

# PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT  
GENERAL COMMITTEES

## Public Bill Committee

### BIRMINGHAM COMMONWEALTH GAMES BILL [*LORDS*]

*Tuesday 17 March 2020*

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#### CONTENTS

Programme motion agreed to.  
Written evidence (Reporting to the House) motion agreed to.  
CLAUSES 1 TO 5 agreed to.  
SCHEDULE 1 agreed to.  
CLAUSES 6 TO 10 agreed to.  
SCHEDULE 2 agreed to.  
CLAUSES 11 TO 20 agreed to.  
SCHEDULE 3 agreed to.  
CLAUSES 21 TO 33 agreed to.  
CLAUSE 34 agreed to, with an amendment.  
New clauses considered.  
Bill, as amended, to be reported.  
Written evidence reported to the House.

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No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the final version of the report should be clearly marked in a copy of the report—not telephoned—and must be received in the Editor’s Room, House of Commons,

**not later than**

**Saturday 21 March 2020**

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**The Committee consisted of the following Members:**

*Chairs:* † SIOBHAIN McDONAGH, SIR CHARLES WALKER

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| † Anderson, Stuart ( <i>Wolverhampton South West</i> )<br>(Con)   | † Newlands, Gavin ( <i>Paisley and Renfrewshire North</i> )<br>(SNP) |
| † Caulfield, Maria ( <i>Lewes</i> ) (Con)   | † Nichols, Charlotte ( <i>Warrington North</i> ) (Lab)               |
| † Huddleston, Nigel ( <i>Parliamentary Under-Secretary<br/>of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport</i> ) | Owatemi, Taiwo ( <i>Coventry North West</i> ) (Lab)                  |
| Jones, Fay ( <i>Brecon and Radnorshire</i> ) (Con)  | Richards, Nicola ( <i>West Bromwich East</i> ) (Con)                 |
| † Jupp, Simon ( <i>East Devon</i> ) (Con)   | Sambrook, Gary ( <i>Birmingham, Northfield</i> ) (Con)               |
| † Lamont, John ( <i>Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk</i> )<br>(Con)   | † Tracey, Craig ( <i>North Warwickshire</i> ) (Con)                  |
| † McGinn, Conor ( <i>St Helens North</i> ) (Lab)  | † West, Catherine ( <i>Hornsey and Wood Green</i> ) (Lab)            |
| Mahmood, Mr Khalid ( <i>Birmingham, Perry Barr</i> )<br>(Lab)   | † Young, Jacob ( <i>Redcar</i> ) (Con)                               |
| Matheson, Christian ( <i>City of Chester</i> ) (Lab)  | Kevin Maddison, <i>Committee Clerk</i>                               |
|   | † <b>attended the Committee</b>                                      |

## Public Bill Committee

## Clause 34

## SHORT TITLE

Tuesday 17 March 2020

[SIOBHAIN McDONAGH *in the Chair*]

**Birmingham Commonwealth Games  
Bill [Lords]**

9.25 am

**The Chair:** We are now sitting in public, and the proceedings are being broadcast. Before we begin, I have a few preliminary points to make. The most important is: happy St Patrick's day. Please switch electronic devices to silent. Tea and coffee are not allowed during sittings.

We will first consider the programme motion on the amendment paper. We will then consider a motion to enable the reporting of written evidence for publication. I call the Minister to move the programme motion, which was agreed by the Programming Sub-Committee yesterday.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nigel Huddleston):** I beg to move,

That—

(1) the Committee shall (in addition to its first meeting at 9.25 am on Tuesday 17 March) meet—

- (a) at 2.00 pm on Tuesday 17 March;
- (b) at 11.30 am and 2.00 pm on Thursday 19 March;
- (c) at 9.25 am and 2.00 pm on Tuesday 24 March;

(2) proceedings on consideration of the Bill in Committee shall be taken in the following order: Clauses 1 to 5; Schedule 1; Clauses 6 to 10; Schedule 2; Clauses 11 to 20; Schedule 3; Clauses 21 to 34; new Clauses; new Schedules; remaining proceedings on the Bill;

(3) the proceedings shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at 5.00 pm on Tuesday 24 March.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms McDonagh. You are a vision of green today.

*Resolved,*

That, subject to the discretion of the Chair, any written evidence received by the Committee shall be reported to the House for publication.—(Nigel Huddleston.)

**The Chair:** Copies of written evidence that the Committee receives will be made available in the Committee room. We will now begin line-by-line consideration of the Bill. The selection list for today's sitting is available in the room. It shows the order in which clauses, schedules and new clauses will be debated.

*Clauses 1 to 5 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Schedule 1 agreed to.*

*Clauses 6 to 10 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Schedule 2 agreed to.*

*Clauses 11 to 20 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Schedule 3 agreed to.*

*Clauses 21 to 33 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

**Nigel Huddleston:** I beg to move amendment 1, in clause 34, page 20, line 16, leave out subsection (2).

I have rarely been in a Committee where the Chair has spoken more than the Committee members. We will see how that goes today.

For Bills starting in the House of Lords, a privilege amendment is included to recognise the right or privileges of this place to control any charges on the people and on public funds. It is standard practice to remove such amendments at this stage of a Bill's passage in the House of Commons.

*Amendment 1 agreed to.*

*Clause 34, as amended, ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

**New Clause 1**

LOCAL COMMONWEALTH GAMES LEVY

“(1) The Secretary of State must make regulations to provide the powers necessary for the relevant local authorities to levy charges on hotel occupancy and short-term rentals in their respective areas for the duration of the Birmingham Commonwealth Games in the United Kingdom.

(2) The regulations must define ‘relevant local authorities’ to include the local authorities for each Games location.”—(Catherine West.)

*This new clause would provide for money to be raised during the Games by the relevant local authorities charging a levy on hotel occupancy and short term rentals.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab):** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

You do look splendid in your green today, Ms McDonagh. I wish all Committee members a happy St Patrick's day. I want to speak to all four new clauses at the same time. Am I permitted to do that?

**The Chair:** I am advised that they need to be taken individually.

**Catherine West:** Thank you for that clarification.

Given that we have sped through all the clauses in the Bill so quickly, it will come as no surprise that the Opposition are delighted to welcome the prospect of the Commonwealth games in 2022. With the big question mark over the Olympic games this morning, let us hope that, by 2022, we can all be enjoying the Commonwealth games. We are all thinking about Japan and the international organising committee in these tough times.

I welcome the fact that the Government have looked at the broad question of a carbon-neutral games, which was the subject of my first question to the Minister in departmental questions the week before last, but I want to highlight two issues on the environment.

The first is the question of the bus provider, National Express. On our visit to Birmingham last week, I was concerned to learn that it is considering keeping diesel. Given that we are being so accommodating on the Bill, can the Minister touch on the conversations the Department

is having with the provider around the carbon-neutral games? That is not directly relevant to my new clause, but I wanted to introduce it, because while it would be easy to see this as a national project—indeed, it is—there are also many things that could come out of it for the region. I am concerned that the fleet will still be diesel, when it could be electric, given the two-year run-in to the games. The Minister may not be able to respond now, but if he would like to write to me later, I would be grateful for his views on what progress is being made towards a carbon-neutral games.

Secondly, there has been a lot of debate about the environment as it relates to the Perry Barr flyover, which my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Preet Kaur Gill) would be keen for us to mention in Committee. Even though that relates to the Lords element of proceedings, I know the Minister has listened carefully to the consideration of the issues involved. Although this is mainly a matter for local government because it pertains to highways, I still believe it is important to put it on record.

New clause 1 was spoken to on Second Reading by my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston, who of course has a massive interest in the Commonwealth games because there is going to be cricket there—we are all very pleased about that. She and others in the region have looked on a cross-party basis at the question of a hotel levy, and are encouraging the Government to seriously consider such a levy so that the region can have that little bit of extra funding. That is the question the new clause deals with, and I would be grateful if we could debate it now, so that we can hear what the Government's *prima facie* view is.

We on the Opposition Benches accept that this is a new idea. A £1 a night per room levy was not, for example, applied to the Olympic games in Stratford, so the new clause seeks to introduce something new. However, we are also aware that, with a regional games such as this, there is an argument for a hotel levy to be spent exclusively in the region, in order to help tourism and to help the region in general pay for what is going to be quite an expensive project. I am sure that taxpayers in Birmingham and the midlands would want us to consider affordability at this stage of the Bill, so would the Minister enlighten us as to the Government's thinking about a hotel levy?

**Nigel Huddleston:** I very much appreciate the comments made by the hon. Lady, and the tone that she and the Opposition parties have adopted towards the Bill to date. I completely agree with her earlier comment that, in these difficult times, the games are something we can all look forward to, and I appreciate the speed with which we have gone through the Bill in Committee so far. I will address some of her comments.

I am aware of the issues relating to the A34 highway scheme. I know there are strong views on it, both locally and in the House, and that local residents have petitioned the council and raised the prospect of a judicial review. Although this is indeed a decision for Birmingham City Council, as the authority responsible for the local road network and the wider regeneration of the Perry Barr area, those concerns need to be taken seriously, and I will be happy to continue my dialogue with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Perry Barr about that.

Regarding the Sprint routes, I understand that a decision has recently been taken to use zero-emission vehicles for the operation of Sprint, which in turn has increased the timescales for delivering the scheme because of the additional infrastructure requirements. The broader issue of climate change and sustainability is one that we all take seriously, as does the organising committee, and there is a real commitment to ensuring that sustainability is a key pillar of the planning and delivery of the games. The organising committee has signed up to the UN's sports for climate action framework, which aims to combat climate change and raise global awareness and action. That is a first for the Commonwealth games, and represents a key commitment to work towards global climate change goals. The organising committee is also in the process of developing its sustainability strategy for the games, and has convened a local sustainability forum that is supported by many bodies, Government Departments and agencies, including the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Environment Agency.

I appreciate the hon. Lady's comments relating to the proposals for a hotel tax, which is a hotly debated issue that has already been discussed in great detail during the Bill's previous stages. There is constant dialogue between the Government and the council on all aspects of the games, including the budget. Birmingham City Council is absolutely committed to meeting its financial contribution to the games' budget, and has published a plan for how it will do so without the need for a hotel tax. In any case, this Bill is not necessarily the appropriate vehicle, as it is not a money Bill and a statutory hotel tax is not necessary for the council to meet its share of the cost of the games, although I appreciate that the concept is much debated.

9.45 am

If such a tax were introduced for the duration of the games, which run from 27 July to 7 August 2022, the proceeds gained by participating local authorities are likely to be negligible, and considerably lower in value than Birmingham City Council's own figures, which, albeit still small, suggest that a longer-term pilot could generate between £4.5 million and £5 million per annum.

Local authorities already have a range of revenue-raising and fundraising powers to support them in meeting the financial contributions associated with such events—for example, through taxes at a local level, such as precepts and business rates. Hon. Members will also know that decisions on taxation are ultimately for Her Majesty's Treasury. Any case put forward to HMT for a hotel tax would need to be fully costed, including balancing additional burdens on businesses.

We should be careful to consider this in the round: while the UK is one of the few nations not to charge a tourism tax, full VAT is already charged on hotel stays, which is not the case in much of Europe. We would not want to discourage people from staying overnight in Birmingham and the west midlands at games time, when the region will surely want to capitalise on the large increases in visitor numbers.

All games partners are working together to ensure that we deliver a fantastic and memorable games. To that end, the Government will work closely with Birmingham City Council to ensure that it can deliver its financial contributions. I understand that this debate

will go on—it is not something we can sort out in this Bill. Accordingly, for the reasons I have just set out, I ask the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green to withdraw the new clause.

**Catherine West:** I am very pleased to respond to the Minister's remarks. First, I welcome the fact that having a carbon-neutral games is a key value. I will push him later on by letter on the question of the provider and what efforts are being made to introduce the least polluting buses. To respond on the question of the Perry Barr flyover, the current cost is quite high for a local authority. I would seek a reassurance that, if the local authority is unable to cover that cost, the Government are able to step in. It does seem expensive, given residents feel they are getting back from the games, and there is a lot of opposition at the moment.

Moving on to the principle of new clause 1—the hotel levy—my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston and other local MPs in the west midlands and Birmingham city area make a valid point. While full VAT is charged on hotel stays, the Minister will agree that the Treasury is not famous for ensuring there is a trickle-down effect in regions. Will he have his officers look fully at whether there could be some kind of agreement whereby some of the VAT is more transparently redirected to the region, to offset the cost of putting the games on at a local level? Would he care to respond to those issues before we move on?

**Nigel Huddleston:** I am happy to continue the dialogue, and I commit to responding to the hon. Lady's letter and the questions she raised.

Regarding any further location of taxes and VAT, I do not think we really have a mechanism for that in the UK. On the point about fundraising and ensuring that Birmingham and the west midlands receive adequate financial support to ensure that the games are successful—we are talking about more than £750 million of Government money going into the games—I will happily work with the hon. Lady to ensure she is comfortable that the west midlands are indeed getting a substantial proportion of Government expenditure for that.<sup>1</sup> I am happy to continue the dialogue with her.

**The Chair:** Does the shadow Minister want to push the new clause to a vote or to withdraw it?

**Catherine West:** I am keen not to push it to a vote at this stage, but I hold on to the right to raise it later in the passage of the Bill. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

## New Clause 2

### PAYMENT OF A LIVING WAGE

“(1) Within 3 months of this section coming into force, the Secretary of State must direct the Organising Committee to prepare a strategy for ensuring that a living wage, as a minimum, is paid to all staff employed—

- (a) directly by the Organising Committee, and
- (b) by organisations awarded contracts to deliver the Games.

(2) In preparing the strategy under subsection (1), the Organising Committee must consult representatives of businesses and trade unions in the Birmingham area.

(3) For the purposes of this section, the hourly living wage for the year 2020 is—

- (a) £9.30 outside London, and
- (b) £10.75 inside London.

(4) For the purposes of this section, the living wage for each year after 2020 shall be the amounts determined by the Living Wage Foundation.

(5) The Secretary of State must direct the Organising Committee to seek accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation once it is eligible to do so.”—(*Catherine West.*)

*This new clause would direct the Organising Committee to seek accreditation from the Living Wage Foundation.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Catherine West:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

The new clause deals with the living wage for Birmingham and the west midlands. As we heard on Second Reading, the living wage is popular in the region and has been pushed by campaigners and trade unions for quite a while. During a recent visit to Birmingham, I heard evidence from staff of the Trades Union Congress, and I understand that the living wage would be very welcome from the point of view of the workforce. For example, a number of people working in the leisure industry currently do not even receive the national minimum wage, let alone the real living wage. We know that the real living wage makes a huge difference to the lives of working people and that, if staff receive the living wage, they need only work one job, whereas many people—particularly women—on the minimum wage or less have to work two to three jobs, which puts enormous strain on their families and their mental health.

The new clause is very simple. It seeks to introduce the living wage for all staff directly employed in the running of and preparation for the games and for subcontractors. I thought about inviting the Living Wage Foundation to give evidence to the Committee, but I felt that, on balance, we all know what the living wage is and so did not need that evidence. Those of us who know members of the workforce who have gone from being on the minimum wage to being on the living wage know that it makes an enormous difference.

The new clause seeks to ensure that the prosperity that the games will bring—not only in July 2022, but in the run-up to the games—will have an uplift effect in the region. It aims not only to promote things such as women in construction, more apprenticeships and safety in the workforce and in the works going on in and around the region for the games, but to promote that concept as a legacy of the games. For example, we all want to see more grassroots sport as a result of the games. Introducing the living wage would push up the hourly rates of people working in the leisure industry, such as swimming and athletics teachers or coaches in the personal training industry. We would be doing an enormous service to not only sport and leisure in general, but, importantly, the region of Birmingham and the west midlands, which, as Members know, has the lowest level of accreditation in the UK.

**Nigel Huddleston:** I thank the hon. Lady for tabling the new clause. This issue has been raised several times during the Bill's passage, and the Government share the intent to make sure that we become a higher-wage economy. I concur particularly with her comments on

1. [Official Report, 19 March 2020, Vol. 673 c. 11MC.]

the hospitality and leisure sector. However, I am confident that the games are setting an excellent example on fair pay. As an arm's length body, the Birmingham 2022 organising committee's pay scales are set in line with civil service pay rates, and all direct employees of the organising committee are therefore paid above the Living Wage Foundation's rates.

Of course, all organisations awarded games contracts will be required to pay at least the Government's national living wage, which is set to receive its biggest cash increase ever, rising by 6.2% from 1 April 2020, which will mean a pay rise of almost £1,000 for around 2 million workers across the UK. As my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer said in his Budget speech last week, the Government are also targeting the national living wage reaching two thirds of median earnings by 2024, provided economic conditions allow. On current forecasts, that means a living wage of more than £10.50 per hour.

The Chancellor also announced that the national insurance threshold will be increased from £8,632 to £9,500 from April. Taken together, the changes to the national living wage, income tax and national insurance mean that someone working full time on the minimum wage will be more than £5,200 better off per year than in 2010.

Let us look at the wider picture of huge Government investment in Birmingham and the west midlands. Such investment will see thousands of jobs created and will lift skills and training opportunities across the region. Games partners continue to develop plans to maximise the employment, training and volunteering opportunities that the games will give rise to, ensuring lasting and meaningful benefits for those living and working in the region.

We should remember that the Birmingham 2022 games will be the first Commonwealth games with a social values charter. Organisations bidding for games contracts will be asked to demonstrate how they support delivery of the charter—for example, by promoting local employment opportunities and skills development. The games will provide a huge uplift to the local and regional economy and provide fantastic employment, training and skills development opportunities for local people and businesses. Although I understand the intent of the hon. Lady's new clause, given what I have outlined, I ask her to withdraw it.

**Catherine West:** I accept the Minister's arguments about the introduction of increases to the minimum wage, but I do not accept that it would be as good as having the living wage and living wage accreditation, with the uplift that that would give to the region as soon as the Bill is passed. I do not agree that the new clause should be withdrawn, but I do accept that I will have a further opportunity to raise this important matter during the passage of the Bill.

**The Chair:** Are you withdrawing the new clause at this stage?

**Catherine West:** Yes. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

### New Clause 3

#### GAMBLING ADVERTISING

“(1) The Organising Committee must not enter into any sponsorship, or contractual arrangement, with any business or company that derives part or all of its income from gambling.

(2) For the purposes of this section, ‘gambling’ is defined as it is in section 3 of the Gambling Act 2005.” —(*Catherine West.*)

*This new clause would prevent the Organising Committee from receiving sponsorship from gambling companies.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Catherine West:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

I am pleased to introduce this new clause, which deals with gambling advertising and the Commonwealth games. We all know that my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris) is a fierce campaigner on this question, as are others in the House, including the hon. Member for Aylesbury (Rob Butler). There is considerable concern in the House around gambling advertising, and I want to see that reflected in the Bill. I want gambling companies barred from sponsoring the games. I know it is unlikely that the organising committee will enter into an agreement with a gambling company, but it is important to have that in the Bill so that we can be sure that gambling companies will be responsible in how they proceed.

Gambling is a significant and harmful aspect of sport in general, and the NHS has recently opened a gambling clinic for 14-year-olds. The Minister and I have discussed the concerns in the House. We are pleased that the FA has decided that young people who want to watch football on their phones should not have to register with a gambling company first—that has now been stopped. That is down to the campaigning from expert Members in this House, and I want to see that apply to any sport. Because the Bill falls under the heading of sport, I want a specific pledge from the Minister to prevent any form of official gambling support. That would send a strong and notable signal that gambling in sport should be discouraged.

The Commonwealth games, with the 54 members of the Commonwealth, is an international phenomenon. It would be negative for young people watching the games to be bombarded with gambling messages. Although we have the issue of our 14-year-olds and other young people succumbing to the addiction of gambling, we would not want that to spread across any other Commonwealth country. I hope the Minister will look carefully at the new clause and advise us on how those values can be brought to the Commonwealth games.

**Nigel Huddleston:** I thank the hon. Lady for her comments. I know we will continue to debate issues of gambling with many Members from across the House, particularly as we review the Gambling Act 2005 as it relates specifically to new clause 3.

As hon. Members know, commercial revenue, including sponsorship, forms an important part of the games budget and will reduce the level of public sector investment that would otherwise be required for the games. Securing sponsorship and granting authorisations to associate with the games are matters for the Birmingham 2022 organising committee and Commonwealth Games

[Nigel Huddleston]

Federation. Their negotiations with potential sponsors are continuing, with three sponsors announced to date: WLG Gowling, an international law firm; G1 Group, a recruitment services firm; and Longines, who will be the official timekeeper for the games. All potential sponsors will have to demonstrate their alignment with Birmingham 2022's vision and mission, and an ongoing commitment to social values, as set out in the organising committee's social values charter.

10 am

On Second Reading, the hon. Members for Batley and Spennings (Tracy Brabin) and for Hornsey and Wood Green acknowledged that it is unlikely that the organising committee will enter into an agreement with a gambling company. I can confirm that the gambling companies have not been sponsors of recent editions of the Commonwealth games. However, as I said in my closing remarks, I would like to provide reassurance that my Department has made clear to the organising committee the importance of promoting the games and its values through its sponsorship programme. We have asked the organising committee to provide regular updates on overall progress as the sponsorship programme develops.

Therefore, I do not agree that limiting sponsorship arrangements or prohibiting certain types of sponsors on the face of the Bill is proportionate or necessary. More broadly, we are committed in the manifesto on which we stood at the recent general election to continue to tackle gambling addiction, and we have committed to review the Gambling Act to make sure it is fit for the digital age. We are currently in the process of scoping that review.

The Health Secretary has also announced the publication of a cross-Government addiction strategy, which will include gambling. The Government and the Gambling Commission will continue to act on the evidence to protect vulnerable people—as we have done in cutting stakes on fixed odds betting terminals to £2 and banning credit card gambling. As the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green mentioned, these efforts were the result of considerable lobbying by Members on both sides of the Chamber.

The Government have made it clear that sporting bodies and event organisers must consider their responsibilities to fans and the wider community when entering any commercial arrangements. Returning to Birmingham 2022, I want to be clear that any commercial arrangements should support the vision and mission of the games, and we will continue to work with the organising committee to support that. In that spirit, I respectfully request that the hon. Lady withdraw her new clause.

**Catherine West:** I am pleased to hear the reassurances from the Minister. If other concerns unfold during the passage of the Bill, we will raise them at a later stage if we need to. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

#### New Clause 4

##### BROADCASTING: LISTED SPORTING EVENTS

“(1) The Secretary of State must designate the Games as a Group A listed sporting event.

(2) For the purposes of this section, a ‘Group A listed sporting event’ is an event included in Group A of the list maintained by the Secretary of State under section 97 of the Broadcasting Act 1996.” —(Catherine West.)

*This new clause would direct the Secretary of State to make the Games available on free to air television.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

**Catherine West:** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

This is a very topical debate. Many Members will be aware that the future of the BBC is high on the list of priorities for the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the shadow DCMS team. Of course, it is not only the BBC that provides sport free to air; other channels do so as well. In this crisis of coronavirus, it is increasingly clear how important the concept of free-to-air viewing is. We do not want people to feel that they have to rush to spend hundreds of pounds to watch sport, particularly given that they cannot, at the moment, pop down to the local to watch a match any more. The shadow team has campaigned on this issue for different sports, and I am keen to reflect that campaigning and those values in the Bill.

I am keen to hear the Department's thinking, and an efficient way to do that is to move a new clause so that we can have the debate and the Minister's response recorded in *Hansard*. This simple new clause seeks to have the Commonwealth games on free to air so that everyone can enjoy them. The BBC has its networks around the world—the fantastic international service it offers and its different language services. The issue is particularly important for the 54 nations participating in the Commonwealth games. I would be pleased to hear from the Minister what the current thinking is about free-to-air broadcasting, and in particular whether the games will be classified under group A, rather than group B, under the broadcasting categories.

**Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Ms McDonagh. May I also wish everyone a happy St Paddy's day?

I rise to support new clause 4, in the name of the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green. In keeping with this stage of the Bill, I will be relatively brief. We have seen from the decline in participation in many sports—notably cricket and others—that when live broadcast is moved from terrestrial TV to subscription TV, participation rates can plummet, and that sport is then affected in the medium and long term. The current issues surrounding the Six Nations coverage highlights that we need a much broader debate on this matter. In the meantime, I am happy to lend my support to the new clause to protect the games.

The SNP fully supports the Birmingham Commonwealth games. Everyone in Scotland was very proud of Glasgow's Commonwealth games, and I hope the games have the same impact in Birmingham as they did in Glasgow. But I do have to note—as we always do—that the Glasgow games were delivered without any financial support from this place. I can sense that the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk straining to tell me that this matter is devolved, and he would be right, but that cuts both ways. We had to go 10 rounds with the Treasury to secure any appropriate Barnett

consequentials flowing from the London 2012 games and, prior to that, the Manchester Commonwealth games. We would appreciate that not being the case. We will table an amendment on Report to try to ensure that 100% Barnett consequentials are secured. That assurance has been given over the Dispatch Box, but we would feel a lot more secure if the commitment were part of the law of the land.

**Nigel Huddleston:** I thank Opposition Members for their comments. This topic will be hotly debated, and I know that the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee is aware of these issues and concerns.

On the Government's support for the games in Scotland, hosting major events is indeed, as the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North acknowledged, a devolved matter, with responsible agencies in each of the devolved Administrations. Support from DCMS and UK Sport complements and aids the ambitions of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in identifying and securing events across the whole UK. The UK Government also support Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in UK-wide matters, including the delivery of Government guarantees on reserved policies areas. The hon. Member mentioned the great success of the Glasgow games. I completely agree. The whole of Scotland can be very proud of those games, which I will mention further in a moment; they were an incredible success.

The Commonwealth Games Federation and Birmingham 2022 are committed to ensuring that as many people as possible can access the games via their TV, mobile phone, computer screen and tablet—whichever device they choose. I have been assured that, as part of its digital strategy, the organising committee is looking to provide content on a diverse number of digital platforms, with a view to maximising audience and reach. As the Commonwealth games are a listed event, broadcasting rights must already be made available to the qualifying free-to-air terrestrial broadcasters on fair and reasonable terms. In any case, the listing regime ensures only that events are available to qualifying channels, and does not guarantee that an event will be broadcast by a free-to-air broadcaster.

Free-to-air channels have the opportunity to bid to show live coverage of group B events and have done so successfully in the past, as with the BBC's live coverage of previous Commonwealth games held on the Gold Coast and in Glasgow. The Commonwealth games have been in group B since the list was put together in 1998 and have had excellent live coverage on free-to-air television, with 35 million domestic viewers in total for the Glasgow games. The event's group B listing helps to enable extensive free-to-air coverage for the nation and allows the organising committee to agree live free-to-air coverage as it sees fit.

We believe that the current list strikes the appropriate balance. Reconsidering which group the Commonwealth games sit in would not be appropriate, as the organising committee is in the middle of a competitive commercial process with potential rights holders, and cannot pre-empt the outcome of those negotiations. I am sure hon. Members will appreciate that any change to the listed events regime at this time could therefore significantly and detrimentally affect the ongoing negotiations. However, I appreciate and share the spirit of the new clause, which aligns with the organising committee's vision to

ensure Birmingham 2022 is the games for everyone, with everyone having the opportunity to access and experience them, should they wish to do so.

In that vein, let me remind hon. Members that over a million tickets for games events will be available across 11 days of elite sport. Fairness, affordability and accessibility will be the central underpinnings of the organising committee's ticketing strategy. I am therefore confident that there will be many ways for people to access and enjoy the games, whether on TV, mobile, computer screen, tablet or in person. Accordingly, I hope that the Committee can see that the new clause is not required, and that the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green sees fit to withdraw her new clause.

**Catherine West:** I am pleased to sum up on new clause 4. I accept the Minister's point that we are in the middle of a competitive tendering exercise, and I am happy to hold fire. However, I welcome the debate we have had, and it is important to have had it at this stage.

I also welcome the thoughts of the SNP spokesman—particularly his reference to the 35 million viewers who watched the games in Glasgow and to the Six Nations competition. I shadow declare an interest, with a Scotland rugby supporter in my household.

**Gavin Newlands:** Hear, hear!

**Catherine West:** Not that it is always a happy Saturday. Hopefully, the games will lead to more grassroots participation. I would be interested, at a future date, to hear the assessment of Scottish MPs of the participation rates in grassroots sport as a result of the Glasgow Commonwealth games.

I note that the DCMS Committee has opined on broadcasting, and that is a live and ongoing debate. On value and the importance of as many people watching the games as possible, the London experience in 2012 sadly coincided with mass cutbacks to municipal and school sport. During 2012, high-achieving local authorities—I am sure Merton was one of them, Ms McDonagh—allowed all under-18-year-olds to pay £1 a swim, for example, which promoted swimming as a sport that many people could enjoy. If young people watch those fantastic swimming races, I hope that families will not have to spend £20 to go swimming, but will pay £1 a swim. I hope that local authorities in Birmingham and the west midlands will take up the challenge of increasing municipal sport, that schools will grab the opportunity and that the tickets will be available to schoolchildren, so that they can watch water polo, the exciting swimming races or any other sport.

Ms McDonagh, I am coming to my concluding remarks, but I would glad of advice on whether there will be a concluding debate or whether this is the end of the sitting.

**The Chair:** There will be a general debate on everything following this debate.

**Catherine West:** Thank you. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

*Clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

*Question proposed,* That the Chair do report the Bill, as amended, to the House.

**Catherine West:** I thank hon. Members for their patience and for the combined efforts of both sides of the House. I thank the Scottish National party spokesman for his depth of knowledge of the Glasgow experience.

I would like to conclude on some of the values I introduced in the four clauses. First, there is the importance of a carbon-neutral games, and some of the specifics around transport. I hope civil servants will look carefully at the bus networks, which seem to be a point of contention for local people, who will enjoy these sports, but who would enjoy them even more if the air quality was as good as it possibly can be.

10.15 am

I was also pleased to move new clause 2 in relation to the living wage. It would have an incredible impact on local people in terms of their day to day experience. I hope we can come back to that at a further stage of the Bill.

The Minister and I share concerns around gambling. I hope the Committee's concerns about gambling advertising are noted as we go forward in the organisation of the games.

We talked in new clause 1 about the hotel levy. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston, and others in the region, who brought this to our attention. There is cross-party support for the new clause, which would lead to a lessening of the financial burden on the local authority. I hope we can continue to look at it, particularly in relation to the question of how we can ensure that VAT goes to the region and is not just swallowed up by the Treasury.

I was pleased to talk about grassroots sports and other issues, including the importance of free-to-air broadcasting, the impact on community cohesion and the sense of purpose for the Commonwealth itself. I look forward to the next stage of the Bill.

**Gavin Newlands:** On behalf of the SNP, at the conclusion of the most bizarre Bill Committee I have been involved with in five years, I thank you, Ms McDonagh, the Clerks, the Doorkeepers, the millions watching at home—

**Catherine West:** Free to air.

**Gavin Newlands:** On free-to-air television. I thank all Members present, even the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk—he is in *Hansard* now, so he has had a mention. I thank everyone present, and I look forward to further robust debate on Report.

**Nigel Huddleston:** I thank all hon. Members for their participation today, and I thank everyone else involved. The speed of progress today should not be misinterpreted as lack of scrutiny. We have had intense scrutiny in the Chamber and outside, in the House of Lords and on Second Reading. As testament to the preparation of my team, I should say that hon. Members did not get to hear all the speeches I had in my folder today. Maybe I can get them out at some other point.

I thank everybody for their engagement and involvement with what we know will be a fantastic games; they are something we can look forward to in these challenging times, as sport can unite the nation. I thank everybody who has been involved in their development to date, including the stakeholders, the organising committee and the partners of the games. I thank the parliamentary staff, the Doorkeepers, the Clerks, hon. Members here today and the public observing. I particularly thank the team at DCMS, who have worked hard pulling the Bill together, and, of course, you, Ms McDonagh—the vision of green today.

Thank you to everybody involved. We will continue the robust debate on many of the important issues raised today. I do not dismiss them; they are all valid topics for debate. We have a shared intent and purpose, and I look forward to working with everybody involved in the coming weeks and months.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill, as amended, accordingly to be reported.*

10.18 am

*Committee rose.*

**Written evidence reported to the House**

BCGB01 News Media Association

BCGB02 Advertising Association

BCGB03 Phillip Johnson

