

**Wednesday
15 January 2020**

**Volume 669
No. 10**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 15 January 2020

House of Commons

Wednesday 15 January 2020

The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

SELECTION

Ordered,

That Sir Alan Campbell, Mike Freer, Rebecca Harris, Amanda Milling, Jessica Morden, Iain Stewart, Mark Tami, Owen Thompson, and Bill Wiggin be members of the Committee of Selection until the end of the current Parliament.—(*Amanda Milling.*)

Oral Answers to Questions

WALES

The Secretary of State was asked—

Welsh Language

1. **Virginia Crosbie** (Ynys Môn) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to support the Welsh language. [900125]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Simon Hart): My Department and I are 100% committed to supporting the Welsh Government's ambition of 1 million Welsh speakers by 2050, as well as to increasing Welsh language services across Whitehall and supporting the growth of the Welsh language in Wales. I am proud that my constituency is home to S4C, and welcome ideas from all Members on ways we can promote the Welsh language.

Virginia Crosbie: I am a keen supporter of the language and a Welsh learner myself. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] *Diolch yn fawr; thank you.* Does the Minister agree that the best way to support the language is through economic prosperity, which means supporting jobs, skilled employment and projects such as *Wylfa Newydd* on Ynys Môn?

Simon Hart: May I start by congratulating my hon. Friend on her fantastic election result? She has already brought an energy and a fizz to her part of the world, which will be appreciated across the House. I know that her father is watching these proceedings from his hospital bed, and he will be as proud as we are that she is among us.

On the Welsh language, I absolutely share my hon. Friend's recognition that a vibrant economy and a vibrant language go hand in hand. The language of Wales is one of the oldest in the world and we are rightly proud of it—even those of us who are perhaps not as fluent as others. On the question of *Wylfa*,

I cannot think of anybody better in the House to take forward that project. I am happy to commit to helping her to do that and I know the Welsh Government will be doing the same, so fingers crossed; we will definitely work together on our shared ambitions in that regard.

Shared Prosperity Fund

2. **Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the shared prosperity fund. [900126]

9. **Chris Elmore** (Ogmore) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the UK shared prosperity fund. [900133]

10. **Anna McMorrin** (Cardiff North) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the UK shared prosperity fund. [900134]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Simon Hart): I have already had productive discussions with the First Minister and his colleagues. Only last week I met Jeremy Miles to discuss the UK shared prosperity fund, and I am excited about the opportunities that the fund will create to bind together the whole United Kingdom, tackling inequality and deprivation across each of our four nations.

Peter Grant: *Diolch yn fawr.* The EU funding that comes to an end in 2020 has delivered more than £2 billion of investment in Wales since 2014. This money has been used according to priorities set in Wales, for Wales, by the Government of Wales. Can the Secretary of State give an assurance that Wales will receive not a single penny less under the Government's funding scheme, and that the priorities for Wales will continue to be set in Wales, by the people and the Parliament of Wales?

Simon Hart: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for strengthening the Union by coming here to support Welsh questions, which is very much appreciated. I hope that I can reassure him by describing the shared prosperity fund as a good news story, because for the first time in 45 years, a substantial sum of money is going to be distributed in Wales by Welsh politicians who are directly accountable to Welsh voters. That has not been the case for some time. The hon. Gentleman is quite right that the collaborative approach I take with the Welsh Government over the distribution of the fund should ensure that it goes to the places where it is most needed, and is not—as some might argue has been the case in the past—blown on vanity projects. The relevant Minister in the Welsh Government is with me on this; we have a shared ambition to ensure that outcome, and to do so collaboratively and efficiently.

Chris Elmore: I am all for strengthening the Union, as most Welsh politicians are. I am completely against nationalism and all it stands for, but the reality is that I am also in favour of supporting the devolution settlement. This funding has always been controlled by the Assembly, so can the Secretary of State confirm that he will rule out subverting the Welsh Government by funding local government directly in Wales? Bypassing the Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales will do nothing to strengthen the Union.

Simon Hart: The reassurance I can give is that nothing contained in the proposals for the shared prosperity fund will in any way drive a coach and horses through the devolution settlement.

Anna McMorris: The Secretary of State answered the hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant) by saying that there would be a “substantial” amount of money. Will he, though, confirm that there will not be a penny less nor a power lost, as the First Minister of Wales put it, to Wales, and that spending decisions will in fact be taken where they should be—by the Welsh Government?

Simon Hart: On the first part of the hon. Lady’s question, our manifesto commitment was clear on that. As for the second part, my discussions with Jeremy Miles so far have been very clear about taking a collaborative approach so that the UK and Welsh Governments, working together, ensure that this money gets to the right place in a timely fashion.

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): May I congratulate the Secretary of State on his new post? I also congratulate my constituency neighbour, the hon. Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies), on his long-anticipated and—may I say?—long-awaited promotion to the Front Bench.

As Wales leaves the European Union, the Secretary of State will be aware, because we have heard it in the questions so far, that there are deep concerns about the continuation of structural and investment funding. I have to say that his answers to my hon. Friends have not been that reassuring so far. Can he clear up the uncertainty now with two unequivocal guarantees—not a penny lost, and the Welsh Government having complete control of the funding?

Simon Hart: On the hon. Gentleman’s first question—there are lots of double questions going on—the answer is yes. That was in the manifesto and we made it clear. As for the second question, the Welsh Government do not even have complete control over the situation now, so he is asking about something that is not even the status quo. I think he should refer to his ministerial and party colleague in Cardiff—Jeremy Miles, who I have spoken to—who is perfectly adamant, and perfectly content, that this should be a joint UK Government-Welsh Government initiative. What the hon. Gentleman is hinting at is actually contrary to the policy of his own party in Cardiff.

Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): May I warmly congratulate my right hon. and good Friend on his appointment as Secretary of State?

Does my right hon. Friend share my concern that since 2000 more than £4 billion of European aid has been spent in Wales but communities have not yet felt the benefit of that money, and the prioritisation of that spend by the Welsh Government has been brought into question by many local authorities and businesses alike? Does he agree that this is an opportunity to reset the formula and reset the way in which money is distributed, and to enable Members of this House to have some influence on how it is spent?

Simon Hart: May I, with your patience, Mr Speaker, start by paying tribute to my right hon. Friend and predecessor? There is a saying in politics: “There is no

such thing as real friends, only sharks circling waiting for a sniff of blood”, but no such situation would describe our relationship. He has done a fantastic job for Wales. He has boundless energy and I know that Wales will benefit from that again.

On my right hon. Friend’s comments about the shared prosperity fund, I hope I can reassure him by saying that this is a reset of the meter of the relationship between the Welsh and the UK Governments. It is absolutely right that he highlights the priority that we should give to this, which is getting the money to the right place in a timely way and in a way that is accountable to Welsh voters as it never has been before.

Sarah Atherton (Wrexham) (Con): *Diolch yn fawr, Mr Speaker.* Under the Welsh Labour Government, Wrexham has missed out on opportunities for the past 20 years. Can the Secretary of State give assurances that Wrexham will now start to receive benefits from the shared prosperity fund?

Simon Hart: May I congratulate my hon. Friend too? It is going to be a day of congratulating new Members, which is a happy place to be.

I hope—my hon. Friend the Under-Secretary will confirm this in due course—that, as far as Wrexham is concerned, the answer is yes. As for growth deals, that is an ongoing and positive development for Wales on which further information will be made available as we proceed. It is absolutely right that my hon. Friend highlights the specifics for her particular part of Wales, and yes, we will certainly comply and co-operate with that.

Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con): May I, too, warmly welcome my right hon. Friend and my hon. Friend the Minister to their positions?

The shared prosperity fund represents a unique opportunity for all parts of Wales to benefit from Brexit. Does my right hon. Friend therefore agree that it is essential that in the design of the architecture of the fund, the priorities of local authorities and the interests of the people they serve should be properly reflected?

Simon Hart: I thank my right hon. Friend for the advice that he has so generously given me over the years. It should be a source of encouragement that the early conversations I have had with the relevant Ministers, including the First Minister in Cardiff, suggest that they are as attuned as we are, or are certainly getting that way, to the need to ensure that the shared prosperity fund money that will be benefiting Wales is targeted at the areas where it is most needed and recognise the arguments being made across all parts of Wales. There is a public perception that this is always just about Cardiff, but this will be about more than just Cardiff, and it is my job and the job of the Welsh Government to ensure that that is the case.

13. [900137] **Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con):** Those on the Opposition Benches see the shared prosperity fund as primarily a constitutional issue, but it is fundamentally an economic issue, and the previous rounds of European funding have failed in their objective of lifting Welsh GDP to EU average levels. Does my right hon. Friend, whom I strongly welcome to

his position, agree that however we design the new shared prosperity fund and however we share the responsibility with the Welsh Government, we cannot repeat the mistakes of the past?

Simon Hart: I thank my right hon. Friend and west Walian neighbour for his question. The answer is yes. One of the reasons we are in this position—one of the reasons the Brexit vote went the way it did in June 2016 and the general election went the way it did in December 2019—is exactly the point he makes: people were beginning to lose faith. They knew that there were substantial sums of money, but somehow it never quite reached the places it should. The new arrangement—the reset to which I referred—will address exactly that point.

Steel Industry

3. **Ruth Jones** (Newport West) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the future of the steel industry in Wales. [900127]

The Secretary of State for Wales (Simon Hart): The UK Government are committed to supporting a productive, modern and vibrant steel industry in Wales. With that in mind, I have already had discussions with the Welsh Government and unions. I plan to visit the steel industry in Wales within the next few days, and I look forward to my meeting later today with the hon. Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden), who has initiated a meeting with other Labour colleagues to discuss the steel sector.

Ruth Jones: We know now that Liberty Steel is cutting 72 jobs in Newport, and although it is based in the seat of my hon. Friend the Member for Newport East (Jessica Morden), those job losses will affect people across our city—east and west. The losses follow the disastrous decision to mothball the Orb steelworks at Christmas. The UK steel industry is disappearing before our eyes, and it is happening on this Government's watch. We can see with Flybe that this Government can take steps to save jobs and industries when they want to, so when will the Secretary of State sit down with his ministerial colleagues and agree a plan that will protect jobs, livelihoods and the steel industry across Newport, Wales and the rest of the UK?

Simon Hart: I am pleased to say that that process is already happening. I am sitting down not only with my ministerial colleagues but with the hon. Lady's ministerial and parliamentary colleagues, as well as unions and management, all in the space of a few days. I am absolutely conscious of the huge impact, uncertainty and worry that the current circumstances are resulting in. I will say it again: it is our shared responsibility with the Welsh Government to steady the situation and rectify the position. There are a number of ways of doing that; energy prices is one, and business rates is another, which we will look at closely to see how we can help.

Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab/Co-op): This is my first appearance at the Dispatch Box in 2020, so may I wish all hon. and right hon. Members a happy new year? I welcome the new Secretary of State to his place, and I wish the Under-Secretary of State for Wales, the hon.

Member for Monmouth (David T. C. Davies), well. Given the average length of tenure of previous Wales Office Ministers, his first achievement will be to last more than a few months. I understand that he is a junior Whip as well, which may be even more challenging.

The Liberty Steel announcement is yet another blow to the steel industry, following Tata Steel's announcement about Orb. Our thoughts are with the steelworkers and their families at this very anxious time. I must commend my hon. Friends the Members for Newport East (Jessica Morden) and for Newport West (Ruth Jones) for all the work they have done on this. I am sure that the Secretary of State has heard Welsh Government Economy Minister Ken Skates ask the UK Government to intervene more directly to reduce energy prices. Will he use his voice in Cabinet to make that call?

Simon Hart: I thank the hon. Lady. I am sure the whole House will want to extend its congratulations to her on becoming a grandmother this week. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] I hope she will not mind my mentioning that for the public record.

The answer to the hon. Lady's question is, of course, that the UK Government made £53 million available in, I think, 2018, by way of compensation for energy prices. The conversation I want to have is also with her colleagues in Cardiff—perhaps she can lead this herself—about business rates, and where the Welsh Government can help the industry in that regard as well. However, the shared ambition to make sure that there is a future for steel in Wales is absolute, and the hon. Lady can rely on the fact that I and my Cabinet colleagues will work to ensure that.

Christina Rees: My question was about energy. In other countries, large companies pay far less for their energy. All that Welsh steelworkers need is a fair deal. Steel is a foundation industry, and this UK Government and this Secretary of State need to do far more. Will the Secretary of State act now, decisively—or will he be just a bystander in the decline of the vital steel industry in Wales?

Simon Hart: The hon. Lady may have misheard me, but I have already commented on the £53 million being made available by way of compensation for energy prices, and I restate what I said just now: one way in which the Welsh Government could step in now, and help significantly with the certainty around steel, is by addressing the issue of business rates. It would be a powerful message if she and I, combined, could make that case to Welsh Government.

Infrastructure

4. **Tonia Antoniazzi** (Gower) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Welsh Government on the resilience of infrastructure in Wales. [900128]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (David T. C. Davies): Last week I met Ken Skates, the Minister for Economy and Transport, to discuss how we can work together on infrastructure in Wales. I look forward to a productive and collaborative relationship with Welsh Government, and with Members in all parts of this House. In particular, I reaffirm this Government's commitment to rebuilding the M4 relief road.

Tonia Antoniazzi: The Secretary of State's predecessor long dodged giving answers to questions about the lack of electrification further west than Cardiff. Will the Secretary of State, and the Minister, do better, and get Swansea and west Wales the investment that they deserve by funding a more integrated system, such as a Swansea Bay metro?

David T. C. Davies: My predecessors felt—and I share their view—that it would have been difficult to justify spending hundreds of millions of pounds on electrifying the line from Swansea to Cardiff, which would not have delivered any decreases in journey times. So we put £5.7 billion into the Great Western main line, £2.8 billion into the Great Western main line modernisation, over £1.5 billion into the Wales and borders route—all investments that have benefited Welsh travellers. We look to continue to do that, and I would be delighted to work with the hon. Lady to develop plans for further rail improvements in west Wales.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Diolch yn fawr, Lefarydd. Dw innau hefyd yn croesawu'r Ysgrifennydd Gwladol newydd a'i Weinidog i'w seddi ac yn gobeithio y cawn ni gydweithio efo nhw. [*Translation: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I also welcome the new Secretary of State and his Minister to their seats, and look forward to working together.*]

Wales currently benefits from EU funding to the tune of £680 million a year, including many infrastructure projects—£4.4 million for Blaenau Ffestiniog, £3.4 million for Tywyn, and £7.5 million for Llanbedr airfield, to mention just a few in my constituency. But as we leave the EU, we sadly leave behind the principles that underpin such funding—principles whose objectives were to tackle deprivation, poverty and inequality. The old political adage says follow the money. Can the Minister and the new Secretary of State allay my fears that, after this Tory Brexit, the money will not mainly find its way into the constituencies presently coloured blue on the political map of Wales?

David T. C. Davies: I ddechrau, a gaf I ddweud diolch yn fawr iawn am y croeso? [*Translation: First of all, may I say thank you very much for the welcome?*] Can I assure the right hon. Lady that this Government are absolutely committed to ensuring that Wales does not lose out by one penny as a result of Brexit. Indeed, as a result of the growth deals that will now be taking place in all parts of Wales, we are going to see hundreds of millions of pounds invested in the economy of Wales, levelling up communities.

Liz Saville Roberts: I am delighted to hear the Minister's commitment that Wales will not lose a single penny. We should be building the whole of our nation. One idea is a railway from north to south, so that we no longer have to travel to the neighbouring nation to go from one end to the other of our country.

I hope that the Minister has had a chance to look at the iTunes charts, where Dafydd Iwan's protest song "Yma o Hyd"—"We're Still Here"—has been going up the charts. It has reached No. 1 this week. It was originally, of course, released in the midst of Thatcher's relentless attacks on Wales, and it might be time to update the lyrics:

"er gwaetha'r hen Foris a'i griw;
ry'n ni yma o hyd."

[*Translation: Despite Boris and his crew, we are still here.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. Minister, answer what you can and we will have to move on.

David T. C. Davies: I thank the right hon. Lady. The north-south link has been talked about for years, and I look forward to seeing some costs on that. East-west links in both north and south Wales have finance available to them, and I very much hope that the Welsh Labour Government will again consider the commitment to the M4 relief road. I congratulate Dafydd Iwan on that fantastic song. As far as the Conservative party and this Conservative Government are concerned, with hundreds of millions of pounds going into growth deals for Wales, his other song, "I'r Gad", springs to mind.

Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con): Has not the whole point about infrastructure and the M4 been missed so far—unless I missed it during the singing—because of the fact that the Severn crossing is now free? Is it not that point that will help Cardiff and Swansea?

David T. C. Davies: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. My predecessor, who managed to get tolls on the Severn bridge scrapped, has done wonders for the south Wales economy. The Welsh Government must now match the commitment shown by the UK Government, by getting the M4 relief road built and continuing to support the south Wales economy through a good transport link.

Mid-Wales Growth Deal

5. **Ben Lake** (Ceredigion) (PC): What recent discussions he has had with (a) the Welsh Government and (b) Welsh local authorities on the mid-Wales growth deal. [900129]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (**David T. C. Davies**): Over the past week I have held discussions with the Welsh Government's Minister for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates, and I look forward to working collaboratively with our partners to discuss the mid and west-Wales growth deal.

Ben Lake: The Minister will be aware that people in Ceredigion and across mid-Wales are keen to see swift progress on the growth deal. With that in mind, will he consider meeting groups and businesses in Ceredigion that are involved in some of those proposals, to see how we can get them implemented as soon as possible?

David T. C. Davies: When I was invited to join the Government, one of the only things that might have dissuaded me was that I was planning to visit Ceredigion with the Welsh Affairs Committee—I believe the hon. Gentleman had arranged for us some whisky tasting and to see some cheese factories. I will therefore take his question as an invitation to visit Ceredigion. I hope it will go on to the Wales Office, and I look forward very much to accepting it—diolch yn fawr.

North Wales Growth Deal

6. **Robin Millar** (Aberconwy) (Con): What recent progress has been made on the development of the north Wales growth deal. [900130]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Wales (David T. C. Davies): Together with the Welsh Government and the leaders of the North Wales Economic Ambition Board, heads of terms for the north Wales growth deal were signed in November 2019. The opportunities provided by that deal are the latest example of the Government's commitment to levelling up communities across the United Kingdom.

Robin Millar: I thank my hon. Friend for his answer. In the past 20 years, the people of north Wales, and the people of Aberconwy, have grown used to being overlooked and underfunded by a Cardiff-based, Labour-led Welsh Government. It will not have escaped the attention of the House that seven of the nine MPs from north Wales are now Conservatives. Does my hon. Friend agree that that represents a new chapter for north Wales?

David T. C. Davies: May I offer the warmest welcome to my hon. Friend? This Government note that the people of north Wales appear to have rejected 20 years of Labour government, and have already begun to build an impressive piece of infrastructure—a political blue wall that now stretches from Ynys Môn to Clwyd South. I look forward to seeing that political infrastructure followed up by physical infrastructure, as we release hundreds of millions of pounds in the growth deals into north Wales.

Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab): I welcome the Minister to his place. I hope he lasts longer than his predecessors, and that I can meet him more than once about the north Wales growth deal—more than I did any of his predecessors. May I ask him for more money, because the money on offer is not enough? I also ask for a strategic growth deal, not a series of pet projects across north Wales.

David T. C. Davies: We have absolutely no intention of allowing the sort of pet projects to go ahead that we have seen money wasted on in previous years. All growth deal projects will be rigorously scrutinised to ensure value for money, but at the end of the day, if the right hon. Gentleman wants to criticise the Government for putting hundreds of millions of pounds into the north Wales economy, then I plead guilty and I am absolutely delighted to be a part of the Government who are doing it.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—

Engagements

Q1. [900185] **Gill Furniss** (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 15 January.

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

Gill Furniss: Last Thursday, we received the devastating news that more than 350 steel jobs will be lost in Sheffield, Rotherham and Newport—yet another blow for steelworkers, their families and their communities. When will the Government bring forward a comprehensive plan for the steel industry that tackles high energy costs and business rates and ensures that steel is at the heart of all infrastructure plans? Action is needed now. Will the Prime Minister stay true to his word and repay the trust of communities that voted for him only last month?

The Prime Minister: I thank the hon. Lady, and I can assure her that the Government are indeed embarking on a plan to do everything we can to make sure steel made in this country has all the competitive advantages we need. She makes some excellent points. In the particular case of Liberty Steel, I understand that whatever happens—it is a commercial decision for that company—all those affected will be offered an opportunity to remain within the GFG Alliance by joining a new company.

Q2. [900186] **Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown** (The Cotswolds) (Con): The Conservative manifesto promises in relation to the roll-out of broadband and mobile phone signal are incredibly welcome, but does my right hon. Friend agree that rural constituencies like mine, wherever they are in the United Kingdom, should not be left behind? Does he agree that these vital technologies should be rolled out, and will he set a firm timetable for their roll-out?

The Prime Minister: Yes, the Cotswolds needs broadband and the Cotswolds is going to get gigabit broadband. That is why we are putting £5 billion into the roll-out of gigabit broadband. My hon. Friend asks for a deadline and he will get it—2025.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab): May I just put on record our pleasure at the return of the Northern Ireland Assembly and, hopefully, the restoration of the peace process in Northern Ireland? I know there is a statement coming on this after Prime Minister's Question Time.

Will the Prime Minister let the British people know why, after almost 10 years of Tory Government, patients are waiting longer for essential NHS care, whether it is in A&Es, on waiting lists or for a GP appointment?

The Prime Minister: We are investing record sums into the NHS. Indeed, I think the House should be very proud today that we are passing the NHS Funding Bill, which will guarantee such funding not just this year but into the future.

Jeremy Corbyn: Well, passing legislation that will guarantee underfunding of the NHS, yes. The number of patients waiting more than four hours in A&E is now at its highest on record for the second month in a row. We have had months of promises, but people need action. There probably is not a family in the United Kingdom that has not been affected in some way by cancer, yet last year we saw one in four patients waiting more than two months for the start of their cancer treatment. How many more patients will face life-threatening delays because our NHS is understaffed and underfunded?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. Gentleman knows, there is massive demand on the NHS, which, as he also knows, is doing a fantastic job, particularly in oncology, where tremendous progress has been made. He is right to signal the delays that people are facing. They are indeed unacceptable. That is why we are investing in 50,000 more nurses, that is why we are investing in 6,000 more GPs, and that is why this Government are investing record sums in the NHS. We will get those waiting lists down.

Jeremy Corbyn: Twenty thousand of those 50,000 already work for the NHS, actually, Mr Speaker.

Delays in cancer treatment can reduce a patient's chance of survival. The target of 85% of patients being seen within two months was last met four years ago, in December 2015. Action is needed urgently.

Last week, we heard of the heart-rending case of a 92-year-old RAF veteran in Leicester who had to go through the indignity of waiting almost 12 hours on a hospital trolley because there were no beds available. I want the Government to apologise to him and many others and to explain why, despite the extraordinary efforts of NHS staff all over the country, over 2,000 patients had to wait more than 12 hours before they could get into a hospital bed last month alone.

The Prime Minister: The right hon. Gentleman is right to highlight the case of the RAF veteran, and I think everybody in this House will have every sympathy for people who have a bad and unacceptable experience in the NHS. We all share that. On the other hand, I would say that most people in this country—most patients of the NHS—have a fantastic experience of our healthcare, and we should pay tribute to our nurses and our staff. The hospital he mentions, Leicester, is one of those that, as he knows, we are rebuilding under this programme, with 40 new hospitals and 20 upgrades under this Conservative Government.

Jeremy Corbyn: The A&E has already been rebuilt in Leicester, actually, as I understand it. The problem is that the Prime Minister promised 40 hospitals. In reality, it was 20 and then it became six. The issue of people waiting on trolleys is a very serious one. The number doubled in December and it is now at the highest ever level on record. The Prime Minister promised to put the Conservative party's inadequate NHS funding pledge into law. Can he explain why it is necessary to cement into law a pledge that the Health Foundation has said is

“below the amount needed to maintain current standards of care”?

The Prime Minister: It is only under this Conservative Government that we have the resources that will enable us to invest in our NHS, and it is because of our stewardship of the economy, after the wreckage that Labour left when it was in office, that we have been able to make those colossal investments. I remind the right hon. Gentleman that not only was it this Conservative Government who rebuilt the A&E, as he correctly points out, but it is this Conservative Government who will be rebuilding the entire hospital in Leicester. We are putting more money into the NHS as a direct result of our careful management of the economy.

Jeremy Corbyn: Well, I understand that another hospital has been closed to pay for it. The question is: why would the Government need to put into law an inadequacy of funding for our national health service? Health professionals have said that the NHS needs more money than the Government are saying in order to keep patients safe.

It has now been almost three years since the Government promised a Green Paper on social care and seven months since the Prime Minister stood on the steps of Downing Street and said he had prepared a clear plan to fix the crisis in social care. Well, what is the hold-up? Where is the plan?

The Prime Minister: I am delighted by the right hon. Gentleman's constructive attitude, because as he knows, we intend to begin cross-party talks to build a consensus. I think there is a growing consensus in this country on the need to tackle the issue of social care, so that everybody has dignity and security in their old age and nobody has to sell their home to pay for the cost of their care. We can do it, and we will do it. With the help and co-operation of the Labour party and other parties in this House, we will go ahead with a fantastic plan for social care. I look forward to his support, but I point out to him that it is thanks to the Conservatives' stewardship of the economy, and indeed the mandate of the people that we have, that we are now able to tackle a problem that was shirked not just by the Labour party, but Governments for decades after decades. We are going to do it now.

Jeremy Corbyn: I do not know if the Prime Minister had a chance to read the Labour manifesto in the election, but we made it very clear that we have a plan—a very clear one: free personal care, more funding and support for carers. I am very happy to send him another copy of our manifesto so he can read it.

The Prime Minister said many times that he is going to put the NHS funding issue into law, but all this gimmick means is even longer waiting lists, more delays for cancer patients and more A&E departments bursting at the seams, while patients continue to suffer while he continues to provide excuses. If he is really committed to fixing the crisis that his Government have created over the last decade, he should end the empty rhetoric and back our proposals to give the NHS the funding it needs, rather than putting into law an insufficiency of funding. The NHS is our most precious national institution. Fund it properly so that everyone can rely on it—those that cannot afford private healthcare.

The Prime Minister: I am delighted that the right hon. Gentleman is still fighting on the manifesto he submitted to the attention of the British people at the last election. It was pretty clear what they thought of it and of the credibility of the promises he made. It was also clear what they thought of what we were going to do. They see that we are the party of the NHS and that it is this Government who invest in hospitals, in schools, in policing and in bringing down crime. That is because the Government's careful stewardship of the economy has led to record employment and record low unemployment, which is what delivers the tax revenues that enable us to pay for it all. Whenever Labour are in office, they wreck the economy, make unemployment higher and make us less able to pay for great public services. We are taking the country forwards; they would take it backwards.

Q3. [900187] **Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con): Despite the clear improvement in educational standards and funding, white working-class boys massively underperform at every stage of the education system compared with their better-off peers. Given the exciting infrastructure projects on the horizon and the high-value apprenticeships that will be unleashed, does my right hon. Friend agree that reforming the apprenticeship levy and investing in apprenticeships will allow us to ensure that white working-class boys climb the skills ladder of opportunity?

The Prime Minister: Apprenticeships play a vital part in the progression of the kids my right hon. Friend is talking about, and it is right that we should follow his advice—he has been on this for a while now—and reform the apprenticeship levy. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education will be updating the House in due course on our proposals.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I congratulate all the parties in Northern Ireland on reforming the Northern Ireland Executive.

The Prime Minister sent a letter to the First Minister of Scotland rejecting the democratic right of the people of Scotland to have a choice over their own future. This was not a surprise: the Prime Minister is a democracy denier. I say to the Prime Minister that, as his colleagues privately admit, this position is undemocratic, unacceptable and completely unsustainable. He has shown utter contempt for Scottish democracy, for Scotland's Parliament and for Scotland's people. Does he accept that, by ignoring Scotland, by imposing Brexit and by his pursuance of cruel and punishing policies, he is strengthening the case for Scottish independence?

The Prime Minister: It was not only the right hon. Gentleman, who leads the SNP in this House, but Alex Salmond and his protégée, Nicola Sturgeon, who said at the time of the referendum that it was a once-in-a-generation event. He said it, they said it. They were right then. Why have they changed their minds? He is the denier of democracy.

Ian Blackford: The Conservative party signed up to the Smith commission, which recognised the right of the people of Scotland to determine their own future. That is the reality.

The Prime Minister lives in a fantasy land, but people across Scotland know the reality of his broken Brexit Britain. The truth is, the only union he is truly interested in is his union with Donald Trump—a partnership that threatens to sell off our precious national health service. Only yesterday, the Prime Minister called for the replacement of the Iran nuclear deal with, as he put it, a “Trump agreement”. The public deserve the truth. What backroom deals are being done with Donald Trump? Why is the Prime Minister putting our NHS at risk? Repeatedly during the election campaign, he promised that the NHS was not for sale. Will he now commit to supporting the SNP proposal for an NHS protection Bill? Without that commitment, what price will he make us pay for his toxic Trump deal?

The Prime Minister: Actually, the SNP welcomed our statement on the JCPOA yesterday; but, seriously, this is the problem with the SNP. Scotland under the SNP is

the highest-taxed part of the UK. Its deficit is six times the UK average. Maths and science in schools in Scotland, unlike any other part of the United Kingdom, is going down in the PISA rankings. That is no fault of the pupils of Scotland, by the way. It is the fault of the Government of Scotland, under the SNP, who are not giving them the chances that they deserve because they are obsessed with breaking up the United Kingdom. Change the record!

Q5. [900189] **Andrew Griffith** (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): Investment in superfast broadband is an excellent way of levelling up the whole United Kingdom, boosting British business and reducing carbon emissions, but can the Prime Minister reassure rural residents of West Sussex, many of whom have little or no access to broadband today, that the Government's scheme to guarantee minimum broadband speeds is on track and ready to be launched in March this year?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend speaks well for the interests of his constituents, and he is absolutely right. As I said earlier to my hon. Friend the Member for The Cotswolds (Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown), of course we are rolling out superfast broadband—gigabit broadband. We have put in £5 billion, the legislation is on track, and my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has given me every assurance that Arundel and South Downs will be very well catered for.

Q4. [900188] **Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): Research published by Oxford University this week shows that our oceans are heating up at an alarming rate, that the process is accelerating, and that it will lead to more incidents of extreme, catastrophic weather. The Government are on track to miss most of their environmental goals in 2020, and that record looks set to get worse in future years. The Government make the right noises, but fail to come to the right conclusions. Will the Prime Minister commit himself to legally enforceable targets, and give the new Office for Environmental Protection powers to fine the Government if they fail to live up to their promises? It is the Government who should be under scrutiny, not the protesters who expose their shortcomings.

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman is right to say that the new Office for Environmental Protection will have powers to hold the Government to account, but let me draw his attention to the record of this Conservative Government. Under this Government, we have seen carbon dioxide emissions fall by 42% from 1990 levels, despite a 75% increase in GDP. On some days, most of our energy now comes from renewable sources. We will be leading the COP26 summit, where we will introduce enforceable limits not just for this country, but for the whole world.

Q7. [900191] **Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his endeavours to get Brexit done, but, as he knows only too well, something else needs to be got done. In an exchange with me on 25 July, he said that Southend would become a city. Before all that happens, however, will he join me in thanking the religious orders of Nazareth House in Southend for caring for vulnerable people for 147 years, and will he meet me and others to ensure that its caring mission continues on that site?

The Prime Minister: I thank my hon. Friend for everything that he does for Nazareth House. I saw the good work that it does when I was Mayor of London, and I am happy to support it. As for the “citification” of Southend, it continues at a pace set by my hon. Friend.

Q6. [900190] **Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): There are 1,200 people living with dementia in my constituency, and there are 850,000 across the United Kingdom. Dementia is the leading cause of death in the UK today. Will the Prime Minister commit himself to supporting the recommendations of the report published by Alzheimer’s Research UK, and the aim to find cures and new treatments for all forms of dementia? Will he also support the call from the Alzheimer’s Society for dementia care to be fixed as a matter of urgency?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate the hon. Lady on what she has done personally to support that campaign. She is absolutely right to stress its vital importance for the whole country. Dementia is one of the biggest challenges that we face, which is why we are doubling funding. As my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary has said, we want to make a moon-shot effort to isolate the causes of dementia, and to cure it if we possibly can.

Constitutional Reform

Q8. [900192] **Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): What plans he has to reform the relationship between the legislature, Executive and the judiciary.

The Prime Minister: A constitution, democracy and rights commission will be established to examine the broader aspects of the constitution and to develop proposals to restore trust in our institutions and in how our democracy operates. Careful consideration is needed on the composition and focus of the commission, and further announcements will be made in due course.

Sir Desmond Swayne: Will my right hon. Friend let bygones be top priority?

The Prime Minister: I can tell my right hon. Friend that our independent courts and legal system are admired around the world. We will continue to ensure that judicial review is available to protect the rights of individuals against an overbearing state while ensuring that it is not abused to conduct politics by another means or to create needless delays.

Engagements

Q9. [900193] **Sarah Jones** (Croydon Central) (Lab): I congratulate the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and all the parties in Northern Ireland on the re-establishment of the Assembly. The press were briefed last year that the Prime Minister was going to bring an end to all ongoing investigations from the conflict, and he said on Monday that he would not support vexatious claims when there was no new evidence. However, the Stormont agreement includes the Historical Investigations Unit, and the point of all the ongoing investigations is that the original evidence has never been properly investigated, so will the Prime Minister tell us today, yes or no, whether he now supports the investigation of every single outstanding claim?

The Prime Minister: We will go ahead and, as I said yesterday, I think that a good balance has been struck, in getting Stormont going again, between those who need truth and those who need certainty in the protection of our armed services. I want to reassure the House that nothing in the agreement will stop us going ahead with legislation to ensure that no one who has served in our armed forces suffers vexatious or unfair prosecution for cases that happened many years ago when no new evidence has been provided. We will legislate to ensure that that cannot happen.

Q10. [900194] **Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): Staff at my local hospital, the George Eliot, have been praised by their bosses for the superhuman effort that they put in during the Christmas period, which was not only their busiest on record but the fourth busiest across the whole of the west midlands. Will the Prime Minister join me in thanking them for the amazing work that they do? Will he also update the House on the progress of the NHS workforce plan, which will be key to ensuring that hospitals such as the George Eliot are able to attract and retain the inspirational people we all rely on to deliver our healthcare services?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend on everything that he is doing to campaign for the George Eliot Hospital in his constituency, and I thank the staff there for everything that they do. The people plan will be coming forward in the spring, but I fancy that he already knows some of the details: 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more doctors in general practice and 6,000 more primary care professionals in general practice. Today, as he knows, the House is legislating to ensure that we guarantee record multi-year funding for our NHS.

Q11. [900195] **Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): My constituent, Rosanna, came to the UK as a Kurdish refugee fleeing persecution and human rights abuses committed by Turkish-backed fighters in Syria. Her family remain in the area, and she lives in daily fear for their lives. There have been multiple reports of human rights abuses against Kurdish civilians in Syria, including reports that Turkish forces used white phosphorus against children. Will the Prime Minister join me in condemning the human rights abuses committed by Turkish forces against Kurdish civilians in northern Syria, and what will his Government do to prevent further atrocities?

The Prime Minister: As the hon. Lady knows, we have raised our concerns about the operation in northern Syria with the Turkish Government and with President Erdoğan several times. We certainly deplore any abuse of human rights and the suffering that she has identified. May I make a proposal to the hon. Lady? I would be happy to look at the details of the case she has raised myself, because I am deeply concerned about what is happening.

Q13. [900197] **Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): As the Prime Minister knows only too well, Britain is a nation of animal lovers, and leaving the European Union and decoupling from its lesser standards will mean that we can lead the world in animal welfare. Will he commit the Government to making that their utmost priority in the months and years ahead?

The Prime Minister: Yes, indeed. I thank my hon. Friend for everything he does to promote and protect animal welfare. This Government brought in the toughest ivory ban in the world, and we are bringing in new laws on animal sentience and to cut the illegal smuggling of puppies and dogs. As we come out of the EU, we will of course be able to ban the live shipment of animals, which has been a disgrace for so long and against which the British people have campaigned. The Labour party, however, is still trying to work out whether it wants to rejoin the EU or stay in the customs union and the single market, making any such reform of the protection of animal welfare impossible. It is time that Labour made up its mind.

Q12. [900196] **Alex Cunningham** (Stockton North) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister support Tees MPs and the Mayor in opposing the dumping of nuclear waste at Port Clarence in my constituency?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to look at that campaign and will write to the hon. Gentleman in due course.

Mrs Helen Grant (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con): Given the Prime Minister's post-Brexit vision for an outward-looking, global Britain and given Africa's huge potential for trade and investment, will he update the House on the Government's plans for next week's UK-African investment summit?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who has followed such matters with great interest over many years. The summit on 20 January in this country will be a chance to show people not only in the UK, but around the world, particularly in Africa, our huge commitment to Africa, our massive investments in Africa, and the massive opportunities to strengthen our long-standing ties, bonds and commercial relationships.

Q14. [900198] **Douglas Chapman** (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): The writer and broadcaster Muriel Gray said last week that the end of the Erasmus scheme "is an utter disaster, academically, culturally and socially. Politicians have just voted to make our young people more insular, narrow and parochial. Heartbroken."

What would the Prime Minister say to 2014 no voters like Muriel who thought that the future of Scottish students was safe in the hands of a British Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman is talking through the back of his neck. There is no threat to the Erasmus scheme, and we will continue to participate in it. UK students will continue to be able to enjoy the benefits of exchanges with our European friends and partners, just as they will be able to continue to come to this country.

Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con): At the end of this month, on the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, the nation will come together once again to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. The theme for this year is "Stand Together". Does my right hon. Friend agree with the Holocaust Educational Trust, which says that, welcome though they are, signatures in books are not as valuable as action? Will he commit to more action to stamp out antisemitism and all intolerance in this country?

The Prime Minister: I will be commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day along with my hon. Friend and others. As he knows, this Government and this House—people across the House—want to do absolutely everything we can to stamp out the resurgence of antisemitism. As someone who is now 55 years old, I find it absolutely incredible that antisemitism is rising again in this country in the 21st century. It is a disgrace, and we must stamp it out.

Q15. [900199] **Dave Doogan** (Angus) (SNP): The seasonal agricultural workers scheme affords a limit of 10,000 temporary visas for agricultural workers to come and work in the UK in support of food production. Given that my constituency alone requires 4,000 and neighbouring constituencies a similar amount, will the Prime Minister concede that 10,000 is clearly not enough even for Tayside, much less for Scotland or the rest of the UK? Will he therefore instruct the Home Secretary to review the situation in support of the National Farmers Union of Scotland and our whole agricultural sector and commission that review to look upwards to a limit that will support the actual operational requirements of agriculture in our country?

The Prime Minister: The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. We have doubled the scheme and will ensure that not only the Scottish agriculture sector, but the agriculture sector of the entire country has access to the seasonal workforce it needs. That is why we are introducing a points-based immigration system that will enable this country to get the skills that it requires.

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): Child sexual abuse is not a thing of the past in this country. Over 4,000 offences of online child abuse were recorded by the police last year. Organisations such as Facebook and Instagram find it easy to analyse our online shopping habits but less easy to keep children safe. Can my right hon. Friend say how the Government will continue to make it their priority to protect children from sexual abuse online?

The Prime Minister: My right hon. Friend raises a subject of massive interest to the House and to the whole country, and we are indeed very concerned about what is happening online. The Cabinet discussed it yesterday, and the online harms White Paper sets out our plans to make companies more responsible. We will be taking further action in the near future to stamp out this vice.

Sir Edward Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): I thank all those involved in the important progress in Northern Ireland.

When my mother was widowed with three young children, bereaved families received small payments until the youngest child left school. In our case that would have meant payments for 14 years, except my mother died too early. The duration of the payments was reduced in 2017, and a new bereavement support payment was paid for only 18 months. Many of us feel that is far too short. Will the Prime Minister deliver on his Government's promise to review the new bereavement support payment, and will he meet me and charities helping such families to discuss how we can better care for bereaved parents and their children?

The Prime Minister: Yes. I know this is an issue that is very close to the right hon. Gentleman's heart, and it is absolutely right that we should provide people with easily accessible support following their bereavement. I will indeed commit to meeting him.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: We have to move on.

Points of Order

12.31 pm

Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. You will have noticed that it has become even more difficult to secure a seat on the Government side of the House following the general election, which reinforces the point I tried to raise in the last Parliament through a letter to the then Chair of the Procedure Committee on the need to take part in Prayers in order to secure a seat.

I no longer have a relationship with God in a way that would be recognised by many, but those of us who do not have faith, or who subscribe to a faith other than the established Church, are required to take part in Prayers in order to secure a place. There is the possibility of placing a pink card with "Committee" written on it, but today the Doorkeepers, because no Committees have yet formed, rightly declined to make a pink card available to me.

Mr Speaker, for those of us who do not want to take part in Prayers and who do not want to have to sit through them to secure a place, could you ask the Doorkeepers to make pink cards available in advance of the Committees being formed? Could you also ask the Procedure Committee to look again at the issue in this Parliament so that those of us who find it uncomfortable are not placed in this position?

Mr Speaker: First, I have sympathy with the hon. Gentleman; I know what it was like in 1997. What I would say is that the pink card system is something the House has chosen to do when Committees are sitting, but Committees are not sitting and I will not instruct the Doorkeepers to do something against the procedure of this House. He is quite right: I think the matter needs to be taken up with the Procedure Committee, and I am sure he will continue to do so.

Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I apologise for not being able to give you more notice of this.

It has come to light that a newly elected Member of this House has misled the press about his involvement in an exploitative and demeaning website called sugar-daddy.net. The involvement of the hon. Member for Bridgend (Dr Wallis) was highlighted following press reports about complaints to Bridgend trading standards. He denied links to the website on the record, but Companies House records clearly contradict that statement. Information that I have received from a former employee of his also contradicts this statement.

At a time when public trust in politicians is already damaged, Mr Speaker, can you provide guidance on whether the House and, more importantly, the people of Bridgend can expect an apology from the hon. Member, to go some way towards making up for this appalling behaviour?

Mr Speaker: I thank the hon. Lady for giving me notice of this question and the point she wanted to raise. I hope she mentioned to the hon. Member for Bridgend that it was going to be raised.

Tonia Antoniazzi indicated assent.

Mr Speaker: That's great. The matter the hon. Lady raises is not a point of order on which the Chair has responsibilities. I am sure she knows that there are other ways in which to pursue this matter, and I am sure she will do so.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Many of my constituents and their families have given money to a charity called St Margaret's Hospice on the basis that it would spend that money on an in-patient unit in Yeovil, but it has closed that unit. Unfortunately, the Charity Commission investigation that I helped to get under way was not able to prove "bad faith". What avenues are open to me to engage with Ministers to examine the way in which the Charity Commission legal frameworks operate to make sure that such potential cases of mis-selling do not go unpunished in the future?

Mr Speaker: I thank the hon. Member for giving me notice of the point of order. He has certainly got it on the record. I am sure that the concerns will have been heard by those on the Treasury Bench and somebody will take up the issue.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I know that Big Ben is in the news at the moment, but may I ask you to make sure that when Big Ben opens up to the public, members of the public and constituents will not be charged for climbing up to the top to see Big Ben?

Mr Speaker: The House will look into that when we get to the appropriate date. I wish I could give the right hon. Gentleman the exact date, but I am sure we will have a discussion before it.

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. You will more than likely be aware of the mistake made during Prime Minister questions by the Leader of the Opposition, when he indicated that there would be a statement after PMQs about the Northern Ireland issue. I understand that there will be no such statement. Perhaps you could confirm that, Mr Speaker, and also how Members might get elaboration and clarification on this in this House, particularly on the financial settlement that followed last week's agreement, so that we can ask questions about that.

Mr Speaker: In fairness to the Leader of the Opposition, I think he wants to come in on that.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab) Thank you, Mr Speaker. I am sorry if I inadvertently misled the House. I had been led to believe that there was going to be a statement today, which is why I made the reference to it. I must say that I am a bit surprised that there has not been a statement yet on something of such importance as the reopening of Stormont in Northern Ireland.

Mr Speaker: I am sure that as soon as a statement is to be made the House will know and I will ensure that Members are aware of it.

BILL PRESENTED**NHS FUNDING BILL**

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Orders Nos. 50 and 57)

Secretary Matt Hancock, supported by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Robert Jenrick, Secretary Thérèse Coffey, Secretary Gavin Williamson and Edward Argar, presented a Bill to make provision regarding the funding of the health service in England in respect of each financial year until the financial year that ends with 31 March 2024.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 6) with explanatory notes (Bill 6-EN).

Debate on the Address

[4TH DAY]

Debate resumed (Order, 14 January).

Question again proposed,

That an Humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:
Most Gracious Sovereign,

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

A Green Industrial Revolution

12.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Andrea Leadsom): May I start by congratulating you on the superb way you have taken over the speakership, Mr Speaker? The atmosphere in the Chamber demonstrates the dignity and respect that we all want to see, and I commend you and your Deputies for the leadership you are showing.

Speaking of leadership, I wish the hon. Member for Salford and Eccles (Rebecca Long Bailey) all the best in her party's leadership contest. It takes courage to put oneself forward, and I commend her for her service.

Also on leadership, there is one woman—the first ever female Conservative leader—who definitely deserves 10 out of 10: Margaret Thatcher. Just over 30 years ago, she became the very first global leader to warn of the dangers of climate change at the United Nations, saying:

“It is mankind and his activities which are changing the environment of our planet in damaging and dangerous ways.”

She predicted that

“change in future is likely to be more fundamental and more widespread than anything we have known hitherto.”

How right she was.

Mr Speaker, you recently called the Australian wildfires “a wake-up call for the world.”—[*Official Report*, 7 January 2020; Vol. 669, c. 235.]

I agree. From wildfires in Australia to flooding in Indonesia and record temperatures across the world, the impacts of climate change are in the here and now. People throughout the UK and around the world are calling for us to act, and we are doing just that. Just as the UK has led the past 30 years of climate action, we will lead the next 30 years, seizing the opportunities of the green industrial revolution.

Since Margaret Thatcher made that speech in November 1989, the UK can be proud of its record of action. Since 1990, we have cut our emissions by 42% while growing our economy by 73%.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): Will the Secretary of State give way on that point?

Andrea Leadsom: In a moment.

Since 2000, we have decarbonised more quickly than any other G20 country. Since 2010, we have quadrupled our electricity generation from renewables, including through the installation of 99% of the UK's solar capacity.

Caroline Lucas *rose*—

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP) *rose*—

Andrea Leadsom: In 2017, low-carbon fuels produced more electricity than fossil fuels for the first time, and in that year we also saw the first coal-free day for a century, followed in 2019 by the first coal-free week and coal-free fortnight. Building on the world's first climate change Act, last year we became the world's first major economy to legislate to end our contribution to climate change altogether by 2050.

Alan Brown: We obviously welcome some of the things that the Secretary of State has outlined, but on the net zero target that she just outlined, Lord Deben, the chair of the Committee on Climate Change, said in his covering letter to an update report that

“policy ambition and implementation now fall well short of what is required”

to achieve the target of net zero by 2050. Is the Secretary of State going to address that in her speech?

Andrea Leadsom: I will indeed address it, and I can also tell the hon. Gentleman that the Government have taken the advice of the Committee on Climate Change in setting our legally binding commitments to net zero by 2050. Throughout the year, we will set out precisely how we think we can achieve that.

Caroline Lucas: The Secretary of State will know that the Government are off track when it comes to the fourth and fifth carbon budgets, but I wish to take her up on the constant repetition from the Government. She says that greenhouse gas emissions have fallen by 42% since 1990, but she knows that if we calculated consumption-based emissions and factored that in, our emissions have actually fallen by only 10%. Does she agree that we need a common understanding of what is facing us? If she keeps using numbers in a slightly misleading way, we are not going to get to where we need to be by getting our emissions down.

Andrea Leadsom: On the one hand, the hon. Lady is absolutely right: the carbon emissions figures for the United Kingdom do not take into account our consumption emissions or, indeed, our contribution to the reduction of carbon emissions around the world—both are important points. On the other hand, I would take issue with her from a philosophical point of view, because in order to measure progress, we need to have measurements, so it is incredibly important to talk about our UK territorial emissions at the same time. I look forward to working with the hon. Lady constructively, as she and I have done previously on a number of occasions, to make the UK's ambition to lead the world in tackling climate change a reality in the run-up to COP26.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Andrea Leadsom: I will make some progress and give way again in a moment.

As the cooling towers have come down, wind turbines are going up in their thousands, with offshore wind capacity increasing by more than 500% under Conservative

Prime Ministers. We can all be proud that no other country in the world has more offshore wind than the UK, with a third of global capacity off our coastline. This is creating thousands of future-proof, planet-saving, profit-making jobs, as well as skills investment all around the United Kingdom.

Many of my new, true blue hon. Friends have green-collar jobs in their constituencies. The constituency of Sedgefield makes underwater-cable protection systems that are exported all over the world. Great Grimsby leads the world in offshore wind operations and maintenance, while in Blyth Valley, where I was proud to pay a visit to support our excellent new colleague my hon. Friend the Member for Blyth Valley (Ian Levy) during the general election campaign, our offshore renewable energy catapult recently tested the world's longest offshore wind turbine blade. At over 100 metres, it would, if we stood it next to Parliament, be taller than Big Ben.

Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab): The Secretary of State talks about offshore wind, but does she agree that this Government have effectively banned onshore wind, which is the most tried and tested of all forms of renewable energy technology? Will she commit to bringing that technology back across all parts of the UK?

Andrea Leadsom: What I can say to the hon. Lady is that onshore wind produces electricity for 10 million homes in the United Kingdom. We are promoting offshore wind as the most effective way to increase our power generation from renewable technology. It is a huge success story for the United Kingdom and something of which we can be proud. She will be aware that the Conservatives are committed to producing 40 GW from offshore wind by 2030.

Janet Daby: The Government's policies are not sufficiently ambitious to meet their own climate change targets. Does she agree that according to the Government's official advisers, the Committee on Climate Change, the UK is even off its own climate change target of an 80% reduction in emissions by 2050?

Andrea Leadsom: As I said in answer to the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown), we work very closely with the Committee on Climate Change. Our target of net zero by 2050 has been set on the basis of its recommendations so that we can grow our economy, sustain our future and contribute to tackling global climate change in a way that is sustainable for the UK, with the creation of green growth, so I am confident in that regard. We will bring forward more measures throughout the year to help us to meet that target of net zero.

Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con): My right hon. Friend is being very generous in giving way. She mentioned the cooling towers coming down. Was she aware that the four cooling towers of Ironbridge power station came down during the course of the general election, and that one of the companies interested in that industrial brownfield land is one of the leading companies involved in driverless vehicles? If the company is successful, I hope that she will come and open the factory.

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. Friend might be setting up a bit of contest, because I think that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport, who is

[*Andrea Leadsom*]

sitting next to me on the Front Bench, will be fighting me for that honour. None the less, my right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne) makes a really good point about how, particularly in some of our areas of heavy industry, the fossil fuels of yesterday are giving way to the green future that we all want. He gives us a fantastic example of the work that is going on.

We have made great progress, but there is still much more to do. Our challenge now is to ramp up and scale up successes such as offshore wind, providing new sources of pride and prosperity across our United Kingdom.

In the first industrial revolution, our pioneers from Scotland to Cornwall forged their own path, and in so doing they became the envy of the world. James Watt's Prussian rivals travelled hundreds of miles to sneak a glimpse of his steam engines in Birmingham. Richard Trevithick travelled as far as Peru to personally oversee his engines. Today, like them, we must be the first movers, not the last to act. From creating supply chains for electric vehicles to decarbonising our industrial clusters and designing low-carbon buildings, the opportunities of net zero are immense. In 2020, the first year of a new decade of decarbonisation, we must seize those opportunities.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The Secretary of State has outlined a number of important stats. Local councils such as mine—Ards and North Down—are specifically involved in achieving climate change standards and environmental targets. Will she consider implementing a reward system for councils that are specifically involved in education and setting targets for them to achieve? If we do that, we may encourage councils to do even more.

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman makes a very good suggestion. It is clear that central Government will not be the only actor in spending taxpayers' money and driving every bit of innovation; they will be hand in glove with local civic leaders and, really importantly, the private sector. Government must set the direction and provide incentives, and then let others take the mission forward.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): My right hon. Friend rightly highlights Cornwall's history in new technologies. Is she aware that large deposits of lithium have been identified in Cornwall? That has the potential to put Cornwall at the forefront of technology once again and to revive our precious mineral extraction industry. Will she ensure that her Department gives that fledgling industry all the support it needs to thrive?

Andrea Leadsom: My hon. Friend is a great champion for his constituency and for Cornwall more widely. In many ways, Cornwall is playing a major role in our moves toward net zero, and we in my Department will always be happy to talk to him about that.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese (Slough) (Lab): Will the right hon. Lady give way?

Dr Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State give way?

Andrea Leadsom: I will make more progress before giving way again.

Crucial to this debate is the UK's global leadership. The UK contributes only about 1% of global emissions, and that figure is falling. We cannot solve the challenge of global climate change just by doing the right thing at home, so we are using our strength to help to transform the world, from doubling our international climate finance contribution to nearly £12 billion to using our £1 billion Ayrton fund to support the world's most vulnerable—for example, by designing clean stoves for the billions who rely on firewood. In 10 months' time, COP26 in the fantastic UK city of Glasgow will be a seminal moment for climate action, as well as a massive opportunity for British business—a giant global shop window for the UK's clean tech prowess, with countries across the world heading home with their pockets crammed full of British ideas, technology and expertise.

Mr Dhese: The Secretary of State mentioned electric vehicles and charging points, and Slough Borough Council, in my constituency, is leading the way in Berkshire. Although we gratefully receive platitudes regarding the good work of local authorities, what measures will the Government put in place to support excellent councils financially, in addition to those mere platitudes?

Andrea Leadsom: There are far too many initiatives for me to talk about now at the Dispatch Box, but one example is the £1 billion that was recently announced for electric charging infrastructure. If the hon. Gentleman writes to me, I shall send him a full submission on the subject.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): What the Secretary of State says about electric vehicles is absolutely right and I applaud it. My vast constituency comprises 5,752 sq km and has 18 charging points, so that is a move in the right direction. My point, however, is that electric cars are expensive—more than most people can afford. Does the right hon. Lady agree that a tax break—perhaps through the PAYE system—should be considered as a way to encourage people to buy electric cars?

Andrea Leadsom: My right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary is sitting right next to me, and he and I work closely on all sorts of incentives for people to move away from fossil fuels and toward decarbonisation. Of course, as the hon. Gentleman knows, transport is a key target area and we will talk more about it later.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Andrea Leadsom: I will make more progress before I give way again.

From fighting climate change across the world to backing British ideas, we need a thriving economy to pay for it all. That is why I have set out my Department's clear mission to build a stronger, greener United Kingdom. That mission is underpinned by three priorities: to lead the world in tackling climate change; to solve the grand challenges facing our society; and, quite simply, to make the UK the best place in the world to work and to grow a business. Today, as well as prioritising the pathway to net zero, we are solving the grand challenges facing

our society, backing a new generation of problem solvers in science and business. From space technology to life sciences, the UK is developing satellites that measure climate change and creating ways to help people to enjoy five extra healthy years of life by 2035. From artificial intelligence to robotics, and from advanced manufacturing to green tech, the UK will seize the opportunities offered by this new industrial revolution. That will be underpinned by our commitment to increase our research and development spending to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): Again, we are hearing the right noises from the Government, but the action is not being followed through. The commitment to net zero trips off the tongue, but can we achieve it if we continue to fail to meet our environmental targets?

Andrea Leadsom: I urge the hon. Gentleman to consider what I have just said in explaining the achievements, the ambition and what we are actually doing in practice. Perhaps he just needs to listen to what I am saying.

To seize the opportunities that lie ahead, we must make the UK the best place in the world to work and to grow a business. This Government will back business to the hilt, promoting inward investment and new export markets while also stamping out the poor practices that can sometimes give businesses a bad name. Our plan is to reduce burdens on business by reviewing and reducing business rates, and by resolving the scourge of late payments. As we leave the European Union, we will protect business confidence in supply chains, securing the best possible trading arrangements with our European partners. From diversity to sustainability and beyond, we will hold businesses to the same high standards, putting in place reforms to keep the UK a world leader in audit, corporate governance and transparency.

Dr Huq: I wanted to congratulate the Secretary of State on one thing that caught my eye in both the Queen's Speech and last year's Environment Bill: the biodiversity net gain mandated for planning authorities when making their decisions. That has not yet taken effect. Ealing Council has a meeting of its planning committee tonight. Will she encourage me by making a new year's resolution of ensuring that such committees adopt the measure now so that the bulldozers do not sacrifice our nature? The future of our planet is at stake.

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Lady will hear that there is a lot of support for her initiative across the Chamber. She is right that we do not want Government to be telling people what to do; we want people to draw their own conclusions and to seek to protect and preserve our incredibly valuable biodiversity, our green spaces and our precious habitats for future generations.

At the same time as making the UK the best place in the world to work and to grow a business, we want our employment Bill, to which we committed in the Queen's Speech, to make sure that work is fairly rewarded. We want to protect workers' rights and ensure fair pay, to create a world where flexible working is just called "working", and to do more to support the crucial work that people do as carers and parents, helping people to balance work with the other things that matter in their lives.

Margaret Thatcher ended her UN speech in 1989 by saying:

"We are the trustees of this planet, charged today with preserving life itself—preserving life with all its mystery and all its wonder."

I hope that that is something on which we can all agree, whatever our party or politics. Thirty years ago, politicians could barely have imagined the technologies that would be available today. Today, we can only dream of the world of 2050. Together—as a House, as a country and as an international community—we must act. Our action can make a global difference. Instead of self-doubt, we need self-belief in our ability to build the low-carbon, high-tech United Kingdom that we all want, a stronger, greener future for people across our shores, and a sustainable future for our planet.

12.59 pm

Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for her kind comments. Of course, she will understand what I and the other Labour leadership candidates are going through at the moment. Putting yourself forward and standing up for your principles is a noble pursuit, but it is also certainly an interesting one—I will say that much.

I agree with much of what the Secretary of State said in her speech, but that ambition needs to be matched with sufficient action. I hope she takes the comments that I am about to make in the spirit in which they are intended, so we can work across the House and reach a solution to the climate emergency.

I pay tribute to my colleagues Danielle Rowley, Laura Pidcock and Sue Hayman, who were sadly unable to take their place after the general election. Each one of them has been a champion, fighting against the climate emergency, and their policy work will leave a mark on this House for years to come. I welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) to his new role on the shadow DEFRA team. I am sure he will also leave his mark in the years to come.

Climate change and environmental breakdown present an existential threat to our society. I doubt that there is a single Member of this House who would disagree with me. Seeing off that threat by investing in new industries and technologies, and the restoration of our natural world, has the potential to bring jobs, new wealth and new pride to all the regions and nations of the UK. Again, I doubt there is a single Member of the House who does not want to see that.

So we start from a position of agreement on the green industrial revolution, which, in a nutshell, is about achieving just that. But to make it happen, rather than just talking about it, three qualities are required that are lacking in the Queen's Speech: honesty, ambition and fairness. We need to be honest with ourselves and with the electorate about what the science says is necessary to avoid planetary catastrophe; we need to be ambitious, deploying our resources and testing our inventiveness at a pace and scale that is commensurate with the challenge; and we need to be fair, tackling climate change in a way that is socially just, that leaves nobody behind, and that meets and exceeds the expectations that people have for their lives and their communities.

I turn to the first quality—honesty. The Queen's Speech references the Government's commitment to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050,

[*Rebecca Long Bailey*]

but the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which is the world's leading scientific body on the subject, says that the entire world needs to reach net zero by 2050 to avoid more than 1.5° C of warming. Given the UK's historical responsibility for climate change, and our wealth and resources to do something about it, we clearly need to be ahead of the curve on this, and we need to be honest that 2050 is not good enough—not if we are serious about keeping our people safe. I urge the Government to revisit this target.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. COP26 is coming to the UK this year. Is that not an additional responsibility for the Government, not just a historical one? Is it not true that we have a responsibility for the entire planet as the president and host of COP26?

Rebecca Long Bailey: My hon. Friend is spot on. We have an opportunity now to show on the world stage that we really mean business when it comes to tackling climate change. We need to lead the world, and not just in terms of the industries we support in the UK. We need to lead by example and encourage other countries across the world to take as robust action as I hope we will do over the coming years.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making some good points. Does she agree that another advantage to the early adoption of a zero-carbon target is that we can lead the world in the products we have developed and sell them around the world? When we left government in 2010, we had set a target for passive house standards for all buildings by 2015. One example of Government failure in this area is that this Government removed that law, meaning that new houses are not currently being built to passive house standards. We are falling behind in new builds and environmental standards, and should be calling on the Government to address this. They should be ashamed of what they have done.

Rebecca Long Bailey: My hon. Friend is right. It is important to note that markets are incentivised by robust targets, but that targets alone are not enough. They need to sit alongside a robust industrial strategy that supports our industries, all the way through from our steel sector to our automotive sector, so that they are capable of delivering the change at the pace that is required.

Mr Dhesi: My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. Does she agree that, despite the grand statements from the Government, they are missing all the targets that they are putting in place due to their own mediocre measures? Does she also agree that the cuts to renewable energy subsidies need to be reversed, and that we need to ensure that the Government work towards jobs in the green industries—unionised jobs? Rather than just talking a good game, the Government actually need to deliver.

Rebecca Long Bailey: My hon. Friend is spot on.

We need to be honest that we are off track when it comes to meeting our targets, inadequate as they are. In fact, according to the Committee on Climate Change—the Government's official advisers—the UK is even off track

with regard to meeting its old target of an 80% reduction by 2050. The UK's CO₂ emissions fell by only 2% between 2017 and 2018. Politics aside, that is nowhere near good enough. Let us be honest about what it means. It is not like failing an exam or a driving test. Failing on climate change means devastating fires sweeping across Australia and the Amazon. It means critical threats to food security, water security and the entire ecosystem, on which we all depend.

Janet Daby: Constituents living in flats and houses have emailed me regarding a lack of charging options for electric cars. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government are simply not ambitious enough to support the UK's electric vehicle charging needs?

Rebecca Long Bailey: My hon. Friend makes a pertinent point. Although the comments in the Queen's Speech are certainly welcome—I will come to them in more detail shortly—they do not sit alongside a robust strategy to support the creation of a market for electric vehicles. The hon. Member for Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross (Jamie Stone) made a point about the affordability of electric vehicles. They are not cheap and most people cannot afford them, so we have a duty to create the market by providing incentives. The Government should use their own procurement to ensure that their fleets are electric by a specified date, and we should ensure that fleet operators are incentivised to make their fleets electric so that the vehicles can transition into the second-hand car market. There is an essential need to ensure that people who want to buy new electric vehicles can afford to do so, with options ranging from scrappage schemes all the way through to incentivisation.

Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab): As my hon. Friend will be aware, Orb steelworks—the only producer of electrical steels in the country—was mothballed just before Christmas. With investment, the plant could provide an end-to-end supply chain for the electric vehicles industry so that we would not have to import this kind of steel. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is absolutely crucial that the Government step up and support our steel industry, which could play a key part in this green industrial revolution?

Rebecca Long Bailey: My hon. Friend is quite right. It is devastating to see the impact of what has happened in her constituency. We need to tackle the climate emergency, and we need a robust industrial strategy to sit alongside it. This is the biggest economic opportunity that the country has had in a generation. By tackling a huge societal and environmental need, we can support our industries and create the new green jobs of the future. Unfortunately, although we talk about targets, and about providing help here and there, we are not backing it up with a comprehensive industrial strategy that supports our industries. What was lacking in the general election campaign—although certainly not from the Labour party—was support for the steel sector, with a robust strategy ensuring that the steel industry plays a key role in our infrastructure projects and the technologies of the future. That is what I would like to see from this Government.

Alan Brown: On honesty and ambition, the hon. Lady said that net zero by 2050 is not good enough, so I am sure she will welcome the fact that the Scottish

Government have legislated for net zero by 2045. During the general election campaign, Labour started talking about net zero by 2030. Currently, 27 million homes rely on fossil fuels, so getting to net zero by then would mean changing over 52,000 homes a week every week from 1 January 2020 until the end of the decade. What are Labour's plans for doing that?

Rebecca Long Bailey: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comment. Certainly, there is no point in having a target without having an ambitious plan to deliver it. We know from the work of leading scientists across the world that the majority of the work that needs to be done even to reach net zero by 2050 must be done by 2030. That is an inescapable fact and that is why we have to move so quickly.

The Government have started to work towards insulating social homes. That is welcome, but it is not enough. We need to look at how we can support the UK's 27 million homes to take part in a home insulation programme that will not only tackle climate change but help to bring down bills. We had an ambitious package for that but unfortunately we did not deliver that message strongly enough in our election campaign.

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): Does my hon. Friend agree that the Government's rhetoric is far away from the action that we actually see? In Greater Manchester we have a clean air crisis where people are literally dying because of the quality of the air. When the Mayor of Greater Manchester made an approach to Government for grant support to help taxi drivers and the self-employed to transition to new vehicles, the Government were not even willing to meet him halfway.

Rebecca Long Bailey: My hon. Friend is quite right. We are expected to encourage our localities and our regional governments to take part in the climate emergency and to do their best to deliver plans on a local scale, but they are not being given sufficient resources to be able to do so. That is not acceptable, because this is a national crisis and a local crisis. That goes right to the heart of the point about public transport. We need to make sure that all the workers involved in transport are given the opportunity to deliver transport that is eco-friendly, but they are not, particularly taxi drivers. Taxi drivers, in many cases, cannot afford to transition to electric vehicles as rapidly as we need them to, and we must provide the support that is necessary for them to be able to achieve that.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): A little earlier, the shadow Minister implied that climate change was causing the raging fires in the Amazon and Australia. The fires in the Amazon are caused by mankind trying to create agricultural land, not climate change, as I would expect it is very wet out there. In Australia—this goes back to a question I asked earlier—75% of fires are caused by arson.

Rebecca Long Bailey: I welcome the hon. Gentleman's points, but we need to move beyond discussions regarding climate change denial and recognise the scale of the task ahead of ahead of us, because the science is clear. We are facing a climate emergency, and if we do not take robust action and lead the world, we will not have a world left—it is as simple as that.

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): I am very disappointed that the hon. Member for South Dorset (Richard Drax) has mentioned the 75% figure, which was also mentioned by the Foreign Office Minister who gave the statement on the bushfires last week. It is fake news that is being spread by climate change deniers in Australia. A letter to *The Guardian* from a number of well-renowned climate academics, including several from Bristol University, was published yesterday. I think the true figure for arson is less than 1%. I would like to make sure that that is absolutely on the record.

Rebecca Long Bailey: I thank my hon. Friend for her point because she is quite right.

With reference to civil society groups like Extinction Rebellion who have been urging those in power to tell the truth about climate change, I was alarmed by reports that the Government's response was to defend the recommendation to list them alongside neo-Nazi terrorists. That is an absolute disgrace. I urge the Secretary of State to speak to her colleagues about this. It is absolutely absurd that our school strikers and our climate activists who were trying to fight to be heard here in Westminster are being listed alongside terrorist organisations when they are simply trying to save the planet and deliver a world for their future and that of their children and grandchildren.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I have no doubt in my own mind that the landslips, the flooding and the collapse of roads is being caused by climate change: I come from the land of the mountain and the flood. Highland Council and all rural councils, not just in Scotland but all over the UK, are faced with the cost of the restoration works. Adding to the hon. Lady's suggestion that the money is not there, does she agree that we need a dedicated income stream for the devolved institutions in the UK to pay for these repairs, because otherwise it is just going to get worse?

Rebecca Long Bailey: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments because he is quite right. As I said earlier, we cannot keep having discussions about whether climate change is real. It is real, and we cannot detach ourselves from the situation in thinking that it is something that happens to other countries across the world and it is not going to affect us. It is already affecting us, and even if it does affect other countries across the world we will need to help the people in those countries. We also need to recognise that for a country like ours that is so reliant on imported food, any disruption to any part of the world disrupts our quality of life here. That is why it is so important for us to protect the people here in the UK by making sure that we lead across the world on this. I am sure that we have collaborative agreement across the House on that point.

Caroline Lucas: A moment ago the hon. Lady was talking about civil society organisations. I absolutely agree with her about the excellent work done by Extinction Rebellion and others. Will she join me in congratulating the student climate network, People and Planet, which only this week announced that over half of UK universities have now divested from fossil fuels? Does she agree that it is about time that we in this Parliament got our house in order? I have been trying, along with other colleagues, to get our parliamentary pension fund to divest from fossil fuels. That still has not happened. Will she join me in saying that it is long overdue that we take this step?

Rebecca Long Bailey: I thank the hon. Lady for her comments and associate myself with them wholeheartedly. I thank her for all the work that she has done in this House over the years really to put this issue on the agenda at a time when others did not want to talk about it, quite frankly.

Let me move on to the second quality that is required—ambition. The purpose of the Queen's Speech should be to look forward—to set out the Government's future plans—but most of the climate section looks backwards, sadly, to the Government's record over the past 12 months, and even this is confusing to many. There is reference to £400 million of funding for electric vehicle charging infrastructure, but this was first announced in the 2017 Budget. The Queen's Speech also references an industrial energy transformation fund, but this was announced in the 2018 Budget. We were told that 53% of electricity now comes from low-carbon sources, and that sounds good, but is it really ambitious enough? As any energy expert will tell you, electricity is the easy part. Only 11% of the UK's total end energy consumption, including heat and transport, comes from renewable sources. Only 7% of the UK's heat demand is met by renewable sources. As Labour set out at the general election, to get on track to a net-zero energy system, we need low-carbon electricity at levels of above 90% within a decade.

The Government reference their doubling of international climate finance, and this sounds good until you realise that this money is not new or additional and that the Government are effectively raiding the aid budget to pay for it. The Government want to ensure that everybody is within 30 miles of an electric charging point, but that does not sound particularly ambitious to me, to be honest. Nor does the commitment to end the export of plastic waste to non-OECD countries when 60% of our plastic waste exports are actually shipped to OECD countries. Should not the Government be asking why we are producing all that pointless plastic in the first place and cut it off at source rather than dumping the problem overseas?

There are of course welcome features in the Queen's Speech, such as the commitment to invest £800 million to develop the UK's first carbon capture and storage cluster by the mid-2020s. But I remember the time in 2010 when the coalition made a £1 billion commitment to CCS before scrapping it again in 2015. Can the Secretary of State assure us that the UK's carbon-intensive industries will not suffer the same fate as when the last promise was made? Why is it that as the climate crisis worsens the Government appear to be treading water and going backwards? Tackling the climate and environmental emergency and capturing the massive opportunities of the green economy require ambition. We needed to see an emergency plan for the first 100 days of Government—a plan for every year of this Parliament and a plan for the decade ahead. Sadly, the Queen's Speech does not come close to this.

I now turn to the third and final quality—fairness. Rapid decarbonisation across our economy requires fundamental changes in the way we work and the way we live. Done badly, this presents big risks to people's livelihoods. Only by socialising the costs and the benefits of decarbonisation will we be able to take the public with us through this change, but the Queen's Speech does not set out a plan to do that.

To give an example, fossil fuel workers have powered the country for decades. We need a clear and properly funded plan for what will happen to those workers and their communities as we move to a renewable energy system. We tried to set out proposals at the election for a just transition fund. The absence of a plan for a just transition in the Queen's Speech is a major omission, and I urge the Government to do better and start listening to and working with trade unions on this as quickly as possible.

It was more than 30 years ago that NASA scientist James Hansen presented his findings on climate change to the US Senate. Nobody could reasonably argue that we have done enough since then, and now we are running out of time. We cannot afford another lost five years. I urge the Government to work with us and Members across the House to correct the obvious shortcomings of the Queen's Speech and their agenda, and to develop a package of measures that can secure the future all of us deserve. There is still time, but it is running out.

1.20 pm

Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con): I intend to speak briefly, as I am conscious that there will be a large number of extremely high-quality maiden speeches this afternoon. I wish to raise a very niche subject while my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is still in her place. I feel privileged to be called so early in the debate, following only the Secretary of State and the shadow Secretary of State.

I want to pick up briefly on some of the comments that the Secretary of State made about the generation of clean energy. I urge her to ensure that, when we are generating green energy, it must be properly green. She also spoke of new technologies. I absolutely agree; there are many new technologies coming forward that will enable us to generate power and deal with waste in much greener ways, but we must scrutinise them incredibly carefully, to ensure we do not make mistakes that will be around for many generations to come.

I very much welcome the Secretary of State's comments and the policies included in Her Majesty's Gracious Speech. I particularly welcome the introduction of a landmark environment Bill, the introduction of an Office for Environmental Protection and the personal commitment of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister to chair a new Cabinet Committee on Climate Change. The environment Bill will cement our position as a world leader on air quality, biodiversity and plastics reduction; I know I am correct on that because I am quoting directly from the Conservative research department brief—something that I would commend to all new Conservative Members.

Those three points are of particular interest to us in Romsey and Southampton North, and now I come to the niche comments that I wish to make. Members may have heard me raise with the Prime Minister last week the fact that US company Wheelabrator is planning to build, under national infrastructure rules, a giant incinerator in my constituency to burn commercial waste, between the beautiful, picturesque Test Valley villages of Longparish and Barton Stacey. Notionally, it will generate energy from waste, but it is in fact many miles from any connection to the national grid, and significantly, it is not close to a demand for that energy. It is within a few

miles of an area of outstanding natural beauty and the South Downs national park. It is proposed to be twice the size of Winchester cathedral, but, of course, devoid of any of the architectural merit of that building. It will be in excess of 40 metres high, with chimneys that are 80 metres high. The plan is to locate it adjacent to the River Dever, which is known the world over for its fantastic fly fishing and is a tributary of the River Test. The incinerator will be situated above the aquifer and will be pumping pollution into the atmosphere, putting the biodiversity of this precious area at risk.

My asks of the Secretary of State today are wholly in line with her and my aspirations for a reduction in carbon emissions, enabling us to meet our net zero target and supporting her goal of better air quality, and totally in keeping with the aim to reduce waste, including plastics. We simply cannot keep looking to incineration as a solution to landfill. It is not good enough, and it is not green enough.

I turn to relatively recent history. The hon. Member for Salford and Eccles (Rebecca Long Bailey) mentioned the Treasury's October 2018 Budget, which stated:

"the government wants to maximise the amount of waste sent to recycling instead of incineration and landfill. Should wider policies not deliver the government's waste ambitions in the future, it will consider the introduction of a tax on the incineration of waste, in conjunction with landfill tax, taking account of the possible impacts on local authorities."

I know that my friends at Hampshire County Council would wish to emphasise the point that we have to be cognisant of the needs of local authorities, but the proposal in my constituency is not a local authority project; it is a massive commercial venture.

I welcome the Secretary of State's comments about businesses being held to account for their actions. This commercial venture seeks to make money by putting pollutants into the atmosphere. It pays no heed to the specific qualities of the landscape or local biodiversity. I want to put on record the determination of local residents to oppose the project by whatever means necessary, and would especially mention the brilliant campaigners of Keep Test Valley Beautiful. I urge the Secretary of State to ensure that we hold to our commitments to improve air quality, reduce waste and protect our precious environmental diversity.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Can I suggest that Members speak for up to 10 minutes, so that everybody gets a fair share of the time? That does not include the Scottish National party Front-Bench spokesman—I call Alan Brown.

1.25 pm

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The word "revolution" means either an overthrow or a radical and pervasive change in society, especially one made suddenly. Have we really had a green industrial revolution? Have we had a revolution in Government? I would suggest that, if anything, there has been a counter green revolution, given that the Tory Government scrapped the Department for Energy and Climate Change, thus highlighting their priorities in recent years.

I have to acknowledge that we have made fantastic strides forward with renewable energy, but has it been a revolution? I would argue that, owing to the UK Government chopping and changing strategy, the process

has been too stop-start to be classed as revolutionary. We have seen a welcome increase in the deployment of renewable energy, and UK Government support has facilitated that, but owing to policy changes, there have been too many peaks, troughs and, in some cases, catastrophic failures because of the actions of the UK Government.

The first example of that is onshore wind, which was deployed to great effect in Scotland, with prices falling rapidly due to the initial Government policies. It was a renewable energy revolution that Scotland embraced—one that saw 75% of gross electricity demand met by renewable generation in Scotland in 2018. However, the Tory shire prejudice against onshore wind means that the Tory Government are now blocking onshore wind across the UK, against Scotland's wishes.

The Committee on Climate Change states that onshore wind capacity in the UK needs to increase from 13 GW to 35 GW by 2035 as part of the net zero transition, yet there is no route to market at present for onshore wind, despite it being the cheapest form of electricity generation. The former Secretary of State for Scotland should hang his head in shame for blocking the redeployment of onshore wind in Scotland. A report by Vivid Economics estimates that this could cost 2,300 jobs in Scotland and add £50 a year to everybody's energy bills.

As the debate on Scottish independence re-intensifies, we need to remember the broken pledge and propaganda on onshore wind in 2014. We were told how well Scotland does out of onshore wind subsidies, how that would continue and how the UK as a whole would support onshore wind in Scotland, but instead the subsidies were removed a year or so after. That is another broken promise in 2014 that the public need to be reminded of.

When we consider renewables and wind in particular, it is a reminder that the transmission charging regime is a straitjacket around Scotland. The punitive charges, especially in the north of Scotland, can be a deal breaker for some developments. The charging system needs a complete overhaul to allow deployment of renewable energy for maximum benefit.

Similarly, we need a timescale for the delivery of interconnectors to Scotland's islands. The change in classification for island onshore wind so that it can bid in pot 2 contract for difference auctions is welcome, but without the interconnectors these opportunities cannot be maximised. Ofgem needs to reconsider its rejection of a 600 MW interconnector to the Western Isles. Why is it holding out for a less ambitious 450 MW interconnector?

We need greater strategic vision from the UK Government on interconnectors. We need interconnectors to the continent and Norway, because of the abundance of hydroelectric energy. Is it not telling that Ireland is getting an interconnector to France, paid for by the EU at a cost of half a billion pounds? What does that signal for the future direction of the single energy market, and where does Brexit and a possible no-deal crash-out leave the UK without those vital interconnectors?

In the past—in another policy change—we had the carbon capture fiasco, when the Treasury pulled £1 billion that was on offer, and which looked set to deliver carbon capture and storage in Peterhead. That was a wasted opportunity—money down the drain with nothing to show for it—and it cost 600 jobs in Peterhead and ruined the chance for the UK and Scotland to be a

[Alan Brown]

world leader in that technology. I am asking Westminster to please back Scotland's CCS potential. With 35% of the available capacity in the whole of Europe, we could still be a world leader. However, it needs a fast start, and better investment in Scotland. The Committee on Climate Change has made it clear that carbon capture is not a wish; it is a necessity in order to hit net zero by 2050.

Solar energy was another possible success story, yet, when it was looking good, the Tory Government pulled the feed-in tariffs and now they have quadrupled the VAT on solar installations, so they have destroyed the industry just as it was heading towards subsidy-free installations. That is another example of a UK Government policy revolution wreaking havoc on an industry. The VAT decision must be reversed as soon as possible.

And yet, when it comes to nuclear and the Government's nuclear obsession, money is no object. We signed up to Hinkley Point C, which has a 35-year concession at a strike rate of £92.50 per MWh, and yet, as the Secretary of State is aware—she spoke about the benefits of offshore wind—offshore wind now has a strike rate of £40 per MWh for just 15 years, so it is about three to four times cheaper than nuclear energy. Why are the Tory Government continuing to pursue new nuclear projects? It makes no sense. [Interruption.] Can the Secretary of State explain why?

Andrea Leadsom: The hon. Gentleman will be very aware that there is a difference between the baseload and the variability of renewables.

Alan Brown: And the Secretary of State will know very well that that baseload is becoming a moot argument. It was argued that Hinkley Point C was required by December 2017 for the baseload to stop the lights going out. Now Hinkley will not be delivered till 2025 by the earliest, and the lights have not gone out. That shows how much the market has changed. Half the existing nuclear power stations will be decommissioned by 2024, and they cannot be replaced by new nuclear stations in that time, so the Government really do need to look again at their strategy, and new nuclear power stations is not that.

The Government say that the National Infrastructure Commission have said that there should be only one new nuclear power station, because of the change in renewables technology. Again, it seems that the Government are not actually listening to the body they say they are listening to.

As an alternative to nuclear, we also need to look at sector deals for investments such as marine and tidal energy, and also floating offshore wind. Where are their sector deals and what is happening with those?

Has there even been an industrial revolution? Again, I would suggest not. The UK Government failed to back the technological development of onshore wind and the fantastic opportunities there. That led to the manufacturing sector of that industry being developed elsewhere, particularly Denmark. That was a massive lost opportunity, and it cannot be replicated by other emerging technologies.

Even now, when it comes to offshore wind, the CfD auctions do not include a quality mechanism that would allow bidders to be rewarded for using local supply chains.

That would be an ideal way to generate industrial jobs around the coastal communities, and it would provide greater opportunities for companies in Scotland, such as BiFab and CS Wind. Why are the UK Government not willing to incorporate such a procurement quality assessment mechanism in the auction process? It makes sense, and it would also reduce the construction carbon footprint for the delivery of such projects.

If we are to hit net zero in the UK by 2050, we need a proper green industrial revolution. We need the large-scale development of CCS, which, as well as creating jobs, will allow a long-term just transition for the oil and gas sector. We need radical measures to decarbonise our heat. Our domestic heating systems are the elephant in the room when it comes to the net zero target. I said earlier that 27 million houses relied on fossil fuels for heating, so a change in that mechanism for 27 million homes needs to be a proper revolution. It is likely that we shall see gas central heating boilers change to hydrogen boilers, and we know that hydrogen blending is a short-term transitional measure in decarbonising the gas network, but we need the strategies and policies in place, and the necessary changes in regulation to allow that to happen. There, too, we need concrete plans from the UK Government.

If I may switch back to Scotland, Scotland has been attempting to undergo a real green industrial revolution, but again we have been hampered by UK Government policies, the U-turns and the lack of strategic vision. Where is the energy White Paper that we were promised last year? It is ridiculous to have a clean growth strategy, an industrial strategy, but not an overarching or a linking energy policy that brings those together. We need to see that sooner or later.

Where is the Government response to the National Infrastructure Commission? We are still waiting on that. That is another organisation that states that energy efficiency should be treated as a national infrastructure programme. It would create jobs and it reduces carbon emissions, energy demand and fuel poverty. And yet, again, the Tory Government have not addressed that. They previously chose to go down the route of the green deal, which actually forced people to take out loans. Then the green deal led to scandal, with the mis-selling of solar panels by the company HELMS, leaving thousands of people with 25-year loans and faulty installations. The UK Government have still not rectified that. Will the Secretary of State consider that as well?

Meanwhile, the Scottish Government spend four times as much per capita on energy efficiency measures as the UK Government. For that, they have been praised by industry, third sector organisations and the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee. Put simply, Scotland leads the way in energy efficiency, and by 2021 the SNP Government will have invested £1 billion in energy efficiency programmes.

The one energy efficiency measure that the UK Government brought in is the energy company obligation scheme—ECO. But the Committee on Fuel Poverty states that that is not helping the people who require it the most. In effect, that means that those who struggle to pay their bills for energy costs now pay extra on their energy bills for ECO, which is then funding energy efficiency measures for those most likely to be able to afford them. That is completely bonkers. There is also a

really serious point, because every year 3,000 people in the UK die as a result of fuel poverty—the second-worst rate in Europe. Urgent, coherent action is needed to address fuel poverty and to address energy efficiency measures.

Scotland leads in energy efficiency, and we also lead in climate change registration targets: the first Government to call a climate change emergency; a net zero target for 2045; and a 75% target reduction by 2030. According to the Committee on Climate Change, Scotland has become the leading UK nation in reducing greenhouse gas emissions under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. However, these latest targets are world-leading. Our 2030 target goes beyond what the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report states is required globally to limit warming to the 1.5°, as per the Paris climate agreement. We have also taken the difficult decision not to reduce air passenger duty when it is devolved. In the past couple of days the UK Government have been flip-flopping on that, and are all over the place when it comes to APD.

Going forward, the Scottish Government's "Programme for Government" puts the green new deal at the heart of Government policy. Securing transition to net zero will be the primary mission for the Scottish National Investment Bank, supported by £130 million this year. The creation of the SNIB will provide £2 billion of long-term capital to businesses and infrastructure projects, to help transform the Scottish economy, and again reduce carbon emissions. That contrasts directly with the UK Green Investment Bank, set up by the Tory Government and then sold off without assurances of green aims or a UK focus.

We know that transport is a major carbon emitter. If we are looking at the roll-out of electric vehicles, I suggest that we need to look at Norway. It has undertaken a real revolution towards electric and low emission vehicles. In 2019, 58% of new car sales were of plug-in low-emission vehicles and 42% of overall sales were of fully electric cars. Meanwhile, here in the UK, flags are being waved and we are supposed to celebrate the fact that we have reached 3% sales of electric vehicles. According to the Committee on Climate Change, the UK deadline of 2040 for the phase-out of fossil fuel vehicles is way too far ahead, and even then the plans for its delivery are too vague. I suggest that the UK Government look to a small, independent, prosperous country such as Norway for inspiration, and to see how things can be done properly.

The UK has made strides regarding carbon emissions, but, as we have heard, there is a long way to go. While we look for solutions, nature is unfortunately undergoing its own climate change revolution. We have seen that with the bushfires in Australia, the 4 million hectares of Siberian forest that burned a few months ago, and the fires in Greenland, Alaska and Canada. The six hottest years on record have been the last six consecutive years, with warming oceans and melting ice. Things are critical, and Lord Deben, Chair of the Committee on Climate Change, said that the UK's efforts to deal with climate change have fallen short. Indeed, in the interim progress report he states that

"policy ambition and implementation now fall well short of what is required."

We have a Prime Minister who ducked out of TV debates on climate change, so we are looking for real leadership on this issue. I am glad that Scotland is

showing such leadership, but I know it could do so much more if it were a small, independent country that was able to grasp the nettle in the way that Norway has.

Several hon. Members rose—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. I remind the House of the informal time limit of 10 minutes—we will be quite rigid about that—and Members should observe the usual courtesies when a maiden speech is being delivered. I have great pleasure in calling the next Member to make a maiden speech, Simon Fell.

1.41 pm

Simon Fell (Barrow and Furness) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and may I welcome you back to your position in the Chair? I am grateful to be making my maiden speech in this debate on the green industrial revolution. Although mine is the first maiden speech delivered today, it is daunting to follow the contributions made by colleagues from both Government and Opposition Benches over the past couple of days. I watched those speeches, feeling increasingly green as they went on, and I do not think those Members need my congratulations. Indeed, when they rise up the ministerial ranks, I hope they will look favourably on me.

I will also gladly comply with another tradition of the House and pay tribute to my predecessor as Member of Parliament for Barrow and Furness, John Woodcock. Despite hailing from the wrong side of the Pennines, John was a staunch and passionate defender of that beautiful but often neglected part of the world. He fought to secure the Dreadnought programme in the shipyard, and he brought that same focus to the fight against antisemitism and injustice wherever he saw it, no matter the personal cost. John and I have clashed many times over the years, but his affection for Furness shines through and I wish him the best for the future.

Barrow and Furness is hidden away, but it is a remarkable place. Stretching—almost—from the Old Man of Coniston in the north, all the way to Walney Island in the south, Barrow is beautiful, with an industrial town at its beating heart. We are home to the national endeavour of building our nation's nuclear deterrent, and we have a proud history of shipbuilding, from ocean liners to Royal Navy flagship vessels and submarines.

It was not always that way. Furness is rich in mineral deposits such as copper, nickel, cobalt and iron ore. Indeed, during the 1830s, prospecting for iron ore led to the creation of the town of Barrow as we know it. A collection of sheep farms rapidly turned into a Victorian town of high standing, an iron exporting giant, a shipbuilding hub, and then into a world leader in submarine production. That is the work on which many—almost one in five—of my constituents rely, either directly or through our substantial supply chains. I will focus on ensuring not only that my party honours its commitments to sustain that work, but that we seek to grow our capability by renewing the Astute-class boats and seeking wider opportunities.

Barrow and Furness is not just about submarines. Our market towns, from Ulverston to Dalton and Broughton-in-Furness, are bustling and—I urge hon. Members to note this—ideal for weekend visits and Easter holidays. People can watch the grey seals in South Walney, with

[Simon Fell]

Piel Island, which used to repel marauding Scots from the harbour, but now welcomes them as tourists, on the horizon. From local craft shops to the best pies in England, Furness's real natural resource is its people, and there is no place with a stronger sense of community.

Coming off a gruelling election campaign, we often find ourselves thinking about what would have happened had we zigged rather than zagged, or if life had taken us in a different direction. The joy of an election, as all hon. Members will know, is meeting people, and hearing on the doorstep what they want for their families, futures and community. That same joy also comes from the people with whom we spend our election campaigns, and if hon. Members will indulge me, I wish to pay tribute to five people without whom I would not be standing here now. First is my father, Peter, a bounder of hedges and disrespecter of people's gates—I would not be here without him. I also pay tribute to my wife, Pippa—my rock—to my mother, Meriel, who kept me sane, and to Ben and Brenda, who despite having a candidate who would not listen to them, made my campaign a success. I fear that if I listed everyone I should thank, the orchestra would play me off, but they know who they are.

We also lost people this campaign, and I will take this opportunity to remember Pam Whittam, the kindest and most determined stalwart of my local party, whose cooking I still think about in idle moments, as well as Rory McClure, former mayor of Barrow, former president of Furness Rotary, and a dedicated local councillor and friend. I miss them both terribly.

I campaigned on a slogan of "Securing Furness's Future", which is not a pledge I take lightly. Furness's future is at stake, and it is hard not to argue that we are a left-behind community. The A590, our main road, is dangerous and prone to flooding. The A595 runs through a farmyard. When our rail franchise fails—as it does all too often—our people are left stranded. One point that is especially appropriate to raise in this debate is that our current rail service is so poor that it is pushing people off public transport and back into their cars. That is why I look forward to working with Front-Bench colleagues to strip Northern of its franchise, and deliver a reliable and improved rail service on the Furness line.

We in Furness have a tremendous opportunity to be at the forefront of the green industrial revolution. We vie with Hull to be host to the largest offshore wind farm in the world—a title I very much hope we will soon regain. Up the coast in Copeland is Sellafield, to which a number of my constituents make a daily journey, through the farmyard that I mentioned. We in south-west Cumbria are already pioneers of renewable energy, but there are further opportunities on our doorstep. Our coastline is the ideal place for a tidal barrage, the development of which would cement the Cumbrian coast as a northern powerhouse in renewable energy, skills and capability. The impact of such a concentration of renewables businesses in Morecambe Bay and the Cumbrian coast would be transformative. That remote and beautiful part of England could become the epicentre of the green industrial revolution. We have the people, we have the skills; we just need the chance, and I look forward to working with colleagues on the Front Bench to explore the viability of those bold projects.

On the doorstep, I was told time and again that traditional Labour voters were lending me their votes. I consider every vote to be lent—we have to earn those votes, and to earn them again we must deliver on our promises to level up communities such as Barrow and Furness, to renew our town centres, finally to tackle existing deep-set poverty, and to invest in our NHS and schools. I shall pursue those things with a single-minded focus. It is an incredible honour to be standing up and speaking here, and I will work daily to earn the trust that the people of Barrow and Furness have placed in me. I look forward to fighting for them in the years to come.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. Simon Fell is a former researcher of mine, and I am privileged to have been in the Chair when he gave his maiden speech. Well done, Simon.

1.48 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell)—that is clearly where he gets his ease of manner, and he already seems like a veteran of the Chamber. I have never visited his constituency, but perhaps it is about time I did.

I wish to pay tribute to my colleague, Sue Hayman, who represented another Cumbrian seat. I wish she were here today to contribute to this debate, because she did so much, particularly on Labour's "Plan for Nature" and animal welfare manifesto, and as our Front-Bench speaker shadowing the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. She will be very much missed.

The planet is facing a climate and ecological crisis, but forgive me, Mr Deputy Speaker, if I do not have complete confidence in the Government's ability to rise to the challenge. Since we returned after the election, two ministerial appearances at the Dispatch Box have raised my concerns. We had a statement on the Australian bushfires, and the Foreign Office Minister managed to get through her entire opening statement without putting the situation in the climate context. When a number of us challenged her and said, "Surely, if you are talking about the Australian bushfires, you should be talking about why they are happening?", she got quite cross with me and said that we should be treating it like some sort of disaster where we just come in afterwards and patch things up, rather than looking at the root causes. As we have already heard, she repeated the 75% arson claim, which has been thoroughly debunked.

We also had an urgent question on Flybe yesterday. Again, in the Minister's initial response, with regard to bailing out an airline and possibly cutting air passenger duty on domestic flights, there was no mention at all of the impact on carbon emissions and pollution. Surely, no matter what your views on whether Flybe provides an essential service, you have to mention climate change if you are serious about trying to reach net zero.

Another thing that really worries me is that the COP25 climate change talks took place during the election campaign. A number of us had been hoping to attend, but were obviously unable to because of the election. We have not had a ministerial statement on COP25. We should have had an oral statement, particularly

as we are hosting COP26. COP25 is widely regarded as a failure—very little was achieved. I would have expected, at the very least, a written ministerial statement assessing what did not happen in Madrid and putting forward a plan for how we can get things back on track as we host COP26 in Glasgow later this year.

In terms of what is in the Queen's Speech, I welcome the direction of travel set out in the environment Bill. I particularly welcome the decision to locate the new Office of Environmental Protection in Bristol. I can think of no better place for it, given the level of expertise we have in the city. My concern, however, is particularly that the long-term targets do not need to be set until 2022 and potentially cannot be enforced for almost two decades. Reference has already been made to the fact that the carbon budgets, which give us interim targets, are slipping. We know that we are not going to meet the recycling target for this year. We cannot just have one goal that we aim to reach two decades into the future. We have got to have a way of monitoring it and holding the Government to account in the short term as well.

The OEP will not be truly independent and will lack the power to hold the Government to account. In the previous Parliament, I sat on both the Environmental Audit Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, which undertook pre-legislative scrutiny. Both Committees made that point. There is also no commitment to non-regression. When we should be seeking constant improvement, we can do better than our current standards. We certainly should not be going backwards. National infrastructure projects will not be subject to biodiversity net gain. Increasingly, net gain is looking like net parity. Again, we should be seeking improvements and not trying to just hold things as they are. The National Trust is particularly concerned that the historic environment has been excluded, even though the 25-year environment plan put it on a level playing field with the natural environment. There is no commitment to a national tree strategy, which is a crucial nature-based solution. While I am here, I would also make a plea for us to restore our peat lands. They can be an incredible carbon sink, but if we allow grouse moor owners to set fire to them, the environmental degradation that goes with that releases a huge amount of carbon into the atmosphere. We need action on that.

On a global scale, we heard the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) talk about the need to measure consumption, rather than just production. There is absolutely no way that we are looking at the true picture unless we do so. The UK, for example, consumes 3.3 million tonnes of soy per year. Some 77% of that comes from high-risk deforestation areas in Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay. We know that land use is one of the biggest threats to biodiversity and ecosystem services.

On UK Export Finance, it is a shame that the Secretary of State is no longer in her place. She was boasting about some of the work we do on reducing carbon emissions overseas, but, as the Environmental Audit Committee found, UK Export Finance spent £4.8 billion on fossil fuel projects overseas between 2010 and 2016. In fact, well over 90%—I think 95% or 96%—of the amount it spends on financing energy projects overseas goes on fossil fuel projects, rather than on cleaner renewable projects. That is almost equal to the total spending on international climate finance. There is no

point boasting about what we do on the one hand, if we then finance the private sector to do damaging fossil fuel exploration on the other hand.

The agriculture Bill has not been mentioned yet. Last time it was before us, I spoke on Second Reading and served on the Bill Committee, which concluded in December 2018. There is a sense of déjà vu to hear it announced again. I think it was published a couple of hours ago and there have been only a couple of minor tweaks to the previous Bill. That is disappointing. It is disappointing that the Government did not use this opportunity to think again about how farming can tackle the climate, nature and health crises all together. Those three dots simply have not been joined up. From my perspective, it requires a transition to sustainable agroecological farming by 2030, as proposed by the RSA's Food, Farming and Countryside Commission. I hope, in the new Parliament, to reconstitute the all-party group on agroecology, which I chaired for a number of years, and I will be tabling the same amendments in support of whole-farm systems that I tabled in the previous Parliament.

I would also like the Government to adopt the previously proposed new clause on supporting county farms. We have heard a lot of warm words on this. In a session I chaired at the Oxford Real Farming conference, the former Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the right hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), made clear his commitment to county farms, which are a great way for new entrants who cannot afford to buy land at today's prices to enter the market. They are also a good way to direct the growing of local healthy food and restoring nature. I hope we can pin the Government down on that.

We need a long-term financial commitment, which farmers have been asking for, on delivering public goods to be set out in the Bill. The Government have now ring-fenced the overall farm funding budget for the next five years, but there is still no indication as to how it will be divided up. Based on independent analysis by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the National Trust and the Wildlife Trust, at least £2.9 billion is needed for the new environment land management schemes. The Bill is also missing a duty on the Government to routinely assess the scale of financial need and a strong baseline of regulations for land managers to adhere to.

I tabled new clause 1 in the Report stage of the Bill, which then suddenly disappeared in December 2018. I think one of the reasons it disappeared was that the Government were convinced they would lose on new clause 1. New clause 1 was designed to ensure that there would be no lowering of environmental, food safety and animal welfare standards in any future trade deals. The Government talk about that a lot, but when I raised it at Brexit questions last week, mentioning the National Farmers Union's concerns and its request for a trading standards commission to be established, the Minister was incredibly dismissive. We know that the Government will come under significant pressure from the Department for International Trade to lower standards in any future trade deal once we leave the EU, and that will lead to a race to the bottom. As I said, it is not just environmentalists but the NFU and everyone involved in the food sector in this country who do not want to see that.

Finally, if I can just ask where we are in terms of some of the animal welfare proposals. There is a lot of support for the sentencing Bill, which will increase the

[Kerry McCarthy]

sentences for animal cruelty from six months to five years. I hope that will be brought back soon. Where has the sentence Bill got to? Again, the Government promised several years ago, I think in 2017, to introduce a sentence Bill. They still have not done so. I urge the Government to bring it forward as soon as possible.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): We now come to another maiden speech—Mr Gary Sambrook.

1.58 pm

Gary Sambrook (Birmingham, Northfield) (Con): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. May I first say that it is a pleasure to be giving my maiden speech with you in the Chair? Thank you for all your help and guidance to new Members since we arrived here on whatever day it was in December—it feels like a long time ago. Secondly, may I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Halesowen and Rowley Regis (James Morris)? I do not think I would be here today without his help, guidance and, most importantly, his friendship over the past six years. Finally, I would like to congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell) on his excellent maiden speech.

I would like to say a couple of words about my predecessor, Richard Burden, who had a long and distinguished service in this House over 27 years. He definitely built up a reputation over time in Northfield. Richard Burden and Roger King, another former Member in the constituency, struck up a good partnership campaigning together on local issues, especially the development of the North Worcestershire golf club that we have all been campaigning against. They also shared a huge passion for motorsport. Unfortunately, we part in respect of my skills in this area, which can be described in this way: I had to ring up my uncle once to ask him what the flashing gravy boat meant in the car, to which he coolly said, “It’s the oil light—you need to change your oil.” Although my skill base in this area may not be the same as theirs, my enthusiasm for the motoring industry is just as high, and we need to celebrate it and make sure that it is still a distinguishing part of our country.

Birmingham is home, and I have lived there for my entire 30 years. It is rapidly growing and it has been known as the city of a thousand trades. It was an integral part of the industrial revolution in the UK, as was Northfield. Northfield, Kings Norton, Weoley, Allens Cross, Rubery and Rednal, Frankley, West Heath and Longbridge are all very distinctive parts of my constituency. They all started off as villages in north Worcestershire and were later consumed by the ever-expanding Birmingham. Now, 100 years later, they are a key contributing part of our city, especially in industry.

The two things that most people think about when you mention Birmingham, Northfield are, of course, the Cadbury family and Austin Motors—latterly, MG Rover. The Cadbury family left behind a lasting legacy for south Birmingham in many physical forms, including the Manor Farm Park, the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital and, although it is not quite in my constituency—it is in the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Bromsgrove (Sajid Javid)—the Lickey Hills. They were a caring family who ably demonstrated the

compassionate side of capitalism and the good things that can be done. Jobs, training, community and a decent standard of living were their legacy and their values, and that lives on today in Northfield.

Austin Motors—latterly, MG Rover—has been synonymous with Longbridge and Northfield for many, many decades. Indeed, this week, many former employees will be saddened to see demolition beginning of the two main plant areas on the site, but with our changing economy, we must adapt and embrace our new green industry to ensure that we use it to create more jobs and wealth, provide better homes and increase our connectivity between cities and suburbs, and cross-borough. We must make sure that we use every possible opportunity from our new green industry to make that happen.

All of this creates life chances, because as the Prime Minister says, talent is equally shared across our country, but unfortunately, opportunity often is not. I stand here feeling that it was absolutely unthinkable that I would ever speak in this Chamber. We hear stories—I think the former Member for Rutland and Melton, Sir Alan Duncan, once said that he remembers hiding under the bedsheets as a teenager reading “Erskine May”. I was similar, but it was a dictionary because I hadn’t the foggiest what was going on and did not understand what most people were talking about.

Talking about life chances makes me reflect on my own roots. I was born in a part of Birmingham called Kingstanding, which was the largest council estate in Europe when it was built. I went to a secondary school that in 2004, just before I left, had a pass rate of 11%. My parents are incredibly hard-working: my mother is a dinner lady and my dad is a van driver. My grandparents have worked in industries in Birmingham, too. My grandad has always said to me that anything in life can be achieved as long as you have two things: concentration and dedication. He also says that you can say whatever you like to anybody as long as you smile—I have tried that a couple of times, but it does not always work out for the best.

Since leaving school there have unfortunately been several times when I have picked up the *Birmingham Mail* and seen pictures of people who I went to school with who have gone to prison, for a variety of crimes. It often makes me think, “How did it ever happen, and why?” My secondary school had some fantastic teachers—I remember two in particular: Mr Hopkins and Mrs Hare, who I hope to bring down here one day to thank them for their support during my teenage years. They gave it their all and they cared about the students at that school, but something was desperately wrong in the system at the time, and too many people left school ill-equipped, without the skills that they needed to succeed in life.

I stand here with an enormous amount of responsibility on my shoulders and a passion for what I want to try to deliver while I am in this place. I obviously want to do well by my constituents in Birmingham, Northfield, and to do well by Parliament and this country as we try to restore faith in this place and re-establish our national pride. I also want to do well by and champion the working-class kids up and down this country who wake up every day with ambition and zeal and want to realise their opportunities. I think it is through the new green industry that we will create those opportunities and realise those dreams.

2.5 pm

Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab): I congratulate the hon. Members for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook) and for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell) on their excellent and most entertaining maiden speeches. I am sure that we will hear a lot more from them during this Parliament.

I am very pleased to speak in this debate, and I was following very closely the Secretary of State's words. One of the key issues that we need to resolve, whichever side of the Chamber we sit on, is the growing economic divide between the north and the south. I will refer quite extensively to a new report published by Sheffield Hallam University, "The State of the Coalfields 2019", which details the situation, identifying not just problems, but solutions.

In the UK, power and finance is concentrated in the centre, in the near exclusive control of Whitehall and Westminster. This has led to decades of under-investment in the north-east and former industrial communities such as mine. I believe that our economy and country as a whole will not succeed post Brexit if we remain exclusively reliant on the success of London and the south-east. Today, I will focus on the green industrial revolution and the economic benefits that it could bring to constituencies such as mine—Easington, in County Durham.

I am very proud of Labour's manifesto and I thought that our Front Bencher, my hon. Friend the Member for Salford and Eccles (Rebecca Long Bailey), made a terrific contribution at the start of the debate in outlining the advantages of Labour's green industrial revolution. In my lifetime, the north-east was one of the engines of economic success. It powered the industrial revolution and has a long and proud history in shipbuilding, coalmining and engineering. In Murton, where I live, the colliery was the mainstay of the village, providing employment and coal for the nation's furnaces from 1834 until it stopped production in November 1991. It employed my father, uncles, cousins and grandfather.

Labour had planned to make the north-east a centre for the next industrial revolution—the green industrial revolution. Indeed, Labour's manifesto set out not just slogans, but specific pledges: £13 billion of new investment in the green transformation fund, including plans for Crossrail for the north, expanding our ports, particularly on the Tyne and the Tees, a steel recycling plant in Redcar, and manufacturing facilities to support the Dogger Bank wind farms. We would have had 80,000 well-paid new green jobs. We heard about investment in manufacturing electric vehicles and the benefits of expanding the electric vehicle charging network. That would protect the 18,000 workers directly employed in the automotive sector in the north-east while reducing emissions and improving air quality. Also important is the upgrading of housing—the national figure was quoted earlier—from which 1.2 million households across the north-east could benefit. It would reduce bills, eliminate the vast majority of fuel poverty and make our homes healthier and more comfortable.

It is important that we consider the record of the last Government. It is not just a feeling or an impression, but certainly true that former coalfield constituencies such as mine have been at the sharp end of austerity and suffered disproportionately. If we grouped together all the coalfield areas, some of which are now represented

by Conservative MPs, into one distinct region, it would have a population of 5.7 million and would be the poorest region in the United Kingdom, so the shared prosperity fund that Ministers talk about needs to be targeted at regions and former coalfield areas such as mine in the north-east.

The IPPR North research department found that between 2009-10 and 2017-18 the north-east saw a £3.6 billion cut in public spending, while the south-east and south-west together actually saw a real-terms £4.7 billion rise. Indeed, my local authority, Durham County Council, had a 40% budget cut—almost £250 million—at a time of increasing demands on services. We also have to hold the Government to account for their industrial policy, or lack of it: the abolition of One North East, our regional development agency; the scrapping of our Minister for the North—someone who could be an advocate for a joined-up government—and of specific measures to help with employment in my region; and their failure to support the industrial base, as several Members have mentioned, particularly the steel industry on Teesside.

I ask that the Minister consider the report by Sheffield Hallam University's centre for regional, economic and social research. It contains some specific actions that I think he will find are very well thought through and evidence based. It documents the consequences of a legacy of failure that stretches back several decades and which manifests itself in many ways. For example, health problems are more widespread in former coalfield areas; more than one third of residents aged over 16 report health problems lasting for more than 12 months; and although the number of jobs is increasing, it is doing so at only half the rate we see in the main regional centres and a third of the rate we see in London, which widens the economic inequalities in coalfield areas such as mine.

The current focus on the City and financial sectors of the economy disadvantages coalfield communities, which have a higher proportion of manufacturing jobs. Such is the scale of the intervention needed—the Secretary of State mentioned some figures—that to raise employment to the national average would require 80,000 additional residents in work in the north-east and to raise it to the level of the south-east our region would require an additional 170,000. Part-time work accounts for a third of all our employment, there is a skills shortage, which is not helped by education cuts, and we have fewer degree-level qualifications. The young and better qualified have little option but to move out of coalfield communities to meet their employment aspirations. Welfare reform has hit us particularly hard, with £2.4 billion having been taken out of our communities—money that would otherwise have been spent in the local economy.

I want to conclude with some specifics. I have obviously got a vested interest in promoting the green industrial revolution. The north-east is the home of UK manufacturing. We have the most productive car plant in the world producing electric vehicles the world wants to buy. I know of constituents driving polluting diesel vehicles who would love to switch to electric if they could afford it. In my constituency, we have the commercial space—office and factory units—to accommodate the green businesses of the future, and at the end of this month Biffa will be opening a new £27.5 million plastic recycling plant in my constituency. Also in my constituency is Drilcorp, specialists in renewable technologies, heat pumps and geothermal systems, while our East Durham

[Grahame Morris]

College has established a technical academy that delivers courses and training in engineering and manufacturing, including renewable technologies of the future. The Minister has an opportunity—I am asking for his help—to unleash the immense potential of our former coalfield communities and of constituencies such as mine.

2.15 pm

Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con): I join other colleagues who have congratulated you, Mr Deputy Speaker, and I declare at the outset that I have never been one of your researchers.

It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Easington (Grahame Morris), who ably demonstrated the geographic importance of the green industrial revolution. There are policies in the Queen's Speech that present tremendous opportunities for rejuvenation in parts of the country that one does not naturally think of as being at the heart of the green revolution; the north of England is one of them and my constituency, which I will touch on later, is another.

It was a particular pleasure to be here for the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell), with whose predecessor I worked closely when I was in the Ministry of Defence. My hon. Friend and I share an interest that I am sure we will continue to share in this Parliament. It was also a pleasure to listen to the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook), whose constituency is one of the few in the west midlands that I did not visit during the recent campaign. He made a very impressive speech.

I welcome the cross-party consensus on the environment evident from both Front-Bench speeches today. We may have differences between us over the speed and scale of the action required, but there is no doubt that everybody in this Chamber and community groups outside recognise that the environment is a key national and international challenge and that we as a Government have to lead the way and do what we can. The science is clear. If we continue to pump out greenhouse gases at the rate we are, the climate will get worse and temperatures will rise, with devastating consequences that we are starting to see increasingly regularly around the world. We need to bring that consensus to bear to put pressure on the UK Government to lead the way in trying to mitigate climate change and on other Governments to do more collectively.

There are disagreements over targets, however, as we have heard already today. I was interested to note that the Opposition spokesperson, the hon. Member for Salford and Eccles (Rebecca Long Bailey), called for more ambitious targets. I urge her to reflect on the target in the Labour manifesto of seeking net zero by 2030 and to compare that with the target set by the Mayor for Greater Manchester, the former Labour Front Bencher, who on advice from the Tyndall Centre has set a framework to achieve net zero for Greater Manchester, where her constituency is situated, by 2038. It is quite possible to have a sincere endeavour to reach net zero carbon without necessarily agreeing on exactly what targets to set.

Ministers have recognised that fact in setting separate targets for their own sectors, Departments and activities. I applaud my right hon Friend the Secretary of State for

Transport, whom I am delighted to see back in his place, for announcing at the party conference that he is actively considering bringing forward the date for the removal of diesel and petrol vehicles from the streets of the United Kingdom from 2040 to 2035. That is an excellent example of how different sectors in our economy may have to move at different paces to achieve net zero, mainly because of the state of the technological alternatives that exist thus far. We do not want to go down the route that a 2030 target, or even more ambitious targets, would require, namely the inflicting of unprecedented austerity on all our constituents. We must look with a degree of realism at how we will achieve these targets.

Many local authorities, in addition to Manchester, are setting targets. Last month my own authority in Shropshire set a climate change strategy framework which has been copied up and down the country. I hope that, over the next period, the Government will try to find ways of helping authorities to fulfil their plans. Many people feel that the current frameworks are fine words, but lack action. I think that we should use the COP26 conference, which we will host at the end of this year, as an opportunity to develop action plans across our economy and across local authorities, so that, with the leadership of our Government, a clear plan is set out during the year for how to achieve the net zero targets that are being set throughout the country.

The House has a big opportunity to lead the debate. We do so on occasions such as this, but also through structures that are available to us here. I pay tribute to Mary Creagh, the former Member of Parliament for Wakefield, who so ably chaired the Environmental Audit Committee, on which I sat for the last two years. It is good to see other members of the Committee in the Chamber, and I hope that they will seek to serve again in the current Parliament.

One of Mary's passions was highlighting inconsistencies and injustice. One of the inquiries that she led, very ably, focused on "fast fashion", drawing the attention of the world to the extraordinary consumerism that currently exists worldwide. Consumers are being encouraged to buy clothing that is essentially disposable—single-use—and can be produced only in sweatshops. The fact that that happens not just in far-flung places around the world but, I regret to say, in this country was exposed by the work undertaken by the Committee and led so ably by Mary.

Parliament does a great deal of work in scrutinising the measures in the Queen's Speech, and we did significant work on the draft clauses relating to the principles underlying the Environment Bill. I am pleased that the Government's ambition is to create a world-class regulator, which they are able to do only as a result of Brexit. They will, I hope, publish the Bill very swiftly after we leave on 31 January, and we will then be able to see exactly how they responded to the measures that we proposed in the Committee to beef up the regulator and ensure that we have world-class standards. I hope that we will also, in the Bill, be able to respond to the view expressed at the Dispatch Box by the Under-Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, my hon. Friend the Member for Rochford and Southend East (James Duddridge), that "no regression" would be an important component of it.

Another Bill that we have been scrutinising is the Agriculture Bill, which will also be introduced as a result of Brexit. I agree with the points made by the

hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) about the need to encourage better productivity in agriculture so that we can use less land to produce more food, as well as seeking alternative uses for land in order to improve carbon capture and all the other elements that are so important to meeting our climate change commitments. Land use is a critical issue. Members have mentioned peat bogs, and the Government have ambitious plans for the planting of trees. It is yet to be seen how achievable those plans are, and we look forward to holding the Government to account in respect of their targets.

I think that this country has every opportunity to lead the world in the green industrial revolution, just as we did in previous industrial revolutions. We need to take advantage of the exceptional skills that we have in our universities, and in sectors such as the automobile industry that can lead the world. We have touched on electric vehicles, but not on alternative technologies such as hydrogen vehicles. A company called Riversimple, which started in my constituency, has produced the first hydrogen fuel cell-powered car. We need to find ways, in the Budget and in the comprehensive spending review, to support alternative technologies and the ingenuity of people in our universities and in the City of London, where we are leading on green finance, so that the UK can lead the world in developing the right solutions to climate change, and we can achieve “net zero Britain” as soon as possible.

2.25 pm

Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to make my maiden speech today. Let me start by giving my heartfelt thanks to the people of Coventry South for putting their faith in me: I am truly honoured and humbled to be their representative.

Let me also thank my predecessor, Jim Cunningham, for his service to the constituency. He served Coventry for 27 years, which means that he was an MP before I was even born. He has been a champion for the city, fighting for Coventry to get its fair share of regional investment, defending our industries, and speaking up for causes from the WASPI women to Rowan’s law. I know that Jim was renowned in the House for the frequency of his interventions. As the new Member for Coventry South, I aim to continue that tradition, and I wish him well in his retirement.

As for Coventry, Mr Deputy Speaker, did you know that on several occasions the city has been the capital of England? As far back as 1404, Henry IV summoned a Parliament in Coventry. Given that we will have to move out of this place for renovations, may I suggest that we take Parliament back to Coventry to put power back in the midlands? It is a city fit for the prestige. From the beautiful cathedral to the 49 hectares of the beautiful War Memorial Park, Coventry South is a constituency of scenic beauty.

Coventry is a city of rich culture too, and I look forward to its hosting UK City of Culture 2021. It is a city with a history of challenging convention, of struggle, and of solidarity. From being home to two universities, as well as two-tone music—bands such as The Selecter and The Specials—to the founding of one of the first Indian Workers Association branches, it has been at the forefront of the arts, anti-racist organising and industrial militancy. From welcoming the Irish migrants in the

1950s and 1960s who built the city’s booming car industry to housing the largest population of Syrian refugees in recent years, Coventry proudly continues to be a sanctuary for people in need of a place to call home.

I was just 14 when the global financial crisis struck and reckless bankers sent the economy into free fall. I was still a teenager when David Cameron and George Osborne began to implement their austerity agenda. Now, I know that the convention for maiden speeches is to avoid saying anything that Members opposite will find very disagreeable, but I cannot do that, because my generation has only ever faced a future of rising rents, frozen wages and diminishing opportunities. For my whole adult life, I have only known Tory Governments who wage war on working-class communities like mine, cutting our services, underfunding our schools and hospitals, and saddling me and my generation with tens of thousands of pounds of student debt.

The manufacturing jobs which were the backbone of Coventry, and which brought my family from Kashmir to the region, are now few and far between. The public libraries that allowed me to study and go to university are closed. The council houses that gave working-class families like mine access to safe, affordable homes have been sold off. While the vast majority have seen services cut and wages stagnate over the past decade, the super-rich have had their taxes cut and seen their incomes soar. The gap between the ruling class and the working class has widened and is widening still, and the response from Members opposite is, as it always has been, to divide and rule. That is what is happening when they compare Muslim women to bank robbers, when they call gay men “tank-topped bum boys”, and when they blame events such as the Hillsborough disaster on drunken fans. They are pitting our communities against each other. They are diverting attention away from the billionaires who fund their party, dodge their taxes and rig the economy.

I am a working class Muslim woman, and I know that the Bullingdon boys will never be on my side or on the side of the shop stewards in Coventry, the cleaners in Carlisle, the migrant workers in Manchester or the teachers in Tottenham. I know that my Muslim brothers and sisters, my Jewish comrades, my friends in the Gypsy, Traveller and Roma communities, and people of all faiths and none, are safer when we unite to defeat the far right, even as this Government have given it new-found confidence. And I know that a Government who abandon refugee children abroad will just as quickly abandon working class children in Britain, where one in three of them already live in poverty. This is a Government of the few; they will never be for the many.

The prospect of five more years of this Government is almost enough to make me despair, but my generation and I cannot afford to despair. If we do, by the time I reach middle age it will be too late, and the climate emergency will have become the climate catastrophe. I come here with a message from my generation and my constituents: we have no intention of letting that happen. We have seen Australia burn and Indonesia drown. We have seen our Earth teeter on the brink of ruin. We have heard the warnings of scientists. We know where the blame lies: it is with the 100 companies that are responsible for 70% of global pollution. It is with the billionaires who got rich polluting our rivers and pumping out carbon. It is with an economic system that puts the profits of the rich above the needs of the people.

[Zarah Sultana]

Make no mistake: the climate crisis is a capitalist crisis, and the climate struggle is a class struggle across borders. Whether you are in Coventry or Canberra, Doncaster or Delhi, if you are working class you will suffer the worst effects of floods, fires, droughts and devastation while the rich build ever-higher walls to protect themselves. That is what is coming unless we take bold action. That is what will happen unless we unite working people across borders to say that our lives are more important than anyone's profits. It is what will happen unless we put the power in the hands of the working class to put people and planet first.

This is the urgent call of our times: an international green new deal to transition from disaster capitalism to a new society created on the principles of equality, freedom and justice, building green industries providing good unionised jobs, democratising our economy and eradicating poverty. That new society has an old name. It is a name that inspired past generations in the fight against mass unemployment, war and fascism. It is the name that people gave to a decent, liveable, healthy future on this planet. That name is socialism.

Ten years ago, I was sitting my GCSEs at school. I was a teenager, and I never dreamed that I would be here today. In 10 years' time, at the start of the next decade, I want to look teenagers in the eye and say with pride, "My generation faced 40 years of Thatcherism and we ended it. We faced rising racism and we defeated it. We faced a planet in peril and we saved it." We have our work cut out, but together we can do it.

2.33 pm

Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con): May I congratulate you, Mr Deputy Speaker, on your re-election to the Chair? It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana). Well done! There is something else about Coventry South—it was also the home to my great-grandmother, or Granny in Coventry, as we used to call her. I welcome another working-class voice to this Chamber, alongside myself—I grew up in Knowsley and Merseyside—and my hon. Friends the Members for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook), who made excellent maiden speeches. It is clear that they will be strong champions for improving the lives of people in their areas, proving that power is in the hands of the working class—just that it is on this side of the Chamber.

The UK started the industrial revolution that changed the face of the world, and since then, all major economies have been powered by coal, oil and gas. But today we stand on the precipice of change, and I believe that the UK is once again in a position to lead by example and ignite a global green industrial revolution. We are already on this path, having decarbonised faster than any other developed economy, with renewables up from just 6.1% when we took office to nearly 40% today. To put that into perspective, 75% of our electricity came from coal in 2010, but last year it was just 2%. That is a remarkable feat, and I want to pay tribute to colleagues across the House who have championed this change.

Last year, we committed to continue this journey with our landmark commitment to a net zero carbon economy by 2050—or sooner; we are allowed to beat our targets, and as we are Conservatives, we often do.

Wind power has played a significant role in our success thus far, and we are now the world's biggest producer of power from offshore wind. Last year it contributed a fifth of our electricity generation, overtaking nuclear for the first time in our history. This is progress. I fully support the Government's commitment to increase our output to 40 GW by 2030, and I fully anticipate that this will become a reality, given that the cost of wind energy has fallen year on year through contracts for difference.

However, we need a diverse energy mix to ensure our long-term energy security. I am concerned by reports of the wake effect, a process whereby turbines block one another, and of blockage, where the physical wind farm slows the wind down as it approaches. This, combined with the irregularity of the wind, means that the UK needs diversity in its energy output.

Solar has a huge part to play, and I am proud that 99% of all existing solar panels have been installed since 2010. Locally, West Sussex County Council is leading the way with a range of projects such as the development of two solar farms in my constituency at Tangmere and Westhampnett. The latter has been built on a former landfill site and was the first such public farm to be built without any central subsidy. I hope that Government colleagues will look to sites such as these that are inappropriate for alternative development and consider replicating these examples. The council also runs a solar schools programme, and 80 schools across the county now collectively produce the same energy as the Westhampnett solar farm, saving an average of £2,000 per school on bills. Altogether, the council's renewable programme brings in a revenue stream that exceeds £1 million a year.

Government and business have driven these changes that have transformed our energy market. I believe that we need to do more to develop and invest in emerging technologies, particularly at sea, and as an island nation we are well placed to lead the way. I was particularly interested in my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness's suggestions about investment in tidal technologies that could transform his constituency. Creating a renewable and diverse energy grid is crucial as we move into the next decade, when most of our nuclear power stations are set to be retired. Beyond this, the Government are rightly tackling emissions from cars and looking to phase out the internal combustion engine from our lives by 2040. To that end, electric vehicles are set to replace them, which will increase demand on the grid.

Chichester District Council recently installed eight new charging sites across the district, thanks to a £58,000 grant from the Office for Low Emission Vehicles. Our council is not alone: we have made progress nationally, and there are now more charging locations than petrol stations in the UK. Despite this, there are still more than 100 local authorities with fewer than 10 public charging devices per 100,000 people. I therefore welcome the £400 million charging infrastructure investment fund, and the consultation on requiring charge points to be built into all new homes with a parking space. Getting this right is not only a necessary piece of our net zero puzzle; it will also improve air quality. Of course, we could go faster, and the Transport Secretary has announced that he will look to move the petrol and diesel phase-out date forward from 2040 to 2035. Where we can, we will improve our targets.

Infrastructure is only part of the problem. More needs to be done to incentivise people to get an electric vehicle in the first place. As the hon. Member for Salford and Eccles (Rebecca Long Bailey) mentioned, electric vehicles are expensive, so I ask the Government to help reduce the up-front costs associated with these cars by extending the plug-in car grant. Furthermore, I ask them to consider implementing a levy on new petrol and diesel cars that could be used to fund incentives for people going electric, so that we can make the shift happen faster.

Chichester District Council is doing its part. It already operates two electric vehicles for its daily enforcement patrols, and I will have further cause to speak about its work as it implements a climate emergency action plan that aims to make a 10% carbon reduction in the district year on year from now until 2025. Again, we can go faster if many more councils follow this example. I am sure that the council will also consider the steps that we can and need to take to make existing and new homes more energy efficient as we move towards zero carbon housing, which will be vital.

This Government have proved that we can grow our economy and tackle climate change. The real winners in the industrial revolution will be those who take the lead early on, as we are doing. We have already created 400,000 green jobs, and more will follow. The new climate economy project has forecast that bold action on climate change globally could deliver £20 trillion in economic benefits over this decade, so there is even a business case at this point. Later this year, we will welcome the world to Glasgow to talk about climate action at COP26, and I want our message to be simple: “We in the UK are taking a lead and so can you.”

2.41 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I will start with a few words about the maiden speeches that we have had the privilege of hearing this afternoon, and I single out that by the hon. Member for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana). I completely agreed with her powerful and uncompromising statement about climate change and austerity, and I completely agree that Parliament should be moved out of Westminster. I am perfectly happy to check out Coventry South as a possible new venue, but we should be decentralising far more of the institutions of government and Parliament.

There is new evidence every day of the increasing scale of the climate emergency. Just yesterday, scientific analysis showed that ocean temperatures have hit a record high as the rate at which our planet is heating increases. Yet, despite the weight of the irrefutable and overwhelming evidence, the UK continues to do far too little, far too late to cut greenhouse gas emissions from every sector of our economy. In a year when the COP26 climate talks will be hosted in Glasgow, it is time to demonstrate real climate leadership, not just talk about it. While I welcome the Government’s decision to invest in a green industrial revolution, I will set out how their approach is not up to the task in three fundamental ways.

We need Ministers to start speaking the truth. The Prime Minister claimed that the UK is leading the world on tackling climate change, and we have heard the same thing from other Members on the Front Bench, yet they have already been pulled up on that claim on several occasions, with people pointing out that, for example,

the figures look an awful lot less impressive when we factor in consumption emissions. When we do that, we see that emissions have fallen by just 10% over the past 20 years, which is nowhere near enough. What is more, historical reductions are no indicator of future progress. Coal is now all but gone from the power sector, meaning that the biggest source of reductions so far has now been exhausted, and there is little sign of the policy required to ensure that the necessary reductions continue. The truth is that if the Government’s green revolution includes spending on new roads, bailing out failing airlines, and promoting more airport expansion, they will remain part of the problem, not the solution.

A target of 2050 is not leadership. When someone’s house is on fire, they do not dial 999 and ask for a fire engine in 30 years’ time; they want the fire engine right now because the crisis is happening right now. Targets on their own do not bring down emissions; action does. However, the Committee on Climate Change warns that “actions to date have fallen short of what is needed for the previous targets and well short of those required for the net-zero target”.

While we are at it, let us examine what the “net” in net zero means. It means positively heroic—I would rather say criminally reckless—assumptions about the potential for negative emission technologies to suck carbon out of the atmosphere. Such technologies are almost entirely unproven, and even unknown in some cases, so let me be clear about what we are doing when we rely on those net negative emission technologies: we are simply passing the buck to our children and leaving it to them to sort out. That is not a moral position.

Our targets also rely on our taking far more than our fair share of the global carbon pie than we are entitled to. We are on course to emit around 2% of the remaining safe carbon budget, even though our population accounts for only 4.9% of the global total. Not only that, but we have taken far more than our fair share for decades. We have emitted around 4.5% of the world’s historical fossil fuels and industry emissions. Again, that is around five times our fair share of the historic carbon budget given our percentage of world population. That legacy of colonialism has to stop. Let me be clear that intergenerational and international justice are at the heart of the climate issue, and the UK is failing on both counts.

We must also be clear that the primacy of GDP growth as the overarching priority for our economy is the elephant in the room. Our house is on fire and that elephant is blocking the door to the emergency exit and devouring our efforts to decarbonise. Take the IPCC report that tells us that we have to reach net zero by 2050 globally: during that period—the next 30 years—the global economy is set to triple in size. That means three times more production and consumption each year. It will be hard enough to decarbonise the existing economy in such a short timescale, so the idea that we will be able to do it three times over is fantasy. If we carry on with growth as usual, halving emissions by 2030, as the IPCC has made clear we need to do, would require decarbonisation of the economy at its current size at 11% a year. That is five times faster than historical rates of decarbonisation and about three times faster than even the most optimistic scientists project is possible.

Let me explode the myths surrounding the possibilities of endlessly extending the concept of green growth, which relies upon the assumption that we can achieve

[Caroline Lucas]

the full and adequate decoupling of economic growth from environmental harm. Although decoupling is undoubtedly useful and necessary and has occurred at certain times and in certain places, green growth cannot reduce resource use on anywhere near the scale required to deal with global environmental breakdown and to keep global warming below the target of 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels.

The IPCC has set out one lifeline scenario that does not rely on speculative and harmful negative emission technologies, and it is our emergency exit from climate breakdown. So what does it look like? Fundamentally, it is about scaling down material consumption in the richer countries by 20% globally, and with the richest among those richer countries leading the way. This cannot be about preventing poorer countries from developing; it has to be about the richer countries, and the richer people in them, doing their fair share. Transitioning away from the growth dogma is not about hurting people's welfare—quite the opposite. It is about placing wellbeing centre stage, reducing inequalities, cutting waste and inefficiency, and prioritising quality of life over quantity of things. Instead of measuring progress in terms of GDP growth alone, we need to shift to indicators that tell us an awful lot more about whether people have high levels of wellbeing, whether there is clean air and clean water, whether we have a safe atmosphere, and whether we are reducing the gaping inequalities that diminish us all.

That is where the proposals for a green new deal come in. My colleague the hon. Member for Norwich North and I—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Norwich South (Clive Lewis)—I will flagellate myself when I get back to my office—and I have worked on a cross-party basis on a private Member's Bill, which we intend to reintroduce in this parliamentary Session, that will set out what the green new deal needs to do. In the process of transforming the infrastructure of our society at the speed and scale that the science demands, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fix an economic model that is failing the vast majority of people in this country. At the heart of the green new deal is the recognition that the current climate, nature, and inequality crises are all driven by how our economy and financial system is managed and that that has benefited a small number of people and a few giant corporations, with the price being paid by the rest of us and by the Earth that we share.

That situation will not be fixed by an acceleration of business as usual, because business as usual is what got us into this situation. Unless the Government's so-called decade of renewal is targeted on the transformation needed to move us to a world beyond carbon, all that investment will be washed away long before the decade is out. What is required is a redistribution not only of resources but, crucially, of real power, starting with those communities that have been most excluded from prosperity.

The transition we need is not just to net zero but to a new kind of economy. The green new deal is a transformational programme to transform everything from the way we produce and consume energy to the way we heat and cool our homes, the way we travel, the way we connect our communities, the way we grow

our food and the way we work. It will create jobs and generate income, including tax revenues for the Government. It will be a real revolution that enables us to transform our society so that it is fairer, more democratic and works better for all of us, here and around the world, while safeguarding and restoring the ecological systems on which we all depend.

With the window for making a difference rapidly closing, what we do in the next 18 months will be literally life changing. Quite honestly, standing here and thinking about what that really means for the next parliamentary Session, we cannot afford any more pretence about the scale of the challenge we face or the idea that just tinkering with business as usual will get us to where we need to be, because it simply will not.

The world's addiction to fossil fuels started here in the UK as the birthplace of the industrial revolution. We have caused the fifth highest emissions of any country in the world. We have built our economy, our prosperity and our society on the overconsumption of finite resources, which has trashed the planet and taken away the life chances of people in other parts of this world.

Our share of causing this emergency is vast, and we must now do our fair share in addressing it.

2.51 pm

Claire Coutinho (East Surrey) (Con): I commend my hon. Friends the Members for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook) and the hon. Member for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana) for their maiden speeches today.

I am proud to be here representing the beautiful constituency of East Surrey. I begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, Sam Gyimah. We have more in common than representing East Surrey: we are both the children of immigrant doctors, and I, too, am 5 feet 4½ inches. Although we may have slightly different views on Brexit, I know he is passionate about the prosperity of this country, which both our families now call home. I am sure the House will agree that he made many important contributions in this place as Childcare Minister, as Prisons Minister and as Universities Minister.

Sam was right when he said, "In East Surrey we stand on the shoulders of giants." From Geoffrey Howe to Lord Melbourne and Lord Palmerston, the list is long and distinguished. I would like, however, to make special mention of Peter Ainsworth. From his work as shadow Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to his expert chairmanship of the Environmental Audit Committee and his work on the board of the Environment Agency, I can safely say that I stand on the shoulders of a very green giant indeed.

East Surrey is known for its local beauty. There are four local nature reserves, eight sites of special scientific interest and over a third of the constituency is in an area of outstanding natural beauty or of great landscape value. Those who walk through the North Downs or the High Weald are met with chalk downs, rolling hillsides, lowland meadows and woodlands.

Our vibrant village spirit is evident in the communities of Tatsfield, Warlingham, Woldingham, Lingfield, Felbridge and many more besides. I hope to be a champion in this House for preserving and protecting this treasured way of life.

In Outwood, near Godstone, work began in 1665 on one of the oldest working British windmills. The owner is said to have watched the great fire of London rage 25 miles away from its roof, and I am proud that what East Surrey helped to pioneer in the renewable energy sector in the 17th century has now become one of the most remarkable success stories in the UK today. Not only are we the world's leader in offshore wind, but seven of the 10 biggest wind farms in Europe are right here in the UK. I commend the ambitious environment Bill proposed in Her Majesty's Gracious Speech to forward this work, and I look forward to seeing the green measures in the upcoming Budget that will undoubtedly build on it.

For East Surrey to continue fulfilling its role as the lungs of London, I hope to secure much-needed investment in local infrastructure for vital improvements to roads—tackling potholes is crucial to local productivity—and to public transport, particularly rail. More than half of the area's working population commutes to places like London, Crawley and Gatwick, yet we have some of the most congested rail lines and roads in the UK. Making sure that people can successfully get to work and to public services is not only good for the environment and the wellbeing of residents but ensures that our local towns—Horley, Caterham and Oxted—can continue to thrive.

I had the considerable pleasure of working with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, my right hon. Friend the Member for Richmond (Yorks) (Rishi Sunak), on the 2019 spending review, which saw record investment in schools, in the police and in the NHS. Now I am on the other side of the table, I wholeheartedly and unreservedly welcome the increased funding, particularly where those funds might land in East Surrey. I will be working hard to make sure that the initial groundwork of that national announcement makes a meaningful difference to classrooms, GP surgeries and police officers on the ground.

I would like to mention my grandmother, who may be the single greatest emblem of Conservative values I know. She was a teacher in India who, in my memory, took her fashion lead firmly from the Queen. She raised seven children with little in terms of resources, but with a strong sense that you can achieve the impossible with hard work and determination. Her children were doctors, teachers and grade 8 musicians who are now scattered all across the globe. If she could see me here today, in “the noblest government in the world,” I am sure she would tell me to work hard, to be determined and to achieve the impossible.

Politicians today have a near impossible task. We live in a world of changing technology, behaviour, demographics and, as has been the subject of many excellent speeches today, environment. In this place I hope to contribute in a small way to preparing this great country for the future to come.

2.56 pm

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to follow the maiden speech of the hon. Member for East Surrey (Claire Coutinho) and all the other fantastic maiden speeches. I think back to four years ago, when I was in the same position, as it is a huge responsibility to make a maiden speech. I encourage hon. Members to get their printed copy from *Hansard*, as it is quite a treat to take back home.

This debate, which is both timely and long overdue, is about how our country can address the climate emergency while realising the economic benefits of developing a new settlement for communities that feel frustrated with the current offer. I do not claim to be any kind of climate expert—I have read the briefings, as other hon. Members have—but I can see the difference. There is a spectrum of views on the climate emergency in this House. I do not claim to have had the ability of the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) to foresee it, but I can see what is in front of my eyes. I worry that some hon. Members are blind to what is staring us right in the face.

We all need to learn, to be educated and to form solutions together to address the climate emergency and to build a shared future. None of us can escape the extreme weather conditions or the impact of flooding and coastal change. Parts of the planet are burning today. There is a financial cost, but the human and wildlife cost is significant and the suffering is evident. We are seeing water shortages, we are seeing the effect on natural ecosystems, biodiversity and coral reefs, and we are seeing the impact on crop production. And we all know it is always the poorest in society who pay the price when crops fail or when water runs short.

It is our collective responsibility to try to find a solution. The movement has been significant, whether in the large-scale protests by Extinction Rebellion or in the localised protests by schoolchildren on Fridays. Young people in Manchester have actively participated, and they want their voices to be heard because they have a bigger stake in the future.

I really worry about the Government's approach, as they have not invited Extinction Rebellion for a conversation to seek common ground. Instead of building bridges, the Government are building walls. We need a common shared vision on how best to address this emergency. That is a missed opportunity.

I believe a different way is possible, so I did not turn a blind eye to the protestors in Parliament Square. I wanted a conversation with them about their views in order to seek common ground on the solutions, so we had a meeting in 1 Parliament Street. I said, “This is your Parliament. Instead of protesting outside, come inside and have a conversation to see where we can make progress together.” One of the people I met during those conversations was a man called Paul, who is commonly known as the “tree lawyer” because of his real passion for protecting our ancient trees and woodlands.

The aim of that meeting was not only to connect, but to protect. The first challenge is: how do we connect everyday people with the environment? We talked about the challenges and how people are sometimes very disconnected from the environment, and about the interventions, sometimes small ones, that we can make to connect people with the natural environment around them. We might dismiss some of those suggestions as being simple, but I was inspired by some of the ideas. For example, when someone is born or given their citizenship, why not, on that document, have a tree or woodland that is planted for them, and, thus really put roots in the ground? Why not fight to say that every child will have the ability to look up to a clear night sky or to walk to school without breathing in toxic air that could eventually kill them? We see that happen in this country, where people are literally dying as a result of

[*Jim McMahon*]

the quality of the air. Why not make urban environments more attractive and much more connected? We talk about connecting the natural environment and about protecting what we have got, but in towns such as Oldham, where terraced streets and industrial land have been built up to make the town we see today, many communities are denied access to good-quality green, environmental space. We need to reinvest in that to connect people with the natural environment.

I am proud to say that in Oldham the council is doing that; this week, it announced plans for a project called “Northern Roots”, whereby we would have an eco-park of 160 acres right in Oldham town centre and beyond, into the countryside. Another suggestion was for worldwide twinning. After the second world war, we made a massive effort to ensure that towns and cities in this country were connected to our counterparts in Europe. Why not do the same today for climate, so that children in Oldham can be connected with children in Bangladesh, and see the human impact of climate change and what it means for children of their age going to school?

We also need to protect what we have got. Paul’s ambition was to give ancient trees the protection they need, but perhaps people just want protection for the green belt, to make sure that those who live in an urban environment have access to good-quality green space. The Government need to do far more, first, to update the population data to make sure that local planning authorities are planning on the basis of the most accurate and up-to-date data, and, secondly, to ensure that we have a proper fund in place to build on brownfield sites. A town such as Oldham has acres and acres of dirty brownfield sites that are contaminated. They are so expensive to build on that it is far easier for a developer to build on green space. We need a new deal for towns such as Oldham so that they can build on brownfield sites, where the community are crying out for new investment, instead of having that impact on the green belt.

Importantly, we also need to connect people with opportunities. When we talk about the type of interventions and behavioural change needed for our environment, we are asking people to make a sacrifice—we are asking the Government to introduce a new tax. What we really need to do is connect people with the opportunities that exist if we take concerted action. So the green revolution, the industrial revolution for our economy, is really important. People recognise that this is an opportunity to have decent, well-paid, secure and skilled jobs. Unfortunately, when people talk about a town such as Oldham, they often talk about the north as though it is some kind of distant land. They talk about a town that once was and not as one that has a stake in the future, but those people could not be further from the truth. When I look at a town such as Oldham, I see that we are still innovating, creating and making things that change the world. Behind those dirty roller shutters people are changing the world in towns such as Oldham, and that provides a foundation for this revolution.

People in Oldham want to know that they have a stake in the future. They are sick of demanding that the Government listen to them and of asking for a fairer share. If we just continue that conversation, we are not capitalising on the skills that still exist in these towns. My town was the home of Ferranti, which made the

components for the world’s first computer, of British Aerospace, which made the Lancaster bomber, and of Platt Brothers, which had one of the largest engineering plants in the world. Although those have closed, the skills and values of manufacturing and engineering jobs are still very much in our local economy, and that should be the foundation for the future. And we feel this—we are the gateway to the Pennines, so although Oldham is an urban town on the doorstep of Manchester, we are a stone’s throw from the countryside and we recognise the value that that has.

When planning for the future, we are all very short-term in this place. We are all focused on the next election and the next cycle, and it is hugely damaging for the country and the planet when we behave in that way. The challenge I lay down today is not that we prepare for the next election or Queen’s Speech, but that we think about a child being born today in this country. We need to think that that child will live to see the next century. We need to think about the kind of life they will have, from the moment they are born in their community, to when they go to school, when they start out on their adult life and when they enter old age, and about the type of care they will need and the type of society they will live in. If we think about a child being born today, we will collectively make very different decisions from those we often end up voting for in the Lobby. Let me make it clear that I believe strongly that the foundations are in place in this country to thrive and rebuild on the back of a green revolution. The test for me as to whether Britain thrives—Members would expect me to say this, because I represent Oldham, Chadderton and Royton—is whether towns such as mine can be part of that journey. That is the challenge for the Government, and they need to come forward with concrete examples of how we can connect people, so that they really feel they have a stake in the future.

3.6 pm

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I fully accept that mankind is changing the earth’s climate. I have always worried about how we are altering the air we breathe, but I feel our actions are now turning the weather. I realise that climate is cyclical; there was a little ice age from late medieval times until the 1850s or thereabouts, and the Thames froze over and ice fairs were held. I also believe that when I was a little boy, not very long ago, it was much colder in the winter—that might just be in my mind, but I felt it was more icy. There is too much evidence of ferocious world weather nowadays for us to ignore what is happening.

Health is definitely being affected too. For instance, according to Bromley Council health people, in one recent year there were 60 deaths across the six wards in my constituency because of long-term exposure to polluted air. I agree that we have started to tackle the problem, and we have had some success: carbon emissions have, apparently, been reduced by 25% in the past 10 years, and that is great; and all coal-fired generating stations will be gone in the United Kingdom by 2025. It is also really good news that we are the world leader in offshore power generation. We have increased renewable energy generation sixfold in the past 10 years. In 2018, renewable sources of electricity generation supplied 33% of our electricity needs, which is up from 6.9% in 2010. This is all good news. More and more people are buying and using cars powered by electricity, but they are damn

expensive. By 2040, diesel and petrol cars should be almost off our roads, so it seems the future for our vehicles will be electricity, but let us not forget hydrogen, which is another source that can be harnessed to run vehicles. A heck of a lot of investigation as to how that can happen is being undertaken by the car companies.

Of course, our Government have a major part to play in reducing carbon emissions, and we have too; on 27 June last year, Parliament amended the Climate Change Act 2008 to include the commitment to net zero emissions by 2050. That is excellent news. Some say—I accept this—that we could get there earlier, and let us hope that that is the case, but at least we have a target. It would be superb if could get there as soon as possible. If we want to get to zero carbon emissions very fast, we have to accept the penalties: giving up our cars, diesel and petrol; travelling only by public transport; stopping flying off to exotic locations in aeroplanes; and changing our central heating systems.

Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con): My hon. Friend is making an excellent point, and he alights on the issue of changing our heating systems. Does he agree that we need to incentivise, within the tax structure, the building of ground-source heat pumps and air-source heat pumps to ensure that they can replace traditional fossil fuel systems and get our carbon emissions down?

Bob Stewart: I certainly do, and I want it to happen in my house as soon as possible.

We are decarbonising our economy faster, apparently, than any other G20 country, and we have reduced our emissions by 29% in the past decade, but here is the point: every breath we take is full of something called particulates, which, to be honest, I did not know much about until recently. These particulates—particularly something called particulate matter 2.5—are about 200 times smaller than a grain of sand, so they just float through the air and go into our lungs. They pass into our bloodstream and end up somewhere in our brain, or any of our other organs. I am told—of course, I am no expert, and I suspect that very few of us in the House are experts—that this causes illness and death. Having looked at the January 2019 report by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, I understand that only 12% of particulate matter comes from vehicles.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for mentioning particulate matter, which is an issue of air pollution, but we should differentiate air pollution and climate change. They are two separate matters and we need to tackle them differently.

Bob Stewart: I accept that, and that I am no expert, so I accept the hon. Lady's point of view, but particulate matter does have an impact on us all. Around 13% comes from industrial processes and 38% comes from wood burning and coal fires. That is quite a lot—more than comes from vehicles. I am looking up at the clock because I promised the Deputy Speaker that I would be finished in under 10 minutes—and I will.

I like the clean air strategy that was published in January last year: it is a good, bold new goal. We have to think carefully about using wood-burning stoves—I do not use the fireplace in my house anymore—and having open fires, and farms will have to change the way they do business. The move on the reduction of

particulate matter has been welcomed by the World Health Organisation as an example for the rest of the world to follow.

As a good boy, I am now skipping through my pages, Mr Deputy Speaker, to make a final point. We produce about 1% to 2% of the world's greenhouse gases. If we became carbon neutral right now, it might not make much difference, but that should not stop us doing it—we can become an example to the rest of the world—and the rest of the world is starting to follow and to deal with climate change. Bring it on: let us change the way we live so that the future is bright for those who follow us.

3.14 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): It is always a massive joy to follow the hon. Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart). It is also great to see you back in your place, Mr Deputy Speaker; congratulations on your re-elevation.

It has been a genuine privilege to sit through the maiden speeches by the hon. Members for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana), for East Surrey (Claire Coutinho) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook), to whom I pay tribute. I wish to single out my new neighbour, the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell), who made an excellent maiden speech and referred in particular to the need—I say this in hearing range of the Secretary of State for Transport—to strip Arriva Northern of its franchise, to make sure that we have a local train service that actually runs some trains.

I remember giving my maiden speech; the terrifying fact is that I have a copy of it on a VCR tape in the garage. That is a reminder that I am indeed an old git, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The green industrial revolution is nothing if not an ambitious title, and so it needs to be if we are to head off the existential threat of catastrophic climate change. Ambition is indeed what we need, but although we can give something an impressive and ambitious title, it is unlikely to earn a lasting legacy unless it actually delivers. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's new deal is not still invoked today because of its catchy title, but because of the good it achieved. We marvel at the Victorian expansion of the railways not because the Victorians did good spin, but because the network was actually built. Nations are never built on public relations stunts.

Members can call me a glass-half-empty person if they like, but my fear for the Government is that they will make two significant mistakes as they decide how they are going to use their new majority. First, in order to mask the damage that the UK's leaving the world's biggest market will inevitably do to our economy and public sector, it is likely that the Government will max-out the credit card on revenue spending in a way that makes the recent Labour manifesto look fiscally conservative by comparison. Secondly, they will talk about big infrastructure investment, both the green and the not-so-green varieties, but in reality their fear of big government means they will not deliver anything that will make a true difference. In other words, the Government will show largesse when they should observe restraint, and restraint when they need to be ambitious. I hope I am wrong, because what we need is to be wise on revenue spending and ambitious on capital, particularly when it comes to green infrastructure. We must make the big strategic decisions needed to fight climate change.

[*Tim Farron*]

In South Lakeland, we see nature changing before our very eyes, as climate change takes place with horrific consequences. Our communities are still reeling, four years on, from the devastating floods of Storm Desmond. Indeed, in the past decade or so we have been hit by three floods, each one of them classified as a one-in-200-year event. Storm Desmond flooded 7,500 homes and more than 1,000 businesses. We have to mitigate the impact of climate change on families and businesses while building the infrastructure to prevent a climate catastrophe. That is why Kendal's flood prevention scheme must be delivered. All three phases of the flood scheme are now fully funded and I am glad that, after much pressure, the biggest concerns about the scheme have now been answered. In the place of every tree that must be removed as part of the scheme, six new ones will be planted in the town, and many of them will be semi-mature at the point of planting.

I was there the morning after Storm Desmond, and in the weeks after. I saw people's lives ruined; families left destitute; and businesses wiped out. Even today, there are children who are still unable to sleep any time it begins to rain. I could not look people in the eye on Appleby Road, Shap Road, Sandylands, Ann Street or Mintsfeet Road if I did not do everything in my power to deliver them some kind of protection and some kind of peace of mind. After four years of promises—four years of fear whenever it pours; four years of incalculable strain on mental health for the old and young alike—how dare I claim to represent them if I do not see the flood defences delivered? The reality is that we are too late to prevent climate change, but we have perhaps a dozen years to avoid a major climate catastrophe with even more appalling human consequences.

The main issue that I wish to focus on in the next few moments is the revolution that we need in public transport. Over the past 30 years, Governments of all colours have allowed funding for bus provision to evaporate. Our communities in South Lakeland have done a spectacular job in putting together community bus services to plug some of the gaps caused by this attrition of Government funding, most notably the Dales bus service in Sedbergh and Dent, which does a wonderful job connecting those Dales communities with Kendal and the surrounding communities. We have fought recently to keep the 552 and the 530 bus services. These are great victories. I am immensely proud of them, but they are short-term solutions at best. They are sticking plasters, when what is needed is ambitious change.

It is utterly ludicrous that bus services in London receive a £722 million annual subsidy, when in Cumbria we receive nothing at all—not a single penny. The lack of subsidy has a catastrophic impact on fares, and the extortionate prices make commuting by bus a massive challenge, especially for lower-paid workers. How is it right, Mr Speaker, that the 5 mile journey from Ambleside to the neighbouring community of Grasmere costs £4.90, while a journey of equivalent length in London costs £1.50? If we are to entertain any hope of revolutionising public transport, the Government need to look beyond the M25—well beyond the M25. Indeed, it may come as a surprise to some in Government that the north does not stop at junction 32 of the M6.

There is much to recommend the northern powerhouse, with two slight caveats: first, it is not much of a powerhouse; and secondly, it is not very northern. The transport

spend in the north-west per head of population is still barely half that in London, despite the promises that were made when the northern powerhouse was first established. I will continue—I will have to continue—to fight the cuts to individual bus services. I will continue to stand with, and work with, the community to find alternative solutions, just as we are currently doing for Arnside, Levens, Cartmel, Hincaster and Kendal where we have replaced the 552 and the 530 services, but let us be honest, all that will do is lessen the decline.

Bus services are essential to life for rural communities such as ours. They are also key to Cumbria's vibrant tourism industry. No one could or would deny that the Lake District and the surrounding communities are utterly awesome. It is a national treasure and a source of joy to many more than just those of us who are privileged enough to live among those lakes, mountains and dales.

Cumbria's Lake District is Britain's biggest visitor destination outside London. Some 16 million people visited us last year alone, but 83% of tourists travel to us by car. However, we know that, with the right interventions and conditions, our visitors will travel sustainably. Public bus transport is a key component of that, alongside rail, boats, bikes and, of course, walking in the hills. Improved bus services could alleviate pressure on the roads that become clogged with the cars of those visiting.

The Government keep ignoring the plight of rural communities. A so-called green industrial revolution in London or Manchester simply will not do. We would love it if they stopped ignoring us, and instead commission a truly ambitious and comprehensive rural bus service to exceed anything that we have seen before, even 35 years ago before the deregulation which started to decline. It will be an investment not only that revives rural communities and sees a huge reduction in the use of cars locally, but that boosts our economy and increases access to jobs.

My proposal today is that the Minister should ensure the direct commissioning through Transport for the North of a comprehensive, affordable, reliable rural bus network in Cumbria—a network that will be a substantial step towards ensuring that the northern powerhouse actually serves the rural north.

Finally, if our efforts to tackle climate change are going to come anywhere near something that could be classified as a revolution, we need to transform public transport interconnection and that connection between buses and trains. The main public transport route to the Lake District is the Lakes line. Back in 2017, the Government cancelled the planned electrification of the Lakes line on the basis of a massive and flawed overestimation of the project costs. This was and remains a huge let-down for communities around the lakes, and yet electrification of the Lakes line is the easiest electrification project in the country. The 12-mile route carries hundreds of thousands of passengers each year, but it could carry four times as many if we introduced a passing loop at Burneside so that we could run a half-hourly service, and if it were electrified, it would significantly reduce its carbon emissions.

If the Government are serious about tackling climate change, they need to undo their foolish cuts to the electrification project, and the Lakes line is the perfect place for the Government to begin a green U-turn to reverse their mistakes of recent years. The Lakes line is short, but it is iconic. It carries significant numbers and could carry so many more. I plead with the Government

to make their actions match their words. They should not just plug the gaps in public transport, but instead revolutionise the system. They should speak not of subsidies, but of investment that multiplies its value in the economy of the rural north. Targets are dangerous if they are simply a fig leaf to cover up a failure to act in the present. The Government must act now, and we will wait to see whether they do.

3.25 pm

Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con): It has been a pleasure to be in the Chamber this afternoon listening to the excellent maiden speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell), for East Surrey (Claire Coutinho) and for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook). Birmingham, Northfield is a place that I still hold very close to my political heart.

It is fitting that Members are making maiden speeches on the Queen's Speech. As a one-nation Conservative, I warmly welcome this Queen's Speech and the opportunity it unlocks for people all across our country. In particular, I welcome the investment in public services—in our NHS, in our police and in our schools. It is only because of our strong economy and the legacy of the past decade of Conservative-led Government that we can invest in our public services.

The world is changing at a remarkable rate. We are in the fourth industrial revolution. To maintain that strong economy, we need to continue to invest in science and technology and innovation. As a bit of a science geek, I welcome the Queen's Speech commitment to keeping us as a world leader in science, to boosting our R and D funding and to unlocking innovation.

Innovation is not new in my constituency of Chelmsford. Exactly 100 years ago Marconi chose to locate its radar factory in Chelmsford, and 100 years ago the great Australian singer Dame Nellie made the first ever radio broadcast from Chelmsford—she sang to the world. We led the world that day in a communications revolution that we are still living through today. Marconi chose Chelmsford because of the skills of the people there and because of the infrastructure. Infrastructure matters, and, as the person who has been honoured to chair the all-party group on infrastructure in this Parliament, I believe that it is vital that we continue to invest in our infrastructure, as this Government propose.

Failing infrastructure is a big issue in my constituency. Our flyover, on which we have relied for many decades, suffered terminal damage in last summer's heatwave. In Chelmsford, we have already seen how our infrastructure has to be climate change resilient. That is just one of the reasons why I have chosen to speak today on the green economy. Climate change is the biggest threat to our future. We have only one planet. The science is clear: we have to stop emissions, and we must achieve net zero.

I am proud that we are the first major economy to commit to net zero. We need to turn net zero into reality, and that means we need to have net zero embedded in all the decisions made at national and local government levels. We need a clear pathway.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): The hon. Lady speaks of the importance of achieving net zero. How compatible is achieving net zero with the Government's recent announcement that they will cut air passenger duty?

Vicky Ford: I will come on to exactly that topic a little later.

This year is a unique opportunity, with the UK hosting the world global climate change conference. I will come to the issue of transport emissions in a minute.

It is really important that we are ambitious in the targets we set, but it is also vital that we bring people with us. I look forward to being an observer at the citizens' assembly on the climate emergency, which is happening in Birmingham over the next few weeks. There is no point in setting an ambitious target if it is not achievable, and the Opposition's suggestion that we could achieve net zero by 2030 is disingenuous; it is neither honest nor true.

This country has already done a huge amount to decarbonise electricity. We lead the world in offshore wind and in ending the use of coal, but we can do more. It is great news that by 2025 we will be able to have completely carbon-free inputs to our electricity grid, but we know that it needs to be more resilient. It needs investment, which cannot all come from public funds; it needs private investment too, which is why we need a strong economy.

Alan Brown: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Vicky Ford: I will keep going, because I have only a short time. I will not take any more interventions.

We need to make sure that we can use smart demand management, using AI and technology. I have seen at first hand how this works on the national grid. We also need to unlock the potential of electric vehicles, because of the benefits that they bring to battery storage. I welcome the Government's commitment to more EV charging points, although I believe we need more urgency on this subject.

Bob Stewart: One of the problems with electric vehicles is that they have batteries that cause real problems. We have a problem in making them without actually using resources.

Vicky Ford: The Science and Technology Committee looked into electric vehicles' batteries and resources in great detail last year, particularly the demand for lithium and cobalt—precious materials that are a globally constrained resource. The fight for global minerals will be an increasingly important part of foreign policy, and I would like to see that part of the net zero challenge addressed in the Foreign Office as well. I have driven a hydrogen-fuelled car and returned it safely, giving the keys back at the end. Using hydrogen in cars and potentially feeding hydrogen into our domestic gas network could bring huge benefits.

I am pleased that the Government are to introduce a super-bus strategy. We need better buses in my city of Chelmsford. We need to have medium and long-term strategies on that. We also need to relook at how we run our railways. The service offered to my rail commuters in Chelmsford at the moment is simply not good enough.

The hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) asked about air transport. As a one-nation Conservative I acknowledge the need to improve connectivity between all parts of our country, and regional airlines have a role to play in that, but as an eco-Tory I recognise the urgent need to tackle air transport emissions. It is good that

[Vicky Ford]

the UK is leading the world in developing cleaner, greener aircraft—Cranfield University is a leader in this—but we should do more about carbon offsetting. Easyjet is now carbon offsetting all its flights, but Flybe does not offer that service to anyone. Consumers have a role to play, and they should be given the ability to carbon offset.

Alan Brown: After my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) intervened, the hon. Lady said that net zero should be embedded in every Government decision. If the Government on a whim say, “We are going to review and reduce APD,” how is net zero embedded in that decision?

Vicky Ford: I am calling on the Government to look at how we can embed net zero in every single decision. I believe that getting cleaner, greener aircraft is one way to deliver connectivity, but more needs to be done on carbon offsetting. In the medium and longer term, we need to look urgently at the issue of aircraft emissions.

I turn to consumer choice. The biggest part of many consumers’ carbon footprint is how they heat their homes. More needs to be done on the decarbonisation of heat, so I warmly welcome the Government’s announcements to invest £9.2 billion in energy efficiency in our homes, schools and hospitals. However, I would also call for more green mortgages. We have one of the most innovative financial services sectors in the world, and should be able to do more in relation to how people finance their mortgages.

My final point is on plastic. As the House knows, I am allergic to the use of unnecessary single-use plastic. It is great that the Government have committed another £500 million to the Blue Planet fund, and are helping developing countries across the world to protect our oceans.

I also warmly welcome the producer tax, but we need to get a deposit return scheme going too. Actually, I believe Scotland would be better off if it worked within the whole UK to introduce a scheme that worked for the whole UK. That would be better for industry and consumers. Consumers want to see a step change in how we deal with single-use plastics, and this needs to happen across all areas, not just food. We need to work with producers and consumers, and it would be better if the people of Scotland worked with the whole UK to deliver it.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): It is with great pleasure that I call Kenny MacAskill to make his maiden speech.

3.35 pm

Kenny MacAskill (East Lothian) (SNP): As is customary—and, I believe, correct—I will start with a tribute to my predecessor. Martin Whitfield and I disagreed fundamentally on Scotland’s constitutional situation, but in many other aspects we were at one. I am conscious of the fact that he was tenacious in opposing Brexit, and equally assiduous in representing his constituency, so I know the standards that he has set. He will continue to reside in the constituency, where I will no doubt bump into him.

It was the same for those who went before him. My own colleague George Kerevan was equally assiduous. Prior to that, the constituency was represented by Fiona O’Donnell, who continues to serve the county as a Labour councillor in East Lothian. It goes all the way back to the late, great John P. Mackintosh, who set the standards and template that everybody who has represented East Lothian since has sought to aspire to.

As my colleague George Kerevan pointed out, I have a link to John P. Mackintosh because an assiduous campaigner for him—indeed, someone who has sought to keep his memory alive—is Arthur Greenan, who was also a tenacious campaigner for George Kerevan and an equally vibrant one for me, despite his age. Arthur is one of those to have made the political journey from being a Labour activist and voter to becoming an SNP activist and supporter. It is a journey made by many, and one that I tracked myself when I was privileged to write a biography of arguably Scotland’s greatest ever MP who never was, the late, great Jimmy Reid.

My constituency has endured changes, but it has stayed the same in many ways. It continues to roll from the Lammermuir hills to the banks of the Forth. It contains fertile land, bonny beaches and, indeed, fine folk. Some industries, such as mining, have gone. Other industries, such as renewables, have come—which is why it is important and appropriate that I am making this speech at this juncture in the debate on the Queen’s Speech. We build around those new industries, but they are still based around the vibrant towns and villages of both the historic county and the wider modern constituency. East Lothian’s people remain undiminished in their grit, determination and decency, and indeed—as a new arrival, I know this—in their warm and welcoming nature, as thousands seek to move to the expanding county of East Lothian.

There are historic links to my constituency in this institution, and not just through those who have been elected Members. When I first arrived here last month, I came across a statue of Oliver Cromwell, who is well known in my constituency, in the town of Dunbar. He is not viewed as the Lord Protector; far from it. He may not have been as brutal there as he was at Drogheda, but people still suffered at the Battle of Dunbar in 1650, when his English army killed thousands of Scottish soldiers and captured thousands more. Those who were captured were marched south, with many dying en route. They were taken to Durham cathedral, where thankfully a memorial now recognises what they suffered. Many died in incarceration there. Of those who were released thereafter, some were given by the Lord Protector to the army of France. Others were sent to do drainage work in the area of the Wash in southern England. Others still were transported to Barbados and to the Americas.

But some good did come from this, because in 1657, seven years after serving their penal servitude, some of those Scottish soldiers banded together to form the Scots Charitable Society of what is now Boston, which is argued to be the one of the oldest such charitable organisations not just in the United States but in the western hemisphere. They keep contacts with the community in Dunbar, as indeed did the Scottish Prisoners of War Society—because such an organisation does exist, with many American members, and they had a re-enactment of the battle last year.

You can move along the A1 as well as you can move along the corridors here. Moving along the A1, after some 50 miles I come to the small town of Tranent, and equally moving along the corridors here, I came upon a recognition of the Earl of Liverpool—there is, I think, both a bust and a painting of him. The Earl of Liverpool is the third-longest-serving Prime Minister, but in the town of Tranent he is better recalled as a British military commander when the massacre of Tranent took place in 1797. Twelve men, women and children were slain because they opposed the imposition of conscription. He was then the military commander for east central Scotland. He was not responsible for the order to fire, but he was culpable, and indeed took the blame, according to the Lord Advocate—but he obviously went on to greater things and became Prime Minister in 1820.

The Earl of Liverpool's links with Scotland do not end there, because this year is not just the 700th anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath, when my country's nationhood was enshrined by those who cherish it and have it at its heart, but the year in which we will be celebrating the bicentenary—the 200th anniversary—of the 1820 uprising, or insurrection, when working people in Scotland campaigned for and demanded the universal franchise. Indeed, having seen what had happened just the year before at Peterloo, they pledged that they would not just take it lying down. We will remember them.

The Earl of Liverpool is remembered because he signed the death warrant for John Baird, Andrew Hardie and James Wilson. He had them hanged and then beheaded—the last time such punishment was used in the United Kingdom. We will remember them in April because they fought for the universal franchise—for the right of working people, as hon. Members mentioned earlier, to have that vote. Nineteen others, including a child, were transported to Botany Bay, and only two made it home to their native land.

Centuries on, of course, we have the universal franchise: not just working men but working women have the right to vote. It is for that reason that I and my colleagues are in this Chamber today. I have no doubt that if the situation was the same as it had been in 1820, it would have been a representative of the rich landlords because they were an oligarchy back then.

But we do face challenges, because we have a Tory Government who are no more reflective of the people of Scotland now than, arguably, under Henry Dundas. That is why I will continue to emulate the good constituency work of those of my own party and, indeed, of others to represent the fine people of East Lothian. Equally, I will remember the memories of those who went before who struggled for our native land to retain its identity and to advance the interests of working people. Indeed, as I come to the conclusion of my speech, I remember that one of the banners under which those who went to their doom in 1820 marched was “Scotland Free or a Desert”.

As we sit in a debate on a Queen's Speech that talks about a transformative agenda, many in my constituency, especially the most vulnerable, fear what will happen to the welfare state and the NHS, and the gains made by our parents and our grandparents. We will, as with our forebears, defend the rights of working people and the gains that we are entitled to expect, and we will defend our nationhood. Thank you for your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker.

3.44 pm

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for East Lothian (Kenny MacAskill) on an excellent, lucid speech. I thoroughly enjoy history—I think we all do—and we heard a lot of history in his speech, as well as a lot of passion. I think he mentioned that he had a journey from Labour to the SNP; may I suggest a further journey to the Conservatives? Perhaps he could think about that later. I congratulate the other Members who have made maiden speeches. It has been a pleasure to listen to them all. I remember giving my own nine years ago—how time flies!

I want to talk briefly about nine different subjects in the Queen's Speech that affect my constituency. On the subject of today's debate, I congratulate the Government on the ambitious and aspirational path they are taking. I urge a level of common sense in the direction of travel. We do not want to end up with thousands of people in our country unemployed because of ambitious and aspirational targets that are simply not achievable, but that does not mean we should not try.

The first subject is the national health service. The recent decision to move A&E and maternity services from Poole Hospital to Royal Bournemouth Hospital has understandably caused a lot of anger and disappointment among my constituents, not least those in Swanage. I urge the Government to look at that again.

The second is social care. Dorset Council is one of two new unitary councils formed recently at the behest of the Government and, of course, the people of Dorset. Huge cuts and sacrifices have been made, and savings too. One of our major problems is paying for social care. The Prime Minister has said that that is high on his agenda. I urge the Government to sort this out as soon as possible, because I do not want our new unitary authority left high and dry, unable to afford social care at this crucial time.

The third is education. I have fought with the f40 campaign group of lower-funded councils for a levelling up of our schools' funding. That has been achieved. They have a conference in March near here, which I shall be attending. I spoke to them yesterday, and their view—and mine—is that more fairness is needed in the funding formula, particularly when it comes to special educational needs and disability, which are underfunded in Dorset. We need Government help and for this to be made a priority. Weymouth College in my constituency is the only place where young people have a hope of getting into further education and on to better careers. That, too, needs more funding. Sitting on the Education Secretary's desk is the tick-box exercise for a new special school on Portland. I urge the Secretary of State to sign it off, so that we can open this much needed facility on Portland as fast as we can.

The fourth is home ownership. More affordable homes to buy and let are desperately needed—and when I say affordable, I mean truly affordable, not 80% of market rent. We need more one, two and three-bedroom social homes to buy and let. In Dorset we rely on housing providers, as many do now, because council homes have been sold off. The Government have put £2 billion aside for more affordable homes. Perhaps the Minister who sums up the debate will tell us how that money can be reached and how much money is available for Dorset for these desperately needed homes.

[Richard Drax]

The fifth is the justice system and the police. Sir James Spicer, the renowned former MP for West Dorset who sadly has now passed away, started a thing called the airborne initiative at Portland young offenders institution, which gets young men out on to the moors with trained instructors from the Army and the Prison Service. It has now gone to Feltham and Brinsford young offenders institutions, and it is hugely successful. I urge the Government to roll that out right across the justice system, because it is working, and reoffending is being cut.

On the police under the current funding formula, Dorset will have 120 more officers, and I urge the Government to stick to that. Dorset needs more police officers.

The sixth is infrastructure. The dualling of the Salisbury line will help not only me but all passengers on it down to north Devon. If we can put track back on the former bed at Yeovil Junction, it would hugely help access to Yeovil and the island of Portland.

The seventh is business rates, which have been mentioned. The Government have this on their radar. Business rates need to be looked at, because they are highly punitive, particularly to small businesses.

Eighth is the transport network—specifically, buses. I cannot understand why the routes given to commercial companies cannot be made compulsory. Yes, perhaps the profit margin will not be excellently wide, but they will still make a profit. Leave it to the entrepreneurs to make money out of these least affordable routes. I am not saying that there should be a regular service to these remote villages, but perhaps, in co-ordination with those who live there, there could be a bus service in the morning and another at lunchtime, so that the elderly can get to the shops and be back in time for lunch. I cannot believe that it is beyond the wit of a good entrepreneur and a good company to sort that out.

My final point concerns the armed services. In my day, spending on the armed forces was 5% of GDP; today it is just 2%. It simply is not enough. We have two aircraft carriers—the most expensive form of defence that we could possibly have. They need planes above, submarines beneath and ships beside, and of course men and women on board. We have to be able to afford them. If we are to play our role outside the EU and stand up for freedom, truth and democracy, as this country has a proud record of doing, we need strong armed forces and they need more money.

On the subject of historical legacies, I was glad to hear the Prime Minister reaffirm at Prime Minister's questions today that people who served 30 or 40 years ago in Northern Ireland—and of course in past wars, and those who will serve in future—will not be followed to the grave or persecuted when there is no new evidence to prosecute them. With that final point, I conclude my speech.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): It is a great delight to call Alex Davies-Jones to make her maiden speech.

3.51 pm

Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab): Diolch yn fawr, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Rising to give my maiden speech, I am reminded of the quip that there is never a more dangerous moment to speak than before the audience has had their dinner; but whoever first wrote that line clearly never had my teenage experience—of singing in a local workman's club for an audience who were waiting for the bingo to start. I thank my nan for giving me that particular opportunity, again and again, but at least it means I have absolutely nothing to fear from those on the Benches opposite. They may deplore and decry my socialism, but they are armed with neither heavy-duty black marker pens nor the impatience of a valleys grandmother.

There can be no greater honour in life than to represent the place closest to your heart. I am Ponty born and bred. I went to my local comprehensive school in Tonyrefail. My dad and both granddads were miners. Pontypridd runs through my veins as strongly and truly as the Rivers Taff and Rhondda run through our valley.

Pontypridd, my home, is also the home of local legends—not just my mam, but the legends of Tom Jones and Wales's most feared and capped prop-forward, Gethin Jenkins. Whilst I was tempted to construct this speech around the lyrics of Sir Tom, I did not have the same temptation when it came to Geth's on-field banter. That would generally consist of a look so menacing that it could make the very scoreboard twitch.

To add to that list of local legends is my predecessor, Owen Smith. Owen is a tough act to follow in every sense. I know that his wit and wisdom, his rhetoric and his radicalism will be missed in this place, just as they will be welcomed back at home. His work here, particularly campaigning on surgical mesh implants, will change the lives of women not just in this country, but around the world, as the full scale of that scandal is still being uncovered. That tenacious, groundbreaking campaign work gave a glimpse of what Owen could and should have achieved in government. Owen blazed a trail—as he always does. In his nine years in Parliament he lived a political life worthy of three decades. No wonder his first career ambition was to be zipping around the green pitch at Ponty's Sardis Road, not warming these green Benches. I know that colleagues here will wish him luck with his return to the green, green grass of home.

As with Owen and his predecessor, Kim Howells, music, rugby and politics represented the fundamentals of life growing up in Pontypridd. It is difficult to imagine it any other way in a constituency that gave the world the Welsh national anthem and “Cwm Rhondda”. The Pontypridd front row were not just three rugby players; they were, for us, the eighth wonder of the world.

With iron and coal and industry comes the politics—politics rooted in people, fairness and radicalism. And whilst the iron and the coal may have gone, the people have not, and nor have the radicalism and the ambition for fairness and equality. I have no doubts whatsoever that it is my duty to hold the red banner high in this place, on behalf of my constituents; to tell their stories, and to tell the difficult truths to those on my own Front Bench as well as the one opposite. A town built on iron and steel does not elect shrinking violets, and I will use my voice to elevate the lived experiences of my constituents so that they can never, ever be ignored.

I also have no doubt that my task, and that of all my Labour colleagues, has become more difficult following the election result in December. One of the jewels in the Ponty crown is the Royal Mint in Llantrisant, which is a

fantastic employer of nearly 1,000 people. But it is an irony not lost on me, or my constituents, that despite the fact that we physically make all the country's money, we see precious little of it in return in the shape of Government investment. The High Speed 2 maps proudly produced by this Government show billions of pounds worth of red and blue streaks across the map of England, but not so much as a slither in Wales. There is no investment in rail electrification, or in the transformational tidal lagoon technology being developed in south Wales. Wales can, and will, lead the way on ingenuity, the economy and the environment, but the Government must stop holding us back.

One very small word has a huge world of meaning in south Wales, and that is the sort of economy and environment we want and deserve: tidy—a tidy economy, and a tidy environment. To achieve that means a commitment to the kind of green industrial revolution being promoted by the Labour party, not the wishy-washy promises of the UK Government. It means investment in future technologies, and it means working with the Welsh Labour Government on their groundbreaking environmental legislation, and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. From Pontypridd to Perth the climate crisis that we are facing impacts on us all, and I will use my voice in this place to keep the climate emergency at the forefront. I come from a seat that helped power the last industrial revolution, and for the sake of my generation, and the one to follow, I want Pontypridd to be at the forefront of the next one.

I will close by saying that the bridge that symbolises the town of Pontypridd will be my inspiration for my work in Parliament. It was the longest single span bridge in Britain when it was opened in 1756, and it is not just the architectural ingenuity that inspires me, but the fact that it represented William Edwards's fourth attempt at a bridge to cross the Taff. He did not let the floods, collapses and miscalculations deter him; he kept thinking, he kept on trying, and he kept building. That is how I intend to carry forward this job of representing the people of Pontypridd, which is the greatest honour of my life. I will make mistakes, I will learn from them, and I will keep going. With the support of my family and my constituents, I will be the bridge from Pontypridd to Westminster.

3.57 pm

Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) on a passionate, robust, honest, and forthright speech. It is clear that she will be no shrinking violet in this place, which is quite right.

A green industrial revolution is currently taking place in Suffolk and Norfolk. Off our coast, parts of one of the largest clusters of offshore wind farms in the world are either in operation, being built, or being planned. There are also exciting plans for revitalising the fishing industry in East Anglia post Brexit, in an environmentally responsible way that can help to revitalise coastal communities along the 200-mile coastline in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. The foundations have been laid and jobs are being created, but more work is required if we are to realise the most from those exciting opportunities for local people, communities and businesses.

Successive Governments have done well in creating the policy framework in which the green industrial revolution is taking place—a framework that encourages

technological advance, innovation, and inward investment. The cornerstone is the Climate Change Act 2008 and the creation of the Committee on Climate Change. That was followed by the industrial strategy, the clean growth strategy, and sector deals, including that for offshore wind, which was launched by former Minister Claire Perry in Lowestoft last March. Subsequently, last summer we enshrined in law the legally binding target to reach net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050—the first major economy to do that. That target is robust and realistic, and in line with scientific expert advice from the Committee on Climate Change, which stated that there is no evidence that a target date earlier than 2050 is feasible.

We now need to get on with the policies that are required to reach net zero. Provided that we do not dither and delay, we may be able to achieve this target earlier. Such policies include those set out in the Conservative manifesto of increasing the UK's ambition on offshore wind to up to 40 GW by 2030, enabling floating wind farms and committing £800 million to building the first fully deployed carbon capture and storage cluster by the mid-2020s.

In East Anglia, much has been achieved: 4 GW of offshore wind power is already operational off the East Anglian coast, accounting for over 50% of the UK's installed capacity. With the potential developments in the pipeline, we can provide much of the Government's new revised higher target. Investment to facilitate that further development is taking place: in autumn, the £10 million Energy Skills Centre was opened on East Coast College's Lowestoft campus, and ScottishPower completed the new £25 million operations and maintenance base in the Hamilton dock. Later this year, CEFAS—the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science—will open its new offices and laboratory in Pakefield. It provides, and will continue to provide, the best fisheries scientific advice, but it is also now giving advice on offshore renewable energy to Governments across the world. It is a trusted bridge linking the public sector to academia and private industry.

I commend the Government for facilitating that investment, but now is not the time to rest on our laurels. We need to go the extra mile. The national policy framework must quickly move forward to its next stage, with the Government setting out a cost-effective pathway to achieving our net zero target. Net zero must be embedded across Government. All future departmental decisions, particularly those on spending, must pass a net zero test, to ensure that we achieve, and hopefully deliver beyond, the target.

As I have mentioned, in an East Anglian context much has been achieved, but there is a concern that, notwithstanding the massive scale of investment off our coast—£1 billion to £2 billion per project—the region is very much unrepresented when it comes to the supply and installation of main components. There are a number of main contractors in the region with the expertise to do this work, including Sembmarine SLP, James Fisher Marine Services, Seajacks, 3sun and Global Marine Group-C Wind.

The offshore wind sector deal has the potential to stimulate the required inward investment in components manufacturing, which will create longer and more resilient supply chains and more local jobs. We need to work with those businesses to ensure that they can realise

[Peter Aldous]

their full potential. That will also require investment in infrastructure, particularly in ports such as Lowestoft. If we do that, then ultimately opportunities will open up for more UK businesses to develop and export low-carbon goods and services, thereby facilitating the global transition to net zero.

The oil and gas industry has been an integral part of the East Anglian economy for over 50 years. It still has an important role to play as we transition to net zero. Collaborative work is taking place with the offshore wind sector, with both learning from one another, and with further opportunities to pioneer inter-sector training and currency certification. Gas to wire technology and gas platform electrification, powered by offshore wind, are emerging as new advances that provide added resilience in supply while assisting in decarbonising traditional methods of generation.

As I have already mentioned, there are exciting opportunities in carbon capture and storage, and we must not forget the enormous amount of work that needs to be carried out in decommissioning oil and gas assets on the UK continental shelf. In the southern North sea, late-life and decommissioning expenditure is forecast at around £4.4 billion for the period up to 2027. That amounts to an average annual spend of around £445 million. It is important that we have a policy framework and an investment strategy that ensures that we secure as much of that work as possible for UK and East Anglian businesses. The Government recognise the need for an oil and gas sector deal, and I urge them to start work as soon as possible on its preparation, collaborating closely with the industry.

I turn to the opportunity that Brexit provides to revitalise the East Anglian fishing industry. The right policy framework is emerging following the 2018 fisheries White Paper, and it is important that the forthcoming fisheries Bill promotes sustainable and environmentally aware fishing practices and management. Having sat on the Fisheries Bill Committee in the last Parliament, I believe that we are moving in the right direction, but more work is required. In East Anglia, we have produced the REAF—“Renaissance of East Anglian Fisheries”—report, which sets out recommendations for revitalising the industry that could generate an additional £28 million to £34 million per annum in the region’s ports.

The report’s recommendations very much recognise the importance of sustainable fishing, including the development of a modern fleet, delivering top-quality fish, high-quality jobs and a reduced environmental impact. It is recommended that consideration is given to restricting offshore vessels to 500 hp and prohibiting the abhorrent and unacceptable use of beam trawls. Those restrictions would encourage and facilitate the entry of modern vessels, each with a crew of up to approximately five and each able to use a variety of gear, such as twin-rig trawls and fly-shooting nets. These vessels would carry the most modern fish-handling and storage technology. The proposed new fleet is modelled on the modern French fleet of the same size and gear types. It offers higher fish quality, greater employment opportunities, less impact on marine ecology and a lighter carbon footprint.

This vision is in contrast with the current fleet. At present, no offshore vessels operate out of East Anglian ports. Instead, a number of UK-registered but Dutch-owned

vessels operate out of the Netherlands. They use beam trawls, which drag heavy metal beams across the seabed, which is ecologically damaging and fuel-intensive. We now have the opportunity to move to a newer and greener way of fishing that will benefit our coastal communities. It is important that we grasp the opportunity.

In conclusion, the future is bright, but it is not orange—it is green. There is enormous potential to revitalise coastal communities not only in East Anglia, but all around the coast, to provide opportunities for many people who feel that they have been overlooked and forgotten for too long. It is important that we do not let them down.

4.7 pm

Anna McMorrin (Cardiff North) (Lab): I pay tribute to Members for the fantastic maiden speeches that we have heard this afternoon, including—especially—my constituency neighbour and hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones).

A huge area of the west Antarctic ice sheet is likely to break off into the sea—that was on the news today. Vast cracks have been spotted that could lead to a large part of the glacier breaking away. When my father was there over 50 years ago, he saw a very, very different Antarctica. Such a lot has changed since then, and not for the better. The warming of the oceans is posing a considerable risk. People may ask, “Antarctica is a long way away; what difference does that make to the lives of people living up and down the UK?” Altogether, the west Antarctic ice sheet contains 2.2 million cubic kilometres of ice. If it collapses and melts, it will raise sea levels by more than three metres, completely submerging huge parts of our coastline, including London and Cardiff. Moreover, it could happen more quickly than scientists once thought, if carbon dioxide levels continue to rise as they have been. The ice melt is being driven by ocean temperatures rising far quicker and at greater depths than previously thought.

Despite that, the Government are on track to miss all their climate targets and will not meet our fourth or fifth carbon budgets. The Government’s plans for reducing emissions are just not good enough if we are to meet our targets by the early 2030s, let alone the net zero target of 2050, which, incidentally, will be far too late to prevent the most catastrophic climate change. The world is not coming together to address these issues. The United States, one of the world’s top polluters, has begun its withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement, and the UK Government are still spending billions subsidising fossil fuel projects across the world through UK Export Finance. I pay tribute to Mary Creagh, the former Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee, who led the inquiry that showed how billions of pounds of taxpayers’ money was being spent in that way through UK Export Finance. When will this stop? When will the Government take climate change seriously?

We have experienced raging wildfires—we are seeing them right now—devastating droughts, record-breaking heatwaves and shattering floods at home. We are even seeing fires in the Arctic. This should be the alarm that awakens a deep sense of urgency. Time for real action is running out. World scientists and experts tell us we have less than 10 years to get on the right path and take that action. We must act faster than our current rate of change and we must be drastically more radical. This is

a moral, humanitarian and economic issue that we simply cannot afford not to act on with haste. Our children and grandchildren will judge us on how far we rise to meet this challenge and provide a planet for them that is fit for them.

Last year, official statistics showed that the UK, rather than closing the gap, was moving backwards, and when we look at the recent record, it is not hard to see why. The number of new solar installations has collapsed—the figure for the first quarter of last year was 98% lower than the average for 2015; the number of home installations in England has fallen 95% since 2012; and the Government have effectively banned new onshore wind power, which is the cheapest and most tried and tested form of renewable technology. We have not gone far enough to bring about economic, industrial or societal change here at home or indeed overseas.

A bold and transformative green industrial revolution across the UK could change lives, but it must match the scale of change and also undo the environmental change brought about by the first industrial revolution. Let us also ensure that it creates clean and secure jobs in areas impoverished by deindustrialisation, such as the south Wales valleys, which lost thousands of jobs. We can invest there with renewable energies and provide those opportunities, but we need more than just words; we need a green industrial programme that delivers climate and economic justice—because we can do both.

What would a green industrial revolution mean for people and families? What would it mean for families struggling to live on one income on the minimum wage, or for parents struggling to make ends meet and worrying every day about putting food on the table or keeping their children warm at night? Well, for them it is about building affordable, energy-efficient, zero carbon homes or retrofitting the homes that have already been built, allowing them to save on their bills. It is about providing cheaper, more inclusive public transport in towns and cities, so that that family know that it is cheaper to go to work on the bus or train, that they will be able to afford it, and that they will get there on time. It is about subsidising electric vehicles and providing adequate charging points. I am proud that today Cardiff City Council published its groundbreaking and very ambitious transport strategy, which sets out how it will invest in clean, green transport.

The green industrial revolution will also create much-needed jobs and provide new skills for young people. It is an opportunity to build apprenticeships and stable, secure jobs and income. It is about making sure that the 16-year-old school leaver who may be worried about his or her long-term future has a future, whether it is helping to build green homes or manufacturing, fitting or maintaining renewable energies and technologies. Green apprenticeships and opportunities for new companies must be given the right support, commitment and opportunities by the Government, and must lead to a societal change for the families who really need it: the families who depend on those jobs and on a stable, firm economy—a green economy.

The green industrial revolution will mean cleaner air to breathe, cleaner towns and city centres, and more green spaces. The food security crisis that would come with a climate crisis, leading to higher food prices, would be mitigated, and food could be locally sourced and cheaper and easier to source. This new life, this

clean and green new life for our family, would lead to a massive improvement in wellbeing and mental health and perhaps a reduction in chronic diseases such as obesity, thereby—critically—reducing dependence on the national health service. The groundbreaking Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which I was proud to help to develop during my time in the Welsh Government, leads the way in offering opportunities for that to happen, but we need to see it happen throughout the United Kingdom.

Only by investing in our clean, green economy, setting hard, ambitious targets and taking urgent, radical action will we be able to create a country and a world fit for the future and for our children, so let us start to do that.

4.18 pm

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cardiff North (Anna McMorrin), and it has been a pleasure to hear some excellent maiden speeches this afternoon. I believe that there is at least one more to come, and we look forward to it very much.

It is also a pleasure to participate in this important debate on the Government's vision and ambition for a green industrial revolution. As I pointed out in an intervention at the start of the debate, Cornwall is ready to play a very active part in that revolution. It has a proud history of innovation and being at the forefront of technological advances, and it is already playing its part in the area of renewable energy. We already have very advanced wind and solar generation power, and we are about to start producing geothermal energy: we are the only place in the UK that will be able to do that. Cornwall will also be at the forefront in the extraction of lithium and other precious minerals that are necessary for battery technology.

However, what I want to touch on this afternoon is not so much the green revolution that we need, but the blue revolution that we need. We now have a much greater understanding of just how important the seas and oceans are to our environment, and of the part that they play in regulating our climate.

I was born and grew up in Cornwall around the sea and I now have the huge privilege of representing one of only three constituencies in the country that has two separate coastlines. I grew up being very much aware of what an amazing thing our sea is—a place that we can love and enjoy, a place of adventure—but I also grew up to respect the ocean and to understand what a complex place it is. The sea in Cornwall has shaped not just our landscape but our culture and identity, and we are always closely attached to it. For far too long, though, we seemed to have the impression that the sea could cope with anything we threw at it—that it was vast enough to cope, whatever we pumped or threw into it. Thankfully, in recent years we have come to appreciate that that is not the case and that we need to protect our oceans and take care of what we put into them.

I will touch on three areas where I welcome the Government taking action, but on which I want to press them to do a bit more. Others have already mentioned the fact that we have to stop producing so much plastic and be more responsible in the way we deal with and dispose of the plastic that we use. I will never forget the moment, a few years ago, when the realisation hit me

[*Steve Double*]

just how much plastic was being pumped into our seas and oceans. It was when I read a report that highlighted that if we do not take drastic action by 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in our seas.

I am grateful for the action that the Government have already taken to reduce the amount of plastic waste we produce, including the plastic bag charge, the ban on microbeads and the plan to ban plastic straws, but I want to press them on this, because we urgently need to come forward with a deposit return scheme for single-use plastic bottles. We have been talking about that for over two years, and that is far too long. We now really need to press ahead and bring in a scheme that will help us to increase the level of plastic recycling in our country and ensure that far less is thrown away only to end up in our seas and oceans. I am pleased with the progress we have made as a Government, but let us really press this home and ensure that we take urgent action.

Another thing that I want to talk about is sewage discharge into our seas. We have made huge progress in cleaning up our seas in relation to the amount of sewage that we pump into them. One of the things I have been proud of in my time in this place is that I have worked closely with the Cornish-based charity Surfers Against Sewage, whose main focus over many decades has been to ensure that we clean up our seas, but the sad fact is that we are still pumping too much untreated sewage into our oceans through combined sewer outflows. We still have too many of these sewage systems that combine household foul waste water—sewage—with rainwater and surface water from run-off drains. When we have heavy rainfall, all of that gets into the sewerage system and it just cannot cope. Untreated raw sewage is therefore pumped into the seas.

We have been monitoring this situation and we found that, just in the recreational summer season last year, there were more than 1,700 discharges of untreated sewage into our seas across the UK, 10% of which were in Cornwall. It cannot be acceptable that we continue to do that in this day and age. Yes, we are making progress, but I believe we now need to press the water companies to really up their game. They must take drastic action to get rid of these combined sewers and ensure that we stop discharging untreated sewage into our seas. Surfers Against Sewage has a target that we will have stopped pumping raw sewage into recreational sea areas by 2030, as well as a long-term plan to ensure that we rid our seas of untreated sewage in any circumstances. Again, I welcome the measures in the Environment Bill that the previous Parliament began to consider; I urge the Government to bring back that Bill in the near future and to include real teeth in the new policy to ensure that we can hold water companies to account and stop the pumping of untreated sewage into our seas.

Finally, coastal areas bear the brunt of the impact of climate change, and we see that time and again in Cornwall. The extreme weather events that we used to think happened every 50 years now occur on an almost annual basis. We need to prepare our coastal communities for the impact of climate change. A big area of concern in Cornwall is coastal erosion, which is accelerating before our very eyes. Many of the communities that I represent face the impact and costs of erosion, so I urge

the Government to do more to protect those communities from the impact of extreme weather and storms. If we spend a few million pounds now, we will save tens or hundreds of millions of pounds in the years to come.

Many of the communities that I represent, such as Newquay, are worried about the amount of development still being allowed on clifftops that are eroding before our eyes. We need to look again at our planning policy when it comes to clifftop development to ensure that we are not just saving up problems for the years to come by building properties that will be right on the edge of those cliffs in a short space of time. We must take action to ensure that funding is available to protect our coastal communities and that we are not continuing to build in areas facing coastal erosion.

As a proud island nation, the UK has always had a positive relationship with the sea. I am pleased that we are now starting to treat our oceans much more responsibly, but we need to do more. I welcome the measures that the Government are already bringing forward, but I urge them to continue to review the situation and to ensure that we treasure and protect our oceans and do not continue to contribute to the pollution of the seas around us.

4.27 pm

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): One of the obvious advantages and pleasures of being called late in the debate is that I have been able to listen to several wonderful maiden speeches. In the two most recent speeches, the hon. Member for East Lothian (Kenny MacAskill) gave a full history of Scotland, and the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) offered a wonderful portrait of her town and its people. It has been a pleasurable afternoon, and I am looking forward to the next maiden speech of the day.

It is just weeks since the general election, during which all Opposition parties proposed detailed plans for tackling the climate emergency and getting us to net zero emissions as soon as possible, and I have been encouraged by how the scientific consensus and the political consensus have matched. We have known for over a year that we need to keep global temperature rises to below 1.5° C and that our old target of an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions must change to net zero by 2050 at the latest.

The Opposition parties offer similar commitments to climate action, and we share similar thinking on the science and technology. We share similar aspirations for a just transition and for ambitious targets, but where is the Government's plan? Climate action is notable by its absence from the Government's plan for this new Parliament, and I have a term for that: climate action delay. The climate emergency is real, and we need urgent action now. Climate action delay is no better than climate change denial, because if we delay now, we will fail to keep temperatures below the threshold of 1.5° C necessary to avoid global climate chaos.

What does climate action mean in practice for transport, for energy and for our homes? In transport, net zero means that cars, lorries and buses need to be powered without using fossil fuels. For us that means no sales of new petrol or diesel cars from 2030; for the Government the target is 2040, which is too late. Is there a scientific reason for a 10-year difference? No. It is climate action delayed.

The next sector is electricity. In net-zero Britain, electricity must come from renewables and green hydrogen. For us that means massive new investment in renewable energy such as offshore and onshore wind, solar and marine power, starting now. No one should be in any doubt that this is a big challenge. Electricity usage will go up enormously as we transition from natural gas for heating and petrol and diesel for vehicles.

Our target is to generate 80% of our electricity from renewables by 2030. Net zero means completely transitioning out of fossil fuels in this sector. What would the Government do if they were serious about a net-zero Britain? They would support a fast and extensive roll-out of renewable installations, including onshore wind and marine power. They would demonstrate that there will be no fossil fuel extraction in the UK, and they would put a clear stop to fracking now. They would reduce and remove all fossil fuel subsidies.

What are this Government doing? The signs are not good. The indications are business as usual. Business as usual means going at a sufficiently slow pace so as to ensure the continued need for fossil fuels. That is climate action delayed.

The third sector is the energy efficiency of our homes. To get to net zero, we need to stop heating our homes with natural gas and oil. We will succeed in that transition only if we have an ambitious programme of insulating our homes to the highest energy efficiency standard feasible.

We know what needs to be done, and the technology is there. We can build new homes to high sustainability standards. What is this Government's plan? Little or nothing. They are consulting on or suggesting making some changes five years from now. Once again, that is climate action delayed. We cannot afford delay any longer. We need a clear and decisive plan for how to adjust and change almost every sector to deliver net zero, starting now.

This Government talk the talk, but they do not walk the walk. We need climate action now.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): It is a great pleasure to call Mark Fletcher to make his maiden speech.

4.32 pm

Mark Fletcher (Bolsover) (Con): It is an incredible honour to speak in this Chamber for the first time as the Member of Parliament for Bolsover. It is a particular honour to do so with you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, as I went to school in your constituency.

I start by thanking all the House staff and authorities who have been so welcoming to us newbies as we continually get lost.

The guidance produced by the Library suggests that we should start our maiden speech with a tribute to our predecessor. I feel there was a missing paragraph telling us what to do when our predecessor is a giant of British politics.

Dennis Skinner became a Member of Parliament in 1970, and he served the great people of Bolsover for 49 years. He fought tirelessly for his constituents locally,

and it was incredibly heartening to hear during the campaign, on street after street and doorstep after doorstep, of the work he had done to help people.

Dennis became known nationally for his uncompromising contributions in this Chamber and for his heckling before the Queen's Speech. Feared, admired and respected, Dennis Skinner is synonymous both with this House and with the constituency I now represent. It would only be fair and a great tribute if we could arrange for a statue of Dennis to be built in the constituency to honour his service and to inspire the next generation in Bolsover that they, too, can help to shape the world.

I would very much welcome support for this proposal from both the Opposition Front Bench and the Government. I even suggest that Scottish National party Members may wish to support it, given they finally have the Bench space that they so long desired.

The Leader of the Opposition has already paid tribute to his fallen comrade, my predecessor, in the House, and I suspect he is better placed to do so than I am, other than to say that Dennis is, was and always will be the Beast of Bolsover.

The wonderful people of Bolsover have very discerning tastes—or at least they did until 12 December—and I am only the third Member of Parliament to serve the constituency since its creation in 1950. Both my predecessors made their maiden contributions in this House on the topic of the coal industry, and I wanted to continue in that vein with today's speech on the green industrial revolution.

Bolsover is proud of its mining past—its geography, communities and landscape were moulded by that once great industry—but we know that mining is not our future, and Bolsover is one of those post-mining communities where potential is plentiful but not entirely unleashed. The challenge of becoming the first major economy to become carbon neutral by 2050 is one we should relish, where we look to our science and research sectors to find new solutions and innovations. We should be optimistic about our future, as a leading economy and as a country that is well placed to develop and build green technologies, and about our ability to meet the climate challenge head on. But we must also ensure that, in that challenge, no community is left behind.

I can see what you are thinking, Madam Deputy Speaker. The weather outside is not so great, there are still dozens of maiden speeches to go, recess is only a few weeks away and mentally you are flicking through the travel brochures. The beaches of the Bahamas, Bali and Barbados are calling, but may I make a suggestion that is equally, if not more, splendid—Bolsover? Its tremendous tourism trade is beginning to thrive, and you will meet the friendliest constituents in the country. You can visit our 17th century castle or make your way to Hardwick Hall, an Elizabethan masterpiece. You can start your journey by rail, in the picturesque village of Whitwell, travel through Creswell and see the Creswell crags, and move on to the powerhouse that is Shirebrook, a town of many achievements and from where the mighty Jason Statham originates.

If you insist on driving through the most magnificent constituency in the country, you will be pleased to find that the M1 snakes its way through Bolsover, although I should warn you that we are the beneficiaries of a so-called "smart" motorway on that stretch. You can

[Mark Fletcher]

start in the village of Barlborough, pop into Dobbies for a cup of tea and perhaps visit the council offices in nearby Clowne, and then head to junction 29A, where you will find Markham Vale, the very best place in the country to set up a business if you require good transport links. If you make your way a little further south, you can head to Pinxton, which is famous for its porcelain, and do a spot of shopping at the McArthur Glen outlet. I should say that nearby are the headquarters of a famous business, Slimming World, but it seems not to have written to its new MP—perhaps it knows a lost cause when it sees one!

The largest part of my constituency is just next to Pinxton: the mighty South Normanton. My first engagement in my new role as the Member of Parliament was at the South Normanton Community Church, where they debuted a new production, based on the pop lyrics of a P!nk song, called “What About Us?”. It spoke of the challenge we face in this House: ensuring that communities in the midlands and the north that have felt overlooked and undervalued for too long feel as though politics is as much about them as it is about the City of London and big business; as though we are as interested in delivering jobs, opportunities, transport upgrades and broadband connectivity in post-mining communities as we are elsewhere; and as though we care about tackling antisocial behaviour and ensuring that our national health service remains a cherished institution. It is a challenge that I believe the new Members on these Benches will relish.

I omitted one part of my constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker—or, in political language, I saved the best for last. If you make your way through Blackwell or Tibshelf, you will find four wards on loan from North East Derbyshire District Council that are also in my constituency: Holmewood and Heath, Pilsley and Morton, Shirland, and Sutton are certainly where you should finish your visit. I recommend a visit to the beautiful village of Woolley Moor, or if you are feeling particularly active you can make your way along the Five Pits trail.

If I may finish on a personal note, today and 12 December were both bittersweet days for me: I am indescribably honoured that the people of Bolsover thought that an openly gay, Cambridge-educated lad from Donny was the obvious successor to Dennis Skinner, but I am also drawn to thinking about my mum, who passed away in a tragic accident when I was 17. At that time, I lived on my own and felt like my world was falling apart. I miss her tremendously and wish she was here today.

As I sat on these Benches yesterday, listening to a number of maiden speeches by my colleagues that were considerably better than my own—[HON. MEMBERS: “No!”]—I was struck by how many of the new intake have overcome tragedy, adverse circumstances, disabilities or a difficult upbringing. So many of us have found ourselves, at one stage or another, the underdog in life. Equally, I was struck by how that motivated us to want to make a difference—to help other people when they need it most—and, perhaps most importantly, how we all remembered those who helped us in our moment of need.

I listened yesterday to hon. Members pay tribute to the teachers who helped them and inspired them to reach these Benches. In my own case, I would like to

thank the amazing teachers at Danum School Technology College, like Dave Irons and Val Cusworth, and so many others who treated me like I was their family and made me feel a little less lost.

This is an intake that I am incredibly proud to be a part of, because so many of us overcame difficulties and know how lucky we are, and how things might have been so different for us. Our mission, in the privileged positions that we now hold, is to make our world a little less reliant on lucky interventions and ensure that this Conservative Government give working-class kids the best possible start in life.

4.42 pm

Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mark Fletcher). I think everyone on the Labour Benches would thank him for his kind words about Dennis Skinner, who was more than just an MP to us; he was a link to a period when people had dignity at work and felt respected in what they did, and when we had real communities that were strengthened by the work and the ethos that people had as part of their community. For Labour Members, Dennis is a link to so much more than just the Labour party, and to hear the hon. Gentleman’s warm words meant so much.

On the idea of a statue, I cannot speak for Dennis, although I can think of one word, or perhaps two words that he might say as one word: something like “Give over!” The thought is appreciated, though, and who knows what will happen on this side of the House and how far that will go? Even though it came from the Conservative Benches, I think Dennis would have appreciated that and the hon. Gentleman’s warm words, for which we thank him.

Bob Stewart: I thank my friend for allowing me to intervene. I speak as a friend of Dennis Skinner. The lesson for everyone new coming into this place is to realise that there is a difference between politics and friendship. Friendship stretches across the House; politics may differ, but friendship is firm. Dennis is one of those sorts of people who would be very welcoming when one sat down and had a chat with him.

Clive Lewis: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that intervention; he makes an important point. I hope that in the coming weeks, months and years we all remember each other’s common humanity. It is important that we hold on to that.

Let us understand the backcloth to this debate: Australia is currently on fire; 2,000 homes have been destroyed; 27 people have lost their lives; and half a billion animals have been incinerated. An area larger than either Hungary or Portugal has been razed to the ground. Meanwhile, to its north, the rains that never reached Australia are flooding Indonesia. This pattern is being repeated across the globe.

We are already in an era of wild weather: seasons appear at the wrong times; food harvests are diminished; pollinating and insect-mating seasons are being disrupted; and, without our noticing, the seas have been warming and storms increasing at an alarming rate. This is the beginning of climate disruption. We have talked about it for a long time. It is now here. We are at a stage that cannot easily be reversed, but that can be stopped from

heading into runaway breakdown. The key is what we do within the current decade, which is what makes the Queen's Speech so important.

If the Prime Minister understood the emergency, the Queen's Speech would have included measures such as: introducing UK carbon budgets to reduce CO₂ emissions by 20% a year; removing planning permission for new buildings connected to the gas grid; reinstating Britain's zero-carbon homes standard; putting in place a national fuel poverty, home energy efficiency programme; raising the UK tree planting targets to 3 billion within a decade; transferring the roads budget into new public transport networks; and, because building resilience into every part of our economy from infrastructure to food security is now critical, making a huge investment in flood prevention programmes and everything else that goes with that.

Later this year, the UK will host the COP26 gathering of nations still struggling to set up a robust framework to avoid climate breakdown. It is an opportunity for Britain to lead rather than just to host. Are there any measures in this Queen's Speech to show how we will do this? No, of course there are not. Has anyone actually told the PM that one cannot just turn up to COP and go, "Bing, bang, boom, bong, phwoar, climate crisis!"? We have to stand on our record, and this Government do not have one. Members do not have to take my word for it. In its latest assessment, the Committee on Climate Change said that the UK is not

"on track to meet the fourth carbon budget. To meet future carbon budgets and the 100% target for 2050 it will require the government to apply more challenging measures."

To you and me, Madam Deputy Speaker, that means pull your finger out because: the world is burning; biodiversity is collapsing; the oceans are warming; the ice caps are melting; and the world is watching us here in the UK this year.

Ultimately, I fear that nothing we say in this place will change the mind of this Government. The entirety of this Government's mandate has been founded on one thing, which is to get Brexit done—it pains me to say that. When we understand that this is a hard right political project, we will understand that this Government have no intention of facing up to the climate crisis. Brexit has always been about trade deals that do not give a damn about climate, inequality or the global south. It is about deregulation that lets corporations raping our planet do so with ever more impunity. That is what Brexit is actually about, and that is why the Queen's Speech has failed even the most basic of tests.

Ultimately, little we say in here will make a difference with this Government. The only way that millions of people in this country will see any real change is to build a climate mass movement, the likes of which the world has not yet seen, to force them to act. Greta Thunberg, the youth climate strikers and the global climate movement have shown us all the way. It is now time for us in this place to join them, to build a movement and show that our democracy is capable of changing course and building a better and more sustainable future.

4.49 pm

Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con): It is a great honour speak in this debate and to follow the maiden speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mark Fletcher), but I do have to take issue with what he said about

where to visit. There is no dispute in this place about the fact that Cornwall, including the west of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, is the most attractive and the most beautiful place to visit, but I am very happy to spend the next four or five years in this Parliament in that contest. None the less, his speech was fantastic. It is great to have colleagues in the House who share so many of the same values.

I have risen to speak in support of the green industrial revolution. I looked up the word "revolution", and it might not be what the Government intend, as the definition in the dictionary is "to overthrow the Government", which would not help us to achieve the green industrial revolution. We certainly need a definite and fundamental change, and I believe there is an appetite for that in Government. I have been an MP for four and a half years, and a number of times I have discussed with colleagues and members of the Cabinet how we achieve a more decarbonised and greener economy. I have no doubt that there is the will, appetite and determination, as well as the talent and expertise, to deliver that.

I welcome the intention behind the green industrial revolution and the £22 billion that will be spent each year on green technologies for efficient homes, renewable energy, clean heating and electric vehicles. It will come as no surprise to anyone who has heard me speak on this subject before that I will discuss two areas: transport and housing.

First, I will talk about Flybe. I am a Cornish MP, and Flybe serves the Newquay to London route. Many people appreciate and value that, and it is good for our local economy, but I stress that for every pound we use to support this business and the connectivity that we absolutely should support and sustain between the regions and across the UK, I want an equivalent sum—maybe more—to be spent on our rail infrastructure, on the electrification of the rail line, and on reducing ticket prices. It is ludicrous that, as we look to support and save an operator such as Flybe, it is so much cheaper to fly than to get the train. I really hope that this Government, over this Parliament, will do something to give real choice to consumers, commuters and passengers, so that they can afford to choose a cleaner way to travel. People want choice, and I believe that is one way for us to show a real commitment to the subject. I am delighted that the Transport Secretary, who is a friend of mine, is here; I am sure he is keen to speak and to shed some light on the intention.

The green industrial revolution needs to be about accelerating and embracing the use of new technology and working practices. The two areas where we can achieve quite dramatic reductions in our carbon footprint are the built environment and transport. Both contribute a significant amount of carbon emissions to our environment, and if we get this right, we can reduce carbon footprints quite quickly. House building, however, has not really changed much since I did my apprenticeship, which I started in 1987. We still dig huge holes in the ground, pour in tonnes of concrete, and build on top of it with materials that have a massive carbon footprint. Cement is said to account for 7% of the world's carbon emissions—an enormous figure. Unless we change the way we build, we will not be able to reduce it quickly.

The Government have a really good ambition to build homes, which is absolutely the right thing to do: we must build the homes that families need. New building practices are available, enabling us to cut the amount of

[Derek Thomas]

carbon generated by building, as well as by the homes themselves once they are lived in. In a surgery on Friday, I met a gentleman who is building part of his house on ground screws. A ground screw is not a particularly modern invention, but it really should be used much more. There is no need for deep foundations or to dig up the ground and disperse the carbon once again; the ground screws go into the ground and the whole structure is built on the ground screws. There is no reason why, where it can be done, that should not be the default method of house building.

In Cornwall and many parts of the country, the ground is exceptionally hard. This builder is also insulating his floor with recycled glass, and the floor itself is made of limecrete, which does not have cement in it, so it addresses the carbon footprint issue. It is possible to cut the carbon footprint of building the homes that we must build—and we must build many more. It is really important that the Government find ways of ensuring that the industry embraces every possible tool available to avoid that carbon footprint.

A lot has been said in this debate that I could mention, but I just want to touch on electric vehicles. There is an appetite in my constituency and around the country to get hold of an electric vehicle. Despite what has been said by Opposition Members, we are seeing a real growth in the number of charging points, and in the ways in which cars can be charged conveniently. But I suggest that the Government look carefully at the idea of a scrappage scheme for diesel-guzzling cars for low-income families. Such a scheme would immediately provide a real boost to UK car manufacturing and the development of electric vehicles, and would obviously improve air quality. It would also mean quieter roads, and people all around the country would love to live near quieter roads. It would reduce running costs for low-income families, and it is the right thing to do. I worked on the idea with Cornwall Council last year, and would love to see a real appetite in Government for a scrappage scheme that allowed electric vehicles to be within the reach of low-income families in my constituency and around the country. Cutting emissions is good business sense. This is not about making life much more difficult for people or even putting up their bills. If we get housing right and really ensure that electric vehicles are available, we can cut the cost of living for so many hard-working families.

In summary, the most effective way to achieve a greener, cleaner environment is to encourage innovation, create a can-do culture when it comes to reducing carbon, use taxpayers' money only to support solutions and technologies that reduce our carbon emissions, and much more quickly embrace proven methods that we know can make our environment happier, healthier and greener for everybody.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): It is a great pleasure to call Charlotte Nichols to make her maiden speech.

4.56 pm

Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to address the House for the first time. Before I begin

my speech, I would just like to say that all of us in Warrington North wish Mr Speaker—the son of Warrington North's first MP, Doug Hoyle—every success in his new role; and you, Madam Deputy Speaker, in yours.

Let me turn to my own new role. Every Member of this House has a solemn duty to their constituents, and it is a duty that has rarely been so important, as we stand on the precipice of environmental catastrophe. I am proud that Labour-led Warrington Borough Council has declared a climate emergency, and I will be working with it to deliver a green industrial revolution that puts power, in its most literal sense, into the hands of our community. We have a long-standing science and engineering base in the town. Indeed, it is not uncommon to run into nuclear physicists at the pub. Warrington is strategically located to benefit from developments in the wider region in hydrogen gas and tidal power, among other sources of zero and low-carbon energy, so a real, green northern powerhouse is right at the top of my agenda, building on my work on a just transition with the trade union GMB prior to entering Parliament.

Of course, it is tradition in one's maiden speech to make reference to those of our predecessors. Both Helen Jones and Doug Hoyle served the town with distinction over long careers, but I was struck by just how contemporary both speeches feel today. Indeed, it tickled me to read the maiden speech of the now Lord Hoyle from 1974, on the subject of the then European Economic Community, proving that some issues are perennial. Although there is a certain comfort to be taken from this as a new Member, I hope only that when the time comes for my successor to make their maiden speech in this place, we might have moved on from arguing about the EU. Out of respect for the convention that a maiden speech should not be overly controversial, I will not labour that point. But I do want to turn to another maiden speech convention, and that is to tell the House about the people and the place I stand here to represent.

Having been rather forgotten about for some time, northern towns seem to be the flavour of the month at the moment, whether it is memes about the Labour leadership contest or new Conservative proposals to pit us against each other for the chance to win investment that does not even begin to plug the gap in what has been taken away over the past decade.

I would suggest to anyone looking for a town of the year that they need look no further than Warrington. Warrington is a town whose local economy outperforms many cities. We are a prosperous town with a buoyant local economy, but there remain pockets of real deprivation and too many people struggling month to month. Our challenge, and my driving purpose, is to ensure that everyone shares in that prosperity. With my local food bank doubling in size last month to cope with increasing demand, the urgency here cannot be overstated. As the town has grown, and with further growth expected, it is also about ensuring that our infrastructure is fit for purpose, from housing to the roads, to public transport, to our hospital provision and social care for our communities' most vulnerable residents.

There is a tired adage that we do not make anything in this country any more, but while Warrington has a proud industrial heritage that earned it its nickname "The Wire", it is not about being nostalgic about some halcyon days past. Warrington has a proud industrial

future too. We manufacture a fifth of the world's gin in Warrington North at the G&J distillery, which has been going since 1761, and there is a really thriving local craft gin scene with local businesses like the 3 Pugs distillery started in Orford. But if gin is not your thing, don't worry—we also have fantastic breweries like Burtonwood Brewery and the Coach House Brewing Company, and many fantastic pubs to enjoy their beers in. But it is not just about booze. According to Make UK, there are 255 manufacturers in Warrington North. The future of manufacturing in Britain depends on the cost and security of energy as we decarbonise, making today's debate very important.

The constituency boundaries in Warrington remain a funny one, not least for the parts of Warrington South that are further north than parts of Warrington North, and vice versa. Warrington Wolves' Halliwell Jones stadium is on the wrong side of Lythgoes Lane to fall within the Warrington North boundary—something that I am hoping the Boundary Commission will address to right this historic wrong. Warrington North can rightly claim, though, the world champions, Warrington Wolves physical disability rugby league team, as they train in Padgate—and we are very proud that they do. Gulliver's World theme park also falls within both constituencies, although as it is predominantly the car park that is in Warrington South, I would say the real fun happens in Warrington North—true of most things. Among the many, many things that Warrington South can never take away from us in the north is our claim to Old Billy, the oldest horse who ever lived, who died at the age of 62—definitively Warrington North, and now in *Hansard* for the record.

I will finish on this note. I am proud to represent a town whose people have shown such resilience, good humour and kindness both to me and to each other. I am truly inspired by the people that I have met doing incredible things in our community in Warrington North, and I will work as hard as I can to earn the trust that you have put in me.

5.3 pm

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Charlotte Nichols), who has been my friend since she was an activist in North West Young Labour. It gives me real pleasure to see her arrive here—like me, a new Jewish Member of the House of Commons. Her speech was incredible, and I am sure she will give many incredible speeches in the many, many years that she will be sat with us in this House. I also welcome you back to your role, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Politics, as we know, is a conversation about who we are and what is important. I am glad that so many colleagues across the House have come together today to highlight the importance of passing a liveable planet to our children. The UK can stand by its record of passing the first ever Climate Change Act under the last Labour Government and, more recently, the net zero commitment under this Government. I am thankful that, in this country, there is a broad consensus on the principle of the climate emergency. For some time, the climate emergency will be the greatest threat multiplier that we face. For our country, for our way of life and for generations to follow, we can and must do all we can to tackle that threat and build a smarter, greener and more equitable world as we do so.

What concerns me is that the Government are knowingly under-delivering on their own climate action. We have a climate gap between our rhetoric in this House and our action in this country, and this Queen's Speech does little, if anything, to fill that gap. The point has been repeatedly made by Conservative Members in the short time since the new year, in the build-up to the COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow, that this is a priority for them. That is all well and good, but as Greta Thunberg likes to say: action, not words. It is actions that the planet needs.

The climate gap is a serious matter. Right now, this beautiful country of ours is producing far too many emissions—millions of tonnes too many. We will soon overshoot our carbon budget target unless the Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth and the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy instruct their civil servants to up their game and address the climate gap. In this speech, I will helpfully outline some suggestions for them and for the Secretary of State for Transport, who is on the Government Front Bench.

First, there is no mention in the Queen's Speech of lifting the ban on onshore wind in England, but there should be. Polling proves that many communities are keen to invest in wind technology, so that they can benefit financially, bringing the community together and increasing local opportunities. Onshore wind is also one of the cheapest renewable technologies. By effectively banning it, this Government are making decarbonisation more expensive by approximately £50 per household.

The Government can and must move forward the date for the ban on combustion engine vehicles. I am confident that in a few short years, every developed country in the world will only be using non fossil fuel vehicles, whether they are electric, hydrogen or use other low carbon fuels. Huge market opportunities exist for the countries that get there first, not the ones that get there last, and the UK should be there first. Countries across Europe are investing hard in this; where are we? Brexit causes further, well understood barriers for our automotive industry. We face an uphill battle, and we are not winning it.

Thankfully, there was a commitment to moving forward the ban on combustion engine vehicles in the Conservative manifesto, which also contained this line:

“Leeds is the largest city in Western Europe without a light rail or metro system. And European cities are often more productive than our own in large part because they have better infrastructure.”

I understand that Leeds is the only city outside London with a specific commitment. Conservative Members will have read their manifesto more carefully than me, so if I am wrong, I am sure that they will correct me, although there are not many here at the moment to do so. They may also be interested to know that I agree with that line in the Conservative manifesto—they can take that to the bank. When can the good people of Leeds whom I represent expect the necessary funding to be released to the West Yorkshire Combined Authority to undertake a project of this scale, which will take many years to deliver? The Conservative manifesto also stated:

“We will give city regions the funding to upgrade their bus, tram and train services to make them as good as London's”. That is excellent—when can we start work on it, Secretary of State?

[Alex Sobel]

Finally, I would like to touch on the big climate change event of this year, COP26. A huge diplomatic effort will be required, especially with the United States, to bring everyone constructively to the table. The UK must have addressed its climate gap by then and have its own house in order if we want to command any kind of presence, authority or respect at that conference and have a hope of delivering the kind of breakthrough moment that we had in Paris in 2015, when I was present as the lead councillor for climate change on Leeds City Council. Make no mistake: the Paris agreement is a high bar, and I have yet to see evidence that this Government will achieve a comparable breakthrough.

The Secretary of State and the previous Member for Devizes, Claire Perry—now COP president—are aware of the good work of the Powering Past Coal Alliance. I urge him to extend an invitation to all countries, especially those that are still considering investment in new coal-fired power stations, particularly using UK Export Finance credit, that they might join this alliance, and that we might provide them with whatever assistance they require for the transition from coal to renewables. I also urge him and his counterparts to consider a “net zero club” of countries that have committed to join the UK in increasing their ambition, with legislation, not just to reduce their emissions but to bring them down to zero, and to consider getting that number to include every nation at COP. Having that global net zero commitment will achieve an agreement of the type that we saw in Paris, and will create a net zero goal for the entire planet—but only if the UK can deliver our own end and fill that gap between now and November, when COP takes place in Glasgow.

5.10 pm

Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): I plan to focus my relatively short remarks on transport as it pertains to the green industrial revolution that is so obviously required. I look forward to taking up my transport brief and working closely with the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald), and the Opposition Front-Bench team, and with the relatively new Secretary of State for Transport, who must have the best job in the Cabinet, given that his predecessor set the bar so low that he cannot possibly fail to clear it. [Interruption.] In the repatriation of the Thomas Cook passengers, he managed to book airlines that actually had planes, so already he is one up on his predecessor.

I formally congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Kenny MacAskill). He may be new to this place but he has been in this game a wee while now, and it showed in an excellent and passionate maiden speech. I also congratulate all other new Members who have made maiden speeches today. It is a tough assignment, but they have all done it with great aplomb. I will remember my maiden speech, with you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker, when you allowed me some leeway at the end of my speech as I had gone over my time; I am forever grateful to you for not cutting me off before the end of my speech.

I want to comment on an issue that my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown) raised in his Front-Bench speech at the start of the

debate—the UK Government’s failed green deal scheme. That scheme had laudable aims, but it was badly designed and allowed cowboy companies with criminal intent to drive a coach and horses through the various loopholes in the legislation. As a result, hundreds of my constituents have been defrauded, often for thousands of pounds, by Robert Skillen and his company, HELMS. Unsurprisingly, Skillen liquidated HELMS and emigrated.

The Government must take responsibility for their failed scheme and ensure that our constituents are fully compensated. The members of the green deal all-party parliamentary group and myself, as co-chair, will be renewing our campaign for justice for those affected by HELMS in the coming Session.

David Linden: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for the work he is doing in the all-party parliamentary group. May I say to the Government, through him, that it would be helpful if the Department for Energy, Business and Industrial Strategy had a more adequate number of staff to work through the backlog of people who are trying to contact BEIS to deal with issues to do with the green deal?

Gavin Newlands: I could not agree more. I am seeking a meeting with the new Minister—the previous Minister involved was the then Member for Devizes—to see how the assistance of BEIS has actually helped with the Green Deal Finance Company, because from our viewpoint it does not seem to have helped a whole lot.

For a decade now, the Scottish Government have been pursuing a long-term vision of what Scotland’s economy and society should look like in the decades to come. It is a vision that sees all our electricity needs coming from renewable sources, and the transport system becoming carbon neutral. It is a vision that sees the potential of the natural resources that we have all around us, waiting to be harnessed and used to benefit us all. It is a vision that puts the reindustrialisation of our country at the heart of the strategy, arm in arm with the investment and renewal that has come to the fore over the decade.

My constituency is seeing the fruits of that long-term vision right now. For more than 50 years Renfrew—the largest town in my constituency and my home town—has been without a fixed rail link, and it is the biggest settlement in Scotland that is entirely reliant on buses for public transport. That calamitous mistake from the 1960s is about to be rectified with the beginnings of the Glasgow city region metro, which will start in my constituency at Paisley Gilmour Street, and finally provide the airport with a connection to the rail network.

That project is part of a green industrial revolution, and just as the original industrial revolution had the most expansive rail network in the world at its heart, so must the 21st-century version have transport and connectivity running through it like letters through a stick of rock. Hundreds of people will be employed directly in building the project, and hundreds more will be involved in the supply chains—an economic impact that will go way beyond my constituency and those of my neighbours. Using clean, green, renewable electricity, the new metro will be part of a public transport network that is rapidly being modernised.

Since devolution we have seen the reopening of the Borders railway, and routes from Hamilton to Larkhall, Stirling to Alloa and Airdrie to Bathgate, with only the

former line not electrified. Virtually the whole central belt network now runs on electric lines, which contrasts with years of stagnation and neglect. That programme continues, with preparatory work beginning for the entire west of Scotland network to run under the wires, and longer-term goals of electrification north of Perth and the complete decarbonisation of Scotland's railways within the next 15 years.

Along the A9, the spine of Scotland, work on the first electric highway is under way. Charging points are being installed at a rate of knots, providing the security of energy supply that is vital for the transition from fossil fuel vehicles to electric ones. As my hon. Friend the Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun alluded to, in Norway, which has a strong Government plan and the will to make transformational changes, sales of electric vehicles have grown exponentially. Petrol and diesel cars are on their way out—some going for an oil-rich country—and a confident, independent, self-governing country is taking big decisions on the big issues facing our planet. I hope that Scotland will soon join our Nordic friends as part of that club, whatever obstacles the Prime Minister and his Secretary of State think they are putting in our way.

In contrast, the UK Government cannot decide whether they want to make existing fuels cleaner and less polluting, with a decision on E10 petrol still lying in the long grass where it was kicked. Over recent years, those on the Treasury Benches and their Departments have been in a state of complete paralysis. Electrification projects are cancelled on a rolling basis, including in Windermere, on the Nottingham to Sheffield line and in Hull, south-west Wales and Coventry. Towns and cities have yet again been left behind, and jobs and economic growth directly connected to decarbonisation have been lost. Meanwhile, Crossrail spirals out of control and over budget and Crossrail 2 is in the pipeline as if its predecessor never happened. Billions are spent on extension after extension to London's underground and overground. Why concentrate yet more spending, infrastructure, economic output, resources, and ultimately people in a single city, when we know that a fairer allocation of economic power will result in a better environmental outcome and a less unequal society?

If the UK Government were serious about boosting the economies of the north and south-west England, they would look to Scotland for ideas. Instead, they are presiding over delay and decay. In Tyne and Wear, 40-year-old metro carriages have had their lifespan extended to 2025, while the system awaits new trains, more than a decade after the current ones exceeded their life expectancy. Even when the UK Government finally coughed up for trains that brought to mind modernity and not Methuselah, the then Chancellor handed over only 60% of the costs requested.

In conclusion, if the UK Government want to be serious about a green industrial revolution, the short termism and insular—

Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab): Metropolitanism.

Gavin Newlands: What the shadow Secretary of State said—*Hansard* can ask him later what he said. If the Government want to be serious about the revolution, that short-termism has to stop. Spending seven times more per person on transport investment in London

than in north-east England is not the answer to anything. Learn the lessons from Scotland, make decarbonisation a priority, and the economic rewards of the transition can be spread across the UK.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): It is a great pleasure to call, to make her maiden speech, Olivia Blake.

5.19 pm

Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to make my maiden speech today.

It is traditional for newly elected MPs to thank their predecessors upon entering the Commons. Jared O'Mara, the previous MP for Sheffield Hallam, highlighted important issues relating to the accessibility of this House. For that, he should be commended. While he had his faults, many of which he himself admits, I note that Members have recalled that his intervention in Westminster Hall on his own experience of autism was moving and brought the issue up the agenda. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."]

I would like to begin by thanking the people of our beautiful, vibrant and diverse community of Sheffield Hallam for putting their faith in me. It is an honour to represent this seat in Parliament. Hallam has a reputation for being prosperous. It is not considered a typical Labour seat, but the area has a very long history of social justice. To the north of the constituency is the village of Loxley, whose most famous son, Robin of Loxley, is also known as Robin Hood. So I am not the first person in Sheffield Hallam to stand on a platform of redistributing wealth to the many, from the few.

My constituency stretches right from the heart of Sheffield city centre, deep into the Peak district. It showcases some of the most magnificent countryside in the UK, including the many reservoirs surrounding Bradfield and Redmires, and the ancient Ecclesall Woods. The area also has a proud industrial heritage. Walking through Forge Dam or Rivelin Valley, you can see the overgrown cranks and grindstones that once drove our economy. Fulwood ward was home to Thomas Boulsover, the inventor of the famous Sheffield plate steel. It is a privilege to represent somewhere that played such an historic role as one of the engines of British industry.

Today, the seat also hosts thousands of students and researchers from all over the world; students who travelled to Sheffield to study at both our world-class universities. I am delighted to represent this young, diverse and multicultural community. Sheffield is such a great place to live and work that so many of our students stay on in the city after they have finished their studies, meaning that we have one of the highest graduate retention rates in the country. However, we also have our problems. I know that by convention maiden speeches are less political than the other things that are usually said in this House, but I hope Members will forgive me for bringing up austerity, the climate emergency and Donald Trump.

Despite the history of Robin Hood, many areas still suffer from massive inequality. Some of the most deprived areas in the city sit alongside some of the least. In fact, on polling day this was stark. We not only spoke to people on the so-called millionaires' row, but to families who had been hit by the bedroom tax. Our students are

[*Olivia Blake*]

saddled with tens of thousands of pounds of debt, and mental health issues are on the rise for our young people. Our schools have suffered almost a 10% decline in funding per pupil and inadequate budgets for the needs of our children, with the previous Government acknowledging that they did not give us enough funding for our children with special educational needs and disabilities. As a councillor, I saw first hand our local government budgets cut, cut and cut again. Government grants have been reduced by 50% over the past decade, making it impossible to deliver services—never mind tackle the climate crisis.

Local campaigners battle to preserve our community heritage, with their struggle to reopen The Plough Inn, home to the second oldest football club in the world, Hallam FC, and where the rules of football were first written down.

The countryside in my constituency is beautiful, but it is under threat. The moorlands are on fire, burnt for grouse shooting. Those acts of vandalism have made flooding more likely and are also putting important species in the area, such as the bilberry bumblebee, at risk. Across the country, peat fires have thrown millions of tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Protecting biodiversity is a key part of tackling the climate crisis, which is why the national park, in its 70th year, is so important to constituents and visitors alike. As we see biodiversity decrease locally, we also see the global consequences of the climate crisis. As the world heats to perilous levels, wildfires have swept across California, dangerous heatwaves and floods have ravaged India, and now fires consume Australia. Across the globe, vast movements of people have left their homes because the coastlines that they once occupied have disappeared or the land that they cultivated has dried up. They join refugees fleeing war and persecution. Those numbers will only increase with President Trump's actions in the middle east and his climate denial. I am proud that Sheffield calls itself a "City of Sanctuary"—a city that welcomes and defends migrants.

The climate chaos that we all face is unprecedented. Now is not the time for propriety; it is the old way of doing things that brought us to this crisis. Some of the industrial relics of that old way still stand in my constituency, but now we need radical change, and the only way we will get that is by taking radical action now. It is not just urgent; it is well overdue. The science is clear. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says that the absolute hard limit for transforming to a zero carbon economy is 2050, but the world is burning now. That is why I support my party's pledge to work towards a path to net zero carbon emissions by 2030.

To meet that challenge, we need to channel the spirit of industry and innovation that lingers along the rivers and valleys of my constituency in order to restructure our economy fundamentally. Rather than cuts, it is time to invest, not in the CO₂ emitting factories of the first industrial revolution, but in the sustainable green energy infrastructure and high-skilled jobs of the green new deal.

Arnold Freeman, Labour's 1923 candidate in Hallam, founded the Sheffield Education Settlement. It aimed to institute

"streets along which it is a pleasure to walk; homes worthy of those who live in them; workplaces in which people enjoy working; public-houses that are centres of social and educational life"

and

"an environment in which people 'may have life and have it abundantly'".

Freeman was right then and he is right now: the only way we

"have life and have it abundantly"

is if we look after our environment. There is no social justice on a dying planet. There is also no way to tackle climate catastrophe without changing the inequalities at the heart of our economy, and without redistributing power from those at the top to the rest of us.

It is that belief in people that energised our campaign in Sheffield Hallam. It is not a seat that people expected Labour to win at this election. The past two years have undoubtedly been difficult for my constituents, but we ran a positive campaign, rooted in our transformative manifesto, with our pledges to enact a green new deal and rebuild our public services taking pride of place. My constituents told me that they wanted me to transform our economy and save our environment. It is this agenda that I will fight for in the House—an agenda that stands up for our planet and redistributes power and wealth into the hands of our people; and that stands in the best traditions of Sheffield Hallam, from the folk heroes of Loxley to those who fight to save our community spaces and who are fighting to protect our precious moorlands.

I look forward to taking these arguments forward in the coming months and years, and I am pleased that I am sitting between my hon. Friends the Members for Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough (Gill Furniss) and for Sheffield, Heeley (Louise Haigh). Hillsborough, Heeley and now Hallam: three proud women representing Sheffield. Thank you for allowing me to make my maiden speech, Madam Deputy Speaker.

5.28 pm

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): I welcome you back and congratulate you on your re-election, Madam Deputy Speaker. I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake) not only on an extraordinary election result, but on a terrific maiden speech and on what she said specifically about the moorlands and the threat to them from man's actions.

Almost 15 years ago, we were told by Lord Stern and others that we had to act urgently to address climate change. Former Vice President Gore called it right when he said that we faced an inconvenient truth. Now, not a week goes by when there is not a catastrophe caused by climate change somewhere across the world, including floods in Yorkshire and Derbyshire, Jakarta and Indonesia, or caused by Storm Idoi in Mozambique. Most recently, we have seen the devastation of communities and the ecological destruction caused by the fires in Australia, Alaska and many other parts of the world.

The underlying climate trends are even more alarming. Perhaps most concerning of all was the report published this week in the periodical, "Advances in Atmospheric Sciences", by a team from Penn State University. It concluded that the heat in the world's oceans had reached a new record level in 2019, which suggests the "irrefutable and accelerating" heating of the planet. The world's oceans are the truest barometer of the climate emergency, as they absorb more than 90% of the heat trapped by the greenhouse gases produced by human activity.

According to the analysis reports of the past five years, those five years have been the warmest recorded for the oceans. The past 10 years are also the hottest on record.

It is not just academics who are making the argument for urgent action. Back in September, the Governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, put it simply:

“Firms that align their business models to the transition to a net zero world will be rewarded handsomely. Those that fail to adapt will cease to exist.”

Clearly, it is no longer business as usual. Larry Fink, the chief executive of BlackRock, which manages £7 trillion-worth of assets, said in his letter to investors yesterday that the climate risk must be placed at the heart of all investment decisions. That is encouraging and I hope he can be trusted. I simply ask that he and other fund managers look at the leadership shown by the Rockefeller Foundation over five years ago when it stated it would divest immediately from fossil fuel companies.

Parliament needs to do the same. It needs to act and show leadership with its own pension fund. What is incontrovertible and irrefutable is still being challenged by the deniers. That is why policy is so vital and why the world’s first climate change Act, passed of course by the Labour Government in 2008, was so important. It provided a true vision of what could be. It showed that we could address the risk of climate change while recognising the huge economic opportunity it presented. That is why the report from the independent Committee on Climate Change is so concerning. It states that the UK is off track to meet both its fourth carbon budget and the fifth carbon budget for 2028-32. Given the more recent statistics showing it is off track by an ever-widening margin, the alarm should be even greater.

When we reflect on the past 15 years—the period since the Stern report—we realise just how great the challenge is and how little time we have. As Craig Bennett, chief executive of Friends of the Earth, has warned, the aim of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 is

“too slow to address catastrophic climate change”.

I accept and commend much of what the Government are proposing, but I am worried that it lacks true ambition. Their points about air quality and setting targets are to be commended, but we need to invest in measuring and enforcing them to ensure they are actually adhered to.

Overall, the Queen’s Speech showed a lack of true ambition on the part of the Government. On energy generation and infrastructure, the Swansea tidal lagoon could be an opportunity for Britain to lead the world in this technology, if only the Government could get behind it. As we have heard from across the House, there is the opportunity presented by onshore wind farms, in which so many countries, such as France and Germany, have invested heavily, but on which we have a virtual ban. The Government instead prefer fracking. We have seen huge investment in offshore wind farms, which is to be commended, but where the Labour party proposed to build 37 new offshore wind farms, with 51% public ownership, there was a deafening silence from the Conservative party. In solar, the number of installations has fallen by 90% since 2015.

As well as generation, we must look at how we tackle consumption. On house building, we had a wonderful opportunity to build much better homes, with the introduction of standards such as the passive house.

That would have happened had the Labour Government been returned in 2010. We would have built high-density homes with low-energy consumption and ensured the provision of local transport—good public transport provided through hydrogen or electrification—to meet the needs of those high-density communities Labour was planning.

I want to turn to the automotive industry, an area I am passionate about. I respect and recognise the work the Government have done with the Faraday challenge. The introduction of the UK battery industrialisation centre just outside Coventry is to be welcomed and the work of Warwick Manufacturing Group, which I have seen for myself, is world leading, but the industry needs leadership from the Government and the frameworks to encourage business investment and ensure a true transition as quickly as possible from the internal combustion engine to alternative fuel products. That is so important for companies such as Jaguar Land Rover and Aston Martin in my constituency. Here again the CCC has criticised the Government, saying that they have not gone far enough or fast enough to address the opportunity.

We talk about how we can make those products more affordable, and their price will fall in due course, but the market needs to be driven by Government leadership, and part of that leadership is about providing the necessary infrastructure and addressing, for instance, the paucity of supply and investment in electric vehicle charging points. Let me put that in context. In France 24,000 public charging points have been introduced in the past year, while the UK figure is just 6,500. That is why we are lagging behind, and why consumers are not switching to alternative fuel products.

We need more electric buses, and hydrogen fuel cell technology needs to be encouraged. The number of hydrogen-powered buses in Berlin is well above the norm. There is also a huge opportunity to encourage consumers to switch to electric bicycles. Great products are being introduced across the market, but let us compare the market uptake here with that in Germany. Last year 63,500 electric bikes were bought in the UK, whereas nearly a million were bought in Germany. How will we ever encourage consumers to switch unless we give them incentives to buy those bikes? They also need infrastructure—such as the Kenilworth to Leamington cycle route, for which I campaigned and which, I am pleased to say, the local authority is finally supporting.

There is much to be done. It is all about our ambition, and what the Government choose to do. However, addressing the climate emergency is not an option but an urgent necessity. We should be thankful for the students, the young people, who have been campaigning widely outside our schools and in our town centres. How on earth can a group such as Extinction Rebellion, which is so peaceful in its actions, be considered to be a terrorist organisation? All that those people are trying to do is raise this issue and make sure that the Government act with the urgency that is demanded by society.

May I suggest that we adopt the lexicon that we use when speaking of the financial crisis, when we speak of debt and of the deficit? We should be talking about environmental debt and environmental deficit. At the same time as recognising how much we are costing the earth, we should be setting legally enforceable targets, and ensuring that all Government policies are subjected to full scrutiny and environmental audit here in Parliament.

[*Matt Western*]

Let me end by saying that it is crucial for us to lead by example. Whether through the fleet of vehicles run by the Government or through our pension fund, we must show that we are serious about addressing the climate emergency. I believe that we must divest from fossil fuels in the parliamentary pension fund.

5.38 pm

Mike Hill (Hartlepool) (Lab): Thank you for calling me, Madam Deputy Speaker—Madam Senior Deputy Speaker! It is lovely to see you in your rightful place.

Being at the back end of the shift, it has been marvellous to listen to a host of maiden speeches, all of which have been fantastic. They took me back to the occasion on which I made my own maiden speech. I particularly recall Dennis Skinner—who was mentioned very favourably in the maiden speech of the new hon. Member for Bolsover (Mark Fletcher)—being a good mentor and guide to all the new starters when I first entered the House. I thank Conservative Members for their kind words about the so-called Beast of Bolsover. He would probably fall over at the thought of people building a statue of him, but it is a nice thought.

I am thankful to my constituents in Hartlepool for returning me here, and for having faith in me to represent their interests in this place. I am also thankful for the presence of the Secretary of State for Transport, who visited our area recently. He was visiting the site of Hordern station in Peterlee, which has not yet been built, although the £10 million-plus investment in our area is incredible and great. However, I would ask the Secretary of State, with respect, to listen to the people who use that line. I appreciate the fact that Northern Rail has been taken to task, but the people who use the line know that by the time the train got to that station it would be packed to the rafters, just as it is when the train gets to Seaham. The colloquialism round there would be: why bother getting a train when it gets so packed? So, if he could look at our train issues, that would be great, and if he could work with our combined authority on regulating our buses and bringing them back into public ownership, that would be even better. As he knows, the Tees valley is an area that the Tories love to come to, so let us hope they listen to our constituents and bring in the necessary improvements.

One more thing on my wish list is for the Secretary of State for Health to come to Hartlepool and talk to local people about why we lost our A&E. A number of Members today have spoken about threats to their own A&Es and hospitals. Sadly, we lost our A&E 10 years ago, and we would like it back, please.

I could have spoken on any number of subjects in the Queen's Speech debate—the NHS, local government, social care, the police—but I chose to speak in this debate not only because we need urgently to address climate change and global warming, which could see large parts of my constituency under water in the not too distant future, but because the need to tackle the climate crisis provides unique opportunities for former manufacturing-based coastal communities such as mine.

Hartlepool was once a proud shipbuilding and steel manufacturing town. The shipyards and the steelworks were its beating heart, but they are now long gone. We cling on to our heritage with specialist steel manufacturing,

offshore oil and gas plant production, and a major offshore plant decommissioning base, Able Seaton Port, but jobs are either going or transient, and the decimation of our once-strong manufacturing heritage has left a legacy of unemployment in the town that has affected generations.

With the green new deal, or the green industrial revolution, which I know the Government are keen to grasp, we need to look to areas such as Hartlepool and the wider Tees valley to build on their existing infrastructure, knowledge and skills. Their experience in offshore oil and gas technologies and their steel and chemical manufacturing heritage speak volumes. We have the skills and capabilities, the ready-made workforce and the desire and technology to expand ports such as Hartlepool and develop new technologies such as carbon capture and storage and hydrogen power. We are well positioned to convert our traditional oil and gas and chemical industries into leading providers and manufacturers of green technologies.

In the Tees valley and Hartlepool, we stand at the cutting edge of the green industrial revolution. We have the potential and the desire to reshape our industrial landscape, revitalise jobs and embrace the future, but we also need to protect the low-carbon industries already in the mix. For me, that means taking a serious approach and strategy to our nuclear energy provision. It is as essential to refocus our traditional offshore industries on to the creation of green technologies such as wind farm production as it is to replace our low-carbon nuclear power stations with new nuclear being brought to Hartlepool. One of the most important Labour party pledges in its 2019 manifesto was to continue the nuclear programme as an essential aid to a low-carbon energy future, and I am determined to work night and day to deliver on that. I therefore ask the Minister to meet me to discuss the future of the industry and the future of Hartlepool nuclear power station.

5.44 pm

Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): I pay tribute to all hon. Members who made impressive maiden speeches today. I wish them all well in their futures as representatives of their constituencies, and I hope that they all do well by their communities.

I suppose that particular mention must be made of the contribution from my hon. Friend the Member for East Lothian (Kenny MacAskill), whose reminders of Scotland's past certainly stirred passion in the hearts of those on the SNP Benches and, had you been in the Chamber, it would certainly have stirred passion in your heart as a fellow Scot, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Turning to the subject of this debate, I was delighted to hear that the UK Government will finally be taking steps to address greenhouse gas emissions. Equally, I was disappointed, but not even slightly surprised, to find that the target date for doing so is sadly 30 years in the future. It is not so much too little too late as turning up with the fire safety manual long after the building has burned to the ground. We had a statement just last week about the devastation caused by the worst Australian bushfire season ever, and I pointed out then, as I will point out again now, that Australia is not the only place on fire. We have seen the Arctic burning, too, with huge swathes of Siberian forest on fire in Greenland, Alaska and Canada. Fires in the Amazon are also beginning to threaten the ecosystems of the rainforests.

We know that this is an emergency. We know that the planet will change as a result of human activity, and the only question is, “By how much?” We know that biodiversity is being threatened and that the crops we rely on are under threat. We know all that, but the UK Government think that deferral and procrastination are okay and that nothing much will change between now and three decades hence, so let us have some sense and perspective of what 30 years means.

The first report of the IPCC calling for urgent action and strong measures to prevent serious global warming was published 30 years ago. Some Members of this Parliament had not even been born then, and we have wasted their lifetimes so far without real action. Something else that is interesting about the House of Commons of 30 years ago is that the then Prime Minister was calling for fast action to get emissions under control. Margaret Thatcher might have been horrified were she to realise that her party would still be footloose about on the edges of the issue three decades later.

This is not just some sort of policy issue that can be revised at some future point. It is not just a passing fad that can safely be ignored. This is disaster politics coming at us with a vengeance that we cannot easily comprehend. Failing to act now does not leave options open to act later; it closes them down. A failure to act a heck of a lot more speedily three decades on will simply condemn future generations to ongoing and escalating effects that they will have to spend more and more time contending with. It will also condemn us—the generation that has had it so easy by comparison—to living a far less comfortable retirement, because much of our time and much of the effort of future Governments will be devoted to addressing the ill effects of Government failure now.

The UK Government claim to want to lead the way in addressing climate change, but they do not seem to be doing much to address climate change, so let us take a donder with the IPCC. The latest report tells us that three quarters of transport emissions are from road transport, so if the Government were serious about addressing climate change there would be massive investment in electric vehicle technology—charging points and other infrastructure, to be sure, but also research into better, less expensive technologies. Where is the commitment to do that? Where is the commitment to build more capacity for rail freight and take some of the wagons off the road?

The biggest emissions culprit is heating and power. Will there be a zero rating of VAT on renewable energy from construction to use? The Government will say they have no power to do that until they are free of the EU, so when can we expect to see that Brexit benefit?

While we are it, what about exempting building works and refurbishments that improve insulation? What about investing in better houses to begin with? What about offering incentives for insulation solutions like aerogel for passive houses and for district heating schemes?

There is no evidence that this Government intend to do anything actually to lead on climate change, and there is a similar lack of evidence that they have any idea of what to do about air quality. The 25-year plan has an ambition, if that is the right word, to reduce five air pollutants by half in 11 years—that is only five of the pollutants being pumped into children’s lungs, and maybe only reducing them by half, eventually. It is like

having an ambition to paint every third plank of the garden shed, but only halfway up and only at some point in the future. In the meantime, the garden shed is rotting away and will collapse long before the painting is finished.

Way back in September 2016, I asked the then Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs whether she planned to maintain the air pollution targets set out in the ambient air quality directive following the UK’s withdrawal from the EU. In response, as often happens, I got a lot of words and no real answer.

The response claimed that the Clean Air Act 1956 is an example of the UK acting to improve the environment, rather than responding to thousands of Londoners being killed by smog in 1952. It touted the Act as evidence of a long-standing UK commitment to environmental action. It also said:

“Air quality has improved significantly in recent decades; we are working at local, national and international levels and will continue to do more.”

The response never answered the question about a commitment to match the EU’s air pollution targets.

This Government, in my view and in the view of many others, waffle a lot and deliver little, if anything. The time for action was quite some time ago, and the response was and still is lacking. We have gone from a need to take action 30 years ago to a promise that action will be taken 30 years hence. There are no answers to the questions being asked, and no idea of what they mean.

Alan Brown: My hon. Friend is making a powerful point about air pollution, and she is highlighting the real concerns. Does she agree that those concerns are backed up by the Government’s action? They have lost to ClientEarth in the High Court at least twice because they are not taking proper action on air pollution. There are 40,000 premature deaths a year due to air pollution, and that the Government will not even commit to matching the EU’s standards is a real concern.

Deidre Brock: My hon. Friend makes a fantastic point, and I can only agree with him. It is clear evidence of this Government’s continued failure to act, and I appreciate his contribution.

5.52 pm

Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab): Congratulations on your election and on your return to your rightful place, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a shame that you have not been here for the whole day, because we have been treated to a range of first-class maiden speeches. They have been of the highest order, and everybody who has spoken should be congratulated.

We heard from the hon. Member for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell) about the A595, among other things, and he spoke with great aplomb. He also highlighted the failure of Northern Rail, and I know the Secretary of State for Transport will have taken full cognisance of what he had to say.

We also heard from the hon. Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook). He paid a warm tribute to Richard Burden, for which Labour Members are very grateful. The hon. Member for East Surrey (Claire Coutinho) made a stirring speech. The hon. Member for Bolsover (Mark Fletcher) suggested a statue of

[Andy McDonald]

Dennis Skinner, and my colleagues and I were speculating on the response that might have been forthcoming from his old corner at such a suggestion.

We have also been treated to a history lesson from the young hon. Member for East Lothian (Kenny MacAskill). He may have done it before, but it was very entertaining. We also had terrific speeches from my new hon. Friend the Member for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana)—her speech was powerful and inspirational—and from my new hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones), who said that she is no shrinking violet, which is very clear. We heard a passionate speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Charlotte Nichols), and we concluded with a stirring maiden speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake)—I rather think it is in the blood. So we have been well served.

On the green industrial revolution, the issue at hand, the absence of commitments in the Queen's Speech means it would appear that the Government think that because they won a general election with a campaign that ignored the climate change crisis, they can continue to ignore that crisis. I know that Government Members will protest at that characterisation, but it is accurate. The Prime Minister refused to attend a debate on the climate crisis during the general election campaign precisely because he knows it is true that the Conservatives have not addressed and do not plan to seriously address the climate crisis. [HON. MEMBERS: "Rubbish!"] Conservative Members shout "Rubbish", but this was a Prime Minister who during that campaign took a plane from Teesside to Doncaster. Let us just think about that. He was getting on a jet that could hardly have become airborne before it had to land again—it is ridiculous. Of course the Government's own advisory body on climate change, the Committee on Climate Change, stated that

"the fact is that we're off track to meet our own emissions targets in the 2020s and 2030s".

The Committee's chair, Lord Deben, compared Ministers to the hapless characters in "Dad's Army".

This inaction not only condemns us to a more dangerous and insecure world, but exacerbates existing social and economic problems in the UK by failing to take advantage of the opportunities presented by decarbonising the economy to create well-paid, secure jobs and reduce social and regional inequalities. Transport is the problem sector for the UK. It is the UK's single largest source of greenhouse gas emissions and the worst-performing sector on reducing carbon emissions. Indeed, transport emissions have risen since 2010. This is both a crisis and an opportunity. There is an opportunity to invest in our transport networks. We could upgrade our railways, have a long-term vision of their electrification and invest in them going forward. We could invest in bus services throughout the entire country, and in e-bikes and electric vehicles. This would not only achieve the sort of carbon emission reductions needed to meet our climate targets, but close the huge regional inequalities in transport spending and create thousands upon thousands of skilled, well-paid, unionised jobs as part of a green industrial revolution.

Unfortunately, the Government do not plan to take that opportunity. Indeed, within the past 24 hours they have responded to the troubles at Flybe by reportedly allowing the company to avoid paying more than

£100 million in aviation tax—air passenger duty. Plotting to slash aviation tax in a climate crisis makes a mockery of the Government's supposed commitment to cutting carbon emissions, and also demonstrates that they have little plan to support industry and create jobs beyond handing out tax breaks. Instead of handing out taxpayer-funded tax breaks for a small number of wealthy passengers, the Government should be electrifying the core rail network, boosting investment in the railway and slashing fares to encourage people to take the train. [Interruption.] I see the Transport Secretary chuntering about fares, but he has presided over a further 2.7% increase in rail fares, taking the rise to more than 40% since 2010. We can compare and contrast that with the Labour offer of a 33% reduction in rail fares.

The Secretary of State can snigger all he likes, but in the past several weeks Germany followed our lead and introduced a 10% reduction. Germany is going in the right direction: it wants people out of their cars and on trains. [Interruption.] If the Secretary of State is so keen to get on with this, perhaps he could get the Oakervee report out from under lock and key in the cupboard and publish it. We have a ludicrous situation in which a minority report has been published and the report's authors know what is in it and are champing at the bit to speak to it, yet it remains under lock and key. What is the Secretary of State hiding? Let us have a look at it and have a discussion about it.

While we are at it, the Secretary of State can ignore the siren voices from Andrew Gilligan about cutting HS2. It would be absolutely ludicrous to cut off HS2's legs and abandon phase 1. I have heard nothing more ludicrous in a long time. If we want to get the capacity gains, that would be a foolish thing to do, so I hope the Secretary of State talks to the Prime Minister and totally scuppers that notion.

The Government's response to the problems faced by the automotive sector has been similarly lacklustre. Thousands of jobs have been lost, and more might be lost in the coming months and years unless the Government set out a clear strategy for the transition to electric vehicles, including a more ambitious phase-out date; a scrappage scheme for the oldest vehicles; investment in public charging infrastructure; and additional support for the purchase of expensive electric vehicles—all accompanied by a plan to give the industry the support it requires.

Other speakers, most lately the hon. Member for Kilmarnock and Loudoun (Alan Brown), have mentioned the imperative in respect of air quality. He is exactly right that we are enduring premature deaths directly connected to air quality, running to some 40,000 a year in this country. That is an absolute and utter abomination and we have to take major strides in that direction.

The difficulties of the bus manufacturer Wrightbus are another example of the Government's laissez-faire attitude to the economy and the climate. The UK has a number of excellent bus manufacturers and has the potential to be a world leader in electric bus technology, but the UK is not ambitious enough on electric buses, meaning we are not taking advantage of the industrial opportunities that a bold commitment to electrify the nation's bus fleet would present.

Alex Sobel: The world's first electric double-decker bus was created and delivered by Optare in Leeds, but it is not being bought by bus companies in this country.

Does my hon. Friend agree that it is time the Government supported Optare and ensured that we get electric buses out of the factory and on the streets?

Andy McDonald: My hon. Friend makes a good point. In the election campaign, I made the commitment to electrify the entire fleet in this country. That would be a major contribution to improving air quality and reducing emissions. I encourage the Government to consider that proposition again. If we can take that sort of bold step to electrify the entire fleet, we can start to deliver some real differences.

A strategy to support cycling and walking—including subsidies for e-bikes and a more interventionist approach—could similarly help to slash emissions and create jobs. Instead, the Government's priority is to pursue a colossal road building programme that is environmentally unsustainable and will drive traffic growth and create congestion. Almost £30 billion will be spent on road building on the strategic road network.

Without a genuine green industrial revolution, the Government are condemning the country to economic stagnation and a climate crisis. The Labour party did not win the recent general election, so sadly we cannot implement our programme, but the need to address the climate crisis and revitalise our economy remains every bit as urgent.

6.4 pm

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps): Madam Deputy Speaker, let me congratulate you on being re-elected to your post, and say how fantastic it is to be closing the debate on Her Majesty's most Gracious Speech this evening with you in the Chair.

There have been many eloquent and good contributions to this debate. They clearly set out the huge challenges that we face in decarbonising our economy. One point I would make straight off the bat is that, although there has been quite a bit of heat and light in this debate, there is actually an awful lot on which we entirely agree. This House has, after all, voted under this Government to get to zero carbon by 2050. There is almost an auction of ambition about how we get there in the fastest way. It is right and proper that we challenge each other with different ideas, many of which have come through the contributions this afternoon, in order to come up with new ideas. Some of them are, I think, ideas that could be taken further, particularly in the field of transport. Other ideas, I know, have problems. None the less, all were presented and suggested in the best possible light and, because of that, I think that all parts of the House will agree that this has been a very good and useful debate this afternoon.

It is the first time that I have been at this Dispatch Box since yesterday's Flybe announcement. I just want to touch on that matter for a moment. Flybe is an airline that flies 9 million people a year. It connects some of the most remote parts of our country—in fact, some of the most remote parts of our nation. I was pleased to see that the union, the British Airline Pilots Association, welcomed the rescue, and I was somewhat surprised to hear the Opposition spokesman say that he is not keen on this rescue, because it would have quite literally left quite a large number of communities completely stranded.

Andy McDonald: I am grateful to the Transport Secretary for giving way. Had he been in the Chamber yesterday when I spoke on the issue, he would have heard me say that I welcomed the Government taking action in respect of Flybe and recognised the importance of Flybe services to our communities right across the country. How we go about it is the important thing. The International Airlines Group is particularly interested in the package, and it will be asking why one corporate entity has been preferred over another. It is a question for him to address, but I hope that he accepts that it is necessary for intervention to take place.

Grant Shapps: I apologise to the hon. Gentleman and thank him for putting the record straight. I was not in the Chamber yesterday because I was dealing with the issue itself, but it sounded to me, from his comments earlier, that he regretted the rescue of Flybe, which I was surprised about because there are 2,400 jobs at stake and communities that would have had no other way of being connected. Just as an example of this, there are 46 Flybe routes that no other airline covers. There are 11 destinations that have no rail links whatever, and a further 12 that it would take more than six hours to get to. It was absolutely the right thing to do because it helps to connect our communities and level up our country. That is the right approach for a responsible Government when there is a strategic national interest, which is what makes this different from previous airline failures.

None the less, because the issue has been raised in this afternoon's debate, I will say that we want to see aviation become much greener. This is an enormous challenge and, indeed, as many Members have said, an enormous opportunity for this country. If we can get to the front of that technological research and development, we can offer electric planes to the world. Right now, it is good to see that the University of Cranfield, among other places, is working on an aircraft—a Britten Norman aircraft—which is the only British-manufactured general aviation aircraft, a commercial passenger plane, being converted to an electric aircraft, which will fly in the Scottish highlands and do the island hops. It will be the world's first commercial electric aircraft, and that is happening in Britain. Across the House, we should all be doing everything we possibly can to get to the forefront of electric aviation and, probably in between then and now, hybrid aviation. It is a big part of my work. Members may think I am absolutely obsessed with aviation, but that is where ideas and new technology will come from, so it is right to focus on it.

Vicky Ford: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for mentioning Cranfield University, because I recall being asked to dig the first turf in the building of that facility about a decade ago. It just shows what can happen in 10 years. Does he agree that we need to harness the power of consumers? Some low-cost airlines give consumers the opportunity to carbon offset, but Flybe does not. Will he join me in encouraging airlines to give consumers at least the option to offset?

Grant Shapps: I agree that it is a great idea for airlines to offer carbon offsetting, but although that is a good first step, I want to go further. We have the opportunity, the brains and the capacity in this country to invent the future of flight, just as we helped in so many ways to

[Grant Shapps]

invent flight initially. I want us to focus on that, and a lot of money and research is going into it now. At Cranfield, there is the E-Fan X plane—a BAe 146 aircraft built by de Havilland in my constituency back in the day, which is being converted into an all-electric aircraft in a project sponsored by, I think, Airbus and Boeing. This is a fantastic opportunity and we must take it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Grant Shapps: If hon. Members do not mind, I will make a little progress. I am right at the beginning of my speech and there will be plenty of opportunities to intervene.

Caroline Lucas: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Grant Shapps: On aviation, yes.

Caroline Lucas: If we can get some electric planes, I will be happy, but does the Secretary of State accept that, right now, the increasing number of individual flights is outweighing the efficiency gains in each individual flight? In other words, improvements in energy and fuel are undermined by growing demand. Does he accept that until we get to the sunny uplands of electric planes, demand needs to be constrained, and that the blanket approach of APD will not constrain demand?

Grant Shapps: Let the Member who has never flown argue on that subject. I mean no disrespect, but the reality is that we have to reach an in-between place involving hybrid fuels. We probably have to go through a hybrid stage, as we have with road vehicles, where we use biofuels and other things. The Department is doing a huge amount of work in that respect.

Wera Hobhouse: Will the Secretary of State give way?

Grant Shapps: With hon. Members' permission, I will make a little progress first. I have not even touched on anyone else's speech yet, so let me talk about this afternoon's debate. We know that global warming is one of the biggest threats to humanity. That is why tackling climate change is so important, and my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy set out some of the measures we are taking.

The contributions to the debate have been particularly impressive, and I pay tribute to the nine Members I noted making their maiden speech today. Each was brilliant in different ways. My hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell) spoke about the poor rail service in his constituency—I am sorry about that. Other Members mentioned rail services in relation to Northern. The House will be aware that I have been speaking about that recently, and will again very soon. He made a beautifully pitched and calmly delivered speech, showing how much he cares about the community he now represents. Our hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Northfield (Gary Sambrook) spoke in great terms about his constituency and everything going on in the community, and did a wonderful job.

The hon. Member for Coventry South (Zarah Sultana) described her constituency with great care, leaving us in no doubt about her passion for it. My hon. Friend the

Member for East Surrey (Claire Coutinho) made a fantastic speech, showing great knowledge of subjects including offshore wind. She pointed out that seven of the 10 largest offshore wind farms are here in the UK—a great statistic. The hon. Members for East Lothian (Kenny MacAskill) and for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) also made their maiden speeches in this debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Bolsover (Mark Fletcher) proposed a statue of the “Beast of Bolsover”, although we do not know how that would be taken. His was a fine speech.

The new hon. Member for Warrington North (Charlotte Nichols) talked about her constituency—the constituency in which I got married, it so happens—with great passion.

Finally, the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake) also spoke about her constituency very passionately indeed. There were fantastic speeches all around, and all concentrated on today's subject of green growth.

Reducing carbon in the atmosphere is incredibly important. I know we have had a bit of a debate about it this afternoon because we will say, quite rightly, that our economy has expanded by over two thirds since 1990, but we have managed to cut carbon emissions by more than 40%. I want to point out—because this was questioned during the debate—that these are figures not that we have somehow come to but which have been calculated under the internationally recognised system for assessing the amount of carbon that has been cut. The figures do show a 40% cut since 1990, which is faster than any other G20 country.

We continue to lead the world in this process. We have legislated for zero carbon by 2050, becoming the first major economy to do so. Of course, what happens internationally is important, but I do not accept the argument that just because we cannot control what everybody else in the rest of the world does we should not be making the effort ourselves. It is the right thing to do, and we should be proud of our performance in this area.

We also know that measures have to be viable and practical. It is easy to say that we should just follow Norway, where a number of electric cars are sold. Does the House know why that is so? It is because it does not have a domestic car production facility to protect before the change to electric; it does not produce its own cars. So to all those Members who say, “Look, why don't we just do it tomorrow? Why don't we just demand that every car is electric from now on?”, the answer is: because every single factory in every single one of the constituencies affected would be closing tomorrow. We have to work with the industry and help it to make the transition, and that is what this Government are doing every single day of the week.

Let us not forget what this country has achieved so far. We ratified the Paris agreement. More than half our electricity—53%—now comes from low-carbon sources. We fostered green industry, which is now worth £45 billion; and that goes to my previous point that we need to have a period of transition for industry. The new green sector now employs 430,000 people, so it is growing all the time. We are setting a net zero target, and have committed around £2 billion to green growth initiatives. An awful lot is happening.

To manage these great efforts, we know that there has to be a framework—an industrial strategy. The clean growth strategy, which details our carbon-cutting plans

through to 2032, is exactly that document. In July we published our green finance strategy to trigger investment in green infrastructure technologies and services, from offshore wind to energy-efficient housing. Of course, the Prime Minister will chair the new Cabinet Committee on Climate Change to help co-ordinate the effort of the whole country to get to zero carbon. Later this year the UK will have the honour of hosting the climate change summit in Glasgow.

Alan Brown: I want to go back to the argument of, “It’s great for Norway because they don’t have a domestic car production industry to protect, so they can do what they want.” What are the UK Government doing to change the domestic car production industry in the UK to allow it to capitalise on this market? The Government were very good at making behind-the-doors, closed deals when it came to advance talks about Brexit, so what are they doing to ensure that these companies can adapt to electric car manufacturing?

Grant Shapps: I am very pleased that the hon. Gentleman has asked that question. There is £500 million to help a gigafactory come to this country. That was not done behind closed doors; we announced it publicly. I am sorry he had not spotted the announcement. This is a very positive way of ensuring that more car production comes here. I should also let him know that one in five electric cars sold in Europe last year were made in the United Kingdom—made right here.

Our support for the electrification of vehicles is second to none. Let me give some examples. We now have more charging locations in petrol stations, as one of my hon. Friends mentioned. We have over 200,000 plug-in chargers in home locations. We have much more to do, though, and that is why both through the money already announced—£400,000—and another £1 billion in our manifesto we are pledging to put a lot more resource into having more charging locations so that people do not have as much range anxiety when they drive one of these vehicles. The need for that was one of the key points made by Members across the House.

I know exactly why people are concerned. I drive an electric car, as I have mentioned before. I know the anxiety of wondering about whether one will get to one’s next location, but the good news is that in reality, rather than just the concern about it, I have never found it to be a problem. Every single service station on the motorway network in this country—now bar one, I think—has electric charging. However, I want that charging to be faster. I want it to be rapid rather than just a so-called fast charge. This Government absolutely share the ambition of this House to get that job done and get it done quicker.

At the UN climate action summit, as Members know, the Prime Minister announced that we would double our contribution to £11.6 billion between 2021 and 2025. That will do a huge amount to assist. I heard someone say during the debate, “That’s not right because it’s coming from international development.” If we do not think it is right to use international development money to save this planet, then I do not know what the money is there for. It is absolutely the right thing to be doing.

I am delighted that the Queen’s Speech includes significant measures to move forward our green programme even further. In particular, the environment Bill will put

accountability and practical delivery at the heart of our agenda while providing much-needed certainty for business. The Bill includes measures to improve air quality, restore habitats, increase biodiversity, build a less wasteful economy—hon. Members have mentioned things such as plastic waste, which it will deal with—and better manage our water resources.

Crucially, the Bill will introduce a system for new, legally binding long-term targets in all these critical areas so that central and local government—there has been some talk about how local government fits into this picture—are clear on their legal responsibilities to protect our precious environment. I have been working very actively with local authorities—for example, in the provision of electric car charging points—to ensure that they have everything they need to be able to accelerate this programme as quickly as possible.

Those targets all have a minimum duration of 15 years, because given the scale of the challenge we face, which has been so well articulated by Members across the House, we believe that we have to be extremely ambitious. We have to consider the implications for business, for industry and for the public. We must take people with us as we adapt to this enormous change, use new technology, and make sure that we hit the necessary emission goals, as we will have to do because they will be there in law.

Although air pollution has reduced significantly since 2010 and emissions of nitrogen oxides are at their lowest level since records began, I want to acknowledge a couple of areas where I share the concerns of the hon. Member for Middlesbrough (Andy McDonald). Since energy is no longer the most polluting part of our economy because we produced 53% through renewable sources last year, transport is now the most polluting part of our economy. I think he gave the figure: 27% of all pollution comes from transport, and 90% of that from vehicles. There is a huge prize in solving this problem, and the technology is already here. I heard Members talk about the use of alternative and different types of energy for cars—hydrogen, for example. These technologies are coming along. We have a £28 million programme to further the production of hydrogen vehicles. In transport, it is horses for courses, so heavy items such as trains will work well in future through hydrogen, and lighter items such as cars will work better through electricity. It is a question of developing in all those different ways, and that is what we are determined to do.

There was a very interesting exchange about the amount of NO₂ in our atmosphere. A huge amount of these particles come from transport, and although that discussion was about whether pollutants and CO₂ are the same thing—they are clearly not—the reality is that if we take a lot of the same steps it will solve the same problems. It is good and right that the Bill we are introducing tackles both those things: fine particulate matter and CO₂.

We know that there is a huge amount to be done, and I know that the whole House wants us to get there. One of the most controversial areas is when we end the sale of petrol and diesel cars. I heard a number of calls in the debate to do that earlier than the already pledged 2040. I want to do that. I have spoken about that and we will consult on it, but we need to do it in a way that ensures that people do not end up coming back to the

[Grant Shapps]

House saying, “What happened to that industry and those car producers in my constituency?” We have to do it in a way that works and takes the whole of the economy with us in the best possible way.

From some of the discussion this afternoon, it may not be obvious that the number of electric cars has grown from just 1,500 a decade ago to 200,000 today. The growth in the last year alone has been enormous. Electric car sales are taking off. I think I am right in saying that we have the second largest market in the European Union for ultra low emission cars.

We are doing an awful lot of things behind the scenes to encourage take-up. For example, if someone goes to pay their road tax on the DVLA site right now, they will see a page that suggests that they might be able to pay less road tax if they transfer to an electric car. I know that there are concerns about the overall costs of buying a new electric car, but I want to make this point. When someone buys an electric car, they will find that their petrol bill disappears—it is replaced by an electric bill, but that will probably be a 10th of the cost. They will find that there is no oil for the car and no servicing for the car, and the car tax may well be much lower. Given that 85% of car buyers buy on a finance package—a personal contract purchase—the overall lifetime experience of owning the car may not be all that different. But I agree that we need to work hard to ensure that, as with solar, where we have seen a 50% cut in the cost, we see the same with electric cars.

This has been an excellent debate. The Queen’s Speech has laid out an exciting programme to prepare Britain for the future, making us a more prosperous yet greener nation. We have a unique opportunity today, after three and a half years in which Brexit has—let’s face it—dominated everything about politics and absorbed so much time and energy. We now have a strong mandate to deliver our vision for a modern, green, growing economy, and that is why I commend the Queen’s Speech to the House.

6.28 pm

Ordered, That the debate be now adjourned.—(Tom Pursglove.)

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

PETITION

Chineham Post Office

6.28 pm

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): It is a great pleasure to present this petition with you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker. With very little notice, the busy and much used post office in Chineham was closed on 15 August last year. Residents from across Basingstoke have told me how shocked they were by that and how much they relied on the services it offered. The strength of feeling is demonstrated by how many people have signed this petition. These concerns are being listened to, and I present this petition to underline the support from residents to get a new operator for the post office in place as soon as possible.

I would like to thank Chineham’s hard-working team of councillors for supporting the petition—Councillor Laura Edwards, Councillor Paul Miller, Sherfield Park parish council chair Jenny Vaux, and of course Councillor Elaine Still who, as a former postmistress herself, knows the crucial role that this service plays in the community.

The petition states:

The petition of residents of Basingstoke,

Declares that action must be taken concerning the recent closure of Chineham Post Office Branch and the loss of vital services for local residents as a result of the Old Basing PO operator also withdrawing in recent years.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to urge Post Office Ltd, Tellon Capital LLP and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council to ensure that Chineham residents have access to vital Post Office services and priority is given to opening a branch as part of the new development at Chineham Shopping Centre.

And the petitioners remain, etc.

[P002549]

Ockenden Review of Maternity Care: Shrewsbury and Telford

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Tom Pursglove.)

6.31 pm

Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con): I am delighted to have been granted this Adjournment debate on this very important issue. I want to raise it because the issue deserves the platform that Parliament affords. It concerns the safety of women and babies receiving maternity care at hospitals in Shropshire. I raise that in the context of the Morecambe Bay trust inquiry into maternity deaths in 2015, which at the time was considered to be a one-off. What has come to light at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust suggests that there may be systemic problems within the NHS and maternity care, and there are without doubt significant concerns about the lack of transparency and openness around what went wrong.

The Ockenden review was set up two and half years ago to look at 23 possible cases of maternity malpractice at the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust. So far there have been no formal published findings. However, in November 2019 interim findings were leaked to the media. Those findings show not only that had some very serious failings indeed been uncovered by the review, but that the scale of the malpractice, and the number of women and babies affected by it, exceeded anything that had been expected when the review was initiated.

The interim findings stated that there had been in excess of 40 avoidable maternity deaths and 50 brain-injured babies. NHS Improvement was given that information almost a year ago and appears to have kept quiet about the findings. The findings also make reference to “widespread failings, a toxic culture and a failure to learn lessons.” Since those findings were made public, many, many more women have come forward—women who knew nothing about a review being held. The review is now looking at over 600 cases of possible maternity care malpractice.

Those interim findings directly contradict what senior management were saying publicly at the time when the review was commissioned. Senior management claimed that this was all overblown by the media, that it was all historical, and that good practice was in place now. The chief executive claimed that concerns raised about the possible scale of malpractice were “scaremongering”—his word. Senior hospital management adopted the stance that “it simply couldn’t happen here.” The CEO said that the media, particularly the BBC, had it in for them; that is what they actually said to me, the MP. How, in that kind of environment, can lessons be learned if there is no acceptance that anything has gone wrong?

We had the same response from the authorities in Telford when the scale of child sexual exploitation in the town was revealed. That denial, or perhaps being in denial, seems to be the standard response from those in positions of authority—minimising the problem, blaming the media and depicting those affected as being in some way troublesome.

Let us compare the review from Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust with that from Morecambe Bay, where there were 11 avoidable baby deaths and one

maternal death. The Morecambe Bay inquiry reported promptly, and the then Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), came immediately to the House, made a statement, and apologised to the families. He pledged that lessons would be learned, and that the legacy of those tragic deaths would mean that such things could not happen again. My right hon. Friend is in the Chamber today, and I am grateful that he did not just accept the position taken by senior management, NHS bureaucrats, and officials from Shrewsbury and Telford NHS Hospital Trust at face value. I commend him for initiating the Ockenden review, and for his commitment to encouraging a culture of transparency and openness across the NHS. We must continue with that approach.

Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con): I wish to repay the compliment and thank my hon. Friend for her tireless campaigning on this issue. It is not easy publicly to criticise a local hospital trust, and for an hon. Member to do that, as in this case, shows enormous courage. Does she agree that the biggest mistake the Government could make when they publish and respond to the Ockenden review would be to say that this is a one-off incident? The most important thing is to consider what went wrong at Shrewsbury and Telford, and to learn those lessons for the whole NHS. The big thing that we learned from Morecambe Bay and Mid Staffs was that such lessons apply across the system.

Lucy Allan: My right hon. Friend makes an important point—I was going to come to it in my speech, so I will bring it in now. The Morecambe Bay inquiry was led by Dr Bill Kirkup, who said of the recent findings at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust that “two clinical organisational failures are not two one offs”, and that that points to an “underlying systemic problem” that may exist in other hospitals. My right hon. Friend is right to make that point, and I thank him for his kind comments.

The interim findings in the Ockenden review were not published, and I understand that the hospital trust has not been told about them. The families were certainly not told about them, and neither were MPs. There has been no statement to the House, and we do not know what action is being taken to ensure the safety of women and babies at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I am an avid watcher of that Sunday night programme, “Call the Midwife”—I am not sure whether you watch it, Mr Speaker—where everything seems to work out at the end of the day. The hon. Lady is outlining something that does not work out at the end of the day. She mentioned families. Does she agree that the care of mother and baby must be a priority, and that more support for mothers who have had several children must be considered, to ensure that they are coping and not expected simply to carry on because they already know what to expect? Every life is precious and adds more pressures to families, particularly mothers.

Lucy Allan: I very much appreciate the hon. Gentleman’s intervention. As always, he makes an excellent point, and I am grateful to him for his many interventions in many debates I have secured.

[Lucy Allan]

I am concerned that the NHS can choose to sit on this information, and that Ministers can say, “Well, we don’t comment on leaks”. This is about the safety of women and babies, and the adequacy of the maternity care they receive in our hospitals today. Women were repeatedly told that their case was a one-off tragedy, that there will always be risks to childbirth, and that such risks cannot be completely mitigated. Failings seem somehow to have been normalised, and at the time many women accepted that, rather than question or challenge the care they received. People trust the medical profession, which is why openness and transparency are so crucial.

When people raised concerns they were dismissed as being difficult—no one listened. There was a “we know best” attitude, and complaints about poor practice were treated as women making a fuss about a perfectly natural event that occasionally would have a negative outcome. As Health Secretary, my right hon. Friend spoke about “never events”, and I suggest that those must include an avoidable death. A baby dying in childbirth should therefore be a “never event”, yet it seems that that is not the way the deaths in this case were treated—they were treated as something that could be a result of childbirth. The trust even boasted of having the lowest number of caesarean deliveries in the country, so there seems to have been an unwillingness to intervene when there were complications in a delivery. In my view, an intervention during a difficult birth must be a good thing: that is what the clinicians and medical professionals are there to do. I am concerned about the way this trust appears to have treated women and about its attitude towards women, which seems to have been dismissive. And that is something we have seen from the top.

What adds insult to injury in this particular case is that the trust commissioned a report in 2013 that appeared to find that all was well. We now know, because of the leaked report, that that was in fact a whitewash. The trust was exonerated by what was a perfunctory bare minimum desk-top review. This allowed poor practice to continue unchecked. If it had been identified at the time, the more recent cases of malpractice, which are still coming forward and include death and injury, could have been avoided. We still do not know how many women and babies have been affected, but we do know that £50 million in compensation has been paid out already. However, with hundreds more women coming forward, the cases in which a financial settlement has already been reached are clearly the tip of the iceberg.

The question we have to ask, and must go on asking, is whether that poor care, and the normalisation and denial of it, is a systemic problem within the complex bureaucracy that is the NHS.

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Lucy Allan: I shall be delighted to give way to my right hon. Friend and constituency neighbour.

Mr Paterson: I congratulate my hon. Friend on bringing this very, very difficult subject forward. I also thank my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) for launching the Ockenden review. It is

very easy to talk about numbers, but every one of these cases is unutterably terrible and ghastly for the family concerned, and obviously a total tragedy. We all know dreadful stories from the past. The latest figures show that the infant mortality rate at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust is 3.7 per 1,000, against a national average of 3.9 and a national target, which I would like the Minister to comment on, of 2.6 by 2025. My hon. Friend has rightly raised the absolute horrors and the dreadful culture—we all know terrible stories—but does she derive any satisfaction from the fact that we are marginally better than the national average at the moment and possibly heading towards the national target by 2025?

Lucy Allan: My right hon. Friend makes a very important point. Clearly, the majority of women using these services have an excellent and safe experience. It is good news that there is progress and improvement, but we should not gloss over any of these cases. Regrettably, there have been new, recent cases in my constituency where women have come forward, having been made aware of the review, saying, “This happened to me a couple of years ago.” It is good that the numbers are improving, but we must make sure that every one of those deaths is treated as another event.

Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con) *rose*—

Lucy Allan: I shall be glad to give way to my other constituency neighbour.

Philip Dunne: I am most grateful to my hon. Friend. I completely agree with my constituency neighbour, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson), that she is making a powerful case. It is quite right that she has brought this issue forward. On the subject of current practice versus some of the cases that are being considered in the Ockenden review, which stretches back 40 years, she will remember that it was initiated by the case of a couple who were constituents of mine. They lost their baby in 2009, over 10 years ago. Their concern was that, as my hon. Friend rightly identifies, the case had been inadequately handled and effectively covered up by the hospital.

One of my concerns, in addition to getting to the bottom of what has happened over a long period of time, is that we need to be reassured, as local Members of Parliament serving our constituents today, that the maternity services available to people in Shropshire are safe and of high quality. It would be helpful if in some way, given the scale of the inquiry that Ockenden is undertaking, there could be some interim finding on the current state of practice in Shropshire and Telford, so that at least expectant mums who are going to use those services can feel reassured. That would not prevent a more detailed inquiry going back into past practice. Does she agree with me on that point?

Lucy Allan: My right hon. Friend makes an excellent point. That might be something that the Minister can address, because we want users of maternity services to have absolute confidence in the care that they receive. However, we do not create confidence by hiding facts. If we can get some of the facts out that have been leaked to the media, let us do that and deal with those. He is absolutely right that that will help to reassure parents

and give them confidence in the services that are being delivered—the vast majority receive a very good standard of care, and safe care.

The trust, and possibly other trusts, must work towards a culture of openness and transparency and perhaps show more of a willingness to accept that, “This can happen here.” I kept hearing, “Well, this can’t happen here. It hasn’t happened here,” and I cannot feel comfortable if people cannot acknowledge where things have gone wrong.

I recognise that the Minister may not have all the answers today, and I do not expect all the points to be addressed, but we need to know why NHS Improvement sat on the review’s findings for almost a year. Given how serious they are, why has it not come forward to say, “This is what the Ockenden review has found at an interim stage”?

I want to ask who knew what and when. Were Ministers informed, or were they too kept in the dark? If this had not been leaked, when would we have been told? When will the review be completed? It has now been almost three years. When will the Secretary of State make a statement on this very, very serious issue? I also want to know whether the management still think that this has been cooked up by the media, or whether they genuinely now realise that there is a serious problem to be addressed. It is very important that the Department of Health and Social Care and NHS bodies understand and acknowledge the seriousness, and that all parties are encouraged to be open about it.

As a constituency MP who has had women contact me recently to share their birth experiences at the trust, it seems to me that red lights are flashing. We need to know what is being done to ensure the safety of women and their babies using this service. I very much thank the Minister for her forthcoming comments and any reassurances that she can give my constituents on this issue.

6.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Ms Nadine Dorries): It is an absolute honour and a delight to be responding to this debate with you in the Chair, Mr Speaker—it is the first time I have done so—and congratulations.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Telford (Lucy Allan) on securing the debate. Before I respond to her specific comments, I turn to the wider points that she raised that addressed the UK as a whole.

To reassure people—mothers, particularly—I would like to make one or two points about the wider context of the debate: the safety of giving birth in the UK. The NHS in this country remains one of the safest places in the world to have a baby. The Government’s maternity ambition is to halve the 2010 rates of stillbirths, neonatal and maternal deaths, and brain injuries in babies occurring during or soon after birth, by 2025. That ambition also includes reducing the rates of pre-term births from 8% to 6%. I reassure her that we have already achieved our ambition for a 20% decrease in stillbirths by 2020, so we are very much on track with those ambitions.

First and foremost, I express my heartfelt sympathies to every family who has been affected by previous failings in the trust’s maternity services. There can be no greater pain for a parent than to lose a child.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), the former Secretary of State, who asked NHS Improvement to commission the independent review of maternity services at Shrewsbury and Telford in 2017, which is two years ago now—my hon. Friend was quite right about that. I take mild issue with one of her points, however, which was that NHS Improvement kept quiet about the failings. I find that slightly disappointing, because the *raison d’être* of NHS Improvement, which was also established by my right hon. Friend, is to investigate, expose and learn from failings, so I think she would agree it is not something that NHS Improvement would do. It is not in the culture of the organisation; the exact opposite is true.

The review being chaired by Donna Ockenden, a clinical expert in maternity and a registered midwife, was tasked with assessing the quality of previous investigations and the implementation of recommendations at the trust relating to new-born, infant and maternal harm. The original terms of reference covered the handling of 23 cases. The terms of reference have since been updated and were published in November to reflect the expanded scope of the review, and the review team will be in touch in the following weeks with the affected families to ensure that they are appropriately supported throughout the process. I am afraid I have to inform my hon. Friend and the House that the additional cases have now been identified and the total number relevant to the review now stands at 900, a small number of which go back 40 years.

The extra cases have been found by a number of means—from looking at previous incidents reported at the hospital to parents brave enough to come forward and talk about their own experiences. I am sure my hon. Friend will understand that, unlike with Morecambe Bay, which involved a small number of cases, it will take the review considerably longer to investigate 900 cases¹. That is why there has been no report so far. The interim finding was not 600; the number is greater. It is appropriate that, while this important work is being done, we do not influence or comment on it and that we let Donna Ockenden get on with her vital work. It is our responsibility to let her do that and to provide the additional support needed given the additional cases identified. It is a huge increase on the original number of cases.

Jeremy Hunt: I thank the Minister for her personal commitment to patient safety, which I have seen on many occasions, but she will be aware that what she has just told the House is deeply shocking. She is saying that the scale of potential avoidable death at Shrewsbury and Telford may be no different from that at Mid Staffs. Could she reassure the House, given the huge resources devoted to the public inquiry into what happened at Mid Staffs, that the Department will make sure that Donna Ockenden has all the resources and support she needs, because getting to the bottom of this will be a huge job? Does the Minister also recognise that, while it will take more time, the families would also like it resolved as quickly as possible?

Ms Dorries: Absolutely, and I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments. Yes, the Department is liaising closely with Donna Ockenden about what support she needs to conclude her work as soon as possible, for the sake of the families. As he will understand, the review

1. [Official Report, 20 January 2020, Vol. 670, c. 1MC.]

[*Ms Dorries*]

cannot be rushed; it has to be done properly and thoroughly. We have to get to the bottom of this matter, which is why Donna Ockenden is being supported in the way she is. Anything she needs in order to conclude this review successfully she will have. I thank my right hon. Friend for his personal comments. As he will know, and as he has said, I am utterly committed to patient safety, to eradicating avoidable harms and to making the NHS the safest place—not one of the safest—in the world to give birth. The review is important in the light of that.

As well as the families who came forward when the review was launched, media coverage has raised awareness of it, prompting further contacts with the trust and the review team. More recently, Donna Ockenden herself made a final appeal for any more families who believe that they have been affected to come forward. I am grateful to all the families who have voluntarily agreed to assist the review, although that may mean their having to revisit painful and distressing experiences. We expect it to conclude by the end of the year, at which point the Government will work closely with NHS England and NHS Improvement to consider the next steps.

As I have said, it is important for the review to be allowed to proceed unhindered, and without speculation about its conclusions or findings. However, I am very aware that current maternity patients at the trust may want reassurance that they will be safe and looked after. My hon. Friend the Member for Telford referred to “red lights”. I can reassure her that steps are being taken at the trust. It is completely understandable that people are asking questions, but I have asked for a meeting with the interim chief executive, because I want to see for myself that those steps are working. She has already made a public statement to reassure all families using the trust’s maternity services that much work has

already been done to address issues raised by previous cases and to improve services, while acknowledging that the trust—obviously—had further to go.

During the November inspection of the trust’s maternity services, the Care Quality Commission found that the trust had taken action following the last inspection in April, so it was clearly listening and implementing the recommendations. As a result, there had been a number of improvements. Although more work was still needed, staffing had increased, and morale and governance had improved. However, I expect the CQC to keep a close eye on what is going on.

Let me end by restating the strength of our commitment to improving the quality and safety of maternity care. As I have said, the Government’s maternity ambition is to halve the 2010 rates of stillbirth, and we are on track to do that, which is incredibly important. Let me also say to my hon. Friend that, although I cannot reveal to her what is happening in the review—I cannot find out what is happening myself, because Donna Ockenden needs that autonomy—my door is always open. If my hon. Friend wants to discuss with me at any time what I have said tonight about the improvements that are being made at the trust, she need only pick up the phone. I am there to answer any questions that she may have on behalf of her constituents, and I ask her please not to hesitate to contact me if she needs further reassurances.

As I have said, the NHS remains one of the safest places, although we want to make it the safest place. What is most important is to ensure that the tragic cases that the Ockenden review is examining are not repeated anywhere else. That must be the objective. Women deserve a better maternity experience, and that is what we are determined to achieve.

Question put and agreed to.

6.58 pm

House adjourned.

Written Statements

Wednesday 15 January 2020

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

UK Space Agency: SatelLife Competition 2020

The Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation (Chris Skidmore): The UK Space Agency is offering young people expert advice and the chance to connect with space industry representatives, potential investors and commercial partners, as well as a share of £50,000 for their ideas of how satellites could improve life on Earth.

Satellite services such as navigation, communications and earth observation support industrial sectors worth £300 billion to the UK economy. This competition gives young people the chance to test new ideas with space experts and perhaps one day become part of the UK space sector, which already supports 42,000 jobs and could create thousands more this decade.

By supporting the UK's next generation of scientists and engineers, the competition will help turn young people's ideas into real-world proposals that could eventually transform our lives—from saving our planet from climate change, to improving healthcare services.

Anyone aged between 11 and 22 years old has until 3 March 2020 to enter the competition through the UK Space Agency's website. The winners will go on to pitch their ideas to a panel of industry experts, with the opportunity to gain further advice and support.

The Government are committed to establishing a National Space Council and developing a UK space strategy, while establishing commercial spaceflight from UK spaceports for the first time, to help the UK lead the way in this fast-growing, high-technology sector. It is my own personal ambition to ensure the sector has a bright future, and I would encourage all young people who are fascinated by space to enter the SatelLife competition and to play a key part in the second space age.

[HCWS39]

FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

Foreign Affairs Council: 10 January 2020

The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Christopher Pincher): On 10 January, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), Josep Borrell, convened an extraordinary Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) in Brussels to address recent developments in Iraq and Libya. My right hon. Friend the Minister of State for the Middle East and North Africa (Dr Andrew Murrison) attended the meeting.

Libya

Ministers exchanged views on recent developments in Libya, including the military escalation around Tripoli and the EU's engagement. HRVP Borrell briefed on his recent diplomatic engagement, including with the E4 (France, Germany, Italy and United Kingdom) and

with Libyan Prime Minister Serraj. HRVP Borrell updated Ministers on his plans to engage with all players involved, with the objective of moving towards a political solution within the framework of the Berlin process and UN-led mediated efforts.

The United Nations (UN) Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), Ghassan Salame, briefed Ministers on his work to prepare for the planned Berlin summit, which will focus on practical initiatives towards long-term stability in Libya.

Dr Murrison expressed full support for German efforts to boost regional co-operation, and underscored the need for international unity, particularly in support of the UN process and of the strict enforcement of the UN arms embargo.

Recent developments in Iran and Iraq

The Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Jens Stoltenberg, briefed Ministers on the latest developments in Iraq.

Ministers emphasised the need for the de-escalation of tensions in the region and maximum restraint as well as condemning attacks on coalition forces engaged in the fight against Da'esh. They stressed their continued support for Iraq's stability and reconstruction and urged Iran to return to full compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) without delay.

Dr Murrison supported calls for de-escalation and shared our deep concern at Iran's latest announcement of non-compliance with the JCPoA. Dr Murrison also offered the United Kingdom's condolences to those affected by the Ukraine Airlines crash, and called for EU support for a full investigation.

[HCWS37]

Outcomes of the Foreign Affairs Councils: 11 November and 9 December 2019

The Minister for Europe and the Americas (Christopher Pincher): The 11 November and 9 December Foreign Affairs Councils (FACs) took place in Brussels while Parliament was dissolved. Federica Mogherini, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HRVP), chaired the November FAC with her replacement Josep Borrell chairing the December FAC. The United Kingdom's Ambassador to the Political and Security Committee, Paul Johnston, represented the United Kingdom at both the November and December FAC.

November FAC

At the November FAC, HRVP Mogherini briefed Ministers on Venezuela, Bolivia, and Lebanon and touched on Turkey's actions in North-East Syria. Ministers also adopted a framework for sanctions in response to Turkey's hydrocarbons explorations activity in the eastern Mediterranean.

On Hong Kong, the United Kingdom stressed the need for support for the right to peaceful protest; condemnation of the violence; the need for a proportionate response; the importance of China upholding the Joint Declaration; and the need for investigations into the treatment of protestors.

Ministers discussed the EU's approach to Iran and Gulf Regional Security, following Tehran's announcement of further non-compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA).

The United Kingdom highlighted our commitment to the JCPoA while noting that Iranian actions were putting the deal under pressure. We stressed the importance of all parties engaging in comprehensive negotiations and of the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchange (INSTEX) to avoid the collapse of the deal and to support regional security.

Ministers discussed the political situation in Afghanistan and reviewed the prospects for peace, following the presidential election. HRVP Mogherini underlined the EU's willingness to contribute both politically and financially to peace talks, and its readiness to support an inclusive Afghan political process. The United Kingdom stressed the importance of reductions in Taliban violence and renewed US-Taliban talks as an important step towards the relaunch of intra-Afghan negotiations.

Ministers had an exchange of views with the Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. They reaffirmed the EU's strong political commitment to support the civilian transitional government, as well as the EU's readiness to provide financial aid for the transition, including in support of economic and state structure reform. They highlighted the importance of ensuring that the civilian transition remains an inclusive process, including an appropriate role for youth and women.

December FAC

In December, Ministers expressed their concerns about the Turkey-Libya memorandum of understanding on delimitation of maritime jurisdiction and on security and military co-operation. They also reflected on the political situation in Libya and the Berlin process, which aims to find a sustainable solution to the situation in the country.

Ministers exchanged views on Ukraine, in the context of the Normandy Format leaders' summit, which took place in Paris the following week, and the situation in Iran, following the recent meeting of the Joint Commission of the JCPoA, as well as recent protests. HRVP Borrell briefed on the situation in Bolivia, Moldova and Hong Kong. On the latter, the United Kingdom underlined the importance of meaningful government efforts around dialogue to prevent a return to violence.

Ministers discussed EU-Africa relations in preparation for 2020's Ministerial and summit-level meetings between the EU and the African Union (AU). They addressed the political, economic, security and demographic aspects of the relationship as well as important cross-cutting issues such as climate change and digitalisation. Ministers emphasised that the next summit would be an important milestone in modernising and scaling up the EU's partnership with Africa.

Ahead of human rights Day on 10 December, Ministers discussed the promotion and protection of human rights in the world. They assessed the EU's work on human rights, the instruments at its disposal and its priorities for the coming months, reaffirming the EU's leadership in the protection and promotion of human rights worldwide. HRVP Borrell announced the launch of preparatory work on a possible sanctions regime to address serious human rights violations.

During the working lunch, Ministers informally discussed the FAC's working methods. The new HRVP set out his priorities, including the Western Balkans, Europe's Neighbourhood and the Middle-East, as well as on how the EU could work together more effectively to deliver operational outcomes.

Conclusions

At the November FAC, the Council extended sanctions on Venezuela for a year due to persistent actions undermining democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. It also adopted a framework for restrictive measures in response to Turkey's hydrocarbons explorations activity in the eastern Mediterranean.

At the December FAC, the Council agreed a number of measures:

The Council decided to maintain individual restrictive measures against several personalities of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) regarding the obstruction of the electoral process and human rights violations, and to lift these measures for two other persons.

The Council also adopted conclusions on the DRC that support the most recent elections as the first peaceful transfer of power in the country's history and state the EU's readiness for a gradual engagement in support to the DRC Government's reform agenda, based on reciprocal commitments.

The Council adopted conclusions on Sudan, recognising the opportunity for democracy, peace and prosperity following the political transition. They highlight Sudan's importance in the region's stability and reaffirm the EU's commitment to accompanying Sudan on its reform path towards democracy. While welcoming the transition Government's recent steps, they reiterate the EU's concern for the deteriorating humanitarian situation and call upon the Sudanese authorities to remove remaining bureaucratic obstacles to humanitarian and development actors' work.

The Council adopted conclusions on the civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) Compact, reaffirming its commitment to make civilian CSDP more capable, effective, flexible and responsive. They highlight CSDP missions' significant contribution to international peace and stability as an essential part of the EU's integrated approach to external conflicts and crises. They also emphasise the need to strengthen the EU's role and capacity to act as a security provider through CSDP.

The Council adopted conclusions on the EU Arctic policy, and noted that the EU should continue to make a significant contribution in both regional and multilateral fora.

The Council adopted a decision in support of strengthening biological safety and security in Latin America in line with the implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1540 (2004) on non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.

The Council extended the implementation period of the decision in support of the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons to a total of 48 months. This extension of the implementation period will allow the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which is responsible for the technical implementation of the project, to reach its planned objectives.

The Council adopted a decision in support of SEESAC disarmament and arms control activities in south east Europe reducing the threat of illicit small arms and light weapons (SALW) and their ammunition.

The Council adopted the EU position within the Ghana-EU Economic Partnership Agreement Committee regarding the definition of the concept of “originating products” and methods of administrative cooperation.

The Council adopted a decision setting out the EU’s position within the administrative committee for the international convention on the harmonisation of frontier controls of goods, which aims to reduce barriers to international trade and facilitate the movement of goods at the international level, to reduce administrative burdens on member states.

[HCWS36]

TRANSPORT

Regional Connectivity

The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):

The Department for Transport, the Treasury and the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy have been in discussions with Europe’s largest regional airline, Flybe, which plays an important role in the UK’s connectivity by flying regional routes.

In a sign of the Prime Minister’s commitment to levelling up all regions of the UK, the Government have announced additional measures to support regional

connectivity across the UK, to ensure all corners of the country drive the economy, and fully benefit from prosperity in years to come.

A review of regional connectivity will ensure all nations and regions of the UK have the domestic transport connections local communities rely on—including regional services from local airports. This review, led by DfT, will consider all options to ensure we continue to have good regional connectivity. The DfT will work closely with the aviation industry, local regions and devolved nations to identify how we can support connectivity.

As part of this work and ahead of the March Budget, the Treasury will also be reviewing air passenger duty (APD) to ensure regional connectivity is supported while meeting the UK’s climate change commitments to meet net zero by 2050.

The outcomes of these reviews will benefit the entire industry, passengers, communities, regions and nations across the UK.

These measures featured in discussions between the Department for Transport, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and HM Treasury and Europe’s largest regional airline, Flybe, which plays an important role in the UK’s connectivity.

HMG was notified about the difficulties of Flybe on 11 January, and since then we have worked intensively with the company to understand their financial position and explore options. In the light of these discussions, the management and shareholders on 14 January took action to set Flybe on a recovery path.

[HCWS38]

ORAL ANSWERS

Wednesday 15 January 2020

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
PRIME MINISTER	1013	WALES—continued	
Constitutional Reform.....	1019	Mid-Wales Growth Deal.....	1012
Engagements.....	1013	North Wales Growth Deal.....	1013
Engagements.....	1019	Shared Prosperity Fund.....	1006
WALES	1005	Steel Industry.....	1009
Infrastructure.....	1010	Welsh Language.....	1005

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Wednesday 15 January 2020

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY	39WS	FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE— continued	
UK Space Agency: SatelLife Competition 2020.....	39WS	Outcomes of the Foreign Affairs Councils: 11 November and 9 December 2019.....	40WS
FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE	39WS	TRANSPORT	43WS
Foreign Affairs Council: 10 January 2020.....	39WS	Regional Connectivity.....	43WS

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
Wednesday 22 January 2020**

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

Wednesday 15 January 2020

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 1005] [see index inside back page]

Secretary of State for Wales
Prime Minister

NHS Funding [Col. 1027]

Bill presented, and read the First time

Debate on the Address (Fourth day) [Col. 1028]

Debate adjourned

Petition [Col. 1120]

Ockenden Review of Maternity Care: Shrewsbury and Telford [Col. 1121]

Debate on motion for adjournment

Written Statements [Col. 39WS]

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