years, there has only ever been one woman. There have been 156 men. This is my question to the House today: can we show the country that we have changed by putting the second woman in that Speaker's Chair?

Dame Eleanor Laing: Hear! Hear!—[*Laughter.*]

Ms Harman: Many of you are standing down—some after only a short time here, and that should concern us all. I want to thank all of you who have served in this House and to say to all of you who are standing down that I wish you well for the future. Some are standing down after decades here, and that brings me to the Father of the House, Ken Clarke. Ken, you have been a phenomenal, exemplary parliamentarian, and I just wanted to say that and to thank you.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): Thank you very much, Ms Harman. I am genuinely grateful. I have no idea what voter appeal those very kind words addressed to me will have.

All of the candidates have now addressed the House. In a moment, I will declare the ballot open. Before I do, I have to give a clear explanation of the process, which is not actually familiar to any of us. First, Members with surnames beginning with the letters A to K inclusive

should vote in the Aye Lobby. Members with surnames beginning with the letters L to Z should vote in the No Lobby. Please enter the Lobbies by the main entrances as the side doors will be locked. When you enter the Lobbies, please give your name to the Clerk at the appropriate desk for the letter of your surname. As usual, surnames have been divided into three streams in each Lobby. When you pass the desk, you will be given a ballot paper. When you have completed it, please place it in one of the ballot boxes at the exit of the Lobby. That should be familiar. [*Laughter.*] I remind Members that they should vote only for one candidate. It is not a transferrable vote; it is an exclusive vote. The ballot will remain open for 20 minutes. I hope to announce the result of each ballot around 45 minutes after the closure of the ballot. [*Interruption.*] That, I think, is for counting and the printing of new ballot papers. The House will be alerted by the Annunciator before it is to resume, and Division bells will also be rung.

I declare the ballot open.

3.10 pm

Sitting suspended.

4.15 pm

On resuming—

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): This is the result of the first ballot. The total number of ballots cast was 562. The number of votes cast for each candidate, in alphabetical order, was as follows:

Chris Bryant, 98;

Ms Harriet Harman, 72;

Meg Hillier, 10;

Sir Lindsay Hoyle, 211;

Dame Eleanor Laing, 113;

Sir Edward Leigh, 12;

Dame Rosie Winterton, 46.

There were no spoiled ballots. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear!"] A remarkable achievement for this particular assembly.

No Member received more than 50% of the ballots cast, so we proceed to a further ballot. Meg Hillier received the fewest votes and Sir Edward Leigh also received fewer than 5% of the ballots cast, so under the rules they both leave the contest.

Before I confirm the list of candidates for the next ballot, I now invite any candidate who wishes to withdraw to inform me in the Chamber within the next 10 minutes, which means that I sit here for 10 minutes waiting for each of the candidates to carefully consider their position and then come to inform me if they wish to withdraw from the next ballot. I shall then make further announcements, and we will have to have new ballot papers printed before we actually get to the next round of voting. I will now suspend the House, and in 10 minutes' time I will announce the candidates who are proposing to proceed to the second round of the ballot.

4.17 pm

Proceedings suspended.

4.27 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): Order. No candidates have withdrawn, so the candidates for the next ballot are Chris Bryant, Ms Harriet Harman, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Dame Eleanor Laing and Dame Rosie Winterton. The next ballot will be opened as soon as the ballot papers have been printed, checked and put in place, which is likely to be in about 20 minutes—[HON. MEMBERS: “Oh!”] This is an early stage of these proceedings at the present rate of progress. I will cause the bells to be rung as soon as the Lobbies are ready, and the ballot will then start. As before, Members will have 20 minutes in which to vote.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Clarke.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): May I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman come to the Table to try to explain what his point of order is?

John Spellar: I think colleagues know who has dropped out. It seems to me utterly absurd not to have just reprinted the ballot paper for people to put their cross. All this delay is quite unnecessary and bureaucratic.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): I am sure that we are both out of order, but, with great respect, although these arrangements do need revising in various other respects, with the arrangements that we have it was not possible to know who the candidates were for the next round until a proper opportunity had been given for any candidates who wished to withdraw. I am afraid that the delay is inevitable. I declare the House suspended until the next stage in the proceedings when we have the ballot papers.

Proceedings suspended.

4.43 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): Order. In a moment, I will declare open the ballot. The voting arrangements are identical to those for the last ballot, and as before, the ballot will remain open for 20 minutes. I hope to announce the result of the next ballot around 45 minutes after the closure of voting. The House will again be alerted by the Annunciator before it is to resume. Division bells will also be rung. The ballot is now open.

Sitting suspended.

5.45 pm

On resuming—

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): Order. This is the result of the second ballot. Five hundred and seventy five ballots were cast—[HON. MEMBERS: “Ooh!”] Late arrivals, I think. The number of votes cast for each candidate was as follows:

Chris Bryant, 120;
Ms Harriet Harman, 59;
Sir Lindsay Hoyle, 244;
Dame Eleanor Laing, 122;
Dame Rosie Winterton, 30.

There were no spoiled ballots. Yet again, no Member received more than 50% of the ballots cast, so we proceed to a further ballot. Dame Rosie Winterton received the fewest votes, so she retires. Before I confirm the list of candidates for the next ballot, I now invite any candidate who wishes to withdraw to inform me in the Chamber or the Clerk Assistant in the Reasons Room within the next 10 minutes.

5.46 pm

Proceedings suspended.

5.57 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): Order. Dame Rosie Winterton has been eliminated and Ms Harriet Harman has withdrawn her candidature. [Interruption.] I would have thought that that would be a popular gesture—not in personal terms but because it saves us a ballot. Otherwise, I am sure, there is widespread regret.

The candidates for the next ballot are Chris Bryant, Sir Lindsay Hoyle and Dame Eleanor Laing. I repeat, as I did before, that the next ballot will be opened as soon as the ballot papers have been printed, checked and put in place, which is likely to be in about 20 minutes. The Division bells will be rung as soon as the Lobbies are ready, and the ballot will then start. As before, Members will have 20 minutes to vote.

Proceedings suspended.

6.12 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): In a moment, I will declare the ballot open. The voting arrangements are identical to those for the last ballot. As before, the ballot will be open for 20 minutes. I hope to announce the result about 45 minutes after the closure of the ballot. Before we resume, the House will again be alerted by the Annunciator and the Division bell will be rung. The ballot is now open.

Sitting suspended.

7.11 pm

On resuming—

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): Order. This is the result of the third ballot. The number of ballots cast was 565. The number of votes cast for each candidate were as follows:

Chris Bryant, 169 votes;
Sir Lindsay Hoyle, 267 votes;
Dame Eleanor Laing, 127 votes.
Two ballot papers were spoiled.

Those Members with adequate mental arithmetic will know that no Member received more than 50% of the ballots cast. Dame Eleanor Laing received the fewest votes and therefore leaves the contest.

Again, before I confirm the candidates for the next ballot, I invite either candidate who wishes to withdraw to inform me in the Chamber or to inform the Clerk Assistant in the Reasons Room within the next 10 minutes.

Chris Bryant: On a point of order, Mr Clarke. It might save the House 10 minutes if I just said that I am not going to withdraw at this point.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): I think Mr Bryant has done the House a considerable courtesy. We now move to what, as far as I can see, is the final and decisive ballot, for which the candidates are Chris Bryant and Sir Lindsay Hoyle. Once more, the ballot will be opened as soon as the ballot papers have been printed, checked and put in place, which is likely to be in about 15 minutes. I will cause the bells to be rung as soon as the Lobbies are ready, and the ballot will then start. As before, Members will have 20 minutes to vote.

Proceedings suspended.

7.28 pm

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): In a moment, I will declare the ballot open. The voting arrangements are of course identical to those for the last ballot. The ballot will be open for 20 minutes. As there are only two candidates, I hope to announce the result about 30 minutes after the closure of the ballot. The House will be alerted by the Annunciator before it is to resume, and the Division bell will be rung. The ballot—the final ballot—is now open.

Sitting suspended.

8.20 pm

On resuming—

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): This is the result of the fourth and final ballot. Five hundred and forty ballots were cast—some other pressing engagements have taken people away. The number of votes cast for each candidate was as follows: Chris Bryant 213; Sir Lindsay Hoyle 325. Two ballots were spoilt. Sir Lindsay Hoyle has obviously secured more than 50% of the ballots cast.

Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 1B(10)), That Sir Lindsay Hoyle do take the Chair of this House as Speaker.

Question agreed to.

Mr Kenneth Clarke (in the Chair): I invite Sir Lindsay Hoyle to take the Chair of the House. [*Applause.*]

Mr Kenneth Clarke left the Chair, and Sir Lindsay Hoyle was taken out of his place and conducted to the Chair by Jackie Doyle-Price, Mr Nigel Evans and Caroline Flint.

Mr Speaker-Elect (standing on the upper step): No clapping. [*Laughter.*]

Mr Clarke, thank you for the way you have chaired our proceedings. We have kept you longer than expected and I really appreciate it. You have been steadfast in the job you have done and it really is appreciated.

May I say thank you to all the candidates? Whoever was selected would have made a great Speaker. We thank those who withdrew—Sir Henry Bellingham and Mr Shailesh Vara—for the way they wanted to ensure that we did not have to stay for another two rounds.

As I have discussed, it is about the campaign and the challenges ahead for me and this Chamber. I stand by what I have said and stand firm. I hope that this House will be once again a great, respected House, not just in here but around the world. I hope that once again it is the envy of the world. We have to make sure that that tarnish is polished away and that the respect and tolerance that we expect from everyone who works here will be shown, and we will keep that in order.

I also want to say something to my family. [*Applause.*] There is one difficult part that I want to get over. There is one person who is not here: my daughter Natalie. I wish she had been here. We all miss her, as a family, and none more so than her mum Miriam. I have to say that she was everything to all of us. She will always be missed but she will always be in our thoughts. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear!”]

I hope to show that the experience I have shown previously will continue. As I have promised, I will be neutral. I will be transparent. I think that this House can do more to ensure that that transparency continues, and nowhere more than in respect of the Commission. I have never served on the Commission—I have never even seen the minutes of the Commission—but I do believe there is a need for a little bit of transparency once again.

I have to say thank you to my family, but also to the staff from my office who are also with me tonight. They have been with me for a long time. In fact, Bev, who is up there and who will get all embarrassed, has been with me for 21 years. She left university and said, “I’m never going to get married. I’m never going to have children. I don’t want any of that in my life.” Guess what? She is married; she has children; and she is still with me. The same with Peter and Mike. They have done a fantastic job. They have been really good.

I want to thank everybody. It has been a long night. I do not want to keep you any longer, but I do stand by what I have said. This House will change, but it will change for the better. Thank you, everybody.

The Speaker-Elect sat down in the Chair and the Mace was placed upon the Table.

8.25 pm

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): Mr Speaker-Elect, I know that you will want to join me in thanking, first of all, the Father of the House for the way that he has conducted today’s proceedings. Where is he? [*Interruption.*] There he is! I pay renewed tributes to my right hon. and learned Friend who outranks just about every Member not just in length of service, but in distinction. He has held six Cabinet posts, including two great offices of state. His Hush Puppies have been found propped up on the desk of ministerial offices in four separate decades. His continuing physical and intellectual robustness are a tribute to the benefits of a lifetime’s diet of beer, curry and Castella cigars, all of which I hope he will continue to enjoy in a long and happy retirement at Trent Bridge, or touring the famous jazz clubs in West Bridgford.

Mr Speaker-Elect, in congratulating you on your election, I observe that you have prevailed over an extremely strong field and that every other candidate earlier on spoke forcefully and well. I will not presume to identify exactly what characteristics other Members of this House saw in you when they elected you just now, but speaking for myself, after long and happy years of dealing with you, I think I know what it is. Let me say that, whenever any of us is preparing to speak in this Chamber, we all know that there is a moment between standing up and when the Speaker calls us when our heart is in our mouth and in that moment of anxiety about whether we are going to make a fool of ourselves and, indeed, at the moment when we sit down amid deafening silence, the kindness of the Speaker is absolutely critical to our confidence and the way that we behave.

[*The Prime Minister*]

Mr Speaker-Elect, over the years, I have observed that you have many good qualities. I am sure that you will stick up for Back Benchers in the way that you have proposed, and I am sure you will adhere to a strict Newtonian concept of time in PMQs. I believe that you will also bring your signature kindness and reasonableness to our proceedings, thereby helping to bring us together as a Parliament and as a democracy. No matter how fiercely we may disagree, we know that every Member comes to this place with the best of motives, determined to serve the oldest parliamentary democracy in the world and to achieve our goals by the peaceable arts of reason and debate invigilated by an impartial Speaker, which was, and remains, one of our greatest gifts to the world. Thank you, Mr Speaker-Elect, and congratulations.

Mr Speaker-Elect: The only people I forgot to thank were all the staff of this House and Joanna Dodd for the way that she ran this election campaign. I thank everybody in this House.

8.29 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): Mr Speaker-Elect, may I join others in offering my congratulations to you on winning the election, and thank the Father of the House for conducting the election in the way in which he did? Congratulations and commiserations to the other candidates who did not succeed in getting elected, but who nevertheless made sure that we had a good campaign and serious debate all across the House; that was very important.

We are well aware, Mr Speaker-Elect, of your abilities at chairing the House because we have been through Finance Bills and Budgets in which you are robust in ensuring that people stick to the point and the subject of the debate, as some comrades on my side of the House and Members on the Government side sometimes deviate from the subject in hand—unprecedented, I know, but there we are.

In your position, Mr Speaker-Elect, you are going to need eyes in the back of your head. It is a difficult job; you do not know what is coming at you next. I realise that you have actually been in training in this regard, because I have been looking at a photograph of you at the weekend apparently watching the rugby world cup final while at the same time not watching the television. The only conclusion that I can draw from this is that you literally do have eyes in the back of your head, because you were able to make some very wise comments about the progress of the match that you were apparently not watching at the same time. These qualities alone equip you to be an absolutely brilliant Chair of this House.

Mr Speaker-Elect, as you have said and many know, the job of Speaker is not just a ceremonial one. It is about the rights of Back Benchers to be able to speak up and the power of Parliament to hold the Government to account. The whole principle and point of a parliamentary democracy is that we have a strong Parliament that can hold the Executive to account, and I know that you will stand up for that principle because that is what you believe in. It is absolutely at the heart of our political system.

Mr Speaker-Elect, you take the wellbeing of everybody who works in this building, and of Members, very seriously. This is a fevered and imaginative place that we all work in. People are put under enormous stress, and both staff and Members of this House sometimes find themselves in a lonely and desperate place because of that. I know that you take your responsibilities in that area very seriously and that you want to make this an even more compassionate and humane place in which to work.

Mr Speaker-Elect, thank you for your work and for taking this job on, but also for assuring us that you will always stand up for the democratic values that this House represents and the power of an elected Parliament to express its views and hold the Executive to account, because that is the whole principle behind our parliamentary democracy.

Mr Speaker-Elect: Just for the record, the score had come through and England could not win; that is why I wasn't looking at the television. [*Laughter.*]

8.32 pm

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): Congratulations, Mr Speaker-Elect. Some Members on the Scottish National party Benches thought that we might salute you by singing the "Ode to Joy", but we got into a little bit of trouble the last time we tried that when you were in the Chair. I am sure that the Father of the House would not have minded though, and we congratulate him on chairing today's proceedings.

All the candidates said that they would protect and respect the rights of the third party and the smaller parties in this House, and we appreciate and look forward to that. Not quite as many SNP Members are here as there might have been in other circumstances, but we look forward to coming back in even greater numbers after 12 December to congratulate you more fully, Mr Speaker-Elect. Your predecessor presided over historic times and I think there are historic times yet to come. Perhaps you will be presiding over independence for Scotland. We look forward to the years to come and wish you every success.

8.33 pm

Jo Swinson (East Dunbartonshire) (LD): I thank the Father of the House for the way in which he conducted this election. Congratulations from the Liberal Democrat Benches on your new role, Mr Speaker-Elect. You have been clear that you want to be a strong champion for Back Benchers in this place, and have always conducted yourself with good humour and taken great care of Members in this place. The focus that you placed on the importance of health and wellbeing—particularly mental health—in your election campaign is very welcome indeed for those who work here, including Members and others in different roles.

Mr Speaker-Elect, you take the Chair at a time of great challenge for our democracy. The issues of security that you have championed as Deputy Speaker are more important than ever, with increasing threats. The focus on stamping out the unacceptable culture of bullying and harassment is hugely important. I hope you will also continue the work of modernisation of this place that we have seen in the past decade. I welcome your pledge on outreach to make sure that we reach out to

disadvantaged groups. We should none of us be happy until this place properly represents the communities that we serve.

I wish you well in your new role. It is not one that will necessarily be a popularity contest where you will find yourself welcomed by everybody, but I may at least hope that you will frustrate the various parts of this House equally.

Mr Speaker-Elect: I call the right hon. Nigel Dodds.

8.34 pm

Nigel Dodds (Belfast North) (DUP): Thank you, Mr Speaker-Elect. It gives me great pleasure to be able to call you that and to wish you well. I want to thank the Father of the House for the way that he conducted the election, and the staff of the House as well. You have already demonstrated in your role in the Chair on certain occasions how you intend to conduct yourself, and I think that will be welcome across the House. I think that the House is looking for a breath of fresh air and a way forward that is broadly based, and your vote tonight reflects a broad consensus across the House. I wish you extremely well for the future, and your family. Of course, with all the challenges that you have been through in recent times, you have come through that all the stronger, and much admired. You have been a good friend, not just when you were seeking votes but long before that. Thank you.

The Prime Minister: I have to signify to the House the pleasure of Her Majesty that the House should present their Speaker this day at 9.35 pm in the House of Peers for Her Majesty's Royal Approbation.

Mr Speaker-Elect: Order. The House is suspended until 9.30 pm.

8.36 pm

Sitting suspended.

MESSAGE TO ATTEND THE LORDS COMMISSIONERS

Message from the Lords Commissioners delivered by the Lady Usher of the Black Rod.

The Speaker-Elect, with the House, went up to be presented to the Lords Commissioners for Her Majesty's Royal Approbation; and returned.

Mr Speaker: I have to report that this House has been in the House of Lords where Her Majesty has been pleased, by Her Majesty's Commissioners, to approve the choice made of myself for the office of Speaker.

My first duty to the House is to repeat my respectful acknowledgements and my grateful thanks for the great honour you have conferred upon me in placing me in the Chair and to renew the assurance of my entire devotion to the service of the House.

May I personally say thank you, folks?

ADJOURNMENT

Resolved, That this House do now adjourn.—(Mr Rees-Mogg.)

9.49 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 4 November 2019

CABINET OFFICE

Work of the Department

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Oliver Dowden): The Cabinet Office sits at the heart of Government, overseeing the delivery of the Prime Minister's priorities and policies, and ensuring that taxpayers' money is focused on high-quality public services. The Government need to do more, and better, for less, and we are achieving this with new ways of working. Procurement has undergone significant reform since the collapse of Carillion, the construction company, in 2018.

Between 2010 and 2015, the Cabinet Office helped drive Government efficiencies of £52 billion. Its work to cut costs and make savings, while supporting Departments to operate more effectively, has continued at pace across digital, procurement, fraud and beyond. At the same time, the Cabinet Office has focused on improving infrastructure delivery, maintaining the integrity of the union and co-ordinating national security. It has also launched significant new initiatives, including improved cyber-security, the Office for Veterans' Affairs and the Geospatial Commission.

Value for taxpayers through outsourcing and commercial policy reform

Government Departments are working more closely with industry on quality public services and value for money, driving a reform agenda from the "Outsourcing Playbook" of guidelines, rules and principles launched in February 2019. This complements existing compulsory guidance, such as HM Treasury's Green and Orange Books.

It also builds on our investment since 2010 in a stronger functional model, which has released significant cash and operational benefits through robust central leadership. In all, 14 Government functions across the civil service affect every civil servant and every part of Government. Each function sets strategies for efficiency and effectiveness, driving continuous improvement and leading to better quality services for citizens.

We estimate that from 2016-17, at least £2.5 billion in commercial benefits has been achieved by the central commercial team, working with Departments. In addition, we estimate that central procurement expertise and frameworks have delivered around £2 billion of benefits.

Our debt function, and its innovative debt market integrator policy—which provides additional capacity and capability—has collected at least £400 million between 2016-17 and 2017-18.

Our fraud and error function established the world's first profession for counter fraud. It has identified counter fraud and error savings of at least £300 million across Government since 2017 and helped save at least £200 million via national fraud initiatives. It promotes the UK as a world leader in public sector counter fraud, well-positioned to share international best practice and contribute to the global fight against fraud and corruption.

The grants management function has developed the Government grants information system—the most comprehensive picture of the grants landscape published by Government online. Across Government it has helped managers to make more effective grants and has enabled the identification of inefficiencies and fraud, delivering value for money on taxpayers' spending.

Cutting property costs from the central Government estate

The Government are also transforming their use of land and property. In 2017-18 we cut running costs for central Government estates by £22 million and took out 156,000 square metres—contributing to wider running cost savings of £760 million, in real terms, since 2010. Since 2015, sales of surplus property have raised an estimated £2.5 billion. Since 2013, the One Public Estate programme has invested £70 million across the public sector, including local Government. This has supported the collection of over £140 million in capital receipts and saving over £20 million of running costs.

Harnessing the power of digital for Government and the public

Making Government digital has been a major reform area since 2017. We estimate that from 2016-17 the Government Digital Service has enabled total benefits of around £1.9 billion with its advice on more streamlined and value-for-money approaches. The public has responded positively to our focus on digital: the number of users accessing GOV.UK Verify rose by 4.5million between October 2017 and October 2019.

Supporting our veterans with better long-term outcomes

The UK aims to lead the world in its support for veterans. From its position at the centre of Government, the new Office for Veterans' Affairs ensures that every Department plays its part in bringing about better outcomes for veterans, particularly in terms of their mental health, jobs and homes. With £5 million of funding secured for next year, the OVA will ensure that Departments work together, and with charities, to support veterans and showcase their contributions to society during and after leaving service.

Unlocking economic value through the new Geospatial Commission

The Cabinet Office aims to unlock up to £11 billion of economic value a year by making better location data accessible. A new digital map of underground pipes and cables will help save lives and reduce disruption caused by their being struck in error: pilot projects have begun in London and the North East. We are on track to deliver our National Geospatial Strategy in spring 2020, and also the digital OpenMastermap commitment.

Strengthening the UK's cyber security

In its first three years, the National Cyber Security Strategy has driven transformational change across Government and society. The National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), which links world-class intelligence capabilities with outward-facing public engagement, has given the UK an internationally-respected national technical authority.

Tackling the cyber threat relies on the UK having the necessary skills, talent, innovation and research. The National Cyber Security Programme has invested heavily in the domestic cyber sector, with funding and expert support for start-ups creating a pipeline of the services and expertise we need to remain a world-leading 21st century economy.

An ambitious international agenda complements domestic cyber interventions. Through diplomacy we seek to build consensus on the universal benefits of a free, open and secure cyberspace and shape the development of norms that dovetail with our values.

[HCWS82]

Business: Pre-election Period

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith):

The Prime Minister has today written to ministerial colleagues providing guidance on the conduct of Government business during the pre-election period. The Cabinet Secretary has also issued guidance to civil servants on their conduct during this period. The guidance comes into force at 00:01 on Wednesday 6 November.

Copies of the documents have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on www.gov.uk.

Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000: Statutory Review of Sums

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General (Oliver Dowden): As required under the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA), this statement confirms that the Government will not be making an order during the course of this Parliament to alter the specified sums and reporting thresholds for (broadly) donations and loans to political parties and candidates.

PPERA allows the Secretary of State or the Minister for the Cabinet Office to amend the majority of the sums and reporting thresholds contained in the Act by order. This can be done either to reflect an alteration in the value of money (e.g. arising from a change in inflation rates) or to give effect to a recommendation made by the Electoral Commission.

Where the Secretary of State or the Minister for the Cabinet Office decides not to amend the sums contained in part 4, part 4A, schedule 11, section 95(B)(6), schedule 11 A, schedule 15 and schedule 19A of the Act, a statement must be made to Parliament explaining why. Broadly, these provisions set the sums and reporting thresholds relating to donations and loans to political parties and permitted participants in referendums.

The Government had no grounds to consider the existing sums in PERA to be inappropriate. With the date now set for an early general election on 12 December, we are now unable to prepare and lay secondary legislation by the end of this Parliament in any event.

[HCWS78]

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

UK Space Agency: Sustainable Development

The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Chris Skidmore): The UK Space Agency is offering up to £8 million in grant funding to tackle sustainable development challenges in developing and emerging countries.

These challenges include the growing need for developing countries around the world to build resilience to the effects of climate change. Today's funding will help to forge new partnerships with countries and better understand their needs.

This round of funding includes a collaboration with Australia's national science agency CSIRO, who will provide match funding and invite UK organisations and other international partners to work with them on projects to deliver sustainable benefits to small island developing states in the Pacific.

The funding comes from the UK Space Agency's international partnership programme, a £30 million-a-year-programme funded by the global challenges research fund.

Through supporting satellite-led information projects, the international partnership programme makes a real and practical difference to the lives of citizens and builds skills and expertise.

This is the third round of funding from the international partnership programme, which already supports 33 projects in 44 countries. These projects help developing countries tackle a wide range of challenges including deforestation, food security and disaster resilience.

In addition, this call invites consortiums to bid on any topic with any developing country. This will help to forge new partnerships with countries and understand their needs ahead of a follow-on funding call to underpin operational capabilities.

The international partnership programme is the world's largest space for a sustainable development programme, involving 120 UK organisations and 147 international organisations since 2016. I am pleased to note that the programme was recently recognised by Space and Satellite Professionals International in the "Better Satellite World" awards.

[HCWS73]

Shale Gas Exploration

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Andrea Leadsom): This statement provides an update on the Government's policy regarding shale gas exploration.

The Government continue to recognise the importance of natural gas as a source of secure and affordable energy as we aim to reach net zero emissions by 2050. The Committee on Climate Change predicts that we will still be consuming almost 70% of the gas we consume today in 2050 under our net zero target as significant reductions across building, industry and power are offset by demand for gas to produce hydrogen. It is therefore critical that the UK continues to have good access to natural gas from both domestic and international markets.

Given shale gas has the potential to provide a new source of domestic energy, the Government have supported the development of the UK shale gas industry. Domestic gas production provides jobs and other economic benefits. The industry is currently in an exploration phase and the Government have always been clear that it will only allow development in a way which is safe and sustainable—both for the environment and local people. We have therefore taken a precautionary, evidence-based approach to exploring this potential, underpinned by world-leading environmental and safety regulations.

Following seismic events in 2011 that were connected to shale gas exploration, the Government introduced regulations to mitigate these risks. A traffic light system was introduced to monitor real-time seismic activity during operations, with a clear framework for stopping operations in the event of specified levels of seismic activity.

The Government also introduced tighter controls over the shale gas industry through the Infrastructure Act 2015. This included the requirement for operators to obtain hydraulic fracturing consent from the Secretary of State which requires careful consideration and detailed scrutiny of the necessary technical and legislative requirements. This consent ensures that all the necessary environmental and health and safety permits have been obtained before activities can commence.

While the regulatory and legal framework for shale gas activities has operated effectively to date, it is right that Government and regulators regularly review whether it remains fit for purpose in light of further evidence from shale gas operations.

Cuadrilla, a private company exploring for onshore oil and gas, obtained hydraulic fracturing consent in 2018 to undertake shale gas exploration activity at their site at Preston New Road, Lancashire. Hydraulic fracturing operations took place in 2018 and 2019. Their operations were tightly controlled by the relevant independent regulators, including the Oil and Gas Authority, who are responsible for regulating the licensing of exploration and development of England's onshore oil and gas reserves, including shale gas.

Following a seismic event of magnitude 2.9 on 26 August 2019, hydraulic fracturing at Preston New Road was suspended by the Oil and Gas Authority, in accordance with its strict regulatory controls. While seismicity was at a level below that at which we would expect significant damage, seismic activity at this level does impact local communities and was clearly unacceptable. An event of this significance was considered highly unlikely in the detailed plan that Cuadrilla provided to the regulator before their activities began.

In parallel to its action following the 26 August 2019 event, the Oil and Gas Authority has been analysing in detail data drawn from Cuadrilla's earlier operations that took place at Preston New Road last year. This included commissioning a series of expert reports to better understand and learn from the induced seismicity observed in 2018. The Government have recently received these reports and they are being published alongside a summary of their findings by the Oil and Gas Authority today. The Oil and Gas Authority summary report contains a number of findings and interim conclusions and highlights that the causes of seismicity are highly dependent on local geology. While we cannot draw definitive direct comparisons between this site-specific evidence and other prospective shale gas sites, the limitations of current scientific evidence mean it is difficult to predict the probability and maximum magnitude of any seismic events, either in the Fylde or in other locations.

The Government have always been clear that we will take a precautionary approach and only support shale gas exploration if it can be done in a safe and sustainable way, and that we will be led by the science on whether this is indeed possible. It remains our policy to minimise disturbance to those living and working nearby, and to prevent the risk of any damage.

The Oil and Gas Authority intends to commission further research to incorporate new data from Cuadrilla's more recent operations. The Oil and Gas Authority has made clear that it cannot evaluate with confidence whether a proposal to resume hydraulic fracturing in the Fylde, or to start operations elsewhere, will not cause unacceptable levels of seismicity. The OGA is therefore unlikely to approve future hydraulic fracture plans unless new evidence is presented.

On the basis of the current scientific evidence, Government are confirming today that they will take a presumption against issuing any further hydraulic fracturing consents. This position, an effective moratorium, will be maintained until compelling new evidence is provided which addresses the concerns around the prediction and management of induced seismicity. While future applications for hydraulic fracturing consent will be considered on their own merits by the Secretary of State, in accordance with the law, the shale gas industry should take the Government's position into account when considering new developments.

Finally, alongside the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, I can confirm that the Government will not be taking forward proposed planning reforms in relation to shale gas that were subject to consultation last year. These include the proposals on the principles of a permitted development right for non-hydraulic exploratory shale gas development; making community pre-application consultation compulsory for shale gas development; and proposals to bring shale production development into the nationally significant infrastructure projects (NSIP) regime. Full Government responses which summarise the responses to these consultations have been published today.

[HCWS68]

TREASURY

Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance

The Chief Secretary to the Treasury (Rishi Sunak): The Government will bring forward regulations that will increase most tax credits rates and thresholds and will increase the Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance rates in line with the general rise in prices as measured by the September 2019 Consumer Price Index. The annual up-rating of benefits will take place for Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance in the first full week of the tax year. In 2020, this will be the week beginning 6 April.

The annual up-rating process takes into account a variety of measures:

The majority of working-age benefits were frozen at their 2015-16 levels for four years under the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. From April 2020, the majority of elements and thresholds in Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit will be increased by CPI (1.7%). In line with established practice and the Office for Budget Responsibility's expectations in their welfare forecast, the maximum rate of the childcare element, the family element, the withdrawal rate and the income disregards will remain unchanged.

Child Benefit will be increased in line with CPI (1.7%) from April 2020.

As set out in legislation, Guardian's Allowance will be uprated in line with prices, measured by CPI (1.7%).

The full list of proposed benefit and credit rates will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses in due course. [HCWS75]

DEFENCE

Armed Forces Training: Ukraine

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace): The UK military training mission in Ukraine, Operation Orbital has been extended by a further three years to March 2023. UK armed forces personnel deployed on Operation Orbital have trained over 17,500 members of the armed forces of Ukraine since 2015. It is much appreciated by the Ukrainians and has helped to save lives. The training is focused on building the resilience and capacity of the Ukrainian armed forces. It includes the identification of mines and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), infantry skills, medical care and logistics. In 2018, the training was expanded to include anti-armour, counter-sniping and mortar planning. In early 2019, Operation Orbital was expanded to include training and support to the Ukrainian navy. We intend to develop it further over the next three years with more focus on maritime support and at the institutional and operational level.

This extension of Operation Orbital will mean we can train thousands more personnel in the armed forces of Ukraine and continue to make a real difference in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. [HCWS84]

Shipbuilding

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace): I have today published Sir John Parker's review of the implementation of the National Shipbuilding strategy. I am very grateful for Sir John's efforts in producing this review and are delighted that he has identified so much positive progress. Sir John noted how Defence has embraced the strategy with enthusiasm and evident cultural change. A copy of the review has been placed in the Library of the House and it is available on www.gov.uk.

To build on the success and progress we have made so far, this Government are committed to reinvigorating British shipbuilding industry for both the civil and military sectors and investing in the next generation to ensure a pipeline of skills for the future. That is why the Prime Minister has appointed me to act as the Shipbuilding Tsar on behalf of this Government, to better realise the potential that this sector can offer across the four Home Nations and to reinvigorate UK shipbuilding. This role brings together other Government Departments to shape policies and strategies. As Shipbuilding Tsar, I will work closely with my colleagues across Government to bring together the brilliant work already being done, and to ensure British shipbuilding thrives.

A significant success already delivered by this key strategy and Sir John's recommendations is the Type 31 preferred bidder announcement to Babcock with contract award due by the end of the year. This major milestone demonstrates a transformation in the way this Department can deliver a rigorous warship acquisition programme securing the best capability for our armed forces and extraordinary value for money for the taxpayer. It is an

exemplar of what Sir John Parker envisaged and has shown that the MOD can deliver contracts with a grip on content, specification, design and pace.

Sir John also acknowledged the impressive export success of the Type 26 which has already been selected as the baseline design to deliver nine Hunter class frigates for the Royal Australian Navy and up to 15 Canadian Surface Combatants for the Royal Canadian Navy. We will continue to build on this success and work alongside the Department for International Trade to deliver a competitive naval export plan. This will identify and strengthen opportunities for British shipbuilding and the wider supply chain.

Across Government, a huge amount of work is under way to review the pace and nature of the forward warship programme and to understand the skills needed to design and deliver these ships and their systems. We are already working collaboratively with industry to align these priorities and ensure we maintain the industrial base required to deliver future capability and platforms for our armed forces. [HCWS85]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group: Annual Report

The Minister for Crime, Policing and the Fire Service (Kit Malthouse): My noble Friend the Minister of State, Home Office (Baroness Williams of Trafford) has today made the following written ministerial statement:

I am pleased to announce the publication of the first annual report of the Biometrics and Forensic Ethics Group. The group was established to meet the current needs for ethical review following the expansion of the National DNA Database Ethics Group remit and provides Ministers with independent advice on matters relating to data ethics and ethical issues in forensic science and biometrics.

I would like to thank the group for their strategic advice concerning the use of biometric identifiers and for their continued oversight of the work of the Forensic Information Databases Service Strategy Board. Technologies pertaining to forensics and biometrics are rapidly evolving and the recommendations from the group are more relevant than ever before, particularly with the expansion of the group's remit this year to include ethical problems posed by analysis of large data sets.

The Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group annual report can be viewed on the website of the group at <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/biometrics-and-forensics-ethics-group> and a copy will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses. [HCWS79]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Unauthorised Encampments: Police Powers

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): Today I am announcing the Government's plans to consult on criminalising the act of trespassing

when setting up an unauthorised encampment in England and Wales. I recognise the distress and misery that some unauthorised encampments cause to many communities and businesses across the country. Currently, this kind of trespass is a civil matter and the powers available to the police are limited.

My predecessor, my Right hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid), announced to the House of Commons on 6 February that we would carry out a public consultation on amending the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 to lower the criteria that must be met for the police to be able to direct people away from unauthorised sites. He also announced that the Home Office would conduct a review of how trespassing while setting up an unauthorised encampment could be made a criminal offence in England and Wales, learning lessons from other countries like the Republic of Ireland, where this is already a criminal offence.

I am announcing today that having considered the legislation in the Republic of Ireland, I would like to test the appetite to go further than the original proposals. I would like to broaden the existing categories of criminal trespass to cover trespassers on land who are there with the purpose of residing in their vehicle for any period, and to give the police the relevant powers to arrest offenders in situ and to seize any vehicles or other property on unauthorised encampments promptly.

Tomorrow, we will launch a public consultation on whether criminalising unauthorised encampments would be preferable to the amendments we originally proposed to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994, and if so, how it should work. The consultation will be available tomorrow at www.gov.uk/government/consultations/strengthening-police-powers-to-tackle-unauthorised-encampments and will be open for four months. A copy of the consultation will also be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

I thank Members for their continued engagement on this important issue.

[HCWS80]

Terrorism

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): Today, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) changed the UK national terrorism threat level from ‘SEVERE’ to ‘SUBSTANTIAL’. This means that a terrorist attack is likely.

The decision to change the threat level is taken by JTAC independently of Ministers. JTAC conducts a formal review of the terrorism threat level every six months.

This is a systematic, comprehensive and rigorous process, based on the very latest intelligence and analysis of internal and external factors which drive the threat.

Despite the change in the threat level, terrorism remains one of the most direct and immediate risks to our National Security.

‘SUBSTANTIAL’ continues to indicate a high level of threat; and an attack might well occur without further warning.

As ever, the public should remain vigilant and report any concerns they may have to the police.

Government, police and intelligence agencies will continue to work tirelessly to address the threat posed by terrorism in all its forms. The threat level is kept under constant review.

[HCWS76]

Work of the Department

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): Today I am updating Parliament on the work of the Home Office since 2010.

The first duty of Government is to protect the public. Since 1782, the Home Office has led work to keep the country safe from those who seek to do the country and its citizens harm. In doing so, we make a vital contribution to the Government’s plan for a stronger, fairer and outward-looking country.

The Home Office has a responsibility to tackle crime, fight terrorism, and secure our borders.

Crime, Policing and Fire

The Government have promoted public safety by strengthening policing capabilities, our response to serious violence, domestic abuse and extremism, strengthened our response to fires and civil emergencies and the harm that they cause and strengthened the safeguards on which vulnerable people rely.

We have strengthened the local democratic accountability of police forces through the introduction of police and crime commissioners (PCCs) in 2013, enabled greater collaboration between emergency services by providing powers for PCCs to take on responsibility for fire and rescue services (Policing and Crime Act 2017), provided powers for PCCs, and supported strong and integrated city regions with Mayors performing the role of a PCC.

We have supported our frontline police officers by providing £7.5 million to fund the national police wellbeing service and a £10 million fund to support the deployment of tasers. We announced at the Queen’s Speech plans for a Police Protection Bill to put the police covenant on a statutory footing—giving legal protection to police drivers when pursuing a subject or responding to an emergency, and allowing special constables to join the Police Federation.

We responded to increased demands on our police, by providing the best police funding settlement in a decade in 2019-20, with total funding increasing by over £1 billion (including council tax) and by launching a recruitment campaign for 20,000 additional police officers over the next three years. £144 million was awarded, over a five-year period, for an uplift in armed policing capability and capacity in England and Wales to ensure we can respond more quickly and effectively to a terrorist attack (2017-18).

We have tackled the harm caused by drugs and serious violence through a new drug driving offence (Crime and Courts Act 2013), new powers to seize drug cutting agents (Serious Crime Act 2015), tackling “legal highs” (Psychoactive Substances Act 2016), tougher controls on knives and corrosive substances (Offensive Weapons Act 2019), funding £100 million in 2019-20 to support a surge in police operational activity and investing in violence reduction units. Establishing the national county lines co-ordination centre that has led to over 2,500 arrests, over 3,000 individuals engaged for safeguarding, and significant seizures of weapons and drugs. We have also changed the law to allow specialist clinicians to prescribe medicinal cannabis in 2018. For the first time in the UK, expert doctors have been given the option to legally issue prescriptions for cannabis-based medicines when they agree that their patients could

benefit from this treatment. However, we are clear that this does not pave the way towards legalising cannabis for recreational use.

We have also introduced measures to reduce and prevent crime to ensure people feel safe in their homes and communities. We have invested £22 million to support early intervention programmes that prevent and tackle serious violence, and an additional £200 million in 2018 for the youth endowment fund to support important work in the community to prevent vulnerable children and young people from being drawn into crime and violence. We also launched a £25 million safer streets fund this year to help areas put measures in place to prevent burglary, theft and other offences in crime hotspots.

We have protected people from harm and supported victims, by tackling forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) through the creation of FGM protection orders and criminalised breach of forced marriage protection orders (2015), a new offence of failing to protect a girl from FGM (2015), extended extra-territorial jurisdiction over FGM offences committed abroad (2015), and brought in a new FGM mandatory reporting duty (2015). We have protected people from domestic abuse by providing access to information through “Clare’s law”, committing £100 million (£80 million announced in 2016; an additional £20 million announced in 2017) to tackle violence against women and girls. We also announced at the Queen’s Speech that we would strengthen the protection and support for victims and their children through the introduction of the Domestic Abuse Bill.

We have tackled the harm caused by extremism through empowering 253 locally-led projects to challenge extremist narratives and increase the resilience of communities as part of our “Building a Stronger Britain Together” programme that has awarded around £9 million of Government funding since 2015, and through establishing the commission for countering extremism in 2018 to drive innovative thinking on how best to tackle extremism. We also launched the first counter-extremism strategy in 2015 to protect communities from the wider social harms caused by extremism. We also increased our funding for security measures to protect religious institutions from hate crime. We have awarded approximately £1.5 million to protect over 130 places of worship through our places of worship protective security programme.

We have published plans to ensure we can keep the public safe online. Working with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), we published the online harms White Paper earlier this year that sets out our plans for world-leading legislation to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online. This package comprises of legislative and non-legislative measures and will ensure companies have appropriate systems and processes in place to deal with harmful content to keep their users safe.

We have supported fire and rescue services to protect the public from fire in England, with the “Fire Kills” campaign contributing to a sustained fall in the number of fires and casualties, strengthening national capabilities to respond to major incidents including flooding, wildfires, or terrorist attacks, and providing stronger national leadership and accountability through the creation of an inspection regime (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of

Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, HMICFRS) in 2017, a new independent Fire Standards Board (2018) and a Fire Protection Board (2019).

Serious and organised crime

The Home Office has also strengthened its response to tackling serious and organised crime.

We created the National Crime Agency (NCA) in 2013 to lead and co-ordinate UK law enforcement’s response to serious and organised crime by strengthening the UK’s borders, fighting economic crime, fraud, corruption and cyber-crime, and protecting children and young people from sexual exploitation and abuse. Since 2013, NCA operations have led to over 12,800 arrests in the UK and overseas, and over 8,200 children safeguarded. We also have disrupted serious and organised crime by establishing a network of regional organised crime units (ROCs).

We published a new serious and organised crime strategy in 2018 to tackle the evolving threat and the increasing resilience and adaptability of criminal networks. The overarching strategic aim is that there will be no safe space for serious and organised criminals to operate. On 29 October we announced a review that will enhance the response to serious and organised crime. The review will look to identify ways of bolstering the response to threats such as county lines, people trafficking and drugs.

We have tackled the harm of modern slavery by becoming the first country in the world to introduce dedicated modern slavery legislation (Modern Slavery Act 2015) that included slavery and trafficking prevention and risk orders, by ensuring perpetrators can receive a maximum life sentence for these appalling crimes and by establishing the UK Anti-Slavery Commissioner. We have also invested £33.5 million into the modern slavery fund, delivered an ambitious package of reforms to the national referral mechanism (NRM), and launched the single competent authority in 2019. We have seen a six fold increase since December 2016 in the number of police led modern slavery operations (over 1,200 live operations as at the end of 2018-19).

We have made a significant investment in tackling all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse in recent years and the step change in our response is already drawing this hidden crime out of the shadows as demonstrated by a 227% increase in reporting of child sexual abuse offences to police since 2013. We have announced an additional £30 million to safeguard children from child sexual exploitation and abuse. This additional funding, taken together with an additional 20,000 officers and more money for prosecutors and prison places, will help us redouble our efforts to tackle child sexual abuse. The additional funding will build on our significant investment in recent years, which included £40 million in a package of measures to protect children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation in February 2017 and a further uplift of £21 million to improve how our law enforcement agencies reduce the volume of offending and pursue the most dangerous and prolific offenders, announced in September 2018. In 2016 all UK police forces, and the National Crime Agency, were connected to the child abuse image database, allowing them to identify and protect victims quicker than before. We are also leading international efforts to tackle what is a cross-border crime through the Five Country Ministerial and the UK-funded WePROTECT Global Alliance summit.

We have tackled cyber-crime through launching cyber-crime units in each of the 43 police forces across England and Wales, and teams to tackle illicit use of the dark web across regional and organised crime units. We also established the national cyber-crime unit in 2013, a powerful new unit within the National Crime Agency to collaborate with partners to fight cyber-crime, protect the public and reduce harm to the UK from online crime.

We have recognised the impact that economic crime has on the public and how this underpins serious and organised crime. The national economic crime centre (NECC) was established to act as the national authority for the UK's law enforcement response, which froze £65 million worth of assets in the first year and in 2018-19 almost £217 million of the proceeds of crime was collected. The global standard-setter for anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing, the financial action task force, assessed in 2018 that the UK has the strongest regime of over 60 countries assessed to date. Since 2014, the joint money laundering taskforce has provided a mechanism for law enforcement and the financial sector to share information and work more closely to tackle money laundering and economic crime. In January 2019, the Government established a new public-private partnership to tackle economic crime, and in July 2019 we published a new asset recovery action plan and a public-private economic crime plan. We also introduced new legislation, the Criminal Finances Act 2017, that improved our ability to tackle money laundering and corruption and recover the proceeds of crime and counter-terrorist financing. This included the creation of unexplained wealth orders that required those suspected of corruption to explain the sources of their wealth, and helped to facilitate the recovery of illicit wealth, stopping criminals using the UK as a safe haven for the proceeds of international corruption.

Security and counter-terrorism

The Home Office is responsible for keeping the United Kingdom safe from the threat of terrorism.

We have equipped our law enforcement and emergency responders with capabilities to protect citizens against the threat from terrorism and provided an additional £160 million for counter-terrorism policing this year (2019-20) taking funding for counter-terrorism policing to over £800 million. From July 2010 to June 2019 there have been 2,661 persons arrested, with 1,667 charged for terrorism-related activity under the Terrorism Act 2000 and subsequent legislation. In addition, we continue to provide executive oversight of MI5, under the Security Service Act 1989 (amended in 1996).

We have introduced legislation which balanced new powers to help the UK respond to the threat of terrorism and protect the public with safeguards for civil liberties. We introduced the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 to close gaps in existing counter-terrorism legislation and ensure compatibility with the digital age, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 increased the legal powers and capabilities of law enforcement and intelligence agencies to disrupt terrorism and prevent individuals from being radicalised, and the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011 (TPIMs) introduced a new system to replace the control order system.

We strengthened our response to tackling terrorism following the attacks in 2017 that claimed 36 lives and changed the lives of many more. We launched a strengthened counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST)

in 2018; introduced the victims of terrorism unit to ensure support to all those affected by terror attacks in the UK and overseas; and both MI5 and counter-terrorism policing conducted reviews to learn lessons and improve the operational response.

The Home Office has stopped and prevented dangerous groups from harming UK citizens. We have added 33 groups to the list of proscribed organisations, extended the proscription of Hezbollah and implemented 10 name change orders covering 20 aliases. The Home Office has also hardened the country's defences against hostile state activity. Following the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in Salisbury in March 2018, we worked with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to expel 23 Russian diplomats who had been identified as undeclared Russian intelligence officers. The Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019 included a power for the police to stop individuals at UK ports and the Northern Ireland border area to determine if they are or have been involved in hostile state activity, and we are currently considering whether further primary legislation is required in this area. We have also ensured the removal of people who pose a threat to this country to keep our citizens safe. We enabled the deportation of Abu Qatada and removal of other terror suspects who pose a risk to the safety of this country and whose presence would not be conducive to the public good. We achieved the extradition of Abu Hamza to the US where he has been convicted of serious terrorist charges.

We have ensured that communities are safe by preventing vulnerable individuals from radicalisation and rehabilitating them where necessary. We have provided support to individuals assessed as being vulnerable to radicalisation through the Channel programme. During 2017-2018, a total of 7,318 individuals were referred to the Prevent programme with 1,314 individuals referred on to, and supported by, Channel. We have also worked with civil society organisations to deliver Prevent local projects to around 300,000 people from 2014 to build resilience to terrorist and extremist ideology.

We have worked to ensure that we tackle terrorism and protect our citizens by working with tech companies to remove illegal terrorist content from the internet. We showed global leadership by playing a key role in the establishment of the global internet forum to counter terrorism to ensure international co-ordination on this issue, and we announced in 2018 the development of new technology to automatically detect terrorist video content on any online platforms.

We have developed and implemented robust investigatory capabilities with strong privacy protections enabled by the world-leading Investigatory Powers Act 2016, which maintains essential powers and enhances safeguards to underpin intelligence agency and law enforcement operations to protect the public. We have signed the world-first data access agreement with the US, which will strengthen and speed up investigations into organised crime, child abuse and other serious crimes. We have also established a world-leading oversight regime through the office of Investigatory Powers Commissioner (IPC) to oversee the use of these powers, and the Office for Communications Data Authorisations, under the remit of the IPC, which independently authorises requests for communications data. On encryption, we have led international efforts to stop companies designing out their ability to access communications, even where this access is necessary to save lives.

We have also published the world leading counter-unmanned aircraft strategy in October 2019 that will allow us to harness and safeguard the economic and social potential drones can bring to the UK and to protect the public from malicious or negligent use.

Border, immigration and citizenship system

We have tackled illegal immigration by doubling the maximum penalty for employing an illegal worker to £20,000, simplifying right to work checks and strengthening the ability to collect unpaid penalties (Immigration Act 2014). These measures allowed us to deport foreign criminals under “deport first; appeal later”. We have shut down bogus colleges; and cracked down on illegal working and sham marriages. We also introduced the Immigration Act 2016 provided new powers for councils to crack down on unscrupulous landlords and evict illegal migrants more quickly, extended the successful “deport first; appeal later” measures, and created a new offence of illegal working which means people who are here illegally cannot benefit from working.

We have tackled foreign national offenders, deporting almost 50,000 since 2010, and are legislating to increase the penalties for those seeking to enter in breach of their deportation order. In 2018-19, immigration enforcement made 593 disruptions (of these 71 were major) against individuals and organised crime groups (OCGs) involved in the exploitation of people through modern slavery and organised immigration crime. This is an increase of 42% and 41 % respectively on the previous year for the number of total disruptions and major disruptions.

The Immigration Act 2016 also introduced the immigration health surcharge to ensure migrants coming to the UK for a time-limited period contribute to the national health service, and the immigration skills charge that placed a levy on businesses to help improve the skills of British workers.

We have transformed our visa operations with the same-day super priority visa service, the only European country to offer a visa decision in 24 hours. We have also reformed the study visa system to tackle abuse, while at the same time the UK remains the second most popular destination in the world for students. University sponsored applications increased by 11% last year to over 202,000—the highest ever level, and 31 % higher than in 2010-11. We have worked with the scientific community to develop a new fast-track visa route for the brightest and best, with a view to launching it later this year. The fast-track immigration route will be designed to attract elite researchers and specialists in science, engineering and technology, ranging from those at the very start of their careers to the winners of internationally recognised prizes and fellowships.

We have tightened up our controls on borders and immigration ahead of and in preparation for our departure from the EU by recruiting up to 1,000 additional Border Force staff. We have committed to end to freedom of movement between the EU and the UK and pave the way for a new points-based system. We have extended ePassport gates to nationals of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, South Korea and the United States showing that global Britain is already open for business.

We have strengthened our borders to help tackle the trafficking of drugs and illegal goods. Border Force

made 43,930 drug seizures from financial year 2010-11 to 2017-18, with an increase in annual drug seizures from 3,954 in 2010-11 to 6,545 in 2017-18.

We successfully developed and launched the EU settlement scheme in March 2019, a free scheme enabling EU citizens resident in the UK to obtain the status they will require to live and work in the UK in future. The latest internal figures show there have been over 2.2 million applications and more than 1.8 million people have been granted status. We are processing up to 20,000 applications a day.

We have reduced asylum claims made in Britain from a peak of 84,000 in 2002 to around half that. In order to dissuade people from making the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean, we have resettled 17,000 of the most vulnerable refugees affected by the conflict in Syria since 2015 and are on track to reach our commitment to resettle 20,000 refugees by 2020. We also increased the amount of money we pay to local authorities to look after unaccompanied asylum-seeking children by up to 33% in May 2019. We granted protection to 18,519 people in year ending June 2019 (up 29% from the previous year).

The Government deeply regret what happened to some members of the Windrush generation and have made it clear that responding to this is a priority. On 24 May 2018 the Home Office announced the Windrush scheme, which ensures that people affected directly, their children born in the UK and those who arrived in the UK as minors can apply for citizenship, or various other immigration products, free of charge. In total, 8,124 individuals have been granted some form of documentation, either under the initial arrangements put in place prior to the establishment of the Windrush scheme or under the Windrush scheme itself.

[HCWS81]

JUSTICE

Judicial Conduct Investigations Office: Annual Report

The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Robert Buckland): With the concurrence of the Lord Chief Justice, I will today publish the thirteenth annual report of the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office (JCIO).

The JCIO supports the Lord Chief Justice and the Lord Chancellor in our joint statutory responsibility for judicial discipline.

The judiciary comprises approximately 23,000 individuals serving across a range of jurisdictions. Over the past year, the JCIO received 1,672 complaints against judicial office holders. Fifty five investigations resulted in disciplinary action.

I have placed copies of the report into the Libraries of both Houses, the Vote Office and the Printed Paper Office. Copies are also available online at: <https://judicialconduct.judiciary.gov.uk/reports-publications/>

[HCWS77]

NORTHERN IRELAND

Independent Reporting Commission: Second Substantive Report

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Julian Smith): I have received the second substantive report from the Independent Reporting Commission (IRC).

The IRC emanated from the Fresh Start agreement of November 2015. The agreement set out the Northern Ireland Executive's commitments around tackling paramilitary activity and associated criminality. This work continues to be taken forward through a Northern Ireland Executive Action Plan which contains 43 recommendations.

This second substantive report builds on the work already undertaken by the Commissioners. While the report provides an update on progress achieved to date, the Commission rightly continues to remind us of the challenging work still to be done. Also, as my predecessor referenced last year, the absence of a functioning executive continues to have an adverse impact on delivery of this important work. I remain resolute in finding a way forward in relation to that.

I would like to thank the Commissioners for all of their work to date.

[HCWS72]

ELECTORAL COMMISSION COMMITTEE

Contingencies Fund Advance: The Electoral Commission

Bridget Phillipson (*Representing the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission*): As a general election will now be held on 12 December, the Electoral Commission will be required to undertake additional unplanned work to provide guidance to parties, non-party campaigners, candidates and electoral administrators; to observe and report on the election; to secure compliance with political finance law in relation to party and campaigner spending; to raise public awareness of the election and voter registration deadlines; and to ensure resilience of the commission's functions through this important electoral event. Because unscheduled electoral events are not included in the plans approved by Speaker's Committee for the main estimate, additional funding will be required.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £2,500,000 will be sought in a supplementary estimate for the Electoral Commission. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £2,500,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

[HCWS70]

INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY COMMITTEE

Contingencies Fund Advance: Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority

Sir Charles Walker (*Representing the Speaker's Committee for the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority*): As a general election will be held on 12 December, the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority will be required to undertake additional unplanned work to support new, departing and returning MPs in setting up and winding up their offices and providing other guidance and support. Unscheduled elections events are not included in the main estimate plans approved by Speaker's Committee for IPSA, and additional funding will therefore be required.

Parliamentary approval for additional resources of £30,150,000 will be sought in a supplementary estimate for IPSA. Pending that approval, urgent expenditure estimated at £30,150,000 will be met by repayable cash advances from the Contingencies Fund.

[HCWS71]

WORK AND PENSIONS

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Mims Davies): The UK did not attend the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (EPSCO) in Brussels on 24 October 2019.

The UK Government have decided that from 1 September until exit day, UK Ministers and officials will only attend EU meetings where the UK has a significant national interest in the outcome of the discussions.

[HCWS69]

Welfare and Pensions Update

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey): I am announcing the proposed social security benefit and pension rates for 2020/21.

More than 10 million people in receipt of working-age benefits will see their payments increase at the rate of inflation next year.

Some 2.5 million people on universal credit and claimants on legacy benefits will receive a 1.7% rise in April. This includes people receiving jobseeker's allowance (JSA), employment and support allowance (ESA), income support, housing benefit and universal credit.

The basic and new state pensions will increase at the highest rate for 8 years, by 3.9%, boosting the retirement incomes of 13 million people. Pensioners receiving the full new state pension will get an extra £344 a year. The basic state pension will increase by £263 a year.

The pension credit standard minimum guarantee for a couple will be £265.20 a week, the basic state pension will be £134.25 per week, the full rate of the new state pension will be £175.20 per week, and the universal credit standard allowance couple one or both over 25 will be £507.37 a month.

The annual up-rating of benefits will take place for state pensions and most other benefits in the first full week of the tax year. In 2020, this will be the week beginning 6 April.

A corresponding provision will be made in Northern Ireland and the Scottish Government will lay its own statutory instrument in respect of increases to carer's allowance in Scotland.

The annual up-rating process takes into account a variety of measures:

The basic and new state pensions will be increased by the Government's "triple lock" commitment, meaning that they will be up-rated in line with the highest of prices (CPI), earnings or 2.5%. Consequently, they will be up-rated by 3.9% (the May-July average weekly earnings figure).

The pension credit minimum guarantee will also be increased by earnings in line with legislation. The pension credit savings credit maximum amount will be increased in line with CPI (1.7%).

Benefits linked to the additional costs of disability, and for carers, are increased by the annual rise in prices (1.7%). A number of other elements—including non-dependent deductions—will also be up-rated in line with prices.

Working age benefits will be increased by CPI (1.7%) from April 2020. Those linked to child tax and working tax credits will be up-rated in line with those benefits.

Universal credit work allowances will be increased in line with CPI (1.7%) from April 2020.

The full list of proposed benefit and pension rates will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses in due course.

This will increase expenditure on social security benefit and pension rates by £5 billion. This includes £3.9 billion more to be spent on pensioner benefits. From April 2020 the yearly basic state pension will be worth over £1900 more in cash terms than in 2010. £1 billion more will also be spent on working-age benefits, ensuring that we continue to support the most vulnerable in society.

[HCWS74]

Petitions

Monday 4 November 2019

PRESENTED PETITION

Petition presented to the House but not read on the Floor

India in the Jammu and Kashmir Region

The petition of residents of Burnley,

Declares that the attached petition calls on the actions of India in the occupied region of Jammu and Kashmir should be resolved to a peaceful conclusion that is acceptable to the residents of Kashmir; notes that the Indian decision to revoke Article 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution has caused killings and human rights violations in Indian occupied Kashmir; further that the communications blackout in Indian occupied Kashmir has been distressing for residents with families in the region and has stifled journalism on the issue; and further that concerned residents of Burnley many of whom have family in the area have self-organised to create a petition that has received over 1046 signatures to call for action on the issue.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to compel the Foreign Secretary to call for an end to the communications lockdown, lifting the curfew and the compliance of all past United Nations resolutions relating to Kashmir by the State of India.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by *Julie Cooper.*]

[P002544]

OBSERVATIONS

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Dispute in Kashmir

The petition of Residents of the City of Glasgow,

Declares that the dispute in Kashmir should be resolved peacefully.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the UK Government to use its international standing to encourage India to engage in a comprehensive and sustained dialogue process with its neighbour Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute, and urge the international community to play its role in securing a just and peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by *Alison Thewliss, Official Report, 4 September 2019; Vol. 664, c. 317.*]

[P002512]

Another petition in the same terms was presented by the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (*Alison Thewliss*) [P002524].

Petitions in the same terms were also presented by the hon. Member for Airdrie and Shotts (*Neil Gray*) [P002516] and the hon. Member for Stretford and Urmston (*Kate Green*) [P002529].

Observations from the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon):

The long-standing position of the UK is that it is for India and Pakistan to find a lasting political resolution on Kashmir, taking into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people; it is not for the UK to prescribe a solution or act as a mediator. We have spoken with the Governments of India and Pakistan on a number of occasions since 5 August.

The Prime Minister has underlined the importance of resolving issues through dialogue to both Prime Minister Modi of India and Prime Minister Khan of Pakistan. The Foreign Secretary has spoken with the Indian Minister of External Affairs to express the UK's concerns around the situation in India-administered Kashmir and call for calm. Lord Ahmad, the Minister for South Asia, has also spoken on a number of occasions with both the Indian High Commissioner, Ruchi Ghanashyam and the Pakistani High Commissioner, Mohammad Nafees Zakaria about the situation, as well as to Minister Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, Minister for Minority Affairs, during his recent visit to New Delhi.

We encourage both India and Pakistan to maintain good relations, but recognise that the pace of progress is for both sides to determine.

HOME DEPARTMENT

Lizanne Zietsman, Isle of Arran

The petition of residents of North Ayrshire and Arran,

Declares that we are deeply concerned by the UK Home Office's decision to refuse Lizanne Zietsman leave to remain in the UK; further that Lizanne has settled on the Island of Arran with her Scottish-born husband and has built a successful business employing local residents; further that she is a valued and respected member of the Arran community which is bewildered and dismayed that the UK Home Office has rejected her application to stay in the UK; and further that an online petition on this matter has received over 16,069 signatures.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Home Office to grant Lizanne leave to remain in the UK so that she can continue to contribute to the Isle of Arran community.

And the petitioners remain, etc. —[Presented by *Patricia Gibson, Official Report, 9 July 2019; Vol. 663, c. 284.*]

[P002488]

Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Seema Kennedy):

The Government does not routinely comment on individual cases.

Reclassification of Ministers of Religion under Immigration Rules

The petition of the residents of Glasgow North East,

Declares that visiting clergy offer respite to dedicated Ministers and bring enormous cultural benefit to the communities they serve; and further that the introduction of severe conditions regarding English language proficiency

and the sharp rise in fees for visas for Ministers of Religion would cause detriment to the communities they wish to serve.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Minister for Immigration, the hon. Member for South Ribble, to revoke the decision to reclassify visiting Ministers of Religion as being Tier 2 visitors under immigration rules.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr Paul Sweeney, *Official Report*, 7 October 2019; Vol. 664, c. 1599.]

[P002526]

Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Seema Kennedy):

The Government recognise the role of faith in our communities, helping to build social cohesion and support our congregations in the UK. The Government recognise too, the value of the contributions, made by members of religious institutions from overseas, which is reflected in dedicated visa arrangements.

The immigration rules for visitors include specific provisions for Ministers of Religion, coming to the UK to undertake pastoral duties. This can include one-off engagements such as conducting ceremonies or leading a service, provided they are not receiving payment.

Beyond this, Tier 2 (Minister of Religion) and Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) offer routes for religious workers who wish to fill positions in the UK, for longer periods. Ministers of Religion play leading roles in our communities and Tier 2 allows them to do so, for up to three years,

with the option to stay longer. It is important to ensure that anyone taking up such a role can communicate with both their congregation and the wider community in which they live and serve, which is why Tier 2 visa holders are required to demonstrate a strong command of English.

Tier 5 (Temporary Worker) offers a dedicated subcategory for religious workers undertaking non-pastoral, supporting roles, for a maximum of two years. As a package of routes, designed to facilitate cultural exchange and knowledge sharing, Tier 5 visa categories do not require English language proficiency.

The changes made to the immigration rules in January 2019 better defined what activities may be undertaken by Tier 5 temporary religious workers, and ensure that those filling positions as Ministers of Religion, may continue to do so, via the correct visa category.

The issue of fees has been raised and the Government acknowledge the extra cost of a Tier 2 visa. However, the Government's policy remains that those who use and benefit most from the immigration system should contribute towards its operation. Tier 2 incurs the greater costs, but, in return it offers the most favourable conditions, whereas, a visit visa for a Minister of Religion carrying out permitted activities for less than six months, attracts the lowest cost of all.

The Government continue to believe that existing visa arrangements for Ministers of Religion and religious workers, strikes the right balance between serving the needs of all congregations and the Government's wider position on integrated communities.

Ministerial Correction

Monday 4 November 2019

ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Draft Common Organisation of the Markets in Agricultural Products and Common Agricultural Policy (Miscellaneous Amendments etc.) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2019

The following is an extract from the debate on the draft Common Organisation of the Markets in Agricultural Products and Common Agricultural Policy (Miscellaneous Amendments etc.) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2019 on 7 October 2019.

George Eustice: We have consulted extensively with the devolved Administrations on the instrument to ensure that the legislation that it amends continues to work while, obviously, respecting the devolution agreements. Most areas covered by the instrument are devolved, with powers transferring to the devolved Ministers. In many cases, the Secretary of State can act on behalf of the devolved Administrations should they give their

consent. In one or two areas relating to enforcement, Wales has chosen to introduce its own statutory instruments, for example in relation to the administration of an apiculture—beekeeping—scheme and some of the design elements of a school milk scheme.

[Official Report, Twenty-fourth Delegated Legislation Committee, 8 October 2019, c. 3.]

Letter of correction from the Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice):

Errors have been identified in my opening speech.

The correct remarks should have been:

George Eustice: We have consulted extensively with the devolved Administrations on the instrument to ensure that the legislation that it amends continues to work while, obviously, respecting the devolution agreements. Most areas covered by the instrument are devolved, with powers transferring to the devolved Ministers. In many cases, the Secretary of State can act on behalf of the devolved Administrations should they give their consent. **In one or two areas, Wales has chosen not to have such a mechanism in the legislation,** for example in relation to the administration of an apiculture—beekeeping—scheme and **legislative powers concerning** some of the design elements of a school milk scheme.

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Monday 4 November 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	53WS	HOME DEPARTMENT—continued	
Shale Gas Exploration	54WS	Unauthorised Encampments: Police Powers	58WS
UK Space Agency: Sustainable Development	53WS	Work of the Department.....	60WS
CABINET OFFICE	51WS	INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY COMMITTEE	67WS
Business: Pre-election Period.....	53WS	Contingencies Fund Advance: Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority	67WS
Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000: Statutory Review of Sums	53WS	JUSTICE	66WS
Work of the Department.....	51WS	Judicial Conduct Investigations Office: Annual Report.....	66WS
DEFENCE	57WS	NORTHERN IRELAND	66WS
Armed Forces Training: Ukraine	57WS	Independent Reporting Commission: Second Substantive Report	66WS
Shipbuilding.....	57WS	TREASURY	56WS
ELECTORAL COMMISSION COMMITTEE	67WS	Tax Credits, Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance	56WS
Contingencies Fund Advance: The Electoral Commission.....	67WS	WORK AND PENSIONS	68WS
HOME DEPARTMENT	58WS	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council	68WS
Biometrics and Forensics Ethics Group: Annual Report.....	58WS	Welfare and Pensions Update.....	68WS
HOME DEPARTMENT	58WS		
Terrorism	59WS		

PETITIONS

Monday 4 November 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE	11P	HOME DEPARTMENT—continued	
Dispute in Kashmir.....	11P	Reclassification of Ministers of Religion under Immigration Rules	12P
HOME DEPARTMENT	12P	PRESENTED PETITION	11P
Lizanne Zietsman, Isle of Arran	12P	India in the Jammu and Kashmir Region.....	11P

MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

Monday 4 November 2019

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS.	5MC	ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS—continued	
Draft Common Organisation of the Markets in Agricultural Products and Common Agricultural Policy (Miscellaneous)		Amendments etc.) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2019.....	5MC

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the Bound Volume should be clearly marked on a copy of the daily Hansard - not telephoned - and *must be received in the Editor's Room, House of Commons,*

**not later than
Monday 11 November 2019**

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT GREATLY FACILITATES THE
PROMPT PUBLICATION OF BOUND VOLUMES

Members may obtain excerpts of their speeches from the Official Report (within one month from the date of publication), by applying to the Editor of the Official Report, House of Commons.

CONTENTS

Monday 4 November 2019

Election of Speaker [Col. 607]

Written Statements [Col. 51WS]

Petitions [Col. 11P]
Not presented on the Floor
Observations

Ministerial Correction [Col. 5MC]

Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
