

**Wednesday  
13 May 2020**

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Wednesday 13 May 2020**

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# House of Commons

Wednesday 13 May 2020

*The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock*

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

*The House entered into hybrid scrutiny proceedings (Order, 21 April).*

[NB: [V] denotes a Member participating virtually.]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### NORTHERN IRELAND

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### EU Office: Belfast

**Colum Eastwood** (Foyle) (SDLP): What discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Executive on the EU's request to establish an office in Belfast. [902570]

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis)**: I have regular discussions with the Executive on the protocol and wider matters, and I look forward to having further productive discussions with Ministers before the end of the transition period.

**Colum Eastwood** [V]: I thank the Secretary of State for his answer. But given the dismissive attitude of some in his Government on this particular issue, how can we in Northern Ireland have any confidence that he will faithfully implement the Northern Ireland protocol? Given all that is happening right now, is it not surely time to begin to agree to a transition period extension so that we can finally get a proper agreement on Brexit, which is, in our view, impossible to do at this time?

**Brandon Lewis**: There is no reason why the European Commission should be requiring a permanent presence in Belfast to monitor the implementation of the protocol. We are focused on our determination to ensure that we fulfil all of our obligations to deliver on the protocol. The best way we can give certainty and confidence for business is to follow through and deliver on our promise to make sure that we leave and have everything in place at the end of December this year.

#### Covid-19: Support for Businesses

**Dave Doogan** (Angus) (SNP): What steps he is taking to support businesses in Northern Ireland (a) during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) in preparation for the end of the transition period. [902572]

**Douglas Chapman** (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): What steps he is taking to support businesses in Northern Ireland (a) during the covid-19 outbreak and (b) in preparation for the end of the transition period. [902573]

**Rob Butler** (Aylesbury) (Con): What steps the Government has taken to support (a) businesses and (b) the self-employed in Northern Ireland during the covid-19 outbreak. [902584]

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis)**: The UK Government are backing businesses in Northern Ireland through UK-wide measures including the coronavirus job retention scheme and the self-employed income support scheme. In preparation for the end of the transition period, we are committed to implementing the protocol. That includes unfettered access for goods moving from Northern Ireland to Great Britain.

**Dave Doogan** [V]: The Secretary of State will already be aware of the vital cross-border trade and employment dynamics that existed pre-covid between counties such as Derry, Tyrone and Fermanagh and neighbouring County Donegal. What planning is taking place with the devolved Administration in Belfast and the Irish Government to ensure that the emergence from lockdown promotes an urgent regeneration of the crucial cross-border economy?

**Brandon Lewis**: The hon. Gentleman makes a very good point. We are very focused on the whole economy of Northern Ireland. In fact, one of the biggest and most financially well-supported growth deals in the whole of the United Kingdom is the one in Northern Ireland dealing with exactly these economic issues. I can assure him that I have regular meetings with the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister, and also co-chair a fortnightly meeting with the Republic of Ireland's Tánaiste, to be sure that we take, where appropriate and proper, a joined-up approach.

**Douglas Chapman** [V]: The Secretary of State will value the importance of lifeline ferry services, and the news of potentially 1,000 job losses at P&O is devastating. What assessment has he made regarding the impact of a reduction or loss of the P&O Cairnryan to Larne service, and what discussions has he had with P&O and the trade unions on safeguarding this vital link between Scotland and Northern Ireland?

**Brandon Lewis**: I was pleased to be able to announce only a week or two ago the £17 million package that we put in place to protect the five ferry routes to ensure that we keep connectivity for Northern Ireland with the rest of the United Kingdom. I have had conversations with P&O and other ferry operators just in the past few days.

**Rob Butler** [V]: Just as in my constituency of Aylesbury, small businesses and the self-employed are a vital part of the economy in Northern Ireland. As we move to the next stage of the coronavirus crisis, how will my right hon. Friend ensure that they have all the guidance and support that they need to regain lost trade and to flourish once more?

**Brandon Lewis:** My hon. Friend makes a really good and important point. Throughout the crisis, both I and the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Worcester (Mr Walker), have been in regular contact with businesses across Northern Ireland to ensure that we understand the pressures that they are facing, and to make sure that we can work with the Northern Ireland Executive to continue to focus on the economic recovery in the form that they need. He is quite right: wherever we are in the United Kingdom, including in Great Yarmouth, we have to make sure that we are focused on the small businesses that are often the heartbeat of our communities. We are also determined to make sure that we do that in partnership with the Northern Ireland Executive.

**Mr Speaker:** We go across to Louise Haigh, who is standing in as the temporary shadow Secretary of State, and wish Tony Lloyd well.

**Louise Haigh** (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab) [V]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Can I also send all our love and best wishes to my hon. Friend and predecessor, the Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd), who continues to make a recovery from covid-19?

The Secretary of State will regret, as I do, the disrespectful way in which the devolved nations were cut out of the Prime Minister's announcement on Sunday and the confusion that reigned across the UK as a result. Will he commit to ensuring that the Northern Ireland Executive are fully consulted and informed on the next phase of lockdown and future changes to messaging?

**Brandon Lewis:** I would like to offer the hon. Lady a warm welcome to her new role. I look forward to working with her for the benefit of the people of Northern Ireland. If you will indulge me briefly, Mr Speaker, I want to pay tribute to the hon. Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd), who served in his post admirably for over two years and through three different Secretaries of State; I hope that the hon. Lady only deals with one Secretary of State in her time in office. I was hugely pleased to hear of his recovery, and I am glad that he has decided to continue to represent the people of Manchester as he recovers, as he has done over the last four decades.

We are working with the devolved authorities. They have Ministers sitting on all the committees that are discussing issues around how we deal with coronavirus, and all the devolved authorities were present and part of the decisions made at the Cobra meeting on Sunday, ahead of the Prime Minister's announcement.

**Mr Speaker:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her permanent position.

**Louise Haigh:** Thank you, Mr Speaker; that was a very quick promotion.

As the Secretary of State said, not only is co-ordination across the UK important, but the unique situation in Northern Ireland means that co-operation with the Republic of Ireland is equally important. Can he explain why those in Northern Ireland who hold an Irish passport, as is their right under the Good Friday agreement, are still unable to check their eligibility for the self-employed support scheme, and can he commit to urgently rectify that problem before the scheme starts to pay out?

**Brandon Lewis:** We are aware of that issue, and I hope to be able to outline exactly how we are dealing with it very soon. It is something we are aware of and looking to rectify.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson** (Lagan Valley) (DUP) [V]: Further to the question from the hon. Member for Sheffield, Heeley (Louise Haigh), it is also the case that Northern Ireland citizens who hold a Northern Ireland driving licence cannot use that document to verify their claim for support from the self-employed income support scheme. Clearly, that is entirely wrong. It means that self-employed people in my constituency are being disadvantaged and cannot make their claim or have it verified. Will the Secretary of State liaise with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs and the Treasury to ensure that Northern Ireland driving licences are an acceptable document for the purposes of verification for the self-employed scheme?

**Brandon Lewis:** Yes, I am happy to work with the right hon. Gentleman to see whether we can find a logical, sensible and swift solution to that challenge.

**Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson:** Can the Secretary of State advise us what additional funding he is seeking to support the Northern Ireland economy, as we hopefully emerge from lockdown over the next few weeks and months? He will be aware of the situation with our economy, as with the economy across the United Kingdom. We are all anxious to know what additional support might be available from the Treasury for the recovery of our economy in Northern Ireland.

**Brandon Lewis:** The right hon. Gentleman makes a good point. It is hugely important that we are ready, as we come out of lockdown, to not just recover from the economic situation with coronavirus but then turbocharge the economy across the United Kingdom, and particularly in Northern Ireland to see the economy flourish and grow. We have given £1.2 billion to the Northern Ireland Executive through the Barnett consequential. That is on top of the UK-wide schemes, such as the job retention scheme. The Treasury and the Chancellor continue to look at everything we need to do to support businesses, people and every part of the United Kingdom as we come through this, and to ensure that we come out of it in a way that will allow our economy to re-flourish and grow in the future.

**Kirsten Oswald** (East Renfrewshire) (SNP) [V]: With covid-19 consuming so much effort internationally, does the Secretary of State agree that the EU simply will not indulge further UK Government brinkmanship on transition? The resulting cliff edge will be a step too far for many Northern Irish businesses, so why are his Government pushing ahead with their reckless timetable, despite widespread support across the political divide for an extension?

**Brandon Lewis:** I do not recognise the hon. Lady's reference to widespread support. The position of the British public, restated in December last year, is very clear—they want to see things done, so that we as a country can move forward. It is in both our interests and the EU's interests to be ready to move forward in January 2021. The best certainty we can give business,

which we are focused on, is unfettered access for Northern Ireland businesses to the rest of the UK, and we will do that through the Northern Ireland protocol.

### **Covid-19: Devolved Administrations**

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): What discussions he has had with his counterparts from the (a) devolved Administrations, (b) other administrations of the UK and (c) Republic of Ireland to facilitate (i) co-operation and (ii) mutual aid during the covid-19 outbreak. [902577]

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis)**: We are working closely with the devolved Administrations in our response to covid-19. As I have said, representatives from each Administration attend Cobra meetings, as well as the many detailed implementation groups that sit underneath the Cobra and Cabinet structure. The Tánaiste, the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and I also meet regularly, and we hope to do so again later this week. We agree that continued close contact and co-operation will rightly remain essential in the weeks and months ahead.

**Stephen Doughty** [V]: The contact tracing app that the UK Government are developing is apparently different from the one that the Irish Government are advocating, which may create significant difficulties not only on the island of Ireland but in relation to travel to and from the rest of the UK via, for example, Welsh, Scottish and English ports. What discussions has the Secretary of State had with the Northern Ireland Executive and the Irish Government on the proposed app, and what would he advise people in Northern Ireland to do?

**Brandon Lewis**: The app offers a huge opportunity to be an important part of our work as we come through covid-19 into exiting from this in a sensible and logical way and with awareness of how the virus has spread across the UK. It is important that people take part. I give a huge thank you to those who have been involved in work on the app.

I have been in conversations with the Irish Government—I spoke to the Tánaiste on this issue only a few days ago—as well as with the Northern Ireland Executive, to ensure that all our experts and chief medical officers are working together to ensure that we have a joined-up approach where practical, sensible and appropriate so that we get things working in a way that is good for the health of all the people of Ireland. I am focused on ensuring that the people of Northern Ireland get the best possible care.

### **Covid-19: The Union**

**Marco Longhi** (Dudley North) (Con): What assessment he has made of the role of the Union in response to the covid-19 outbreak. [902578]

**Mark Logan** (Bolton North East) (Con): What assessment he has made of the role of the Union in response to the covid-19 outbreak. [902580]

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis)**: We are working, and will continue to work, closely with all the devolved Administrations, who are

fully committed to suppressing the virus across the UK. Our response to covid-19 is a collective national effort. The Executive are following a science-led path, doing what is best for the people of Northern Ireland, recognising the overall approach that we are taking across the UK to fight this pandemic.

**Marco Longhi** [V]: Does my right hon. Friend agree with most people in Dudley and with me that we are stronger as one United Kingdom in responding to coronavirus? Will he let the House know whether the devolved Administration has improved outcomes for people in ways that we can share across the United Kingdom?

**Brandon Lewis**: My hon. Friend makes a good point. The short answer is, yes. This is a good example of how the United Kingdom has been stronger than any single part of it, so we are stronger together as a family. As I have said, we will continue to work closely with all the devolved Administrations. I remain in close contact with both the First and Deputy First Ministers of Northern Ireland to co-ordinate the response and share information and insights. That approach has been effective, allowing us to work together on issues of common concern, including the provision of personal protective equipment, while allowing plans to be tailored to ensure that they address the particular local situations that we all face.

**Mark Logan** [V]: Does the Secretary of State agree that whether in Bolton or Belfast our two time-tested institutions—the Union and the NHS—have exuded extraordinary heroism in the covid cataclysm that has swept the planet?

**Brandon Lewis**: Yes, and my hon. Friend's language is spot on. We have all seen how the NHS has responded with heroism and agility. I thank all key workers across the United Kingdom for their professionalism and dedication to looking after people. We have seen fantastic co-operation between all political parties in Northern Ireland and across the UK, and the devolved Governments have worked together in a way that is good for all parts of the United Kingdom as we tackle this crisis.

### **Withdrawal Agreement: Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol**

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): What progress he has made on the implementation of the Ireland/Northern Ireland Protocol in the Withdrawal Agreement. [902588]

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis)**: The Joint Committee met on 30 March and the Ireland/Northern Ireland Specialised Committee met on 30 April. The protocol has of course been part of those discussions. Our intention in implementing the protocol is to protect Northern Ireland's place in our United Kingdom and cement the huge gains that we have all seen from the peace process. We believe that it will be necessary to support business and the wider population in understanding the protocol before it comes into effect.

**Mr Harper** [V]: I thank the Secretary of State for that answer. He knows—he confirmed earlier in these exchanges—that Northern Ireland businesses will continue to have unfettered access to the rest of the United

Kingdom. The Prime Minister has made a commitment that we will not check goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. Can the Secretary of State set out a bit more detail for the House about the progress that has been made in implementing both those important commitments?

**Brandon Lewis:** My right hon. Friend is right. I want to put this in the clearest possible terms: Northern Ireland businesses will have unfettered access to the market of the United Kingdom and across GB. This is something, as he rightly points out, that many of my Cabinet colleagues and I have not just commented on publicly but about which we feel strongly. We look forward to delivering on that before the end of the year—we will deliver on that promise.

**Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab) [V]:** I heard what the Secretary of State said about the one-way unfettered access, but in 33 weeks Northern Ireland businesses will have to comply with EU customs and regulatory rules and two VAT systems. When will the Government let those businesses know exactly what they need to do to comply with the protocol in order to keep trading?

**Brandon Lewis:** We will ensure that businesses have plenty of time to be ready for January next year. One of the key parts of that is ensuring that we have unfettered access. We will not put borders down the Irish sea or anywhere else. Unfettered access is a hugely important part of respecting the Good Friday agreement, as well as the “New Decade, New Approach” deal. The best way for businesses to have fluidity of access to the market is to have unfettered access. That is what we are determined to deliver, and that is what we will do.

#### Legacy Issues

**Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab):** What plans he has to bring forward legislative proposals to tackle Northern Ireland legacy issues; and whether those proposals will require cross-community support. [902594]

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Brandon Lewis):** I recently published a written ministerial statement setting out the way forward on the legacy of the past in Northern Ireland. We have begun engagement with the Northern Ireland parties, the Irish Government and other key stakeholders, with a firm focus on finding consensus on the detail of the proposals, which will allow us to move forward.

**Sarah Jones [V]:** The Victims’ Commissioner said:

“The aim of addressing the legacy of the past must be to build a better future”.

Why did the Secretary of State, in that spirit, not consult with key organisations such as the Commission for Victims and Survivors before publishing his statement on 18 March? Does he agree that victims must be at the heart of the proposal, and that any proposals must have their full support?

**Brandon Lewis:** Colleagues will appreciate that it was appropriate to lay the written ministerial statement before Parliament first. That is the process of how we work in this House, but I say to the hon. Lady that I have been engaging with victims groups, as has my Minister of State, and I will continue to do so. I have

spoken directly to victims groups, which are an important part of the process. I gently say to the hon. Lady that the WMS very clearly references the importance of ensuring that we do the right thing for victims. They are absolutely at the heart of this, and it is important that they are.

#### Covid-19: Personal Protective Equipment

**Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab):** What assessment he has made of the adequacy of the supply of personal protective equipment to Northern Ireland from the UK procurement system during the covid-19 outbreak. [902568]

**Mr Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab):** What assessment he has made of the adequacy of the supply of personal protective equipment to Northern Ireland from the UK procurement system during the covid-19 outbreak. [902591]

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr Robin Walker):** The UK Government and the Executive have committed to ensuring that those on the frontline in responding to covid-19 are provided with the critical PPE that they need to do their job safely. As part of our UK-wide approach, the Government have allocated around 5.5 million items of PPE to Northern Ireland, which in turn has sent 250,000 gowns to the rest of the UK.

**Ian Lavery [V]:** Earlier this week, Moy Park, which is the largest manufacturing employer in Northern Ireland, sadly experienced the tragic covid-19-related death of a valuable worker, meat packer, Unite member and human being. Everyone should expect to return home safely after a day’s work. Given what the Minister just said, is he happy with the adequacy of the supply of PPE from the UK to Northern Ireland? Perhaps people in Northern Ireland are not. Also, when will resources be provided to ensure that all frontline workers in high-risk sectors, such as poultry and meat processing, will finally be safe at work?

**Mr Walker:** First, let me say that every death from covid-19 is a tragedy for the individuals and their families, so let me pass on my condolences to the family involved in this particular case. Of course, PPE is an important part of the equation, as are proper social distancing guidelines, and it is important that businesses such as Moy Park follow the social distancing guidelines, as I am assured that they have been.

**Mr Morgan [V]:** Like those in other parts of the UK, including my constituency, care homes in Northern Ireland have been overlooked, with PPE not sufficiently reaching them. What discussions has the Minister had with the Northern Ireland Executive on the distribution of PPE to ensure that our most vulnerable and frontline workers are protected in this crisis?

**Mr Walker:** The hon. Gentleman raises an important point. The Northern Ireland Executive has been distributing PPE to the care home sector. Part of the 5.5 million items of PPE that the UK Government have been making available to Northern Ireland has been deployed in that sector, but it is an absolute priority that we

continue to get a grip on the issue of care homes. I know that that is a priority for the Executive as well as for the UK Government.

**Mr Speaker:** I welcome back the Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, Simon Hoare.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): The recent events of covid-19 have underscored the fragility of international supply chains, certainly with regards to PPE, when international demand is very high. Would my hon. Friend undertake at the appropriate time to discuss with his counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Westminster the opportunity to grow this important area of our economy, thereby creating future jobs and enabling us to produce enough PPE in this country with a UK badge?

**Mr Walker:** My hon. Friend, the Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, makes an important point. Of course, it is vital that we work on the international procurement effort with the devolved Administrations, as we have been, but it is also essential that we maintain our domestic supply. I pay tribute to businesses in Northern Ireland, such as Denroy Plastics, which the Secretary of State spoke to yesterday, and O'Neills, which he visited just before the outbreak and which has switched over its production lines to producing vitally needed PPE and is making a huge contribution already.

#### **Air Connectivity: Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

**Gareth Davies** (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to safeguard air passenger routes between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. [902569]

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): What steps he is taking to ensure that air connectivity continues between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. [902582]

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr Robin Walker):** The Government are committed to maintaining air connectivity between Great Britain and Northern Ireland during these unprecedented times. That is why we worked with the Executive to provide a £5.7 million financial support package to City of Derry and Belfast City Airports to ensure that services to and from London will continue.

**Gareth Davies** [V]: Does the Minister agree that the Government's £5.7 million investment in maintaining air passenger flights is an important step in ensuring that that vital support link is maintained so that, post covid, we continue to strengthen the economic links between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom?

**Mr Walker:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This support package is key to safeguarding vital connectivity, providing links to Northern Ireland's key economic zones. As he knows, Northern Ireland benefits enormously from the Union with Great Britain, which is Northern Ireland's main market for sales and tourism. We want to further strengthen these ties to support the movement of medical supplies and key workers and to assist with Northern Ireland's economic recovery from this crisis.

**Sammy Wilson** [V]: Given the integration between the Northern Ireland economy and the GB economy, air connectivity is vital to any recovery plan out of this health crisis, yet it has practically stopped at present. Will the Minister commit first to continue support for our airports, including Belfast International, secondly to work towards the abolition of air passenger duty, which adds substantially to costs, and thirdly to give every encouragement to present airlines and prospective carriers to open routes quickly again?

**Mr Walker:** The hon. Gentleman makes some excellent points. It is vital that we continue to prioritise connectivity. As he knows, we stepped in where necessary to protect connectivity that might otherwise have been lost. Ministers agree that at this stage Belfast International is financially stable, but we will certainly keep that under review and continue to work closely with the Executive on all those issues.

#### **Ferry Crossings**

**Sarah Atherton** (Wrexham) (Con): What steps the Government is taking to support the continuation of ferry crossings between Great Britain and Northern Ireland during the covid-19 outbreak. [902571]

**Virginia Crosbie** (Ynys Môn) (Con): What steps the Government is taking to support the continuation of ferry crossings between Great Britain and Northern Ireland during the covid-19 outbreak. [902575]

**Dr James Davies** (Vale of Clwyd) (Con): What steps the Government is taking to support the continuation of ferry crossings between Great Britain and Northern Ireland during the covid-19 outbreak. [902583]

**The Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office (Mr Robin Walker):** The Government have, together with the Northern Ireland Executive, made available a financial package of up to £17 million to keep critical freight routes open between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This reflects the huge importance of these connections and ensures essential goods, such as food and medicines, will continue to flow.

**Sarah Atherton** [V]: The Belfast-Liverpool ferry is vital to businesses in Wrexham. Does my hon. Friend agree that free-flowing trade between Northern Ireland and Great Britain is of great benefit to the Union, which is why the Government's success in keeping Northern Ireland part of the UK customs union is beneficial to us all?

**Mr Walker:** I totally agree with my hon. Friend. This package helps ensure that we keep freight capacity between Northern Ireland and Great Britain. The funding will help to maintain the flow of critical goods across the Irish Sea and throughout the Union. And yes this underlines the importance of keeping Northern Ireland part of the UK customs union, so that goods needed in Northern Ireland and Great Britain can continue to flow freely.

**Virginia Crosbie** [V]: The Government have acted swiftly to protect ferry services between Northern Ireland and Great Britain, and I welcome the measures they

have put in place. Many businesses here on Ynys Môn rely on goods coming to and from Northern Ireland and Liverpool. Will he continue to monitor the wider economic impact of services on north Wales, given its close proximity to Liverpool?

**Mr Walker:** Each route is integral to the supply of critical goods within the United Kingdom. Public service obligations are an established mechanism for supporting routes and are being used here to temporarily support routes affected by covid-19. The Government continue to engage closely with operators and ports on the Irish sea and we will continue to listen and take appropriate steps at the right time to protect critical supply routes, wherever they are.

**Dr James Davies [V]:** Can the Minister confirm that keeping these ferry routes open is sustaining the supply chain of food and medical supplies that are so vitally needed on both sides of the crossing, including in the Vale of Clwyd?

**Mr Walker:** Absolutely, yes, and I think the exchange of PPE that was referred to in earlier answers to questions is a good example of that, where both GB has benefited from those connections to Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland has benefited from those connections to Great Britain.

## PRIME MINISTER

*The Prime Minister was asked—*

### Engagements

[902618] **Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con):** If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 13 May.

**The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):** Yesterday was International Nurses' Day and I know that the whole House would want to thank the nurses, and also the care staff and key workers, for their tireless work in responding to the covid-19 pandemic. Sadly, 144 NHS workers' and 131 social care workers' deaths have been reported as involving covid-19. Our thoughts are with their families and friends. Yesterday, this House learnt of the tragic death of Belly Mujinga—the fact that she was abused for doing her job is utterly appalling. My thoughts, and I am sure the thoughts of the whole House, are with her family.

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.

**Ruth Edwards [V]:** Green investments generated the highest returns in the recovery from the 2008 financial crisis. As we restart our economy, will my right hon. Friend commit to prioritising investment in low-carbon infrastructure, such as the electric vehicle charge point network and renewable energy production, which will also help the UK to meet its net zero target by 2050?

**The Prime Minister:** Yes, and to encourage the take-up of electric vehicles, we are putting a further £1 billion into EV infrastructure across the country to prevent range anxiety for those who use EVs.

**Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab):** I join the Prime Minister in thanking our nurses and all those on the frontline, and send my condolences to all the families of those who have died of coronavirus, including Belly Mujinga, as the Prime Minister referenced—a ticket officer who we learned this week died from covid-19 in awful circumstances.

In his speech on Sunday, the Prime Minister said that we need to rapidly reverse the awful epidemic in our care homes, but earlier this year, and until 12 March, the Government's own official advice was—and I am quoting from it:

“It remains very unlikely that people receiving care in a care home...will become infected.”

Yesterday's Office for National Statistics figures showed that at least 40% of all deaths from covid-19 were in care homes. Does the Prime Minister accept that the Government were too slow to protect people in care homes?

**The Prime Minister:** No, Mr Speaker, and it was not true that the advice said that—and actually, we brought the lockdown in care homes ahead of the general lockdown, and what we have seen is a concerted action plan to tackle what has unquestionably been an appalling epidemic in care homes, and a huge exercise in testing is going on—a further £600 million, I can announce today, for infection control in care homes. Yes, it is absolutely true that the number of casualties has been too high, but I can tell the House, as I told the right hon. and learned Gentleman last week and, indeed, this week, that the number of outbreaks is down and the number of fatalities in care homes is now well down. There is much more to do, but we are making progress.

**Keir Starmer:** I am surprised that the Prime Minister queries the advice of his own Government up until 12 March. I do, of course, welcome any fall in the recorded numbers, and he is right to reference that, but he must still recognise that the numbers are still very high.

This week, *The Daily Telegraph* carried the following quote from a cardiologist:

“We discharged known, suspected, and unknown cases into care homes which were unprepared, with no formal warning that the patients were infected, no testing available, and no PPE to prevent transmission. We actively seeded this into the very population that was most vulnerable.”

Does the Prime Minister accept that the cardiologist is right?

**The Prime Minister:** I have the utmost respect for all our medical professionals, who are doing an extraordinary job in very difficult circumstances. I can tell the House that the number of discharges from hospitals into care homes actually went down in March and April, and we had a system of testing people going into care homes. That testing is now being ramped up across all 15,000 care homes in this country.

**Keir Starmer:** I want to probe a little further the figures that the Prime Minister has given us. The Office for National Statistics records the average number of deaths in care homes each month. For the past five years, the average for April has been just over 8,000. This year, the number of deaths in care homes in April



was a staggering 26,000. That is three times the average and an additional 18,000 deaths. Using the Government's figures, only 8,000 are recorded as covid deaths, leaving 10,000 additional and unexplained care home deaths this April. I know that the Government must have looked into that, so can the Prime Minister give us the Government's view on those unexplained deaths?

**The Prime Minister:** The coronavirus is an appalling disease which afflicts some groups far more than others—I think the whole country understands that—in particular the elderly, and the right hon. and learned Gentleman is right to draw attention, as I have said, to the tragedy that has been taking place in care homes. The ONS is responsible for producing its data, and the Government have also produced data which shows not only that there has been, as I say, a terrible epidemic in care homes, but that since the care homes action plan began we are seeing an appreciable and substantial reduction not just in the number of outbreaks, but in the number of deaths. I stress to the House and to the country that solving the problem in care homes is going to be absolutely critical—getting the R down not just in care homes, but across the country—to our ability to move forward as a nation with the stepped programme that I announced on Sunday. We must fix it, and we will.

**Keir Starmer:** The Prime Minister says that solving the problem in care homes is crucial, but that can happen only if the numbers are understood, so I was disappointed that he does not have an answer to the pretty obvious question: what are those 10,000 unexplained deaths?

The overall figure for those who have died from covid-19 given by the Government at yesterday's press conference was 32,692—each one a tragedy. For many weeks, the Government have compared the UK number against other countries. Last week, I showed the Prime Minister his own slide showing that the UK now has the highest death total in Europe and the second highest in the world. A version of the slide has been shown at the No. 10 press conference every day since 30 March—that is seven weeks. Yesterday, the Government stopped publishing the international comparison, and the slide has gone. Why?

**The Prime Minister:** As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows very well, the UK has been going through an unprecedented, once-in-a-century epidemic. He seeks to make comparisons with other countries that I am advised are premature, because the correct and final way of making these comparisons will be when we have all the excess death totals for all the relevant countries. We do not yet have that data. Now, I am not going to try to pretend to the House that the figures, when they are finally confirmed, are anything other than stark and deeply, deeply horrifying. This has been an appalling epidemic.

What I can tell the House is that we are getting those numbers down: the number of deaths is coming down; the number of hospital admissions is coming down. Thanks to the hard work of the British people in reducing the R and reducing the number of fatalities, we are now in a position to make some small, modest steps to begin to come out of some of the very restrictive measures that we have had. I think that people do understand what we are trying to do as a country. As for

the international comparisons that the right hon. and learned Gentleman seeks to draw now, he will have to contain his impatience.

**Keir Starmer:** Well, I am baffled. It is not me seeking to draw the comparisons; these are the Government's slides, which have been used for seven weeks to reassure the public. The problem with the Prime Minister's answer is that it is pretty obvious that for seven weeks—when we did not have the highest number in Europe—the slides were used for comparison purposes, and as soon as we hit that unenviable place, they have been dropped. Last week the Prime Minister quoted, in defence, Professor Spiegelhalter. This is what Professor Spiegelhalter said at the weekend, and we need to think about it:

“we should...use other countries to try and learn why our numbers are high”.

Dropping the comparisons means dropping the learning, and that is the real risk.

Let me now ask the Prime Minister about the changes coming into effect today. A real concern for many people is childcare. I want to quote a mother of a young child. I apologise that the quotation is a little lengthy, but it reflects the queries that all Members of this House will have been getting. She says this: “As Boris said in his speech, people are encouraged to go back to work, meaning my partner, as he works in construction. My partner has explained to his boss this can't happen because we've got no childcare. He also rang the nursery, but they're not open. I work as well, but my boss is having none of it. I hope I can get some advice. Me and my partner have been so stressed all day.” What advice would the Prime Minister give her?

**The Prime Minister:** On the right hon. and learned Gentleman's earlier point about not learning from other countries—nothing could be further from the truth. We are watching intently what is happening in other countries, and it is very notable that in some other countries where relaxations have been introduced, there are signs of the R going up again. That is a very clear warning to us not to proceed too fast or too recklessly. I hope that the country does understand that.

On the specific point, which the right hon. and learned Gentleman rightly raises, about people's anxieties about going back to work when they do not have adequate childcare, I think that I was very clear—both with him and with the House earlier in the week—that in so far as people may not be able to go back to work because they do not have the childcare that they need, their employers must be understanding. As I said, it is clearly an impediment and a barrier to people's ability to go back to work if they do not have childcare. I would be very happy to look at the specific case that he raises to see if there is anything more that we can do to shed light on the matter.

**Keir Starmer:** I am grateful to the Prime Minister for indicating that he will look into that particular case. It is, I think, one of very many.

The Prime Minister is asking the country to support decisions that will affect millions of lives. I recognise that these are not easy decisions; they are very difficult, balanced decisions that the Prime Minister and the Government have to make, and, after the confusion of the last few days, gaining public confidence in them is crucial. The Prime Minister says that his decisions were “driven by the science, the data and public health”,

so, to give the public confidence in the decisions, can the Prime Minister commit to publishing the scientific advice on which they were based?

**The Prime Minister:** All Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies advice is published in due course, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows. Let me be absolutely clear with the House that SAGE, our scientists and our medical officers have been involved in every stage of preparing this strategy. I remind the House that what we are doing is entirely conditional and provisional. The UK has made a huge amount of progress.

The people of this country have worked incredibly hard to get the R down, and we cannot now go back to square one. We cannot risk a second outbreak, and we will do everything to avoid that.

Actually, when people look at what we are advocating as the way forward, the stepped process that we have set out, I think they can see exactly what we are trying to do as a country, and they can see that everybody is still required to obey the social distancing rules. The common sense of the British people got us through that first phase of this disease: I am absolutely confident that they will get us through the next as well.

[902622] **Philip Dunne** (Ludlow) (Con) [V]: My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister is well aware of the impact of air pollution on health outcomes, especially affecting those with respiratory diseases such as covid-19. Will he therefore reaffirm his commitment to tackling global emissions and the COP26 global climate conference to help to protect our people and our planet in future?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my right hon. Friend for what he does to champion the environment and the cause of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. Alas, we have had to postpone the COP26 summit that was to have taken place, as he knows, in Glasgow at the end of this year. But our enthusiasm and determination to get to net zero by 2050 remain undiminished.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP) [V]: May I begin by thanking all our nurses for their efforts in keeping us safe and looking after us, and applaud yesterday's International Nurses Day?

Last week, the Prime Minister, in response to my questioning, noted the ability of the Governments of all four nations to come together and to deliver a very clear message for our people. Events on Sunday could not have been more disastrous from this Government. The Prime Minister has made confusion costly, devolved Administrations have been shut out, there is widespread confusion among the public, and the Government have shown a total disregard for workers' safety. Many, sadly, have seen the images of London buses being packed this morning. Will the Prime Minister accept that the clear message in Scotland is to stay home to protect the NHS and to save lives?

**The Prime Minister:** Indeed, the message throughout the country is, of course, that you should stay at home if you can, unless the specific circumstances that we have outlined apply. But I must say that I do not accept the leader of the SNP's characterisation of the co-operation that we have had across all four nations. In my experience, it has been intense and it has been going on for

days and days and weeks and weeks, and actually if we look at the totality of the measures that we are taking as a country, there is much more that unites us than divides us. We will go forward together.

**Ian Blackford:** The reality is that the Prime Minister has failed to deliver a clear message, and he did not address the point about London buses being packed this morning. The Prime Minister is threatening progress made against the spread of this virus by the general public who are following the advice to stay at home. The Prime Minister is putting workers' safety at risk by calling on those who cannot work at home to go to their jobs without any guidance on health and safety.

Only last Monday, the Health Secretary launched the test and trace app trial. On Sunday, the Prime Minister appeared to leapfrog any success with that by announcing easing of restrictions. Before any lockdown easing and to avoid undermining the progress made so far, the Prime Minister must make sure that there are sufficient levels of testing available, and the ability to test, trace and isolate is fully in operation. Why is the Prime Minister throwing weeks of progress against the virus into jeopardy, undermining the work of our outstanding NHS?

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. Gentleman raises a point about London buses that is quite right, and I do not want to see crowding on mass-transit public transport in our capital or anywhere else. We are working actively with Transport for London to ensure that we have more capacity and discourage people from going to work during the peak, and that the operators, particularly TfL, lay on more tube trains in particular when they are necessary throughout the day. A huge amount of work is being done. We also want to see proper marshalling at stations to prevent crowded trains.

On the right hon. Gentleman's point about test, track and trace, that is going to be a huge operation for the entire country. He should pay tribute to the work of all those hundreds of thousands of people who are now responsible for massively escalating our test, track and tracing operation. We now test more than virtually any other country in Europe. The rate of acceleration—the rate of increase—has been very sharp indeed, and we will go up to 200,000 by the end of the month. The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right that the success of the programme is absolutely vital if we are to be able to move on to the second and third steps of our road map.

[902623] **Julian Smith** (Skipton and Ripon) (Con) [V]: More than 5,000 rough sleepers—90% of the homeless population in the UK—are now in temporary accommodation as a result of action taken by the Government at the start of this crisis. Will the Prime Minister commit to providing all funds necessary and taking all action needed to ensure that this positive way of dealing with the homelessness crisis can be made permanent and that each of those individuals can be given a long-term home?

**The Prime Minister:** As my right hon. Friend knows, it is this Government's ambition to end rough sleeping by 2024. It is great to see the progress that has been made even in this very difficult time—as he says, 90% of rough sleepers are now in accommodation or have been

offered accommodation. We will be investing considerable sums to make sure that we build the housing and address the social issues to tackle that problem for good.

**Sir Edward Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD) [V]: I thank the Government for listening to representations from the Liberal Democrats and others on protecting jobs by extending the scheme yesterday. Will the Government now do the same for the self-employed? People such as cleaners, childminders, taxi drivers and hairdressers have all seen their incomes devastated and are only now able to apply for help for the past three months, but millions of these families now have no help in the future. Surely self-employed people must have their support extended, too.

**The Prime Minister:** I admire the right hon. Gentleman's brilliant attempt to take the credit from my right hon. Friend the Chancellor for his extension of the coronavirus job retention scheme, which has been one of the most extraordinary features of this country's—our collective—response to the crisis. The right hon. Gentleman is right to draw attention to the position of the self-employed; we are making sure that they get payments, over three months, of up to £7,500 as well.

[902628] **Dr Jamie Wallis** (Bridgend) (Con) [V]: I congratulate the Prime Minister on being straight with the British people and spelling out a clear and cautious roadmap to the lifting of the lockdown measures in England. Unfortunately for my constituents in Bridgend, the Welsh Government have not set out any such plan or vision. Does he agree that the people of Wales deserve a Government who are honest and clear about the road ahead?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend very much, and I agree with him, but whatever the defects of the Labour Government in Wales, my experience is that we have been working very well together across all the four nations and will continue to do so. My honest view is that all those who talk about confusion or mixed messages are grossly overstating the position. The common sense of the British people is shining through this argument. They can see where we want to go and where we need to go.

[902619] **John Spellar** (Warley) (Lab): At the end of March, I asked the Prime Minister to help the thousands of our people stranded abroad, notably in south Asia and especially in the Punjab. Grudgingly, and much slower than other countries, the Foreign Office organised flights back, but many are still stranded. Furthermore, the FCO now seems to be washing its hands of those with indefinite leave to remain, even though they may have lived and worked here for years and are the husbands, wives, parents and grandparents of British citizens. Some have described it as another Windrush scandal waiting to happen. Will Prime Minister will sort this out?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his question. He actually nabbed me behind the Speaker's Chair after he last put it to me. I can tell him that we estimate that 1.3 million British nationals have now been returned. I know that he would like the RAF to be more involved, but I can also tell him that we have put £75 million into a charter arrangement, and

a whole range of airlines have signed up to it. We are doing everything that we can to bring people back as fast as we can.

[902629] **Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): Last week, the arrogant, incompetent and vindictive Electoral Commission suffered its final humiliation. For four long years, it has investigated and hounded four people from four different Leave organisations, making their lives and their families' lives hell. Last week, the police said that they were totally innocent and had done nothing wrong. Prime Minister, for the sake of democracy, will you ensure that that politically corrupt, totally biased and morally bankrupt quango is abolished?

**The Prime Minister:** As ever, I hear what my hon. Friend says about the Electoral Commission. What I can say is that, for the people who were investigated, I hope that all those who spent so much time, energy and effort drawing attention to their supposed guilt will now spend as much time and energy and ink and air time drawing attention to their genuine innocence.

[902620] **David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP) [V]: As we moved into lockdown, some of Glasgow's vulnerable asylum seekers were moved from safe accommodation into city hotels where social distancing is harder to enforce. It is clear that the Home Office is not currently doing enough to protect and look after those who seek refuge in our city. Will the Prime Minister urgently trigger a full Home Office review of the support being provided to asylum seekers and ensure that they work with key partners in the council so that they are not left destitute once the lockdown is lifted?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman draws attention to a very important issue. We will make sure that nobody in this country, let alone asylum seekers, is ill-treated. I shall certainly be investigating the matter to which he refers, but am happy to write to him.

[902631] **Fay Jones** (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con) [V]: Next week should have seen the beginning of the Hay-on-Wye literary festival, but, as we are currently closed to visitors, Hay has shown true Welsh innovation by moving its festival online this year. Will the Prime Minister join me in thanking those tourist businesses that have acted in the national interest to protect public health and remind our visitors that, once the Welsh Government publish their exit plan, Brecon and Radnorshire will be able to welcome them back again very soon?

**The Prime Minister:** I am sorry that the wonderful festival at Hay-on-Wye has had to be postponed this year. I thank my hon. Friend for what she is doing to promote it, and I congratulate the organisers on their typical Welsh ingenuity in making the festival online, turning it into Hay-on-Wifi.

[902621] **Stewart Hosie** (Dundee East) (SNP) [V]: Both covid and Brexit are suppressing trade and damaging jobs and the economy and while we hope that, as covid ends, global trade will bounce back, there is no guarantee that that will happen quickly. The Prime Minister could mitigate some of this damage by seeking an extension of the Brexit transitional period. Will he explain to the House why he is being so negligent in not seeking that transitional extension now?

**The Prime Minister:** As I have said, one of the most remarkable things about this crisis has been the way that the whole country has come together to deal with it. There has been a spirit of unity and sharing that we have not seen for a very long time. I do not think that a lot of people in this country want to see the Brexit argument reopened. They want to see it settled, they want to see it done, and that is what this Government intend to do.

[902632] **Simon Baynes** (Clwyd South) (Con) [V]: The hospitality and tourism businesses in my constituency of Clwyd South are vital for the health of the local economy, of which a very good example is the Llangollen steam railway. Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating the railway on its current restructuring and fundraising campaign designed to see it through the coronavirus crisis? After the crisis is over, will he please hop on board one of its steam trains when he is next in Llangollen?

**The Prime Minister:** I have a picture at home of myself and William Hague aboard the Llangollen steam railway, I am proud to say. I congratulate the group on what they are doing to raise funds. I have no doubt that they have a glorious future ahead with my hon. Friend's support.

[902625] **Neil Gray** (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP) [V]: I have a number of cases where employers are refusing to furlough staff, either because they do not understand or are unwilling to follow the guidance. Seventeen-year-old Ben Edgar has now found himself without a job or furlough support and is classed as ineligible for social security because of his age. The employer is refusing to engage with my correspondence. For such cases, will the Prime Minister consider a furlough appeals process to assist employees, ex-employees and employers to ensure that people are treated fairly, according to the guidance, to save unnecessary redundancies or hardship?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Gentleman is making an excellent point. If he could send me details, we will be very happy to take up the case that he describes.

**Kate Griffiths** (Burton) (Con) [V]: In Burton and Uttoxeter, and across the country, we have seen the incredible dedication of our NHS workers in dealing with covid-19—dedication that has tragically cost some their lives. What steps is the Prime Minister taking to ensure that the NHS is adhering to Public Health England calls to risk-assess black, Asian and minority ethnic staff on the frontline and where possible to make appropriate arrangements to move them to non-patient facing roles?

**Mr Speaker:** I think the question was about staff in the NHS.

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend. I think I understood very clearly what she was saying. It is obvious from the data that coronavirus, as I said earlier, is falling disproportionately on certain groups, and not just the elderly. We need to examine exactly what is happening. We need to protect all the most vulnerable groups, and we will take steps to ensure that NHS staff and others are properly protected, advised and screened.

[902626] **Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green) [V]: Last week, climate experts reported that green economic recovery packages deliver far higher returns than conventional stimulus spending. They also warned that how we emerge from this coronavirus crisis must not be in a way that deepens the climate and nature emergencies. Does the Prime Minister agree? Will he commit to action that will help us to build back better, and start by confirming that any airline queuing up for a taxpayer handout must be required to meet robust climate goals?

**The Prime Minister:** I think the best and shortest answer I can give to the hon. Lady is that we totally understand the situation with aviation. Clearly, inadvertently this year the planet will greatly reduce its carbon dioxide emissions, and she is absolutely right that we need to entrench those gains. I do not want to see us going back to an era of the same type of emissions as we have had in the past. Aviation, like every other sector, must keep its carbon lower. We are certainly working on technological solutions to ensure that we can do that.

**Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister join me in paying fulsome tribute to all the staff at Stepping Hill Hospital, particularly those caring for patients with covid-19? Does he recognise that many people have not been attending hospital as usual? How will he be assisting hospitals, such as Stepping Hill, in ensuring that my constituents can access healthcare as usual?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend. One of the most important features of the way this country responded to the epidemic was that we did protect the NHS. We maintained capacity in the NHS throughout. Nobody went without a ventilator. There was space in intensive care units throughout the crisis, but we have a situation now, as he rightly says, where too many people are not going to hospital or the doctor to seek the treatment they need and deserve. I certainly encourage people with conditions that need medical treatment to go and get that treatment now. That will help us to reduce deaths this year and throughout the crisis.

## Covid-19: School Reopening

12.34 pm

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Education if he will make a statement on his Department's plans to reopen schools as part of the Government's covid-19 recovery strategy.

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Secretary of State, who should speak for no more than three minutes.

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):** Mr Speaker, I am grateful to you for granting this urgent question. We had requested to make a statement this week, but Members will understand that there are restrictions on the number of statements, so I am grateful to the hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran) for the opportunity to answer questions today.

It is over seven weeks since we asked schools, colleges and childcare settings to close to all but vulnerable children and those of critical workers. This has been a huge ask of teachers and parents, but the greatest impact of all has fallen on children themselves. I am immensely grateful for the response of all those working in education, childcare and children's social care, but we all know that the best place for children to be educated and to learn is in school, and it has always been my intention to get more of them back there as soon as the scientific advice allowed.

As the Prime Minister has confirmed, we are now past the peak of the virus, and he has set out a roadmap for the next phases of our recovery. If progress continues to be made, we expect that, from 1 June at the earliest, we will be able to begin a phased return to school, college and childcare for children in key transition years, alongside our priority groups. Primary schools will be asked to welcome back reception, year 1 and year 6 children in smaller class sizes. Nurseries and other early years providers, including childminders, will be able to begin welcoming back children of all ages. Secondary schools and colleges will be asked to provide face-to-face support for years 10 and 12, who are due to take key exams in the next year.

On Monday, my Department published initial guidance for settings on how to begin to prepare, and we will work with the sector leaders to develop this further in the coming weeks. This guidance sets out protective measures to minimise the risk of infection, including restricting class sizes and limiting mixing between groups. Crucially, all children and staff will have access to testing if they develop symptoms of coronavirus. This will enable a track-and-trace approach to be taken to any confirmed cases.

We continue to follow the best medical and scientific advice, and we believe that this phased return is the most sensible course of action to take. I know that it will be challenging, but I know that nursery school and college staff will do everything in their power to start welcoming our children back to continue their education.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Layla Moran, who is asked to speak for no more than two minutes.

**Layla Moran [V]:** We need to get our children back to school at the earliest opportunity. Every day that schools remain shut, the disadvantage gap widens and vulnerable children risk falling through the cracks. However, we should reopen schools only when we know it is safe. Given that we still do not know about transmissibility between children, can the Secretary of State reassure us that these decisions are based solely on public health? To what extent has getting parents back to work been the main driver?

What of teacher safety? The chief medical officer has said that there still needs to be a debate on that issue, so does the Secretary of State not think it irresponsible to publish plans and suggest timetables without disclosing all the scientific advice? Will he commit to publishing it today? Why were not all major teaching unions consulted on the specifics of the decision to make sure that it is workable? The guidance says that risk assessments should be carried out before schools open, and I welcome that. Will these be made public, as with businesses? When can we expect further guidance on travel?

If a school leader decides it is not safe to reopen, will the Secretary of State respect that? He says that reasonable endeavours must be made to deliver the curriculum. Will he now set out his expectations of that, given how varied it has been among schools so far? Can he clarify what "some face-to-face" contact for years 10 and 12 actually means? Will he guarantee that every child in all year groups who needs access to devices or the internet will get it, and when will we know about future exams?

Finally, it is obvious to anyone that children in reception and year 1 cannot socially distance. The Secretary of State says that the safety of children and staff is "our utmost priority", so can he tell us, in plain English, what does he think "safe" actually means?

**Gavin Williamson:** I thank the hon. Lady for her questions; I am glad that she recognises the importance of ensuring that children are back getting their education in schools at the earliest possible moment. When we have medical and scientific advice saying that it is the right time to start bringing schools back in a phased and controlled manner, it seems only the right thing to do, and only the responsible thing to do, for many of the reasons that she has highlighted. In terms of pulling our guidance together, we have worked closely with all the teaching unions and headteachers' unions and with the sector. Every week we have had the opportunity to meet them, and I have ensured that my officials have made time to sit down with them and talk about their issues and concerns. This is what has informed and developed the guidance that we have shared with schools.

In terms of the hierarchy of controls that we have developed to ensure that the risk of transmission of coronavirus is minimised within schools, we understood that the advice we needed to seek was not within the Department for Education but within Public Health England, and we have also been working with the scientific and medical advisers, who have been informing what the Government do every step of the way. That is why, when we created the hierarchy of controls about creating safe bubbles for children, teachers and support staff to work in, it was informed by them.

So why are we bringing schools back? The reason that we are bringing schools back is that we know that children benefit from being educated by their brilliant

[Gavin Williamson]

teachers in front of them. We recognise that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are the ones who will suffer most if we do not bring schools back when we are able to do so. I am more than happy to share all the advice that we have received from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies. SAGE regularly publishes its advice and when it is ready to do so, it will be sharing it again. We have also asked the scientific advisers to give briefings for the sector to ensure that it understands that the decisions that we are making to bring back children are based on the best interests of the children, including by ensuring that they do not miss out on something that is so precious: their education.

**Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con) [V]:** I strongly welcome the approach that the Secretary of State is taking in getting children back to school in a phased way. I understand that schools will not officially be open in the summer, but given that close to 90% of vulnerable children are not in education, and that figures from the Sutton Trust suggest that at least 50% of pupils did not communicate with their teachers in the first week of April, will my right hon. Friend support the opening of summer schools over the holidays, to be staffed by volunteers, graduates and an army of retired teachers, to provide catch-up tuition to those children who have been left behind?

**Gavin Williamson:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that we need to do everything we can to help children who will not have the benefit of returning to school before the summer holidays, and to support them, to give them that extra boost to ensure that they are learning all the things that they want to learn. He is right to highlight the many thousands of volunteers who want to reach out to help our children to have the knowledge they will need to succeed in the future. We are looking closely at such schemes, and working with schools and with the sector to see how we can make them available. I very much value my right hon. Friend's advice, insight and thoughts on this, and we are looking at how we can mobilise the schemes.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Rebecca Long Bailey, who is asked to speak for no more than two minutes.

**Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab):** We all desperately want schools to reopen for the sake of children's education and wellbeing, but the Secretary of State must appreciate that the guidance provided so far does not yet give the clear assurances over safety that are needed. Anxious shielding families, worried grandparents, teaching staff in fear—sadly, this sums up the theme of the past 48 hours. I hope that, to allay these concerns, he can address the following issues today.

Will the Secretary of State consider changing the focus of the plan so that, instead of asking schools to scramble to implement an unrealistic plan by a specific date, we ask them to plan to meet certain conditions that, when met, would signal that it was safe to open—a subtle but important distinction? Does he acknowledge that, due to the availability of staff and space, splitting classes while simultaneously providing remote learning is incredibly difficult, and will he work with schools to develop a realistic plan for social distancing? Has he

modelled the impact of reopening schools on the infection rates, and will he publish that? Will he acknowledge that for younger year groups, social distancing will be virtually impossible and that the current guidance, sadly, gives the impression that those pupils and staff should just accept being exposed? With this in mind, will he rethink the position on PPE?

Finally, most schools break up for summer in mid-July; if the ambition is to get pupils back for a month, that means the whole school would need to be back less than two weeks after the priority years, so how does the Secretary of State expect schools to implement social distancing for the whole school when many heads say this is just impossible? If they do not, then what is the point of schools planning strict health and safety measures for two weeks only to abandon them? The Secretary of State repeatedly states that schools will open only when it is safe, and he referred to the scientific advice, which requires a return in a controlled manner; I do not see much of a controlled manner at the moment, so please will the Secretary of State work with the sector to get this right?

**Gavin Williamson:** Of course. The hon. Lady points out the importance of working with the sector, and that is what we will do at every step of the way, and that is what we have been doing. We recognise the importance of supporting the sector to make sure that, as children return to schools in a controlled and phased manner, we offer schools the maximum amount of support, recognise that every school is individual and unique in how we support them, and give them elements of flexibility so that they can make the transition from just providing an education setting for vulnerable children and children of critical workers. Expanding that in the limited way that we are proposing will require some elements of flexibility; schools and the sector will need that, and we will work with them to achieve it.

I have always been clear that we will give the sector as much notice as possible, and we have said that if we are allowed, as seems likely, we would like to see schools opening from 1 June, giving them as much forward notice as possible in order for them to get ready. We think that is a responsible and sensible approach to a phased return. I slightly fear that if we were to ask the hon. Lady to pin down the date it would end up being about what would be the year rather than what would be the actual start date. But we do want to work with her; we want to work with the whole sector to make sure that this is a phased, sensible and controlled return to schools, because those who suffer most from schools not being open are the children who are so desperate to attend.

**Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con) [V]:** The guidance on the return of schools in the primary sector is very clear. May I ask my right hon. Friend to be very clear about the guidance for the secondary sector? For example, what does “face-to-face support” mean? Precisely which year groups will be able to return, and will that be on a voluntary basis, and does he agree that we need to provide maximum support for those taking GCSE and A-level exams both this year and next?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right on the importance of supporting youngsters and children who are going to be facing GCSEs next year, as well as

A-levels, BTECs and other qualifications in years 10 and 12. We are working with the sector, because we want all children in those year groups to have the opportunity to go into school and to speak with their teachers. We want their teachers to be able to make an assessment of the learning and support they will need over the following weeks as we approach the summer holidays, and to set the work at the right level so that children can benefit from learning through the six weeks of the summer holidays as well as in the weeks approaching the summer holidays. It is important to get those transition years back into schools, even if not for a full timetable, as that will be a first step in the right direction.

**Mr Speaker:** We now go north of the border to Carol Monaghan.

**Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP) [V]: Although young children seem to be less susceptible to covid-19, Professor Graham Medley told the Select Committee on Science and Technology:

“It is still not clear what the role of children is in transmission.”

So what new evidence does the Secretary of State have on the ability of children to transmit, and will he publish it? When the Scottish Government recently published detailed proposals for reopening schools, with a mixture of home and school learning, his colleague the First Secretary of State said that that would cause hospitals to be overwhelmed, so why is England considering this reckless full reopening of primary schools?

Finally, if the ambition is to bring all primary year groups back before the summer holidays, with a maximum of 15 pupils per class, where are the extra teachers going to come from? As most schools do not have rooms lying empty, where are the additional classrooms coming from? Will he reassure teachers and school staff that they will not be expected to make or provide their own personal protective equipment?

**Gavin Williamson:** Let me take the opportunity to thank the Scottish Deputy First Minister for the close work and collaboration there has been between us over the past few months, as we have had to deal with this pandemic right across the United Kingdom. The hon. Lady would be asking searching questions of me if, when I am given the scientific and medical advice that it is the right time to be opening up schools, I were not taking up that opportunity. Understandably, SAGE does publish its advice. I have no doubt that it will be publishing the advice it has offered us on what we are doing, and obviously we would be more than happy to make that as freely available as possible.

**Tracey Crouch** (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that our approach to reopening schools is very much in line with that of other European countries? Members might expect a former Sports Minister to ask this, but I have not seen much about how we can ensure that schools can conduct their physical education duties, so will he be issuing specific guidance to ensure that schools can still put on PE classes, in a safe way?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend is right about the importance of PE for all children, whether they are at school or at home. We have been seeing some brilliant examples of children really being engaged in physical

activity. We have issued guidance on how PE can be conducted, such as the safe use of equipment and having non-contact sports at this initial stage. We are keen to work with the sector to see how we can engage all young people in as much physical activity as possible.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab) [V]: We know from the National Association of Head Teachers that headteachers have not been consulted on the proposed date of return, so when the Secretary of State says that the Government are working with the sector, that is partially but not completely true. Having 12 to 15 children socially distanced in a classroom is largely unrealistic. We know that children are more likely than adults to be asymptomatic if they contract covid-19, so what public health and medical evidence does he have that children will not spread the virus to other children, teachers, teaching assistants, and cleaning, catering and caring staff when they return to schools? Will he publish that evidence?

**Gavin Williamson:** As I have repeatedly said—I am not sure whether the hon. Gentleman was listening to my earlier responses—SAGE does publish its evidence and the advice that we get, so, of course, that is in the public domain. At every stage, every week, I have been meeting union leaders, as well as other sector leaders, be it Ofsted or the Confederation of School Trusts, and I will continue to do so. We have shared our thinking widely on what we are hoping to do. We recognise that this is a challenging situation for everyone and that there are a lot of concerns. We want to work with all organisations, whether they be representative bodies of schools or unions, in order to get the best guidance to the workforce and to children and parents.

**Mr Richard Holden** (North West Durham) (Con) (V): The vast majority of schools in North West Durham have remained open for the most vulnerable children. Will the Secretary of State join me in thanking the staff of those schools for their selfless actions throughout the global coronavirus pandemic? For the future, will my right hon. Friend reassure parents, teachers and the House that, despite the claims of some, the safety of pupils is the Government’s top priority? Will he confirm that in reaching that decision, he consulted the unions and school leaders, and that any children going back to school will be fully eligible for testing and tracing, as teachers are already?

**Gavin Williamson:** I very much join my hon. Friend in thanking those teachers and support staff who have done so much to keep schools open all the way through this period. It is important to remember that schools have remained open all the through the coronavirus pandemic.

My hon. Friend makes an important point about testing. We already have priority testing for all teachers and those who work in schools, if they have symptoms of coronavirus. That priority testing will be extended to all children who attend school if they are displaying symptoms, as well as to their families. We recognise how important test and trace is in beating this pandemic.

**Mary Kelly Foy** (City of Durham) (Lab) (V): First, my thanks to all the school staff in the City of Durham and across the country for their dedication throughout the pandemic. Education unions are clear: there can be

[Mary Kelly Foy]

no compromise on health and safety. The proposals are ill thought out and reckless. At best, they will create a sterile learning environment for young children, who will not understand why they are unable to interact with their friends. At worst, the proposals will set off a chain of new infections going back into the households of working people. How can it be right that without any scientific evidence, school staff and pupils have to accept lower safety standards than we expect queuing at Tesco?

**Gavin Williamson:** The only consideration behind this decision is what is in the best interests and for the welfare of children and those who work in schools. We all recognise the importance of children being able to return to schools. Sometimes, scaremongering—making people fear—is unfair and an unwelcome pressure on families, children and teachers alike.

**Damian Hinds** (East Hampshire) (Con) (V): I commend the approach of minimising and mitigating the risk of the virus. Simultaneously, as well as the educational harm, I recognise the significantly negative health and wellbeing effects for children the longer they are away from school. Will the Secretary of State assure me that within the clear guidelines, headteachers will be afforded maximum flexibility to make this work for each school's unique circumstances?

**Gavin Williamson:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely correct. The impact on children is not just educational, from not being in school, but a health and welfare one. He is equally right about the need to ensure that schools have the flexibility to be able to work within the guidelines to make the proposals work for staff and for children.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab) (V): In the Government guidance for educational and childcare settings, the section on “What the latest science tells us” states that

“children...have less severe symptoms than adults”  
and

“are less likely to become unwell if infected with coronavirus”.

Is there a danger that children might be infected but asymptomatic, in school and posing a serious risk to the health and safety of school staff, other children and their families?

I welcome the Secretary of State's agreement to publish the scientific advice, but he must have heard loud and clear that heads, teachers, support staff and parents are really worried. How will he win their confidence that it is time for schools to reopen?

**Gavin Williamson:** At the heart of every step we take on schools returning is the safety and security of those who are in schools, whether it is a child, teacher, teaching assistant or any other support staff. That is why we are doing a phased return. We are ensuring that we take small steps forward and minimise the risk to all those who are attending schools and working within them.

**James Cartledge** (South Suffolk) (Con) [V]: I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's approach. Denmark reopened its primary schools on 15 April, and it has not seen a huge surge in infection. In fact, the country is moving to a new phase where it is reopening restaurants.

Is he aware that yesterday, the BBC spoke to Dorte Lange, the vice-president of the Danish Union of Teachers, who was very positive about her country's experience? Does he agree that our own teaching unions should speak to and engage with their Danish counterparts, to learn from their experience, so that when we get to the beginning of June, we can reopen our schools safely and successfully?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend raises an important point about the international benchmarks that we can look towards. In reaching conclusions on how to bring about a phased return of schools, we looked at how it had been done in countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands and many others. We will see a mirroring of the approach taken in Denmark here in the United Kingdom. That is the right approach, because we have not seen a negative impact as a result of schools starting to return in Denmark. That confirms that our approach is the right approach, and I certainly hope that trade unions in this country will speak to trade unions in Denmark.

**Stephen Doughty** (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: My constituents repeatedly express frustration to me that the UK Government's press conferences and briefings to the media do not make clear the distinction in policy on this between England and Wales, which is causing confusion and anxiety. Will the Secretary of State make it clear for the UK media and Welsh teachers and parents that the decision to reopen schools is for the Welsh Government, that schools will not reopen in Wales on 1 June and that they rightly will not do so until it is safe for children and teachers?

**Gavin Williamson:** I very much agree that this is a decision for the Welsh Government.

**Selaine Saxby** (North Devon) (Con) [V]: How can my right hon. Friend reassure nervous parents and staff that 1 June is not too early for a phased return to school?

**Gavin Williamson:** We would not have made this decision to do a phased return to school if the scientific and medical advice had not been explicit that this is the right time to do it. We have stated that 1 June is the earliest date. If the situation changes, and if the scientific or medical advice change, obviously we will change the programme of that phased return. But we want to give schools, parents and children the opportunity and time to adjust and get ready to return to school.

**Brendan O'Hara** (Argyll and Bute) (SNP) [V]: The Prime Minister's recent promise that England's schools would be covid-secure prompted Chris Whitty, his chief medical officer, to say that there needs to be a “proper debate” about teachers' safety as schools reopen. When will that proper debate take place, and what steps will be taken to ensure the safety of teachers and their pupils?

**Gavin Williamson:** We recognised right from the start the importance of ensuring the safety of all those in schools—not just children, but those who are teaching and supporting the education of children. That is why we put forward a whole set of guidance about how to minimise risk by reducing the number of children in classrooms, minimising contact between children and



staggering the times that schools open. I would be happy to share our thinking with the Scottish Government, so that when they wish schools to return, they can hopefully benefit from the work we have been doing.

**Mr Steve Baker** (Wycombe) (Con) [V]: Wycombe and Buckinghamshire enjoy a diverse school system, including grammar schools. What consideration has my right hon. Friend given to the special situation of those grammar schools?

**Gavin Williamson:** This does present some additional challenges, especially with the consideration of the 11-plus in September. I know that it is a concern of my hon. Friend, and I have received representations from Conservative Members in Kent about their concerns. We will be looking at working with local authorities that have grammar school systems in their areas as to how best we can ensure that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are not disadvantaged as they look at taking the 11-plus in future.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi** (Slough) (Lab) [V]: We all, including me and my constituents, want our schools to reopen and our children's education to continue, but Government guidance around the reopening of schools raises more questions than it answers. As a parent of two young children, I can attest to the difficulty of explaining social distancing, let alone getting the kids to practise it, and that is why so many parents fear sending their children to school. Will the Secretary of State revisit the guidance and commit to working with education unions and others to create a working plan for reopening our schools when the science indicates that it is safe to do so, and when doing so has the confidence of all those affected?

**Gavin Williamson:** We will continue to work with the whole sector to ensure that any changes or modifications that are required, in working with children and teachers in schools, are rapidly adopted. We recognise the importance of creating a safe bubble for children and teachers to operate in, which is why we have put out extensive guidance on how this is done. We have very much worked with Public Health England and the scientific community as to how to approach, in the best possible way, the return of schools, because children benefit from being in schools and they are losing out as a result of not being in schools.

## Covid-19: Housing Market

**Mr Speaker:** I call the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, who should speak for no more than 10 minutes.

1.6 pm

**The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):** Moving home can be a life-changing moment for many among us. For young families spreading their wings after a new arrival, for young people leaving their parents' home for the first time, or for working people changing towns or cities to start a new job, moving home means planting your roots, laying your foundations. A home is more than four walls and a roof—it is a sanctuary, a form of protection, and a link to your community.

We know that people's homes are at the heart of their own personal stories, and throughout the course of this emergency, we have, by necessity, put many of those stories on hold, to protect our communities and to save lives. When the essential "Stay at home" message was announced, we changed the rules so that people could move home only if they thought it was "reasonably necessary". For many people, this has put life on hold, with this most relevant and essential industry in a state of suspended animation. Over 450,000 sales have been stuck in the system, unable to be progressed—not to mention the substantial number of rentals that have not gone ahead. Every month, 300,000 tenancies come up for renewal, a proportion of which result in people moving home. The pressure to move has, for some, become acute, with profound legal, financial and health implications.

We made that decision in order to keep the country safe, but as we move into the next phase of our covid response and embark on our path to reopen, restart and renew the economy, we recognise the need to let people get back to living their lives. That is why today I am announcing a comprehensive, clear, and coherent plan to reopen the housing market and to restart the construction industry. With immediate effect, we are lifting the temporary freeze on home-moving, meaning that, as long as they are not shielding or self-isolating, anyone can move, any time and for any reason.

The industry is broad, and has many moving parts, so we want to be clear: each of the building blocks of the buying and selling process is now back in business, as long as it can be done safely. Here, then, is our plan for the reopening, restarting, and renewing of the housing market and the construction industry: estate agent offices can now reopen, removal companies can get moving again, surveyors, conveyancers and valuers can go back to work, and show homes on sites can reopen.

It is crucial that these changes happen safely and that we continue to tread with caution, to control the virus and to protect the public. This means that as these businesses reopen they will need to adapt their practices—for instance, with virtual viewings where possible and cleaning thoroughly after viewings and when moving. I have published detailed guidance, informed by public health advice, to explain how this can be achieved, building on the existing safer working guidance, with all parties observing hygiene measures and social distancing guidelines.

[Robert Jenrick]

For each of the other elements that make up the wider construction industry—a sector that employs more than 2 million people—the same applies. If people are self-isolating or have coronavirus, they should of course not be moving or going back to work. All parties involved in home buying and selling should prioritise agreeing amicable arrangements to change move dates for individuals in this group.

This is the most radical restarting of an industry in the first phase of our national recovery road map. It was not an easy decision to make. With few, if any, transactions, there is no visibility and no precedent with which to accurately judge the state of the housing market, but I do know that in every economic recovery in modern British history the housing market has been key, so let me be clear to all who work in the sector, have started a business in it, have invested in it, or rely upon it: I am doing everything I can to help the industry bounce back.

A healthy housing market means more than buying and selling houses; it requires building them too, but covid-19 has had a profound impact on housebuilding, with activity on sites down by around 90% since this time last year. I am delighted to see so many construction companies back at work already, and I am pleased to be supporting their efforts by today announcing the launch of a safe working charter with the Home Builders Federation. Those working on site should feel confident that their essential jobs are also safe jobs.

I am taking further steps to support safe housebuilding by allowing more flexible working hours on construction sites, where appropriate and with local checks and balances. I am allowing sites to apply to extend their working hours, again with immediate effect. Varied start and finish times will make it easier for sites to observe social distancing, will take pressure off public transport, particularly in our core cities, and will keep Britain building.

The planning system, too, must be able to operate safely and efficiently during this time, which means, as with many other sectors, making more use of digital technology. I want the Planning Inspectorate to be at the forefront of this work—it is good to see the inspectorate now undertaking its first virtual hearings. I am asking it to make all hearings virtual within weeks. We are going to get the planning system going again and bring it into the digital age at the same time.

As we look to the future, we must remember that the prospects of Britain's housing market is key to our economy: when this sector succeeds, we all succeed. This is what shapes our vision for the housing market: more homes, safer homes, homes of higher quality, more beautiful homes, homes of all types and tenures, for all people, rooted in and at the heart of their communities. Today, we reopen, restart and we renew the housing market and the construction industry to protect lives, save jobs and refresh and renew our economy.

**Mr Speaker:** I welcome Thangam Debbonaire to her new job. She has up to five minutes.

1.17 pm

**Thangam Debbonaire** (Bristol West) (Lab) [V]: Thank you Mr Speaker, and I thank the Secretary of State for an advance copy of his statement.

The Government said that they would do “whatever it takes” to get the country through the covid crisis and protect the most vulnerable. The Opposition want the Government to succeed. Lives, livelihoods and homes are on the line. In a spirit of constructive co-operation, we have scrutinised plans carefully and offered suggestions and challenges when appropriate, to try to help to bring down infections and the numbers of people who are infected or who are tragically dying, and to help people manage financially. Sometimes the Government have heeded our calls, sometimes not. I would like them to consider these.

Today's announcement provides welcome news for some—and of course we all want new homes to be built—but it leaves more unanswered housing questions, which urgently need Government attention to keep people safe at work and at home, as we do not have community testing, a cure or a vaccine and there are still problems with personal protective equipment. What protection will there be for people who rent, if a landlord or an estate agent wants to show a prospective buyer or new tenant around? What will the Government do to help those trapped by the cladding and leasehold scandals at this time? What discussions have the Government had with the trade unions? There was no mention of that in the statement. What advice do the Government have for anyone who feels that their workplace or construction site is not safe?

This crisis has taught us that if anyone is struggling, we are all affected. The announcement focused on those who want to move home, but it ignored those who are at risk of being forced to do so. The Secretary of State talked about show homes, but not about people with no home. We have shown that when we work together we can virtually eliminate street homelessness in days. There must be no going back, but people in emergency accommodation face that. Will the Government work with councils and homelessness organisations on the issue of how to provide and pay for a “housing first” approach, so that we can end street homelessness for good this year?

The Secretary of State said that he knew that homes were sanctuaries, but there is no plan for what happens when the temporary ban on evictions ends. We need to prevent people from falling into arrears, so will the Government heed Labour's calls to fill gaps in the financial support schemes? Will he guarantee that the local housing allowance will stay at 30% of market rent? Will he consider raising it further until the crisis eases?

People who are struggling with their rent are worried about what will happen when the ban lifts. The Government say that they are

“working with the Master of the Rolls to widen the existing ‘pre-action protocol’ on possession proceedings for Social Landlords, to include private renters and to strengthen its remit”.

That is not enough, so will the Secretary of State consider Labour's proposal to halt section 8 evictions on the grounds of arrears caused by the lockdown?

In March, Ministers said that they would provide “whatever funding is needed for councils to get through this and come out the other side”.

That pledge has been repeated by the Secretary of State. This week, however, he told the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee that councils should not

“labour under a false impression”

that all costs would be reimbursed. Which is it? Will the Secretary of State honour his original commitment to councils?

The Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, the hon. Member for Thornbury and Yate (Luke Hall), appeared to require local authorities to provide accommodation for people with no recourse to public funds but without funding, leading to confusion and people being left out. Will the Secretary of State ensure that there is specific funding for housing people with no recourse to public funds?

Councils cannot borrow for revenue spending or run deficits. If they cannot balance the books they have to stop spending. They are currently £10 billion short—a fifth of council spending. They could close every library, leisure centre and children's centre, turn off all the streetlights, and lock the gates to parks, and they would still be billions of pounds short. They would have to make cuts to social care and public health at this time. Will the Secretary of State ensure that councils are fully recompensed for housing and other costs in this crisis?

Finally, during the crisis we have all become aware of people in overcrowded, unsafe homes, who are unable to self-isolate and worried about the rent. We know how bad it is for mental and physical health when families have no outside space. The Secretary of State says that he wants “more homes, safer homes, and higher quality, more beautiful homes”, but he does not say how he will ensure that they are higher quality, or safe, or beautiful. He could have decided to invest in high-quality, safe, beautiful, socially owned, zero-carbon, truly affordable housing. That would capture the national spirit and turn it into building our future.

Instead, the Government have focused on private house sales and even today asked councils to allow developers to defer section 106, the community infrastructure levy, which is likely to reduce the numbers of new social and affordable homes. Will the Secretary of State please work with the Treasury, housing associations, local authorities and the building industry to invest in high-quality, truly affordable social housing?

Our broken housing system has been brutally exposed. Key workers we applaud each week live in poor housing. They have been left behind too long. We must not go back to business as usual. We must solve the housing crisis for all our heroes and for our country.

**Robert Jenrick:** I welcome the hon. Lady to her new role and look forward to working with her constructively in the weeks and months ahead. I am pleased that she supports the overwhelming direction of our statement today, and recognises the importance of the housing industry and construction in this country. She asked a number of questions and I will endeavour to answer as many as I can.

On the important question about building safety, I have been clear from the onset of the crisis that that work should continue. That was, in fact, opposed by many on the Opposition Benches, who said it was too risky, but it was the right decision to encourage ACM cladding and other essential building safety works to continue. I am pleased to say that it is now gradually starting to begin again. I welcome Mayors such as the Mayor of London, the Mayor of Greater Manchester and the Mayor of Birmingham coming together to support that in our combined pledge.

On rough sleeping, I pay tribute to everybody who has been involved in the tremendous national effort so far, bringing 90% of the people sleeping rough on our streets at the onset of the crisis into safer accommodation. Now, we are in the next phase of that challenge. I do not underestimate how difficult that will be, protecting those individuals while they remain in that accommodation during the lockdown and then preparing for them to move into more suitable long-term arrangements with the wraparound care that they need and deserve. That will be a true national effort involving charities, councils and businesses across the country.

With respect to renters, today's announcement is very much about renters. Every month, 300,000 tenancies come up for renewal. Many of those individuals need or want to move house. Today will enable them to do just that and to do it safely, which is the most important consideration.

On the guidance I have published today, it sets out that physical viewings of homes, whether for sale or for rent, can go ahead, but those will need to be done in accordance with social distancing guidelines. In most cases, that will mean that the tenant or the homeowner will not be present in the property. They will be in the garden or will have gone out for their daily exercise. If they are in the home for whatever reason, they will be in a different room and ensuring that they are 2 metres apart from the individuals who are looking around the property. That is the right thing to do.

On the concern about people being evicted from their properties, as the hon. Lady knows we have changed the law to have a moratorium on evictions, so that no possession proceeding can continue. That will go up until June, at which point I, as Secretary of State, have the ability to extend that if we need to. We will be taking that decision very carefully. We will also be proceeding with the pre-action protocol, working with the Master of the Rolls to ensure that that provides an added degree of protection for those individuals. I do not support the Labour proposal, which is to encourage people not to pay rent and to build up potentially unmanageable degrees of debt, so that in six, nine or 12 months' time, their credit rating would be shredded and they would be in a very difficult financial position. We are developing a much more credible plan to protect renters and to help to shield them through this crisis.

Finally, with respect to councils' finances, I said we would stand behind councils and give them the funding that they need, and we are doing exactly that. Today, the Prime Minister has announced an extra £600 million, bringing the total investment in our councils to £3.8 billion in just two months.

**Mr Speaker:** We now go over to the Father of the House, Sir Peter Bottomley.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con) [V]: The Secretary of State is right to talk about people living their lives. Most of the people going to new homes will be going to leasehold ones.

When will he, and we, act to ban the sale of leasehold and pre-sold houses? When can he announce actions for justice for leaseholders and lease renters who are stuck with excessive ground rents?

Can he advise residential landlords and smart developers that the financial games are over, and that the leasehold

[*Sir Peter Bottomley*]

knowledge campaign and the all-party group on leasehold and commonhold reform are going to make sure that there is justice for leaseholders?

**Robert Jenrick:** I am grateful to the Father of the House for that question. I pay tribute, once again, to his campaigning over many years against rip-off practices in the leasehold sector. We are committed to bringing an end to those practices, to legislating to bring ground rents down to a peppercorn, and to ensuring that no new homes are built as leasehold properties except in the most exceptional of circumstances. We will shortly be bringing forward draft legislation for scrutiny. I am pleased that, in general, such practices have declined enormously as a result of the Government's firm stance and that of campaigners, including many Members across the House. I want to see that continue.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP) [V]: I, too, thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement—although I think I read most of it in the morning papers. I want to focus on the part announcing a “clear, coherent” plan. This is an issue that many of us have found, whether with his statement or the statement before it on education. The position in Scotland remains unchanged: people should protect the NHS, stay at home and save lives. This Government often announce big decisions without making it clear that they do not apply to people in Scotland. We in Scotland will take the decision about when to lift the lockdown based on science and when it is right to do so, so I would appreciate it if the UK Government would be more explicit in making it clear that this is for England only.

There are elements of this that I am puzzled by, particularly some of the restrictions that are being eased, because we are saying to people that they cannot see both their parents at the same time, but they can welcome two complete strangers into their home. It also does not make sense that kids cannot go out and have a kickabout with their friends in the next garden, but removal men can come into the house, potentially passing on the virus. Those are just two examples of how this does not necessarily stack up. From a messaging point of view, we have gone from saying on Saturday, “Stay at home, protect the NHS, and save lives,” to saying four days later, “You can traipse around any random stranger's house.” Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to make it clear to people in Scotland that the message remains the same: “You should stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives”?

**Robert Jenrick:** I made it clear repeatedly in my statement that these arrangements apply to England. The Scottish Government will have to come to their own decision and be held accountable for it. With respect to social distancing, the guidelines are extremely clear, so I would be grateful if the hon. Gentleman and others did not purposefully mislead in that respect. Removal men and women, agents and those visiting other people's homes need to respect the social distancing guidelines, which means staying 2 metres apart and using protective equipment where appropriate, as we set out in the guidance. For residents, that means being out of the home, in the garden or in another room at the time of the viewing, so that they do not come into

contact with those visiting the property. That approach has been fully signed off by Public Health England and all the medical and scientific experts.

**Theo Clarke** (Stafford) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for today's welcome announcement that estate agents in Stafford can now reopen and that viewings can resume. Many of my constituents were in the house-buying process when covid-19 hit and will very much welcome this certainty. What steps will be taken to ensure that my constituents can undertake viewings safely and that estate agents can be sure that they are in line with the new Government guidance?

**Robert Jenrick:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. I am sure that thousands of people in Stafford, and across the country, will have been in a state of limbo and unable to move home. This announcement today will make a big difference to their lives and to the local economy in Staffordshire. The guidelines are clear, as I have already said, that people need to respect social distancing when in others' properties. We are encouraging virtual viewings, which can be more sophisticated and may come at a cost, or can be as simple as the agent or homeowner producing a video on their smartphone and making it available to anyone interested in the property before they visit. With respect to show homes, we are strongly encouraging people to attend by appointment only to avoid unnecessary speculative visits.

**Mr Speaker:** We now go over to Sheffield to the Chair of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab) [V]: I welcome much of what the Government have proposed, particularly the help for private tenants. However, we should recognise that many tenants' rent arrears will grow over time, causing problems not merely for them, but for small private landlords. Will the Secretary of State consider a scheme like the Spanish Government's, which offers low-interest loans to tenants to help them to pay the rent and the landlords to receive it? As for the market for new housing, if demand for new homes falls, will he consider increasing grants to housing associations and councils so that they can help the construction industry keep going by building more social homes for rent?

**Robert Jenrick:** With respect to supporting the industry, today is too soon to judge with confidence the state of the housing market because there have been so few transactions in recent weeks. However, we stand ready to work with the industry and to help to guide it through what will undoubtedly be an extremely challenging period. We have announced some measures today—for example, enabling councils to defer CIL and section 106 payments. That does not mean that there will be an impact on social infrastructure or affordable homes in the longer term, but it does mean that small and medium-sized enterprise builders in particular can have a bit of breathing space in the weeks and months ahead, which is a critical lesson learned from the last downturn in the market.

We are thinking carefully about what more we can do to protect renters. Of course, there are other Government schemes, such as the furlough scheme, which is now paying a proportion of millions of working people's

wages and helping to support them through this difficult period. The moratorium on evictions prevents possession proceedings in court at the present time, but we will need to think carefully about what to do when that comes to an end in June.

**Peter Gibson** (Darlington) (Con) [V]: My right hon. Friend knows that the construction industry is core to our economy's success. Will he outline what steps the Government are taking to ensure that that important sector has the flexibility that it needs to operate safely and restart?

**Robert Jenrick**: Across the country, millions of people are employed in the construction industry. It is absolutely essential that we get them back to work, but we have to do so safely. Today's charter, working with the house builders, will set out ways in which we believe that that can be done. Many of the country's house builders have been working with us in recent weeks to put in place the protocols and site working practices that will be needed to protect those working people.

Today's written ministerial statement, extending the work of sites, will also play its part. It will enable sites to stay open during the summer months, potentially to 9 pm in residential areas, and longer than that in areas where there are no neighbouring properties. This is to help the industry to catch up if it wants to and, above all, to help it to put in place the social distancing rules that it will need to operate sites safely and reduce pressure on public transport. I hope that all of us across the country, and our councils, will support that and ensure that it is implemented smoothly.

**Catherine West** (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab) [V]: May I press the Secretary of State on the issue of the cliff edge facing many in the privately rented sector? What action will the Government take to avoid mass homelessness as the moratorium on evictions lifts and we emerge from the covid-19 crisis?

**Robert Jenrick**: As I have already said, we have legislated to have a moratorium on evictions, which comes up for review in June. At that point, the Secretary of State has the power to extend it if necessary. We will take that judgment on the basis of the market at that time and the evidence we see in respect of how many individuals might be coming before the courts with eviction proceedings. We will consider what further steps might be necessary at the time.

**Robert Courts** (Witney) (Con) [V]: I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement. In order to provide the reassurance and clarity that my constituents in West Oxfordshire would like, will he confirm that although people can move whenever they like and removal firms are able to help, the Government do still ask and require that such activity is carried out safely?

**Robert Jenrick**: It is extremely important that removal firms across the country, many of which are small and medium-sized businesses, get back to work, and we have worked with them to produce guidelines that we believe will enable them to do so safely. We may do more work in the weeks and months ahead to learn from that. These businesses play a critical role in the industry.

**Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: At the beginning of this crisis, the Secretary of State said "Everyone in", and that he would fund councils to end homelessness. Since then, it has been suggested that that might not apply to those with no recourse to public funds. That is nonsense: the virus could not care less about someone's migration status. Will the Secretary of State take this opportunity to clarify that when he said everybody he meant absolutely everybody, and that he will be providing funding to make sure this happens?

**Robert Jenrick**: I am extremely grateful for the work of local councils and charities in places such as Nottingham: they did an amazing job in bringing at least 90% of those individuals who were sleeping rough at the onset of the crisis into safer accommodation. In some parts of the country, the numbers of rough sleepers have now fallen to as low as one, two or three individuals. We believe that the success rate could even be as much as 98% so far, but the challenge is by no means complete and there is more work to do. We have said that the Government's policy on no recourse to public funds has not changed, but councils do have flexibility, as they know, to support those individuals when there is a risk to life and serious concern. They should behave humanely and compassionately.

**Dr James Davies** (Vale of Clwyd) (Con) [V]: I welcome the statement. What advice does the new guidance offer for those following the chief medical officer's advice to shield in their home?

**Robert Jenrick**: My hon. Friend raises a very important point that we cannot emphasise enough today. There will be individuals who are not advised to move home, except in the most unusual circumstances. The people we have asked to shield—those people who have extremely high levels of vulnerability to the virus, as identified by the chief medical officer—should continue to do so. They should stay at home and have as little face-to-face contact as possible. Now would not be the right time for them to move house. If they absolutely have to, they should take medical advice before doing so.

**Marion Fellows** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP) [V]: This morning, I saw the Secretary of State's social media posts on the easing of restrictions; every comment and reply from members of the public that I saw highlighted contradictions and inconsistencies. On top of that, a shocking YouGov poll found that only 30% of respondents believed that the UK Government's instructions to stay alert were clear. That suggests that the Government have a major problem with communication. Does the Secretary of State think that the Government's recent communications have been clear? Will he confirm, yet again, that this easing applies only in England?

**Robert Jenrick**: This is one of the most comprehensive, coherent and clear plans for any sector of the economy. We have worked with every part of the industry, from the removal companies, estate agents and letting agents to the surveyors, conveyancers and builders—you name it—to put in place the guidance that is needed, and it has all been published today on gov.uk. It has been hugely welcomed by people across the industry and the millions of people in England who want to move house and get on with their lives, as well as the 2.3 million people whose jobs depend on this critical industry.

**Steve Brine** (Winchester) (Con) [V]: My right hon. Friend was dead right to say in his statement that we need to build homes before we can buy and sell them. What can he do to unlock the market in Hampshire, where a stand-off between Natural England and local authorities over nitrates in the Solent—a subject which the Secretary of State knows about—has had planners, developers, architects and investors tied in knots since long before covid-19? Perversely, it is encouraging greenfield development over brownfield.

**Robert Jenrick:** My hon. Friend and I have discussed this issue at length on a number of occasions, and he has been assiduous in campaigning to break this deadlock. It is extremely unfortunate that before the coronavirus crisis house building in the Solent area was essentially paused because of the issue he described. I have been working with the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Natural England to bring forward guidelines and to bring the parties together, because too many people's livelihoods depend on this and we need to move forward. I hope that those guidelines are now available and will ensure that we continue to work with his local council and others to get the industry moving in the Solent area.

**Mr Speaker:** That's all for now, folks. I will suspend the House for 15 minutes, until 1.53 pm.

1.38 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

1.53 pm

*On resuming, the House entered into hybrid substantive proceedings (Order, 22 April).*

## Speaker's Statement

**Mr Speaker:** Before we start the business today, I should like to make a statement. Before I call the Leader of the House, I want to make some points that arise from the announcement last night about the likely duration of hybrid proceedings. My priority, and the priority of all I am sure, is to ensure that those on the estate are safe while business is facilitated. I am working with the parties and the Commission to ensure that this duty of care is taken seriously. Nothing in the announcement of the Leader of the House changes the position on social distancing in and around the Chamber and throughout the parliamentary estate—I think that we are all agreed that only changes to the guidance from Public Health England can actually do that. I may suspend sittings between items of business to allow safe access to, and exit from, the Chamber. I am also quite prepared to suspend a sitting if I believe that the safe number of hon. Members in the Chamber risks being exceeded. If physical Divisions replace remote Divisions, they will take much longer than usual—probably around 30 minutes and possibly up to an hour—to ensure that social distancing can be observed. Business is now resumed.

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (13 MAY)

*Motion made,*

That—

The following arrangements shall apply to today's business:

Business	Timings	Remote division designation
Business statement	Up to 20 minutes	None
Agriculture Bill: Consideration	Up to one hour and 55 minutes; suspension; up to one hour and 15 minutes from the resumption following the suspension	Remote division
Agriculture Bill: Third Reading	Up to two hours and 15 minutes from the resumption following the suspension	Remote division
Committee on Standards	No debate	None
Committee of Privileges	No debate	None

At the conclusion of proceedings on Consideration of the Agriculture Bill the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to bring those proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with Standing Order No. 83E (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on consideration and up to and including third reading).

At the conclusion of the time allocated to the debate on the Third Reading of the Agriculture Bill the Speaker shall put the Question, That the Bill be now read the third time.—(*James Morris.*)

*The Speaker declared the Question to be agreed to (Order (4), 22 April).*

## Business of the House

1.54 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):** Thank you for your statement, Mr Speaker. It is obviously important that the House maintains social distancing in accordance with the guidelines.

The business for the week commencing 18 May will include:

MONDAY 18 MAY—Second Reading of the Immigration and Social Security Co-ordination (EU Withdrawal) Bill.

TUESDAY 19 MAY—Motion to approve a statutory instrument relating to the draft Human Tissue (Permitted Material: Exceptions) (England) Regulations 2020, followed by motion to approve a statutory instrument relating to the draft Victims and Witnesses (Scotland) Act 2014 (Consequential Modification) Order 2020, followed by motion to approve a Ways and Means resolution relating to the Finance Bill.

WEDNESDAY 20 MAY—Second Reading of the Trade Bill, followed by motion relating to the membership of the Liaison Committee.

THURSDAY 21 MAY—The House will not be sitting.

FRIDAY 22 MAY—The House will not be sitting.

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for next week's business and you, Mr Speaker, for your statement. I must admit I was alarmed to hear the Leader of the House say yesterday that Parliament was going to return physically. He said yesterday that we could not ask people to return if we did not also return, but he fails to understand that we are working—we continue to work. Our casework has increased massively. We might not be in the Chamber but we are still dealing with our constituents, as we always are when we are not here.

The House must lead the way in protecting the health and wellbeing of everyone who works in Parliament by following public health advice to the letter. House staff have done an incredible job, as the Leader of the House knows, setting up a hybrid virtual Parliament that ensures scrutiny of the Government while limiting the number of staff and Members who have to be physically present on the estate. Can he please explain why Parliament would contradict the Government's own health advice by returning to business as usual in early June and allowing only physical attendance, and contradict the Government's advice that those who can work from home should do so?

Will the Leader of the House confirm what assessment has been done to ensure that Parliament's move to physical-only attendance can be done in a way that fully complies with social distancing guidelines? What advice has he received from Public Health England? Will he share it with all the parties? Has it been discussed with you, Mr Speaker, the House authorities and the usual channels? Will he confirm that all the business next week will make use of the hybrid virtual Parliament?

Is this a preview of the Government's future policy? If so, as a matter of urgency, can the Leader of the House arrange for the Government to make a full statement on Monday on their guidance for society as a whole for returning to work safely? He will know that probably one of the best things to do is to ask each workplace to undertake a risk assessment so that staff and employees come back in a phased return.

Let us remind ourselves that no one asked to stay at home. It is what the Government asked us to do in response to a pandemic, and everyone has listened and understood the message, which is why people must be kept safe. I am sorry to say that the Leader of the House has further confused the message: "stay at home", "stay alert"—to what?—"work from home", "come to work", "come in on Monday", "come in on Wednesday". It's like a Commons hokey-cokey. We can all pull together but only if the Government provide us with answers and do not contradict their own advice.

I am sure the Leader of the House will ensure there is a statement from the Health Secretary on testing in care homes, given that the number of deaths has now risen to over 40,000. It seems that no one knows whether the Department of Health and Social Care, the Care Quality Commission or Public Health England is in charge of testing. Who is in charge of testing? Test, trace and isolate—we need to get the first bit right. Some of my constituents have said they have not even got their test results after eight to nine weeks. Can we have an urgent statement on the crisis in testing and care homes?

Our councils have done what they have been asked to do to protect local communities, yet we hear from the Treasury that they may have to make further cuts—that the Treasury is not going to bail them out any more—but councils have been asked to keep their communities safe, so please can we have a statement to ensure they will not be financially penalised if they have done what they have been asked to do?

The Leader of the House has mentioned the Liaison Committee motion, which is up for debate next week. It seems that there is no compliance with equal opportunities. Are the Government really saying that only men we want can apply? Of the paid Committee Chairs, 26 are men, seven are women and none are from a black or ethnic minority background. Why do we not just let the Chairs of Committees decide, as they have always done?

At Foreign Office questions, there was no update on Nazanin, Anoush and Kylie—who is mentally in a difficult place. They need clemency, and it is International Day of Living Together in Peace on Saturday, so could we have an update?

Finally, I too want to thank our brilliant nurses—it was their day yesterday—many from around the world and some of whom have lost their lives looking after us. Some 70% of nurses who have died were from the BME community, as were 94% of doctors who have died. I hope the Government review will report soon. We send our heartfelt thanks to their families: they gave their lives for us.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** May I completely concur with the right hon. Lady in what she says about those who are working for us and who have lost their lives during this terrible outbreak of the coronavirus, and the public service that is given by so many so courageously in going about their daily work?

I want to answer what the right hon. Lady says about Parliament, because what she says is important and fundamental to us as a democracy. The Government's advice is clear: work from home if you can. As you have made clear, Mr Speaker, many members of the House staff will be able to continue to work from home, even with the House of Commons operating in physical form. Indeed, very few additional Clerks will need to be

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present on the premises, Members' staff will be able to continue to work from home, and the overwhelming majority of the House community will be able to continue to work from home—the exception being Members of Parliament themselves. Why is that? It is because the Government's advice is that if you need to go to work, you must go to work.

We see in this Parliament—in this House today—the ineffectiveness of scrutiny in comparison to when the House is operating in the normal way. We have no flexibility of questions. The questions are all listed in advance, with no ability for people to bob, to come in and to join in the debate; no cross-cutting of debate; and no ability to advance arguments or take them forward. We simply have a series of prepared statements made one after another. That is not the House of Commons doing its proper duty and playing its proper role of scrutiny of the Government.

Then there is the other side of it: where are the Bill Committees? How are Bills progressing? What is happening to the legislative agenda that the Government were elected on in December? Or do we just ignore our constituents, ignore the voters and not get on with a proper democratic parliamentary system? The idea that our democratic system is not an essential one—is not the lifeblood of our nation and is not how the Government are held to account at a time of crisis—is one that is surprising. It is extraordinary that it should be held by Opposition Members; that they should not wish to be here, challenging the Government and holding them to account; and that they wish to hide behind a veneer of virtual Parliament, so that legislation is not progressed with. We have heard it from the Scottish shadow spokesman, when he says that a virtual Parliament is a second-rate Parliament. He wants us all to be second rate, whereas I want us all to be first rate—to get back to being a proper Parliament because democracy is essential. What we do is essential. Holding the Government to account is essential and delivering on manifesto promises is also essential, and that is what I hope we shall be able to do after we come back from the Whitsun recess, in line with what is happening in other parts of the country.

The intention is for schools to go back: how can we say to our schoolchildren, “You're safe going back?”—some of them—but we are not? How can we hide away while schoolchildren are going back? Is that the right message to give to our constituents? Are we a people set apart, a special class who are exempt from what the rest of the country is doing? No, we are not. We are the leaders of our nation, and we have a responsibility. That responsibility falls on us to come back, but we can observe social distancing. We can look at the Chamber as it is set out. We can look at the Division Lobbies that have been arranged by you, Mr Speaker, to make sure that the Clerks are safe and that Members are safe. That is the right way for us to proceed, so that there is proper democratic scrutiny and legislation may be brought forward in accordance with the mandate that the British people gave us. Stay at home, work from home if you can. We in reality cannot and that is why we ought to be coming back.

Let me move on to some of the other points made by the right hon. Lady, in particular the situation of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, which is a matter of concern to the

whole House. I assure her that the Government are in contact with Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe and her family and will continue to make decisions in line with what we believe will produce the best outcomes. Without providing every detail of what the consular authorities are doing, obviously, Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe's temporary release is a welcome step, but we remain extremely concerned about her welfare and that of all our dual nationals detained in Iran. We continue to raise all their cases at the most senior levels. We will continue to urge Iran to ensure that Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe receives any necessary medical care and that her treatment so far has clearly been unacceptable, including the lack of due process in the proceedings against her. It is important that Iran is held to account, and we urge the Iranian authorities to release her and allow her to come home.

**Scott Mann** (North Cornwall) (Con) [V]: Can we have a general debate on tourism and the movement of people? Due to the changes in guidance on unlimited travel to take exercise and enjoy open spaces, residents—particularly in tourism hotspots, where there are limited facilities open—have valid concerns about putting additional pressure on facilities and local hospitals. Like many MPs, I have had communications from constituents who are concerned about public health and putting their health at risk. I believe we need to revisit our distancing measures to ascertain how far people should be able to travel to take exercise and enjoy open public spaces. Can we have a debate on that issue, to ensure that we get some clarity?

**Mr Rees-Mogg**: I absolutely understand the vital role that the tourism industry plays in my hon. Friend's particularly attractive constituency and his concerns that many people will want to go there. The Government's guidance on second homes remains clear. Restrictions on travelling to exercise have eased, but it is not permitted to travel to a second home or to remain overnight in a holiday destination. As we ease restrictions, everyone must continue to follow the rules. As the recently published Command Paper states, the Government will announce easing measures for different parts of the country in line with the scientific advice. The Government's objective is to return to our way of life as soon as possible, but it is vital that we do not waste the sacrifices that have already been made, and I understand why that is a particular concern to my hon. Friend.

**Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP) [V]: I should first make it clear that yesterday, when I questioned the wisdom of going ahead with next week's recess, I was in no way suggesting that the staff of the House should not get the leave to which they are entitled. I was simply wondering whether, given the current emergency, it might be possible to do that without closing the business of the Chamber completely. If we are to go ahead with the recess, I would seek an assurance from the Leader of the House that there will be no dramatic changes in Government policy while the House is unable to question Ministers, and that if such a change is required, the House will be recalled to consider it.

The Leader of the House is extolling the fantasy that on 2 June, we can go back to the way things were without special procedures being in place. If he genuinely believes that, I have some specific questions. How can 650 Members of Parliament possibly work safely in a



building of this size and lay-out? What should happen to those who are shielding and have received a letter from the chief medical officer? What should happen to Members who belong to one of the identified vulnerable groups? What procedures will apply in the light of a Member becoming symptomatic or being diagnosed as having the virus as a result of returning to this place? Should Members in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland ignore the advice of their respective Governments to work from home?

In my view, to try to force Members to return to this Parliament in person without those questions being answered is unbelievably reckless, and it will place Members, staff and the wider public at risk. It will also disenfranchise many. I asked the Leader of the House some weeks ago what exactly requires the physical presence of MPs in the Chamber and what aspects of our job cannot be done remotely. I have yet to receive an answer. Is it therefore the case that his decisions are motivated not by necessity but by personal preference?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Yesterday, as the hon. Gentleman crackled through the ether, he was hard to hear, and it was hard to be clear what he was saying. His complaint was that we in the Chamber had an unfair advantage over those who were remote. Today, it is unfair that we should be here in person at all, because we should all be as disadvantaged as he is by being here remotely. That is explanation in itself of why we need to come back: the Chamber does not operate properly when it is done on a remote basis.

On the numbers, the hon. Gentleman suggests that the acres of space at the Palace of Westminster are not large enough for 10%, if not less, of the people who work here on a daily basis. The Chamber is marked out for social distancing. We can get 50 people into this Chamber, which, it has to be said, is often as many as are here for an ordinary debate. It is only on high days and holidays and Prime Minister's questions that the Chamber is bursting at the seams.

As you so rightly said in your statement, Mr Speaker, there is no change to the social distancing advice. There is no change to the advice to Members' staff to continue to work from home. The numbers coming into this estate are a fraction of what they normally are, because we have no tours, we have no commercial banqueting and we do not have the thousands—sometimes, tens of thousands—of people who come in every day. We are just requiring MPs to do their job, because, as the hon. Gentleman eloquently pointed out in his electronic communication, their job cannot be done properly from a remote distance.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab) [V]: The Backbench Business Committee has a number of outstanding older applications, but we also have significant demand for debates in Backbench business time on many different aspects of the Government's response to the covid-19 pandemic. However, Members will want to hold those debates in an environment that is safe for House staff, their own necessary staff and themselves, with the logistics of getting there from all points of the compass safely and efficiently having been considered in a comprehensive and safety-conscious way.

The R rate—the reinfection rate—nationally is between 0.5 and 0.9. However, here in Gateshead, it is between 0.8 and 1.1, so we are not out of the woods. Verified

cases in Gateshead are 478.5 per 100,000; in the right hon. Member's constituency, they are less than a third of that. We are all in very different situations. We want to come back—but when it is safe to do so.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am always grateful to the Chairman of the Backbench Business Committee, and I understand it is difficult for his Committee at the moment, with no time available for his debates. However, the Standing Orders do provide a certain number of days each Session, and over the fullness of the Session the Government will obviously look to provide those.

As the hon. Gentleman rightly says, there are differences across the country, and that is why the Government are looking to have regional alterations, as necessary, to ensure that everybody is protected and kept safe. However, that requires people to follow the Government's guidance and to remain alert.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con): I congratulate the Leader of the House on his speech at the beginning, which he would undoubtedly have made from the Back Benches and not just from the Front Benches. We do need to be back in this House, because we cannot do the job remotely. I cannot complain about the Government not communicating properly, because it is not possible when I am working virtually. Could the Leader of the House therefore ensure that we get back as physically as possible as soon as possible, and could we have a written statement next week? And one other thing: will the Leader of the House confirm that, in future, all new Government policy will be announced in this House first?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I said yesterday—carefully—that I did not expect to bring forward further virtual Parliament motions. It is important not to forget the word “expect”, because things could change. However, the current expectation is that we will be back physically after the Whitsun recess. I note my hon. Friend's point on Government statements, which is, of course, in full accord with the ministerial code.

**Mr Speaker:** We now have the final question, from a virtual Jim Shannon.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP) [V]: Thanks to you and all your staff, Mr Speaker, for what you do to make these sittings happen.

May I ask the Leader of the House to outline the proceedings on the Northern Ireland abortion legislation, which was pulled from the schedule for debate this week? Ever mindful of the legal opinion of the Attorney General for Northern Ireland, will he further undertake to press the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to allow the legislation to be debated in its proper home and proper place—the existing, functioning Northern Ireland Assembly?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. He knows that we had to make the changes to the business this week because of the interest in the covid-19 debate. But he is also aware that there is a legal requirement to bring these regulations forward and have them debated. That is of course not a legal requirement for them to be passed by the House, which would be a different matter, and the House cannot be bound in that regard. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland was

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in the Chamber earlier. I would ask the hon. Gentleman to raise his questions with him directly, because what happens between this House and Stormont is going to be more a matter for him than for me.

## Agriculture Bill

[Relevant documents: Tenth Report from the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, Scrutiny of the Agriculture Bill, Session 2017-19, HC1591, and the Government response, Session 2019-21, HC273, and evidence taken by the Committee on 11 March 2020.]

Consideration of Bill, as amended in the Public Bill Committee

**Mr Speaker:** We now come to the remaining stages of the Agriculture Bill, designated for remote Divisions. My provisional determination is that remote Divisions will take place on any new clauses relating to agricultural imports on which a decision is called for, new clause 7, amendment 39 and Third Reading, and that the Question that Government amendments 20 to 22 be made will not be subject to a remote Division.

### New Clause 1

#### IMPORT OF AGRICULTURAL GOODS AFTER IP COMPLETION DAY

“(1) After IP completion day, agricultural goods imported under a free trade agreement may be imported into the UK only if the standards to which those goods were produced were as high as, or higher than, standards which at the time of import applied under UK law relating to—

- (a) animal welfare,
- (b) protection of the environment,
- (c) food safety, hygiene and traceability, and
- (d) plant health.

(2) The Secretary of State must prepare a register of UK production standards, to be updated annually, to which goods imported under subsection (1) would have to adhere.

(3) ‘Agricultural goods’ for the purposes of this section, mean—

- (a) any livestock within the meaning of section 1(5),
- (b) any plants or seeds, within the meaning of section 22(6),
- (c) any product derived from livestock, plants or seeds.

(4) ‘IP completion day’ has the meaning given in section 39 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020.”—  
(Simon Hoare.)

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

2.14 pm

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

New clause 2—*International trade agreements: agricultural and food products*—

“(1) A Minister of the Crown may not lay a copy of an international trade agreement before Parliament under section 20(1) of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 that contains provisions relating to the importation of agricultural and food products into the UK unless they have first made a statement confirming that—

- (a) the agreement contains an affirmation of the United Kingdom’s rights and obligations under the World Trade Organisation Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement, and
- (b) any agricultural or food product imported into the UK under the agreement will have been produced or processed according to standards which are equivalent to, or which exceed, the relevant domestic standards and regulations in relation to—

- (i) animal health and welfare,
- (ii) plant health, and
- (iii) environmental protection.

(2) A statement under subsection (1) shall be laid before each House of Parliament.

(3) Before the first statement under subsection (1) may be made, the Secretary of State must by regulations specify—

- (a) the process by which the Secretary of State will determine—
  - (i) that the standards to which any agricultural or food product imported into the UK under a trade agreement is produced or processed are equivalent to, or exceed, the relevant domestic standards and regulations in relation to animal health and welfare, plant health and environmental protection, and
  - (ii) that the enforcement of standards in relation to any product under sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) is at least as effective as the enforcement of the equivalent domestic standards and regulations in the UK;
- (b) the “relevant domestic standards and regulations” for the purposes of subsections (1)(b) and (3)(a)(i).

(4) The Secretary of State may make regulations amending any regulations made under subsection (3).

(5) Regulations under subsection (3) or (4) shall be made under the affirmative procedure.

(6) In this section—

“international trade agreement” means—

- (a) an agreement that is or was notifiable under—
  - (i) paragraph 7(a) of Article XXIV of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, part of Annex 1A to the WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time), or
  - (ii) paragraph 7(a) of Article V of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, part of Annex 1B to the WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time), or
- (b) an international agreement that mainly relates to trade, other than an agreement mentioned in sub-paragraph (i) or (ii);

“Minister of the Crown” has the same meaning as in the Ministers of the Crown Act 1975;

“World Trade Organisation Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement” means the agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, part of Annex 1A to the WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time);

“WTO Agreement” means the agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation signed at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994.”

**New clause 3—Groceries Code Adjudicator—**

“The Adjudicator established by the Groceries Code Adjudicator Act 2013 shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with Part 3 of this Act.”

**New clause 4—Agriculture: duty to promote exports—**

(1) The Secretary of State must take steps to increase opportunities for any person carrying on agriculture to export an agricultural product.

(2) Steps under subsection (1) may include measures to seek to secure the lifting of any—

- (a) ban on export of an agricultural product,
- (b) tariff or other form of barrier to trade,
- (c) excessive regulation, or
- (d) controls at national borders, local content rules or other barrier to entry for an agricultural product.

(3) The Secretary of State must, no later than twelve months after Royal Assent has been given to this Act, lay before each House of Parliament a report setting out measures taken under subsection (2) and the impact of such measures.

(4) The Secretary of State must within twelve months of laying a report under subsection (3), and once every calendar year thereafter, lay a report setting out measures taken under subsection (2), and the impact of such measures, in the period since the previous such report was laid.

(5) In this section—

“agricultural product” shall mean anything produced in the course of carrying on agriculture, and

“agriculture” shall have the meaning given in section 22(6) of this Act.”

**New clause 5—Application of pesticides: limitation on use to protect human health—**

(1) The Secretary of State shall by regulations make provision for prohibiting the application of any pesticide for the purpose of agriculture near—

- (a) any building used for habitation,
- (b) any building or open space used for work or recreation, or
- (c) any public or private building where members of the public may be present including, but not limited to, schools, nurseries, and hospitals.

(2) Regulations under this section may specify a minimum distance to be maintained during the application of any pesticide between the place of application and any place under subsection (1)(a) to (c).

(3) For the purposes of this section—

“agriculture” has the meaning given in section 15(6), and “public building” includes any building used for the purposes of education.

(4) Regulations under this section are subject to affirmative resolution procedure.”

*This new clause would have the effect of protecting members of the public from hazardous health impacts arising from the application of chemical pesticides near buildings and spaces used by the public.*

**New clause 6—Import of agricultural goods after IP completion day (No. 2)—**

(1) After IP completion day, agricultural goods imported under a free trade agreement may be imported into the UK only if the standards to which those goods were produced were as high as, or higher than, standards which at the time of import applied under UK law relating to—

- (a) animal health and welfare,
- (b) protection of the environment,
- (c) food safety, hygiene and traceability, and
- (d) plant health.

(2) The Secretary of State must prepare a register of standards under UK law relating to—

- (a) animal health and welfare,
- (b) protection of the environment,
- (c) food safety, hygiene and traceability, and
- (d) plant health which must be met in the course of production of any imported agricultural goods.

(3) A register under subsection (2) must be updated within seven days of any amendment to any standard listed in the register.

(4) “Agricultural goods”, for the purposes of this section, means anything produced by a producer operating in one or more agricultural sectors listed in Schedule 1.

(5) “IP completion day” has the meaning given in section 39 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020.”

*This new clause would set a requirement for imported agricultural goods to meet animal health and welfare, environmental, plant health, food safety and other standards which are at least as high as those which apply to UK produced agricultural goods.*

**New clause 7—Coronavirus emergency food plan—**

(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of Royal Assent being given to this Act, prepare and lay before Parliament a document (a “coronavirus emergency food plan”) setting out

measures to address the impact of coronavirus and coronavirus disease, and action taken in response, upon the supply of food.

(2) The coronavirus emergency food plan must assess and address—

- (a) the matters listed in section 17(2);
- (b) the following matters—
  - (i) the incidence of hunger, malnutrition and food poverty measured (a) nationally and (b) by local authority area;
  - (ii) the level of demand for emergency food aid and the adequacy of services to meet that demand;
  - (iii) the availability, distribution and affordability of nutritious and healthy food;
  - (iv) the ease of access to nutritious and healthy food across different socio-economic groups and communities;
  - (v) the functioning of the food supply chain, including stock levels of individual food items and any cross-border issues impacting upon the import and export of food; and
  - (vi) the level of any financial assistance provided by a public authority to farmers, growers and the fishing and fish processing sectors as a result of coronavirus or coronavirus disease.

(3) The plan may take account of information provided in response to a requirement under section 25 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 (power to require information relating to food supply chains), subject to the restrictions on the use and disclosure of information set out in section 27 of that Act (restrictions on use and disclosure of information).

(4) In this section—

“coronavirus” means severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2;

“coronavirus disease” means COVID-19 (the official designation of the disease which can be caused by coronavirus);

“financial assistance” means assistance provided by way of grant, loan, guarantee or indemnity, and any other kind of financial assistance (actual or contingent).”

*Member’s explanatory statement This new clause would require the Secretary of State lay before Parliament a coronavirus emergency food plan, within six months of Royal Assent.*

**New clause 8—Duty and regulations governing agricultural and horticultural activity—**

“(1) It shall be the duty of the Secretary of State to establish a regulatory framework relating to agricultural and horticultural activity for or in connection with the following purposes—

- (a) the management of land or water in a way that protects or improves the environment;
- (b) supporting agriculture and horticulture businesses in enabling public access to healthy food that is farmed in an environmentally sustainable way, including food produced through whole farm agroecological systems;
- (c) public access to and enjoyment of the countryside, farmland or woodland and better understanding of the environment;
- (d) the management of land or water in a way that maintains, restores or enhances cultural or natural heritage;
- (e) improving public health;
- (f) the management of land, water or livestock in a way that mitigates or adapts to climate change;
- (g) the management of land or water in a way that prevents, reduces or protects from environmental hazards;
- (h) the protection or improvement of the health or welfare of livestock;
- (i) the conservation of native livestock, native equines or genetic resources relating to any such animal;
- (j) the protection or improvement of the health of plants;

(k) the conservation of plants grown or used in carrying on an agricultural, horticultural or forestry activity, their wild relatives or genetic resources relating to any such plant; and

(l) the protection or improvement of the quality of soil.

(2) Regulations under subsection (1) must include provision about the standards to which activity for or in connection with all of the purposes in subsection (1) must conform.

(3) Regulations under subsection (1) may include provision about enforcement, which may (among other things) include provision—

- (a) about the provision of information;
- (b) conferring powers of entry;
- (c) conferring powers of inspection, search and seizure;
- (d) about the keeping of records;
- (e) imposing monetary penalties;
- (f) creating summary offences punishable with a fine (or a fine not exceeding an amount specified in the regulations, which must not exceed level 4 on the standard scale);
- (g) about appeals;
- (h) conferring functions (including functions involving the exercise of a discretion) on a person.

(4) Regulations under this section are subject to affirmative resolution procedure.”

*See explanatory statement for Amendment 30.*

**New clause 9—Duration of provision in relation to Northern Ireland—**

“(1) Section 45 and Schedule 6 expire at the end of 2026.

(2) Regulations made under paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 6 (power to modify retained direct EU legislation relating to public market intervention and private storage aid) cease to have effect at the end of 2026 (so that any amendment made by them ceases to have effect and any enactment repealed by them is revived). But see subsections (4) and (5) for saving provision.

(3) Otherwise, subsection (1) does not affect the continuation in force or effect of any regulations made, or other thing done, by virtue of Schedule 6 before the end of 2026.

(4) Despite subsections (1) and (2), paragraph 7 of Schedule 6, and regulations made under paragraph 8(1) of that Schedule, continue to have effect in relation to any period which ends after the end of 2026 and for which DAERA is giving, or has agreed to give, financial assistance under paragraph 7 of Schedule 6.

(5) Subsection (2) does not affect the lawfulness of anything done in accordance with retained direct EU legislation as modified by regulations made under paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 6 before those regulations cease to have effect.

(6) DAERA may by regulations make transitional, transitory or saving provision in connection with this section.

(7) The provision which may be made by virtue of subsection (6) includes provision modifying primary legislation, retained direct EU legislation or subordinate legislation.

(8) Regulations under this section which contain provision modifying primary legislation (with or without other provision) are subject to affirmative resolution procedure.

(9) Other regulations under this section are subject to negative resolution procedure.”

*This new clause is designed to introduce a sunset clause so that provisions relating to Northern Ireland are timebound, whilst allowing suitable time for the for the development of bespoke legislation within the next Assembly term and taking into account disruptions in future planning as a result of the Covid19 crisis.*

**New clause 10—International trade agreements covering agricultural goods: standards and approval—**

“(1) A Minister of the Crown may not lay a copy of an international trade agreement before Parliament under section 20(1) of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 unless the agreement meets the conditions in subsections (2) and (3).

(2) The condition in this subsection is that the agreement prohibits the importation into the United Kingdom of any agricultural product unless the standards to which that product was produced were as high as, or higher than, standards which at the time of import applied under UK law relating to—

- (a) animal welfare,
- (b) protection of the environment,
- (c) employment rights, and
- (d) food safety.

(3) The condition in this subsection is that—

- (a) upon conclusion of the negotiations on the agreement, the text of any element of the agreement which concerns trade in agricultural products has been laid before Parliament,
- (b) the House of Commons has approved by resolution a motion moved by a Minister of the Crown which approves the text of any element which concerns trade in agricultural products, and
- (c) the House of Lords has debated a motion in the same terms as that approved by the House of Commons.

(4) A motion under subsection (3)(b) shall be framed in terms which permit amendment.

(5) For the purposes of this section—

“agriculture product” shall mean any product which falls within an agricultural sector listed in Schedule 1 or which is derived from any such product,

“international trade agreement” means—

(a) an agreement that is or was notifiable under—

- (i) paragraph 7(a) of Article XXIV of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, part of Annex 1A to the agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation signed at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994 (the WTO Agreement) (as modified from time to time), or
- (ii) paragraph 7(a) of Article V of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, part of Annex 1B to the WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time), or

(b) an international agreement that mainly relates to trade, other than an agreement mentioned in sub-paragraph (i) or (ii);

“Minister of the Crown” has the same meaning as in the Ministers of the Crown Act 1975.”

**New clause 11—Mandatory labelling of animal products as to farming method—**

“(1) The Secretary of State shall make regulations requiring meat, meat products, milk, milk products and egg products (including those produced intensively indoors) to be labelled as to the method of farming.

(2) The labelling required under subsection (1) shall be placed on the front outer surface of the packaging and shall be in easily visible and clearly legible type.

(3) Regulations under subsection (1) shall (among other things) lay down—

- (a) the labelling term to be used for each product;
- (b) the conditions that must be met for the use of each labelling term.

(4) Regulations under subsection (1) may exclude from the labelling requirement products containing meat, meat products, milk, milk products or egg products where the total proportion by weight of one or more of these items in the product is less than fifteen percent.

(5) Regulations under this section are subject to affirmative resolution procedure.”

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State to make labelling regulations that require meat, meat products, milk and milk products, and egg products, including those which have been produced intensively, to be labelled as to farming method. Eggs are not included as legislation already requires eggs to be labelled as to farming method.*

**New clause 12—International trade agreements: agricultural and food products (No. 2)—**

“(1) A Minister of the Crown may not lay a copy of an international trade agreement before Parliament under section 20(1) of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 unless the agreement—

- (a) includes an affirmation of the United Kingdom’s rights and obligations under the SPS Agreement, and
- (b) prohibits the importation into the United Kingdom of agricultural and food products in relation to which the relevant standards are lower than the relevant standards in the United Kingdom.

(2) In subsection (1)—

“international trade agreement” means—

(a) an agreement that is or was notifiable under—

- (i) paragraph 7(a) of Article XXIV of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, part of Annex 1A to the WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time), or
- (ii) paragraph 7(a) of Article V of General Agreement on Trade in Services, part of Annex 1B to the WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time), or

(b) an international agreement that mainly relates to trade, other than an agreement mentioned in subparagraph (i) or (ii);

“Minister of the Crown” has the same meaning as in the Ministers of the Crown Act 1975;

“relevant standards” means standards relating to environmental protection, plant health and animal welfare applying in connection with the production of agricultural and food products;

“SPS Agreement” means the agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, part of Annex 1A to the WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time);

“WTO Agreement” means the agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation signed at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994.”

**New clause 14—Carbon emissions: net-zero and interim targets—**

“(1) When considering the provision of financial assistance under sections 1(1) and 1(2) of this Act, the Secretary of State shall ensure that the likely impact of that funding is compatible with the achievement of any emissions reduction target set out in subsection (2) or (3).

(2) It is the duty of the Secretary of State to—

- (a) set an emissions reduction target for the net UK carbon account for agriculture and related land use for the year 2050 which is at least 100% lower than the 1990 baseline, and
- (b) ensure that the target is met.

(3) The Secretary of State must, within six months of this Bill receiving Royal Assent, publish interim emissions reductions targets for agriculture and related land use that align with budgetary periods as they relate to carbon budgets.

(4) It is the duty of the Secretary of State to ensure that the net UK carbon account for agriculture and related land use for a budgetary period does not exceed any interim emissions reduction target published under subsection (3).

(5) The Secretary of State must, within twelve months of this Bill receiving Royal Assent, publish a statement of the policies to be delivered in order to meet the interim emissions reduction targets published under subsection (3).

(6) In this section—

- (a) “net UK carbon account” shall have the meaning given in section 27 of the Climate Change Act 2008, and
- (b) “budgetary periods” and “carbon budgets” shall have the meaning given in section 4 of the Climate Change Act 2008.”

*This new clause would set a target of net-zero green-house gas emissions for agriculture and related land use in the UK by 2050 at the latest. It would place a duty on the Secretary of State to publish interim emissions reduction targets – and policy proposals to ensure those targets are met.*

Amendment 26, in clause 1, page 2, line 9, at end insert—

“(aa) supporting agriculture and horticulture businesses in enabling public access to healthy food that is farmed in an environmentally sustainable way, including food produced through whole farm agroecological systems.”

*This amendment would add to the purposes for which financial assistance can be given that of ensuring access to healthy food produced sustainably including through whole farm agroecological systems.*

Amendment 27, page 2, line 13, at end insert—

“(ca) improving public health;”

*This amendment would add “improving public health” to the list of purposes for financial assistance given under clause 1, with ‘improving public health’ defined in Amendment 29.*

Amendment 3, page 2, leave out lines 19 and 20 and insert—

“(g) protecting or improving the management of landscapes and biodiversity through pasture-fed grazing livestock systems including the conservation of native livestock, native equines or genetic resources relating to any such animal;”

Amendment 2, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

“(k) protecting or improving the health, well-being and food security of citizens.”

Amendment 18, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

“(k) establishing and maintaining whole farm agroecological systems.”

Amendment 36, page 2, line 25, at end insert—

“(k) supporting upland landscapes and communities.”

Amendment 28, page 3, line 6, at end insert—

“‘environmentally sustainable way’ means in a way which employs factors and practices that contribute to the quality of environment on a long-term basis and avoids the depletion of natural resources.”

*This amendment defines “environmentally sustainable way” for the purposes of clause 1(4) and Amendment 26.*

Amendment 29, page 3, line 12, at end insert—

“‘improving public health’ includes—

- (a) increasing the availability, affordability, diversity, quality and marketing of fruit, vegetables and pulses,
- (b) reducing farm antibiotic and related veterinary product use, and antibiotic resistance in harmful micro-organisms, through improved animal health and welfare,
- (c) providing support for farmers to diversify out of domestic production of foods where there may be reduced demand due to public concerns over issues such as health, environment, and animal welfare, and
- (d) reducing harm from use of chemicals on farms, and reducing pesticide residues in food;”

*See explanatory statement for Amendment 27.*

Amendment 19, page 3, line 17, at end insert—

“‘whole farm agroecological systems’ include any whole enterprise system for farming or land management which is designed to produce food or fuel while delivering environmental and social benefits, and may include organic farming.”

Amendment 4, in clause 2, page 3, line 27, at end insert—

“(2A) In every case such conditions shall include the following restrictions to the eligibility of a recipient of financial assistance—

- (a) financial assistance may only be made to individuals or groups of individuals, natural or otherwise, operating land where the predominant use is agricultural as defined by section 96(1) of the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986; and
- (b) financial assistance may only be made available to individuals or groups of individuals, natural or otherwise, who are—
  - (i) in occupation of or with rights of common over the land for which the financial assistance is being claimed;
  - (ii) taking the entrepreneurial risk for the decisions made in relation to the management of the land for which the financial assistance is being claimed; and
  - (iii) in day-to-day management control of the land for which the financial assistance has been claimed.”

Amendment 30, page 3, line 27, at end insert—

“(2A) Financial assistance may not be given to any person who is not compliant with standards set out in regulations made by the Secretary of State under section [Duty and regulations governing agricultural and horticultural activity].”

*This amendment and NC8 provide a duty for the Secretary of State to set baseline regulatory standards governing agricultural and horticultural activity, which must be met by any recipient of financial assistance.*

Amendment 17, page 3, line 33, at end insert—

“(4A) Financial assistance may only be given for or in connection with a purpose under section 1(1) or (2) if the owner of the relevant land takes the action described in subsection (4B).

(4B) The action is that the owner of the relevant land will not restrict access for any person on any inland waterway or lake which forms part of that land for the purposes of open-air recreation, if and so long as the person—

- (a) exercises that right of access responsibly, and
- (b) observes any restrictions which are imposed in—
  - (i) section 2 of,
  - (ii) Schedule 2 to, or
  - (iii) Chapter II of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

(4C) A person does not exercise a right of access responsibly if their conduct while exercising that right is not in accord with the provisions of any code of conduct issued under section 20 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

(4D) For the purposes of subsections (4A) and (4B), “relevant land” means land which includes the land or premises on which the activity for which financial assistance is given under section 1(1) or (2) of this Act takes place or is to take place and includes any inland waterway or lake.”

Amendment 42, in clause 3, page 4, line 18, at end insert—

- (e) development of a target or targets for the uptake of Integrated Pest Management based upon agroecological farming practices, including organic farming, and a robust system for monitoring progress towards such targets.”

*This new amendment would enable the Secretary of State to set and monitor progress towards targets for the uptake of Integrated Pest Management based on agroecological farming practices, including for organic farming, in order to ensure that financial assistance granted under the Agriculture Bill is meeting its objectives in terms of environmental outcomes.*

Amendment 5, in clause 4, page 5, line 14, at end insert—

- (d) set out the budgeted annual expenditure to be used to achieve each of the aforementioned strategic priorities for the plan period.”

Amendment 6, in clause 8, page 7, line 40, leave out “2021” and insert “2022”.

Amendment 1, in clause 16, page 12, line 42, at end insert—

“(ba) making provision for future contributions to existing rural socioeconomic schemes;”

*This amendment would safeguard the availability of financial provisions to continue the socioeconomic programmes under Rural Development Programmes in the event of delays in the introduction of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.*

Amendment 23, in clause 17, page 14, line 20, leave out “five years” and insert “year”.

*This amendment would make the Secretary of State’s report on food security annual instead of five-yearly.*

Amendment 24, page 14, line 27, at end insert—

“(ba) food poverty and progress towards achievement of the UN Sustainable Development Goal on hunger, malnutrition and food poverty (SDG 2);”

*This amendment would add food poverty and progress towards the achievement of UN Sustainable Development Goal 2 to the matters to be covered by the report.*

Amendment 25, page 14, line 32, at end insert—

“(f) food insecurity.

(3) For the purposes of this section “food insecurity” means a person’s state in which consistent access to adequate food is limited by a lack of money and other resources at times during the year.

(4) Before laying a report under subsection (1) the Secretary of State must—

(a) consult the Scottish Ministers, the Welsh Ministers, the relevant Northern Ireland department, and such other persons as the Secretary of State considers appropriate, and

(b) have due regard to international best practice on food insecurity, including but not limited to the United States Household Food Security Survey.

(5) A report under subsection (1) must include—

(a) an assessment of trends in food insecurity, broken down by different parts of the United Kingdom and different regions of England, and

(b) a summary of actions to be taken in areas of high food insecurity by the UK Government, the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government or the Northern Ireland Executive.

(6) In this section—

“parts of the United Kingdom” means—

- (a) England,
- (b) Scotland,
- (c) Wales, and
- (d) Northern Ireland;

“regions of England” has the same meaning as that used by the Office for National Statistics.”

*This amendment would add food insecurity to the matters to be covered by the report.*

Amendment 7, page 14, line 32, at end insert—

“(3) As part of the report, the Secretary of State must set out food security targets and specify and implement any actions required to ensure that those targets are met.”

Amendment 8, in clause 18, page 15, leave out lines 2 and 3 and insert—

“(a) there is an acute or chronic disturbance in agricultural markets or a serious threat of an acute or chronic disturbance in agricultural markets caused by economic or environmental factors, and”.

Amendment 31, in clause 27, page 23, line 15, leave out “a specified person” and insert “the Groceries Code Adjudicator”.

*This amendment is intended to ensure that the role of regulating agricultural contracts is given to the Groceries Code Adjudicator’s office.*

Amendment 32, page 23, line 23, at end insert—

“(8A) The Groceries Code Adjudicator Act 2013 is amended, by inserting after section 2 (Arbitration)—

**‘2A Fair dealing: determination of complaints alleging non-compliance**

(1) If a complaint relating to alleged non-compliance is referred to the Adjudicator under section 27(8)(a) of the Agriculture Act 2020, the Adjudicator must determine the complaint.

(2) In determining any allegation of non-compliance under subsection (1), the Adjudicator must act in accordance with any regulations made under subsection (1) of section 27 of the Agriculture Act 2020 which make provision for investigation of complaints, imposition of penalties or a requirement to pay compensation, as specified by subsection (8) of section 27 of that Act.”

*This amendment would specify the process to be followed by the Groceries Code Adjudicator’s office in determining a complaint made under the Agriculture Act 2020.*

Amendment 33, page 23, line 25, after “any” insert “competent and appropriate”.

*This amendment is intended to ensure that the role of regulating agricultural contracts is given to a body which is competent to undertake qualitative assessments; for example, the Groceries Code Adjudicator’s office.*

Amendment 34, page 23, line 26, after “provide for a” insert “competent and appropriate”.

*This amendment is intended to ensure that the role of regulating agricultural contracts is given to a body which is competent to undertake qualitative assessments; for example, the Groceries Code Adjudicator’s office.*

Amendment 38, in clause 33, page 30, line 44, at end insert—

“(2A) The scheme must be made by 1 April 2021.”

Amendment 39, in clause 42, page 38, line 28, leave out subsections (4) and (5).

Amendment 12, in schedule 3, page 50, line 15, leave out “may” and insert “must”.

Amendment 11, page 50, leave out lines 25 to 36 and insert—

“(3) A request falls within this subsection if—

(a) it is a request for—

- (i) the landlord’s consent to a matter which under the terms of the tenancy requires such consent, or
- (ii) a variation of the terms of the tenancy, or
- (iii) the landlord’s consent to a matter which otherwise requires such consent.

(b) it is made for the purposes of—

- (i) enabling the tenant to request or apply for relevant financial assistance or relevant financial assistance of a description specified in the regulations, or
- (ii) complying with a statutory duty, or a statutory duty of a description specified in the regulations, applicable to the tenant, or
- (iii) to secure either or both of the full and efficient farming of the holding or an environmental improvement, and”.

Amendment 13, page 51, line 34, at end insert

“, or

(d) a scheme of financial assistance in whatever form introduced by Welsh Ministers;”.

Amendment 16, page 54, line 20, at end insert—

“*Succession on death of tenant*

21A In section 35, leave out subsection (2) and insert—

(2) In sections 36 to 48 below (and in Part I of Schedule 6 to this Act)—

“close relative” of a deceased tenant means—

- (a) the wife husband or civil partner of the deceased;
- (b) a brother or sister of the deceased;
- (c) a child of the deceased;
- (d) a nephew or niece of the deceased;
- (e) a grandchild of the deceased;
- (f) any person (not within (b) or (c) or (d) or (e) above) who, in the case of any marriage or civil partnership or other cohabitation to which the deceased was a at any time a party, was treated by the deceased as a child of the family in relation to that marriage or civil partnership or other cohabitation;”.

Amendment 15, page 54, line 20, at end insert—

“*Succession on retirement of tenant*

21B In section 49, leave out subsection (3) and insert—

(3) In this section and sections 50 to 58 below (and in Part I of Schedule 6 to this Act as applied by section 50(4))—

“close relative” of the retiring tenant means—

- (a) the wife husband or civil partner of the retiring tenant;
- (b) a brother or sister of the retiring tenant;
- (c) a child of the retiring tenant;
- (d) a nephew or niece of the retiring tenant;
- (e) a grandchild of the retiring tenant;
- (f) any person (not within (b) or (c) or (d) or (e) above) who, in the case of any marriage or civil partnership or other cohabitation to which the retiring tenant has been at any time a party, has been treated by the latter as a child of the family in relation to that marriage or civil partnership or other cohabitation;”.

Amendment 14, page 54, line 24, at end insert—

“*Termination of tenancies of 10 years or more*

22A Before section 8 insert—

**“7A Termination of tenancies of 10 years or more**

(1) Where a farm business tenancy has been granted for a fixed term of 10 years or more without any provision for the landlord to terminate the tenancy on a specific date or dates during the fixed term, the landlord may serve notice to quit on the tenant of the holding using the provisions of the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 Schedule 3 Parts I and II in accordance with the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 Schedule 4 and all Orders introduced as mentioned in that schedule in respect of the following cases—

- (a) Case B
- (b) Case D
- (c) Case E
- (d) Case F
- (e) Case G

(2) In addition to any compensation required to be paid to the tenant by the landlord following the termination of a tenancy using Case B, the landlord shall pay additional compensation to the tenant at an amount equal to ten years’ rent of the holding or attributed to the part of the holding upon which notice to quit has been served at the rate at which rent was payable immediately before the termination of the tenancy.”

Amendment 10, page 55, line 19, at end insert—

“*Requests for landlord’s consent or variation of terms*

25A Before section 28 insert—

**“27A Disputes relating to requests for landlord’s consent or variation of terms**

(1) The appropriate authority must by regulations make provision for the tenant of an agricultural holding to refer for arbitration under this Act a request made by the tenant to the landlord where—

- (a) the request falls within subsection (3), and
- (b) no agreement has been reached with the landlord on the request.

(2) The regulations may also provide that, where the tenant is given the right to refer a request to arbitration, the landlord and tenant may instead refer the request for third party determination under this Act.

(3) A request falls within this subsection if—

- (a) it is a request for—
  - (i) the landlord’s consent to a matter which under the terms of the tenancy requires such consent, or
  - (ii) a variation of the terms of the tenancy, or
  - (iii) the landlord’s consent to a matter which otherwise requires such consent
- (b) it is made for the purposes of—

- (i) enabling the tenant to request or apply for relevant financial assistance or relevant financial assistance of a description specified in the regulations, or
- (ii) complying with a statutory duty, or a statutory duty of a description specified in the regulations, applicable to the tenant, or
- (iii) to secure either or both of the full and efficient farming of the holding or an environmental improvement, and

(c) it meets such other conditions (if any) as may be specified in the regulations.

(4) The regulations may provide for the arbitrator or third party on a reference made under the regulations, where the arbitrator or third party considers it reasonable and just (as between the landlord and tenant) to do so—

- (a) to order the landlord to comply with the request (either in full or to the extent specified in the award or determination);
- (b) to make any other award or determination permitted by the regulations.

(5) The regulations may (among other things) make provision—

- (a) about conditions to be met before a reference may be made;
- (b) about matters which an arbitrator or third party is to take into account when considering a reference;
- (c) for regulating the conduct of arbitrations or third-party determinations;
- (d) about the awards or determinations which may be made by the arbitrator or third party, which may include making an order for a variation in the rent of the holding or for the payment of compensation or costs;
- (e) about the time at which, or the conditions subject to which, an award or determination may be expressed to take effect;
- (f) for restricting a tenant’s ability to make subsequent references to arbitration where a reference to arbitration or third-party determination has already been made under the regulations in relation to the same tenancy.

(6) The provision covered by subsection (5)(e) includes, in the case of a request made for the purpose described in subsection (3)(b)(i), conditions relating to the making of a successful application for assistance.



- (7) In this section—
- “appropriate authority” means—
- (a) in relation to England, the Secretary of State, and
  - (b) in relation to Wales, the Welsh Ministers;
- “relevant financial assistance” means financial assistance under—
- (a) section 1 of the Agriculture Act 2020 (powers of Secretary of State to give financial assistance),
  - (b) section 19 of, or paragraph 7 of Schedule 5 to, that Act (powers of Secretary of State and Welsh Ministers to give financial assistance in exceptional market conditions), or
  - (c) a scheme of the sort mentioned in section 2(4) of that Act (third party schemes), or
  - (d) a scheme of financial assistance in whatever form introduced by Welsh Ministers;
- “statutory duty” means a duty imposed by or under—
- (a) an Act of Parliament;
  - (b) an Act or Measure of the National Assembly for Wales;
  - (c) retained direct EU legislation.”

Amendment 40, in schedule 4, page 56, line 21, at end insert—

*“Pigmeat*

Products falling within the table in Part XVII of Annex 1 of the CMO Regulation, but excluding any entry in the table for live animals”.

*This amendment adds “pigmeat” to Schedule 4. Clause 35 enables the Secretary of State to establish marketing standards in relation to products that “fall within a sector listed in Schedule 4”. Sectors listed include beef and veal, poultry and poultrymeat, milk and milk products, and eggs and egg products, but not pigmeat.*

Government amendments 20 to 22.

Amendment 9, in schedule 5, page 61, leave out lines 25 and 26 and insert—

- “(a) there is an acute or chronic disturbance in agricultural markets or a serious threat of an acute or chronic disturbance in agricultural markets caused by economic or environmental factors, and”.

Amendment 37, in the title, line 17, after

“with the WTO Agreement on Agriculture;”

insert

“to require animal products to be labelled as to farming method;”.

*This would amend the long title to enable the Bill to require the Secretary of State to make regulations requiring animal products to be labelled as to farming method.*

I call Simon Hoare, who is asked to speak for no more than eight minutes.

**Simon Hoare:** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

As my hon. Friend the Minister knows, I welcome this Bill. It is the first piece of agricultural legislation to come before our country since 1947, and what a glorious opportunity it is to set out what is important to us both in what our policies should be and how we can help to shape and lead future thinking.

The events of the past few weeks have given our country pause for thought as we have evaluated what is important to us—what we value, what we stand for, who we are. While covid has presented that as an opportunity, this Bill does the same with regard to agriculture: what does a global Britain in a non-membership of the European Union world look like? Just as this country has been a trailblazer against female genital

mutilation, modern slavery and the trade in ivory, so I believe we can be in our high standards that prevail in agriculture today with regard to animal welfare, food production, agricultural practices and environmental standards. So important are these issues that they were writ large in the Conservative party manifesto of only December last year. Every Minister—the Prime Minister, the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Secretary and others—when questioned on these important issues before, during and after the referendum campaign has asserted their absolute, cast-iron guaranteed support for them.

Our farmers and food producers work under those high standards of regulation willingly. They understand their importance and the consumer confidence that they bring. They understand that they add value to the provenance of our food and drink exports. I was therefore not very pleased to have to table new clause 1. The thrust behind it is, in essence, that any food product imported into the United Kingdom under a free trade agreement should be raised to standards either equal to or greater than those that prevail within the UK, and that the Secretary of State should annually update a list of standards. That would not force countries that have entered into an FTA with us to change all their practices. It would simply be up to producers to work out if they were not hitting our standards and then, if they wished to access our lucrative markets, to change their practices in order so to do—the ordinary operation of the market.

My new clause is not about stymieing free trade agreements, and neither is that in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish)—we understand the huge potential benefits that can accrue from them. But this is not about firing the starting gun for a race to the bottom. There is no merit in deliberately setting out in Government policy the creation of an unlevel playing field. Food imports to this country would be cheap for no reason bar the fact that they were made to lower standards. Anybody can look at a variety of websites and realise some of the pretty horrendous ways in which livestock is raised in a number of countries across the world. We should shun that and be a beacon for excellence and high standards.

Those cheap food imports would remain cheap only while there was a viable scale of domestic production to create some sort of viable competition. As soon as it was choked off or choked down—reduced to a scale no more than meeting the artisan market or a farmers’ market—those prices would start to rise, and we would have lost our agricultural sector. I represent the constituency of North Dorset, where agriculture and farming are absolutely pivotal. My manifesto in the 2015, 2017 and 2019 elections was very clear that I would speak up and stand up for farmers, understanding the importance that they play in our economy.

The new clause is not anti-free trade or anti-American, but pro our standards being a beacon and pro ensuring that there is a future for our agricultural sector and for our consumers to purchase securely and safely. The new clause has attracted support from across the House and from both wings of my party: people who voted to leave the European Union and people who voted to remain. Anybody trying to dress this up as some sort of closet attempt to remain within the European Union does so at grave peril.

[Simon Hoare]

The new clause is also supported by a host of radical crypto-anarchic organisations: the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds; the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; the Country Land and Business Association; the Soil Association; that well known anarchic group the Wildlife Trust; LEAF—Linking Environment and Farming; the Tenant Farmers Association; the National Farmers Union; and, worst of all, that Leninist organisation the Woodland Trust.

This is not a crypto-communist move against capitalism; it is about trying to create a level playing field. It is not a coercive approach to those who might enter a free trade agreement, but an invitation to meet our standards if they wish to trade. If one accepts that food production and food security are important, it would require an incredibly brave Minister of the Crown, and an incredibly brave Parliament, if our farmers came to us and said, “Look, we are just about on the brink. You will have to lower our standards and change our regulations in order to allow us to compete.” I do not want to see that, and nor does my party.

Our Prime Minister takes animal welfare very seriously, as do the Farming Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Banbury (Victoria Prentis), and the Secretary of State. However, most countries in the world value their food production, value their food security, and seek out and adopt policies in order to ensure that they have a viable future. New clause 1 does just that, and I hope that either the Minister will be in a position to accept it this afternoon, or we will see what the House has to say about it later.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I call the shadow Secretary of State, Luke Pollard, who is asked to speak for no more than eight minutes.

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I will speak to the amendments that stand in my name and that of the Leader of the Opposition. Food policy has been overlooked and sidelined in our politics for far too long. Empty shelves, crops underwater in flooded fields, food bank growth and the growing obesity crisis demand that it enjoys more of our focus in the next decade than it had in the last. I want to see a greater focus on the quality and resilience of the food that we eat and the quality of the air that we breathe. Our new focus on food is for life and not just for coronavirus.

I place on record my heartfelt thanks to all the food heroes—the hidden heroes—who have kept the nation fed throughout the coronavirus crisis. From the fishers and the farmers, the distributors and the drivers, the processors and the pickers, to the shelf stackers and the supermarket workers, these people are finally getting the recognition that they deserve as key workers. The pay, conditions, pensions, protections and political focus on them must now follow. In declaring my interest, may I remind the House that my little sister is one of those key workers, as a sheep farmer on her farm in Cornwall?

At the very heart of this debate today is a very simple question, which the hon. Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) mentioned in his opening remarks. What kind of country do we want to be—one where farm standards are a pawn in a trade deal with our values traded for market access, or a nation that says Britain is

a force for good in the world and upholds our high standards for food grown locally and food imported alike? At a time of climate crisis, we must choose to rebuild a better, greener, more sustainable and fairer Britain than we had before.

The path ahead of us is uncertain, but we must learn the lessons of those who came before us. We must not trade away the values that make us British and make us proud to be British: high environmental standards in food production; decent pay for those who tend our fields—at least, they should be paid well; animal welfare standards that increase, not slide; and a determination that we will never, ever again be held hostage by our inability, by choice or natural cause, to feed ourselves.

The Agriculture Bill is not a trivial matter; nor is food production. The Bill will fundamentally change the system of farm support, so it deserves our attention. However, an Agriculture Bill without a focus on food is an odd beast. It almost entirely omits food, and therefore does not even begin to solve all the problems that the virus has both caused and revealed. I would wager that the Environment Secretary and the farming Minister did not have the whip hand in the timing of this Bill, and that it is down to Downing Street and its free marketeer agenda, seeking to see off a rebellion of Tory MPs rightly unhappy and uneasy about leaving the door open to imports of food produced to lower standards, that we are here today on a contentious piece of legislation in the middle of a national crisis.

The new clauses in the names of the Chairs of the two Select Committees—the hon. Members for North Dorset and for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish)—and those in my name and that of the Leader of the Opposition all seek to do one very simple thing, which is to put Government promises into law. The promise from the Conservative manifesto says:

“In all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.”

These words are meaningless unless they are backed up by law. The amendments today reflect a cross-party concern that the promises of high standards will not be kept unless they appear in black and white in the Bill. The right place to deal with farm standards is a Bill about farming. Indeed, the Leader of the House has just said from the Dispatch Box that he is about delivering on the manifesto and that this is essential. I agree on this point: those standards are essential, and they must be delivered on in law.

I suspect the Minister will shortly say that the subjects of these amendments would best be dealt with in the Trade Bill. I disagree with her on that and, unfortunately, so do her own Government. It seems the Government's trade team are arguing that the Trade Bill is actually not for setting up trade architecture. They argue that it is a continuity Bill for rolling over existing agreements that Britain is a party to as part of the EU, so we will need another trade Bill that has not been published, written or designed yet to deal with matters such as democratic oversight of trade deals. There is zero chance, as the Minister knows, of such a Bill appearing or passing before the 31 December deadline, so we come to the necessity of this issue being dealt with in this Bill, where it can be discussed and implemented ahead of the 31 December deadline. It must not be parked or lost in the long grass of future Bills that have not yet appeared.

These amendments are being opposed, to my mind, simply because they would make it harder to have a trade deal with nations for which lower food and farm standards are the norm. The inescapable truth of Ministers refusing to put these sensible amendments into law is that allowing British farmers to be undercut by cheap imported food is part of the Government's plan, and it should not be. Labour has tabled the amendments because we will not allow British farmers to go out of business because they are being undercut by cheap imports that would be illegal if they were grown or produced in the UK.

There is no urban-rural divide on high farm standards or on animal health and welfare, no divide when it comes to wanting high environmental standards preserved and no divide between feeders and eaters when it comes to food safety and food quality. This Bill is, by and large, a reasonable Bill.

DEFRA officials and Ministers have worked hard to get the detail right, but the political handcuffs placed on the Environment Secretary and his Ministers to tie them to oppose these reasonable, sensible, necessary and essential amendments betray the bigger political agenda at play here. Both the Environment Secretary and the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Banbury (Victoria Prentis), who has responsibility for farming, have good agricultural pedigree, and I am reassured that those with experience are at the helm of the Department, but if orders are coming from the Department for International Trade, they have my sympathy for being caught in the invidious place of choosing between what is right and what they are told to do.

2.30 pm

The inevitable deregulatory pressure from poorer quality food will put pressure on Britain to slash our high standards so that farmers can compete; it risks a race to the bottom. That risks the animal husbandry and the environmental gains Ministers have committed themselves to. If Ministers are to protect only the standards for UK producers and do not set bars for foreign producers to meet in order to sell into the British markets, the path ahead for our farmers will be a dark one. We know that if only some of our farm standards are protected in legislation, in reality none of our standards are protected.

The Bill already includes a provision on food security reports on this challenge. The expected five-year frequency of publication does not match the annual barometer that it needs to meet. It is because the virus has shone a spotlight on the fragility of our food supply system that we are proposing that a food security report is published within six months of this Bill becoming law, focusing on the food supply problems highlighted by the virus: the fragility of supply, concerns over agricultural labour supply and the nutritional value of food parcels for those who are being shielded. Ensuring that food parcels are nutritionally balanced and culturally appropriate is necessary to ensure that those who are being shielded can receive the benefits of a good diet and not be compelled to head out to the shops to ensure that they can eat healthily, as that would defeat the purpose of this in the first place.

The nutrition of the nation is a national priority for Labour. That is why this amendment also stands in my name, and it does so proudly and distinct from party

politics. However, the shortage of food and the rising incidence of food poverty scream out and demand our rational consideration of the causes of the crisis. I hope the Minister will adopt that amendment, as the Bill needs a greater focus on food, which the amendment would provide. The amendments on food standards are what our farmers are asking for, what the public expect and what was in the Conservative manifesto. I ask the Minister to back those amendments, recognising that Labour MPs, Conservative MPs, farmers and environmental groups all stand united here. I hope she will do the right thing and ensure that food poverty is addressed and that farm standards can be upheld proudly, ensuring that no farmer is undercut in future trade deals.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I now call Minister Victoria Prentis, who is asked to speak for no more than 15 minutes.

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Victoria Prentis):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I should start by declaring my interest: my family has farmed on the Oxfordshire-Northamptonshire border for many years, and I am also a keen smallholder. This is a very important moment for agriculture in this country. This Bill is the first of its kind for more than 70 years and it will allow us to shape farming for the future. This Bill is about farmers, and sets out a framework policy for rewarding them as they produce food and provide public goods.

I thank all Members who have tabled amendments. I apologise if the hybrid nature of the debate prevents me from engaging fully with every point—it is not ideal. I am, however, reassured that the Bill has been thoroughly scrutinised by not one but two Public Bill Committees. I am keen to continue to engage with Members across the House as we develop the details of the policies. I must also record my thanks to those who have worked so hard to ensure that we have all been fed in these frightening times: farmers, manufacturers and retailers. They are food heroes, and they have worked together and struggled on despite workforce shortages and social distancing measures. I hope that a lasting legacy of this pandemic is that we all think a little more about where our food comes from.

The feeding the vulnerable taskforce, which I chair, has worked hard to ensure that those parts of society on whom this crisis falls the hardest can access food. On Friday, we announced £16 million of funding for food charities. Measures in this Bill would have been very useful two months ago. I commend in particular the powers in clauses 18 and 19, which would have made it easier and quicker to support farmers during these difficult times. Under clause 17, for the first time, the Government will have a duty to take a regular, systematic view of our overall food security at least every five years, giving time to observe trends. That is not to say that we have to wait five years between reviews at all. The majority of data covered will, of course, be available between reports, and we certainly have no intention of waiting until the end of the five-year period to publish our first report. That report will, of course, take into account what we have learnt from the current pandemic.

This is a domestic Bill. It is not about trade. However, I have heard colleagues across the House—I am sure I will hear them again this afternoon—voice concerns

[Victoria Prentis]

about the effect of future trade agreements on UK agriculture. Some are concerned about a reduction in standards, particularly those for animal welfare. Others are concerned that there will not be a level playing field between our products and those coming from abroad.

Like the rest of my colleagues on this side of the House, I was elected on a very clear manifesto commitment—one that my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has reiterated since—that in all our trade negotiations we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards. This Government will stand firm in trade negotiations to ensure that any deals live up to the values of our farmers and consumers. We are keen to ensure that parliamentarians, consumers and businesses have access to the information they need on our trade negotiations. Trade talks with the US opened formally last Tuesday. Ahead of that, the Government set out the negotiating objectives and associated documents, and a similar process will be replicated in the coming months as we do the same for deals with Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

I am grateful for the continued contributions of the National Farmers Union and others who sit on our expert trade advisory group, which helped shape this trade policy and feeds straight into the negotiating team. I assure the House that we are actively exploring how to build on that industry participation.

I reassure colleagues that all food coming into this country will be required to meet existing import requirements. At the end of the transition period, the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 will convert all EU standards into domestic law. That will include a ban on using artificial growth hormones in beef. Nothing apart from potable water may be used to clean chicken carcasses, and any changes to those standards would have to come before this Parliament. We will be doing our own inspections to ensure that those import conditions are met.

While we all want to support British farmers, the well-meaning amendments, if passed, would have unintended consequences. The supply of food would be significantly disrupted if goods that meet our current import standards were blocked. New clauses 1 and 2 would affect UK exports to countries with whom, as part of the EU, we currently have trade agreements. I am concerned that the extra conditions in the two new clauses could result in countries refusing to enter into continuity agreements. For example, accepting new clause 2 would risk whisky exports worth £578 million. Another example is the impact on potato exporters. Some 22% of potato exports went to countries with whom a continuity agreement has not yet been signed.

If the amendments were passed, an assessment of our current UK production standards, followed by an assessment of all relevant standards in a third country, followed by an assessment of how those compared with UK legislation and UK production standards would be required to make sure that any FTA complied with them. That would all have to be done by the end of December.

I understand that Members want to ensure safeguards for our farmers. However, I have serious concerns about the unintended consequences of the amendments for our producers and exporters. Our manifesto commitment

is clear that the Government will support farmers and protect our standards. All the rules, regulations and robust processes are already in place for that.

On labelling, I am looking forward to hearing from my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) on her labelling amendment. I understand that she will be championing consumer choice in the domestic market, which is very important. Other colleagues, including my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Esther McVey), and my hon. Friends the Members for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall) and for West Dorset (Chris Loder), have asked us to explore whether labelling approaches could be used to differentiate products that meet domestic production standards from those that do not. This would include exploring mandatory labelling. Any scheme could not be devised until we have completed the transition period and would of course need to recognise World Trade Organisation obligations, but I assure Members from across the House that this is something we will consider closely and on which we are prepared to consult.

We all hope that UK food producers will benefit from increased export opportunities as we open up foreign markets. For example, in the last year, we have seen the lifting of a 20-year ban on the export of UK beef and lamb to Japan. Our “Food is GREAT” campaign targets consumer audiences abroad and is boosting global demand for our food and drink.

I turn now to amendments relating to financial assistance. I defy anyone to maintain that the common agricultural policy was good for either environmental protection or the productivity of British farming. It has held us back. It has paid those with more land more subsidy, regardless of what they did with it. It has favoured some parts of the industry over others. We are really keen that that changes now. We have an exciting opportunity to reset and plan for the future.

Passing the Bill will give farmers and land managers a clear direction. In England, it will enable us to deliver direct payments, simplified countryside stewardship schemes and productivity grants next year. I assure the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) that that is why this Bill is top of the queue. The gradual seven-year transition will allow farmers and land managers time to prepare for the new environmental land management scheme, which is currently being tested. Upland farmers, for example, will be well placed to benefit from it. We will also create a UK shared prosperity fund to address the needs of rural businesses and communities. Delaying the start of the agricultural transition to 2022 would just delay the many benefits of moving away from direct payments. To provide reassurance again, for 80% of farmers, our maximum reductions for 2021 will be modest at under 5%.

Improving the health of our environment as set out in the “25 Year Environment Plan” is a priority. The measures in the Bill will help us to combat climate change, but the Bill is not the place for targets. Environmental land management will be critical in helping us to deliver against our legally binding target to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. We recognise that for these policies to be effective, they need to be properly funded. In our manifesto, we committed to maintain current agricultural spending for each year of this Parliament. Of course, this is a framework Bill, and this is only the

beginning. I look forward to working with colleagues across the House and with groups such as the NFU to develop the policy that will flow from this legislation.

I turn now to amendments tabled on agroecological farming practices, and on reducing the use of pesticides. We are already testing how ELM can support farmers to take a whole-farm holistic approach. We have 50 tests and trials in progress, with many more planned before the national pilot starts in 2021. We are considering innovative solutions such as integrated pest management, which aims to reduce pesticide use on farms. We absolutely agree that pesticides should not be used where that use may harm human health, and we have a robust regulatory system in place to ensure that.

I turn now to the many benefits that the Bill will bring farmers in the devolved Administrations. Clause 33 tackles an unfairness in the red meat levy system and will allow the levy collected from animals that have crossed a border for slaughter to be returned to where the animals were reared. The levy boards are working very hard to devise a scheme, and our aim is to have one in place by April 2021. New clause 9 is for the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister to consider. I understand that he has no plans, at this stage, to introduce a sunset clause. The UK Government will continue to work closely with the devolved Administrations. I reiterate our commitment to consulting with the devolved Administrations on our proposals for regulations to be made under the WTO clauses.

I turn to the amendments on fairness and transparency in the supply chain. No decisions have yet been taken on the subject of the appropriate enforcement body. We are exploring options with the industry first before designing the enforcement regimes and appointing a regulator, but I will keep the House up to date on that.

I turn to the amendments on tenancies. Tenants should be able to benefit from our new payment policies, and we will continue to work closely with the industry—we had a large consultation last year—as we develop these policies further.

Finally, three minor technical Government amendments have been tabled in the name of my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State at the request of the Welsh Government. These are needed in order to bridge the gap until new powers are provided by Welsh legislation in the Senedd.

The Bill provides a framework for an exciting future for farming. It will ensure that those who produce our food are properly rewarded, and that farming efficiently and improving the environment will go hand in hand in the future. I very much look forward to working with colleagues across the House to develop the environmental land management policies, and to working out how they will work not only on the ground, but above and beneath it.

2.45 pm

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I call Deidre Brock, who is asked to speak for no more than eight minutes.

**Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP) [V]:** I will speak to amendment 39, which is in my name.

This is a strange beast of a Bill—a hybrid that covers reserved and devolved competences, and a Lazarus that has had to rise again after that odd election in December.

It now looks as if it will be the first UK Bill to be passed under the new hybrid procedures, and therefore the first UK legislation to be passed using electronic voting—so even Westminster can look a bit modern when it needs to. Perhaps electronic voting and other good developments might be retained after this pandemic is over.

Of course, the Bill is only needed because we are leaving the EU, so it is a case of cauterising a self-made wound. The Bill will pass because farmers—our food producers—need to be provided with the support they need to keep going. I will say it again, because it bears repeating: farmers are good stewards of the land; they take good care of it. It is, after all, one of their biggest assets, and it is essential to their ongoing businesses and livelihoods. Good farmers manage the land well and improve it.

I urge the Government to offer farmers more immediate support to help them get through this crisis, so that they can come out the other side with working farms and productive land. There might even be opportunities for them to use this time to innovate—to adapt their farming and business practices to a new model with an eye to future operations. We recently passed legislation that set up a new payment system. I do not see any reason why the Government should not use that to support farmers now.

We have a few choice selections on the amendment paper, and the SNP will be backing sensible improvements to the Bill. We support writing the need for high standards in imported foods into the legislation, and will be voting for that. It is of great concern to farmers, fishers and other food producers that any low-quality, mass-produced, low-price rubbish from elsewhere might be allowed to flood the market and squeeze them out. Our food producers have high-quality, high-standard and high-welfare products that provide consumers with excellent nutrition. We would be doing the food producers, the end consumers and the retailers a disservice if we allowed those high-quality products to be squeezed out by any low-quality products that have to be, for example, dipped in bleach to kill pathogens before they are dumped on the shelves. It is also a massive concern for consumers, who do not want to see their choices shut down by low-grade products.

Save our farmers, save our cooking and save our families. We must support continued high standards in animal welfare, plant hygiene and end product quality. Do not dump rubbish in our kitchens and on our plates. Let us have standards on imported food that are as high as the standards on food produced on these islands. I noted the Minister's commitment in her speech to maintaining those standards, but I cannot understand why it is not on the face of the Bill. I look forward to her explaining that a little further later, because I am afraid that her explanations were not sufficient for me.

We also support the principles the shadow Secretary of State has written into new clause 7. Food poverty in these wealthy nations was always a disgrace, but the pandemic has brought that inequality and inhumanity into sharp relief. Action is needed to address that. I can only hope that the Government take that under advisement and look to extend the principle in the long term. People should not go hungry, or have to rely on charity to feed their children; decency and humanity are not too expensive.

Public Health Scotland looks at the effects of poverty on health, including food poverty, and analyses possible solutions as part of its work. I would imagine that

[Deidre Brock]

Public Health England must be doing something similar, so the preparation for this would not be as big a task as it might seem, and Scotland might also offer a template you can adapt to serve England better. The “Fairer Scotland” action plan seeks to address gross inequalities. Recommendations from an independent working group on food poverty informed the creation of a fair food fund, which is now part of a larger fund investing in communities. A large lesson from that is that you cannot address food poverty properly unless you address poverty properly, and you have to roll back austerity fully if you are going to do that. You also need to ensure that there is nutritious and untainted food available, which brings us back to the principles underpinning the need to keep import standards high. There is not, however, a recognition of the devolved Governments in the amendment and it is a devolved competence, which leaves us unable to support it.

I turn now to the amendments we have lodged, including mine on import standards. I want to mention the timeous commencement of the proper operation of the red meat levy. I understand that the boards themselves are in agreement about the way forward and have been for some time, and it is incumbent upon the Government to accommodate the ambition they are showing by making sure that the machinery of the scheme is up to scratch and ready to rock ‘n’ roll as soon as possible. Scotland’s farmers have already waited far too long to get their money back so that their investments can support their businesses. I note the Minister’s commitment on this, but we will be continuing to press the Government on their commitment to April delivery.

The amendment I would like to put forward for a vote today is a bit technical. It is explained in some detail and at length in Holyrood’s Sewel memo, or legislative consent memorandum to give it the fancy title, if anyone needs the background, but it concerns the reporting to the WTO. My amendment 39 addresses the concerns in the Sewel memo and would remove the scheme that renders the devolved Administrations subject to the whims of the Secretary of State. It is surely a central principle of devolution that the devolved Administrations should be free to operate in devolved policy areas without interference from the UK Government. As the Bill currently stands, the power to determine how farming support is treated for the purposes of WTO reporting, and therefore the ceilings in each classification of support, are reserved to the UK Government rather than the devolved Administrations, which will still be tasked with providing the support to farmers. I must stress that this is a new reservation; it is a centralisation of function that does not currently exist, so I urge Members to support amendment 39 to remove that from the Bill.

I am conscious that we have a restricted timetable for these proceedings, so I will end my contribution there.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Thank you. I am now introducing a time limit of five minutes, and advise hon. Members speaking virtually to have a timing device visible.

**Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con):** It is a great pleasure to speak in this debate. Given covid-19, I want to pay my great tribute to all the health workers

across the country, and also the food producers, farmers, deliverers and those who process the food to get it into our shops and to consumers. It has never been so important to have home production and good-quality food in this country. It is not only farmers and growers who want that; so do the supermarkets and other retailers and the consumers. We are all working together to deliver higher and higher standards, better welfare and better environmental conditions.

The whole *raison d’être* of the Bill is to move us in the direction of higher welfare and environmental standards, looking after our land and soils, holding back water and having better flood protection—all of this working together. But farming, and especially commercial farming, needs to be able to produce food and to do so competitively. As Government and Opposition Members have said, there has never been more of a need to deliver sustainable, good, affordable food in this country than there is today.

I very much support new clause 1 from my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) and, naturally, new clause 2, which is in my name and the names of the EFRA Committee members. This is about having equivalence of production on imported food, so that it is WTO-compliant, and it is very much about getting very good trade deals in future. I want to see British lamb and more cheese go into America. I want to see everything being exported to America, and I am very happy to have imports from America in a new trade deal, but they cannot undercut our present production methods and animal welfare.

I will say this clearly to the Americans: if we look at American poultry production, we see that they use chlorine wash for about 25% or 30% of that—for the lower end of their production, where the chickens are more densely populated and there are much poorer welfare and environmental conditions—to literally clean it up so that is safe to eat, and of course, in doing that, they reduce the cost of production, but they also reduce the welfare of that poultry. I would say clearly to the Secretary of State for International Trade that she should spend her time going out and dealing with a trade deal that has equivalence and making sure that we export our very important animal and environmental welfare. And I would say to the Americans, “Why don’t you upgrade your production? Why don’t you reduce the density and population of your chickens? Why do you not reduce the amount of antibiotics that you are using, and then you will produce better chicken not only for America: it can also come into this country?”

Let us not be frightened of putting clauses into the Bill that protect us, with the great environmental and welfare standards that we want the whole Bill to have, and that farmers want to have. I think we all accept that the common agricultural policy has not been a huge success. Therefore, we can devise a better Agriculture—and food—Bill, and that is what we have to remember: agriculture is about food, and it has never been more important than now to have high-quality food. If I get the opportunity, I will most definitely push new clause 2 to a Division and I will most definitely support new clause 1. There are also Opposition new clauses that I am prepared to look at, because I think we have to make this Bill good. It is no good being told, “Don’t put it in the Agriculture Bill; put it in the Trade Bill.” When we try to put it in the Trade Bill, it will be out of scope. We are being led down the garden path—we really are—and it is time for us to stand up and be counted.

I want great trade deals. I am not a little Englander who will defend our agriculture against all imports—quite the reverse. I think competition is good, but on a level playing field that allows us to produce great food and allows our consumers to have great food, and makes sure that we deliver good agriculture and environment for the future.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab) [V]: I would like to speak to amendments 23 to 25 and record my support for new clause 7. That I am speaking to these amendments should come as no surprise to the House since they are the contents of my Food Insecurity Bill.

Since 2017, I have been pleading with the Government to introduce a simple, cost-neutral measurement of food insecurity into the household surveys that they already conduct. Each time hunger is raised in this place, various Secretaries of State and Ministers have denigrated statistics from charities, researchers, food banks and colleagues, claiming that the figures are not robust enough or that the information is not reliable enough to inform Government policy. Denying the accuracy of the data or simply turning a blind eye allows them to pretend that the problem does not exist, but it does, and it is only by knowing the true scale of UK hunger that we can start to mitigate it.

When I introduced my Bill, the United Nations had estimated that 8 million people in the UK were food insecure—that is 8 million people who could not afford to eat and who did not know where their next meal was coming from. More than 2,000 food banks that we know of have become an embedded part of our welfare state and are the only port of call for those experiencing the harsh and unforgiving welfare state cultivated by this Government.

3 pm

From 2017 to 2019, Government obfuscation in refusing to implement this simple measure—against a backdrop of rising levels of hospital admissions for malnutrition, a resurgence of Victorian diseases such as rickets, and reports of children attending school hungry—sent a clear message to the millions struggling on this Government's watch that their pain, their hunger and their poverty were not priorities. The Government's continued assault on the social safety net and inaction on low-paid insecure work reinforced to them that they simply did not matter. But they do matter.

When the Agriculture Bill came to the House in October 2018, we were presented with a Bill concerned with agricultural markets and our food chain, but it omitted the end of the supply chain—the consumers—and, more importantly, the impact of food insecurity on them. Now, we are seeing some incremental steps, with the proposal of five-yearly reporting on food security but, crucially, not on food insecurity. I do not mind admitting that I am a little confused, but not surprised, by the Government's incoherent approach. Since April 2019, the Government have carried out a food insecurity measurement, as outlined in my Food Insecurity Bill. Therefore, it should not be a massive leap for them to agree today to enshrine in legislation what we are proposing, because in essence they are already doing it.

Here we are, three years after I introduced my Bill, in the middle of an horrific pandemic that has seen 1.5 million people report that they have gone a whole day without food, half a million children who rely on free school

meals receiving no substitute whatever, and those in the shielding category reporting that they have yet to receive a government food parcel. We have heard just recently, about public sector pay freezes—in other words, more austerity will be the reward for those who have given so much for all of us throughout this crisis.

This measurement deserves a place in our legislation. In a country as rich as ours, no one should go to bed hungry or wake up hungry. We need to know where this is happening, how this is happening, and why this is happening, so that we can stop it. I sincerely hope that the Minister will accept our amendments, because that would show the millions who have gone hungry, the millions who have joined them in recent months and those who, sadly, will continue to join them, that this Government are not beyond contrition and, eventually, are ready to take the growing levels of hunger on their watch seriously.

**Mr Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire) (Con) [V]: It is a great pleasure to be called to speak in this debate. I draw attention to my entries in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, as I come from a long family of farmers, have interests in farming and food production, and represent a very successful rural constituency producing some of the finest food in the world, with absolutely top-class farmers and food producers.

I strongly welcome the Bill, and look forward to it going through today. It will free us from the constraints of the common agricultural policy, which held us back for many years—it will let us give freedom to farmers. When I was Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, time and again farmers said, “Get out of our hair!” The Bill will allow farmers to concentrate on what they are good at, which is producing food. I entirely echo the comments made by the Minister and others earlier in the debate about the tremendous efforts of farmers and food producers to cope with the extraordinary circumstances of corona.

The first thing I want to say is that there is no conflict between wanting to have freedom for farmers and wanting free trade around the world. I see a great opportunity for farming to benefit from any free trade deals. That is absolutely clear. There is a narrative out there that the sad price of free trade arrangements will be some sort of cost to the farming industry. I just do not buy that.

We have huge export opportunities—the Minister touched on exporting beef to the United States, which must be worth over £60 million over three years. When I was at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs we began to get beef on the bone back into Hong Kong, and there are enormous opportunities. For example, in the lamb industry, China and America are neck and neck as world leaders in lamb consumption. They each consume twice as much as France or Germany, so there are great opportunities for our exporters. Given the constraints we experienced under the common agricultural policy, I really see opportunities with new technologies—CRISPR gene editing and so on—to enable us to catch up.

There are some interesting figures from the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations. Against a metric of 1 in 1961, the EU is still producing a given amount of food at 0.55; we are at 0.43; the world is 0.29; and the world leader is 0.03. That is the lesson—if we free up agriculture, people can take advantage of the benefits of free trade and technology.

[Mr Owen Paterson]

Turning to the new clauses, I take exception to the proposals from my hon. Friends the Members for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) and for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish). We agree on many issues regarding oversight, but I do not agree with this. We already have high standards, and the Minister has made it clear that we are not going to reduce those standards. The new clauses are unenforceable. Let us take the great vexed issue of chlorinated chicken. As my hon. Friend for Tiverton and Honiton said, people do not use very much chlorine—they use pathogen reduction treatments, which have been cleared by the US, the EU authorities and by Codex Alimentarius. When we look at the regulations, we see that stocking densities are similar to those that pertain in Europe. The outcomes on health grounds are better. Americans eat roughly twice as much chicken as Europeans, and their outcomes on campylobacter and salmonella are significantly better.

What would we do if this condition went through? It would completely block any hope of a US free trade deal, with catastrophic consequences for large parts of our economy. Would we go after the individual chicken plant? Would we go after the state? Would we go after the whole US nation, which would come straight back and say, “Sorry guys, our product is healthier.” It would be much better if we resumed our full seat on the Codex Alimentarius Commission on food standards, on the OIE on animal welfare, which is important to many citizens, and on the international plant protection convention on plant health, working with allies and pushing to improve world standards.

When I was at DEFRA I went to New Zealand and was struck by the fact that, freed up, it had reduced massively the number of sheep but increased the volume of meat exporting while conforming to religion protocols for minorities. Everything that it exported to the middle east was stunned before slaughter. We talk about standards a lot. What goes on in many of our slaughterhouses does not bear inspection. I challenge Members to look at videos—or, better, go along—and they will be horrified when they see what many of our livestock go through. Much of this volume of material is not required by minorities—it is absolutely fine to provide it for them—but we could copy New Zealand. We could work with it at a high level, pushing for higher standards. I am afraid I do not support the amendments, but I do support the Bill.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson). First and foremost, I want to put on record my thanks to the local farming community in my constituency and to farming communities up and down the country, as they have been vital in helping to maintain the food supply to communities throughout the land in this crisis. Many farmers are anxious about their health, and are concerned about family members and the welfare of their workers. Too many farmers have unsold produce going to waste, as supply chains—restaurants, hotels, caterers and cafés—have had to close because of the crisis. Dairy farmers in my constituency have been hit particularly hard. I know that Members across the House have lobbied the Government to do whatever it takes to support those farmers, and I certainly welcome the announcement of a hardship fund as a step in the right direction. I look forward to the Minister’s response on that.

I want to highlight three areas of concern that need to be improved at this stage of the Bill. Importantly, the concerns are highlighted by those at the chalkface of our agricultural economy: the National Farmers Union, the custodians and users of our countryside, and the consumers of our British products. First, the Bill must ensure that specific provisions in future trade deals require agricultural imports to meet our environmental, animal welfare and food standards. I raised the matter with the previous Secretary of State, and I will raise it again with the current Secretary of State. As Members across the House have said today, that needs to be enshrined in law. British produce must be a global gold standard, and a race to the bottom will have serious consequences for our farmers, our health and our global reputation.

Secondly, the current national and international pandemic has shone a bright light on the importance of food security. While I welcome the fact that the Bill requires the Government to report on the state of the nation’s food security, the current timescale of every five years is too long. The National Farmers Union rightly argues that the Bill should be strengthened to include annual reports on food security, and there should be clear requirements relating to the degree of the nation’s food security derived from domestic production and a clear commitment to prevent any further decline in self-sufficiency.

Finally, as somebody who is keen to maximise access to our countryside, I welcome the provisions that would enable funding for farmers who support public access. However, that is by no means a guarantee that the payments will deliver new paths or make existing paths more accessible. What assurances can the Secretary of State give the House and my constituents that that will happen?

**Dr Neil Hudson** (Penrith and The Border) (Con) [V]: It is a great pleasure to speak in this debate on such an important Bill—the first new Agriculture Bill in many years. I welcome the Bill and want to outline the key areas and then move on to amendments that would tighten and improve it.

The principle behind public moneys for public goods is sound, and it is excellent that animal health and welfare and environmental protection and management are clearly articulated as public goods. It is welcome that food production and security are recognised within the Bill, and that the Secretary of State is able to help support improving agricultural productivity. The covid-19 crisis has thrown into sharp relief the importance of food security and the need for the UK to be able to produce sustainable, local and accessible food for its population. The Bill’s requirement for the Secretary of State to produce a status report on food security every five years could perhaps be reviewed to make it more frequent. As we move to this new way of paying farmers, I stress the need for a smooth transition of payments so that there are no cliff edges. The Government have guaranteed the same level of payment over the duration of this Parliament, but it is important, as direct payments are phased out, that farmers are given the time and security to adapt to the new system.

Moving on to the amendments, as a member of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee I am happy to support new clauses 1 and 2. I am a vet so it



will come as no surprise that I am passionate about animal health and welfare, and it is so important that we uphold our high standards. I was proud to stand in Penrith and The Border on a Conservative manifesto that said:

“In all of our trade negotiations, we will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.”

These amendments to the Bill will ensure that any imports are equivalent to or, indeed, exceed our domestic standards. We can send out the message to our future trading partners that if they want to trade with us, they need to meet the standards that the people of the UK insist upon. That will benefit not only our own farmers and animals but, ultimately, farmers and animals around the world.

Now, some Members will say today that that will complicate trade deals, but I do not hold with that. In the Department for International Trade and the Foreign Office we have the best negotiators and diplomats in the world. In any negotiation there is give and take and, as has been seen with Brexit in recent months, anything can be achieved.

Provisions on animal welfare have been included in free trade agreements, such as those between the EU and Chile and South Korea, and in fact that led to improved slaughter standards in Chile—an important animal welfare improvement. Welfare at slaughter is only part of the story. Members will say that the WTO rules will guarantee welfare standards at slaughter, which is good, but we all know that much more needs to be considered earlier in an animal’s rearing and transport.

3.15 pm

I have heard the argument that the amendments will compromise trade deals with the developing world and Commonwealth partners, but that too can be solved. I am proud that our Government allocate 0.7% of national income to international aid. It would be an excellent use of some of that budget to export British expertise and training to help farmers in the developing world to raise their animal husbandry and farming standards. The UK can be a beacon.

I wish to address the chlorinated chicken debate, which is—if Members will forgive the mixed metaphor—a bit of a red herring. Chlorinated chicken is rightly banned in the UK and EU. Some say that the disinfection process is safe, but it may not be the panacea. A 2018 study published by the American Society for Microbiology reported that the chlorination process was not 100% effective at killing food-borne pathogens and merely led to their being undetectable in the lab. But that ignores the true reason why we should not import such products: this carcass-disinfection process merely covers up and tries to mitigate substandard animal welfare standards in the rearing of poultry.

To conclude, I welcome and support this excellent Bill, but very much hope that Members will join me in supporting the amendment to protect and uphold our high animal health and welfare standards. I see this as an opportunity to raise animal welfare and food-production standards both here and around the world. We should seize it.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow my constituency neighbour, the hon. Member for Penrith and The Border (Dr Hudson). I support much of what he said.

We support the spirit of the Bill, especially the movement to reward farmers for public goods. Today, the Government can introduce one of the most successful changes in agricultural policy in history. Equally, today could be remembered for one of the most catastrophic disasters. The principles are good, but the real value of the Bill will be determined in its implementation.

Farmers in Cumbria and throughout Britain could fall at the first hurdle if the Government insist on beginning the phase-out of the basic payment scheme from next January, long before its replacement is ready. Universal credit is the example of what happens when a good idea is introduced in a hasty, penny-pinching, cloth-eared way. I want to spare the Secretary of State the ignominy of being the person responsible for doing the same with the new environmental land management scheme. Even more, I want to spare our farmers the hardship, spare our environment the damage and spare our people the loss of British food-producing capacity. In the end, it will cost less to do the right thing than it will to do it badly.

The Government’s plan is to remove 50% of basic payments by 2024, costing farmers 46% of their net income, yet the new scheme will be fully rolled out only by 2028. There are currently 89,000 basic payment claimants; how many of those farms do we expect to survive the long period during which their incomes are slashed before a replacement is ready? It is obvious that the disruption will be huge, undermining the good purposes of the Bill. We cannot care for our environment, guarantee food production and deliver public goods if, by 2028, we have allowed hundreds of farms to close by accident. The answer is a no-brainer: do not phase out basic payments until the environmental land management schemes are ready. The Secretary of State must listen to farmers on this issue before it is too late.

The ultimate public good that farmers provide is, of course, food. Those empty shelves in March and the disruption to the supplies of imported food must be a wake-up call. Almost 50% of the food consumed in the UK is now imported, compared with 35% just 20 years ago. Successive Governments have contributed to our sleepwalking into a real problem when it comes to food security.

We will suffer a huge blow if the Bill fails to impose import standards, which is why I tabled new clause 10 and will support other amendments of similar intent. We must protect our British standards on food and food production. That will not be possible if Ministers allow the market to be flooded with food produced at a lower standard than we would tolerate here. Let us be clear: if Ministers will not accept amendments ensuring that Britain does not compromise these standards in trade deals, they are clearly saying to British farmers, “Please give us the freedom to sell you out in trade negotiations.” Britain has the best standards in the world, and they will be completely irrelevant if we allow Ministers to strike trade deals that lead to imported goods with lower production, animal welfare, environmental and labour standards.

For us in south Cumbria, the landscape of the lakes and the dales is a breathtaking public good—although, given that we have one of the oldest and most vulnerable populations in the country and the third highest covid infection rate, I strongly urge people not to rush to visit us here until it is safe to do so, at which point we will

[Tim Farron]

welcome them with open arms. These landscapes are of global significance. As a UNESCO world heritage site, they underpin, in normal times, an economy worth £3 billion a year. Their contribution to the heritage of our country, its economy and the nation's wellbeing are astounding, and it is our farmers who are responsible for stewarding and maintaining those landscapes. Will Ministers commit to there being criteria within the environmental land management scheme for payments for aesthetic maintenance and for heritage, especially in the uplands?

Finally, I urge Ministers to ensure that the good principles of the Bill are reflected in wise and effective practicalities. I am convinced that this Bill will be seen as truly historic, but it is up to the Government to ensure that it is for the right reasons.

**Julian Sturdy** (York Outer) (Con) [V]: I start by drawing Members' attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I want to speak in support of new clause 2, new clause 1 and amendment 6. Like other Members, I very much support the broad thrust of the Bill, which has been much improved over time. The revised text, which we debated on Second Reading in January, now recognises the importance of food production and food security, funding to support innovation and productivity improvements, and the proper financing of environmental provisions.

However, the laudable aims of the Bill will come to nothing if the Government do not secure fair terms of trade for UK producers. The new public money for public goods and innovation funding model has to be considered together with the Government's broad trade policy. Having the right framework for British agriculture is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the future prosperity of the sector, which is why I warmly endorse the amendments proposed, which seek to provide a concrete guarantee on future import standards.

Our producers have worked and invested for decades to raise our standards, and that could easily be lost if they are set at a structural disadvantage by our allowing in a flood of low-quality imports produced with poorer animal welfare and environmental standards, which could ultimately cause economic damage to British agriculture and the social fabric of our rural communities. There is also the risk of environmental damage across the globe if the UK became more reliant on imported produce.

The climate change angle will be increasingly important. UK farmers have a key role to play in our progress towards the 2050 net zero carbon target, as British agriculture accounts for 9% of national emissions, but that opportunity could be wiped out if we allow the importing of food produced overseas in a far more carbon-intensive way—for instance, bringing in Brazilian beef grazed on former rainforest land.

I do not believe that these amendments would damage our ability to strike reasonable trade agreements, so I do not agree with what the Minister said at the start of the debate. The whole argument on standards in trade deals is not unique to this country. We should be looking to base much of our trade on the exchange of quality products. Trade deals should be about the desirable goods we can offer to overseas consumers, not just the

market access that they can seek to gain from us. UK agriculture has a huge amount to offer in that regard, already earning the UK some £22 billion a year and representing 6% of overall exports.

I also strongly support the amendment in the name of my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), which would delay the start of the transition to the concept of public money for public goods from the basic payment scheme to 2022, rather than 2021. This would allow the transition to run more successfully and much more smoothly by giving producers more time to restructure their businesses in order to provide those all important public goods. Though DEFRA's approach is evolutionary, as everyone has said so far, this is still a big shift for British agriculture, and I believe the Government want UK producers to make good decisions, not hasty ones, during the transition. They should therefore give them time.

The amendments I have touched on all have powerful arguments behind them in the best of times; for me, those arguments are substantially strengthened by the new landscape that coronavirus has created. The current situation demonstrates the value of maintaining a strong UK food sector, so that our national food security does not depend on long international supply chains, which have proven fragile in such periods. The outbreak has also showcased the importance of small-scale and regional supply chains that can be relied on for food and drink when all else fails.

I hope the Government will listen to the arguments behind the amendments, and I look forward to hearing their response.

**Carla Lockhart** (Upper Bann) (DUP): I thank the Secretary of State for his work in progressing the Bill to this stage.

No Member needs reminding of the importance of a sustainable UK agriculture industry and of our own food security. Amid the covid-19 crisis, it is the UK's farmers who are feeding the nation. We owe them not only our thanks for working day and night to provide us with food but a future that is economically viable, that ensures farmgate prices are fair and that supports them as they face growing challenges, be they market driven or environmental.

Agri-food is one of Northern Ireland's greatest economic assets, sustaining approximately 100,000 jobs and bringing an added value of almost £1.5 billion to the Northern Ireland economy. That underpins our need to ensure a sustainable platform moving forward. We must protect those jobs and this cornerstone of our economy, and to do so we need to ensure that the Bill not only allows for the continuation of financial support for farmers but offers protection.

With those two core tenets in mind, my party and I broadly support new clauses 1, 2 and 6. We need to protect our farmers and consumers from cheap imports that do not meet the standards we demand of our farmers. The standards that British farmers work to come with significant cost implications. They ensure that our food is safe and our environment is safeguarded for future generations, while our animal welfare standards are exemplary. Speak to any British farmer: their desire is to maintain these standards—indeed, they want constantly to develop and innovate so that they always ensure that best practices are adopted. In our opinion,

it is a major failure of the Bill that it does not enshrine standards for the future. We must not sacrifice these standards, which we demand of our own farmers, on the altar of free trade. That must be rectified.

I also wish to speak directly to the amendment tabled by my colleagues the hon. Members for North Down (Stephen Farry), for Foyle (Colum Eastwood) and for Belfast South (Claire Hanna). I, like my colleagues, am a devolutionist. The Northern Ireland Assembly debated and agreed a legislative consent motion on 31 March. In that debate, my party colleague, Edwin Poots, Minister for Agriculture, stated that he did not support a sunset clause. That was the agreed will of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

With that in mind, and given the respect we ought to afford the devolution settlement on this and other matters, we will not be supporting the amendment. We do not believe the Northern Ireland Assembly requested it.

Indeed, adopting the amendment and imposing such a timeline could leave a legislative gap, leaving our Minister with no legal authority to issue agricultural support payments, which currently total some £300 million, to Northern Ireland farmers. Such a situation would spell disaster for our farmers, particularly in the context of challenging farm-gate prices.

3.30 pm

As we move forward with the Bill and with a new post-Brexit agricultural platform, we need to ensure that financial support remains in place for the future, and I urge the Minister to seek further guarantees from the Treasury on that. I would also be keen to see how rural development is to be supported. We must not lose the support being given to farmers for environmental schemes. Let this Bill and those that will come from the devolved Administrations be the first steps in a new era for British farming and our agrifood sector. Let us be fair to our farmers on standards and import tariffs. There is a slogan in Northern Ireland, “no farmers, no food, no future”, and it encapsulates perfectly the importance of getting this right.

**Robbie Moore** (Keighley) (Con) [V]: Before I begin, may I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests? The Agriculture Bill is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape our farming sector for the better. I would like to spend the short time that I have discussing the proposed amendments on food imports and standards. I have given immense thought to these amendments over the last few days, but I have also been thinking back to just a few years ago when I was lucky enough to travel across the globe undertaking a research project specifically looking at the global ag sector, and the one thing that came across to me loud and clear above all else was just how small a dot the UK is considered to be by others on the world stage when it comes to influencing the global ag sector. I am also aware of our lack of any previous real penetration into global food markets. However, this country is now on an exciting new course, in which we can forge our new food export opportunities, and I believe that our agricultural industry can truly exert real influence on the global stage in promoting high animal welfare standards and ensuring that the high environmental bar that our farmers passionately adhere to is also met abroad.

As we consider the Bill, we need to look ahead to a new future. The question that I have been mulling over is: what is the best mechanism to ensure that our domestic agricultural industry thrives and is truly sustainable long into the future while also being able to show real leadership on the global stage by promoting abroad the high animal welfare, environmental and food safety standards for which we are recognised? We have a truly credible sector producing some of the finest food the world has to offer, and I want to see our farming industry thrive with food production at its heart. That means ensuring strong market opportunities, both here and abroad.

The phrasing of the amendments definitely seems attractive, and I totally agree that the aspirations behind them are profoundly correct, but if we included them in the Agriculture Bill, which represents domestic policy, would they be workable on the world stage and would they be enforceable? After seeking advice from my right hon. Friend the Environment Secretary, I have been informed that they do not adhere to the World Trade Organisation sanitary and phytosanitary agreement. Likewise, the wording of the amendments leads to uncertainty as to how the traceability measures would be enforced in countries abroad.

I reiterate that I am entirely in agreement with the aims of the proposed amendments—namely, to create a thriving domestic agricultural industry that it is not undercut by cheap foreign imports, while maintaining and promoting high animal welfare, environmental and food standards abroad. If the amendments are not workable through domestic policy, other mechanisms for achieving all those aims must be sought, rather than the inclusion of a blanket protectionist approach. That strategy could, in the long term as we go forth and emerge on the world stage, have unintended negative consequences for the long-term prosperity and sustainability of the British farming sector, as securing export markets for food produce may be harder to achieve. An early example of the opportunities that we have seen for British farmers is the lifting of the ban on UK beef exports by the US, creating a market for British farmers worth more than £66 million over the next five years.

As a country, we are on the cusp of opening up new and exciting export markets to our UK farmers. Such trade deals can be used to influence the world with our high animal welfare, environmental and food safety standards. Yesterday, we heard my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for International Trade issue from the Dispatch Box an explicit reassurance that we will not lower our food imports standards as a result of the ongoing US trade deal. Seeking further reassurance, I personally spoke to the Prime Minister this morning. He assured me that our strong animal welfare, environmental and food safety standards will not be compromised, and I accepted his reassurance. None the less, I look forward to seeing those reassurances being upheld.

Let us think big and long-term for our UK farmers by opening up opportunities and making sure that our UK sector is known internationally and not as a dot, which is what I found a few years ago.

**Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab) [V]: This is an important piece of legislation. It has huge consequences for how we are going to feed our

[Catherine McKinnell]

nation and protect our environment, and, as many colleagues have set out, there is a lot to support in it. However, my constituents have huge concerns that the Bill does not go far enough to ensure our high standards for food, animal welfare and protection of the environment and climate that we all value.

The Bill would not do enough to prevent imports of food that do not meet those high British standards, and it would be devastating news for British farmers, who would be left at risk of being undercut when they are doing the right thing to produce good quality food and to protect our environment. That would make a mockery of the value that we place on those standards. I urge the Government to listen to the concerns of the public and support Labour's amendments today, which would enhance this Bill and provide important protections for British farmers and the standards that we all value.

I want to turn to food insecurity and the difficulties that some of the poorest families in my constituency are facing during this crisis—a crisis that has exacerbated the pressures that many people are already facing in trying to feed their families. The continuing problems with free school meal vouchers are now familiar to all of us, yet the Government have failed to get a grip on the problem. Just this morning, another school in my constituency contacted me to say that, again, its vouchers were late. Staff faced similar problems last week. They worked over the bank holiday weekend in their own time for the children who need that support. It is a common story across schools: far too many staff are listing endless problems in trying to use a system that is clearly not fit for purpose. When they try to make contact to address the problems, the helpline is permanently engaged and their emails go unanswered.

Although I know that we needed to put in place a system quickly to get food to those children, the decision not to put the contract out to tender was a poor one. I urge the Government to get a grip on this situation, because it is just unacceptable that children are being left to go hungry and families are being left without the most basic support to enable them to feed their own children. Across the board, too many people are falling through the gaps and are unable to access the food and supplies that they need. Much of that support is dependent on supermarkets—whether it is access to delivery slots or the pricing of their food. Analysis by the Office for National Statistics last month showed that the price of high-demand food and sanitary products has risen by 4.4% since the lockdown measures began. Will the Government put supermarkets on notice that any profiteering from this situation will not be tolerated?

I wish to finish by highlighting the need of kinship carers, too many of whom are finding access to food a challenge. These are people who have stepped up to do the right thing by the children they are raising, and they face unique challenges. Many kinship carers are elderly grandparents, often with long-term health conditions, raising children who have often experienced trauma and have health challenges of their own. The cross-party parliamentary taskforce on kinship care, which I chair, conducted some research into this group and has recommended that the Government work with supermarkets to ensure that kinship carers are included on the priority list for supermarket deliveries. Is that something that the Government can consider urgently?

In conclusion, we have a huge opportunity in this Bill to protect British farming, to maintain high food and environmental standards and to support the most vulnerable in our communities. Let us not waste it.

**Daniel Kawczynski** (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): The Minister, in her introductory remarks, referred to various provisions in the Bill that will devolve more power and responsibility to the Welsh Parliament. She also referred to her family's long history of farming in Oxfordshire and other counties. I would like to explain to her how concerned I am by this moving of additional powers to the Welsh Parliament, because I represent a border community. As Cardiff and London move further and further apart, we have already seen huge additional complications and problems for our farmers on the border in dealing with sometimes highly different and contradictory legislation emanating from both Parliaments.

One classic example is the crisis that we are facing in Shropshire of bovine tuberculosis on an unprecedented scale. We killed 47 cows in Shropshire in 1997 as a result of bovine TB. Last year, it was more than 2,000. My farmers are going through a crisis of untold proportions. Some of my farmers have land on both sides of the border, and bovine tuberculosis unfortunately does not respect national frontiers, so the devolution process is very difficult for my farmers.

Secondly, my understanding of the Bill is that subsidies will end for English farmers in seven years' time, but not for Welsh farmers. Again, that is a devolved matter. My question to the Minister is how my farmers, whether chicken or dairy farmers—or farmers of anything that we produce in Shropshire—are meant to compete against their Welsh friends and counterparts across the border when they still have the subsidies but we do not. That is a real concern to me.

I have come here specially today, in person rather than over the internet, to look the Minister in the eye and ask her to take these genuine concerns from border communities into consideration. I would like her to create a taskforce in her Department to look at and evaluate the impact on farmers who operate in border communities and to assess how they can remain competitive, and have a level and fair playing field, with this ongoing divergence between Cardiff and London.

I also wish to speak on new clause 1. Interestingly, Robert Newbery, who represents the National Farmers Union in my constituency, and many others—including my association chairman, Dan Morris, who is a cattle farmer—are asking me to support my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) and my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), the Chairman of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee. They rightly feel that we have some of the best standards not just in Europe but across the whole globe, and they want guarantees enshrined in law that there will be a level playing field.

I am always amazed by the amount of Investment that our farmers have had to make in order to comply with these standards. It is absolutely mind-blowing. I spoke for 30 minutes today to Guy Davies, a farmer in Little Ness who produces 5 million chickens a year, and in addition uses the chicken manure to generate over 9 million kW of electricity, which can power up to 2,000 homes. He wants me to support the new clause.

In the little time that I have left, if the Minister wants me to back her rather than going with my hon. Friends, she really does need to explain when she winds up just what guarantees we will have to take back to the NFU and others who feel so very strongly on this matter. According to the president of the NFU, this is the most important Bill since 1947. It is a landmark Bill, and I would like to pay tribute to all the Shropshire farmers who contribute so much to my community.

3.45 pm

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab) [V]: I wholeheartedly support new clause 1 and the other amendments seeking the same outcome: that there should be no lowering of standards on food safety, the environment and animal welfare as a result of any future trade deals, no undercutting of British farmers and no race to the bottom. The hon. Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) and I had more than a few differences of opinion when we first served on the Agriculture Bill Committee in the last Parliament—unlike him, I was allowed back for the second one too—but on this issue we are utterly on the same page. The same goes for the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), on whose Select Committee I served in the last Parliament. I thought that he made a very good speech.

As time is limited, all I will say is this: it has been made abundantly clear that no one—not the farmers, not the environmentalists, not the public, not the consumers and not even Tory MPs—trusts the Government's verbal assurances on this. It is not enough for the Minister to say that it will not happen; we want it in writing, enshrined in law.

I also support amendments on better labelling, procurement, baseline regulation, and fairness and transparency in supply chains, and the Opposition amendment on food security, which calls for a statement to Parliament every year so that we can end the scandal of food poverty. During the current crisis, organisations such as Feeding Bristol have done a tremendous job in my home city, trying to ensure that everyone in lockdown can get the essential food supplies that they need, and that no one, including children who no longer attend school, goes hungry. The voluntary sector has been brilliant, but our children should not have to rely on charity.

I will focus on amendments 18 and 19, which are tabled in my name. I thank the Landworkers Alliance for its work with the all-party parliamentary group on agroecology, which I chair, and for all that it has done to promote the amendments. I have had many emails from constituents in recent days urging me to back my own amendments, which I am obviously more than happy to do. Agroecology is a cause whose time has come. This pandemic has brought home to many people how dysfunctional our relationship with the natural world has become, with overconsumption, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, a food system that is broken, and birds and wildlife disappearing from our countryside and gardens.

I urge Members to read a recent report, "Feeding the Nation: How Nature Friendly Farmers are Responding to Covid-19", which includes a quote from a farmer from Northern Ireland. He says:

"The current crisis provides people with time to reflect on the importance of food and farming to all humanity...Our food can only be sustainable and bountiful if it's produced in harmony with the environment and wildlife."

The Bill goes some way towards creating a better approach to farm subsidies and rewarding nature-friendly farmers. Despite being an ardent remainder, I will not shed a tear for us leaving the common agricultural policy. I broadly support the public money for public goods approach, but my concern is that it will allow farmers to cherry-pick.

What we need is a whole-farm system approach, so that across the farm, not just on the margins, farmers are using agroecological methods, focusing on getting the best from the whole landscape. Such measures include protecting soil health through no-till farming, which not only boosts food production but helps to sequester carbon; using integrated pest management rather than toxic pesticides; and protecting habitats and promoting biodiversity, so that we see a return of nesting birds, pollinators and beneficial insects to our countryside.

I will finish with another quote from a farmer in that nature-friendly farming report. He says:

"This crisis has made it very clear that we have lost the resilience in our food and farming system, with value being placed on 'cheap'. This has led to degraded soils, diminishing wildlife and imports of lower food safety and farming standards. We need to shift back to a more sustainable, mixed farming system for resilience across the board."

That is what my amendments seek to achieve, and I hope that the Government will listen.

**Nick Fletcher** (Don Valley) (Con) [V]: While my constituency is primarily known as a former mining area, agriculture has always played an essential role in the local economy of Don Valley and continues to do so. Consequently, as the Government have confirmed that there will be no extension to the transition period, this Bill is more necessary than ever, and its passage today will provide farmers and many other individuals in my constituency with reassurance on several issues.

I appreciate that Members in all parts of the House are concerned about environmental sustainability in food production, as can be seen in the Opposition's amendment 26. Yet this amendment is wholly unnecessary, as clause 1(4) already outlines that the provision of any financial assistance by the Secretary of State to agricultural businesses would have to take into account whether such assistance would encourage food production in an environmentally sustainable way. I am pleased with the addition of this requirement, as it will ensure that the often wasteful aspects of the common agricultural policy will become a thing of the past.

Furthermore, I am pleased that clause 17 will require the Secretary of State to report to Parliament at least once every five years on food security in the United Kingdom. This is particularly relevant at this moment in time. Like so many of my colleagues across the House, I have had dozens of concerned constituents email me about the lack of food in shops as a result of the panic buying that we unfortunately witnessed last month. Some were even scared that the UK would run out of food. Yet I am concerned that the Opposition's new clause 4 would add such a large number of requirements to the Secretary of State's reporting that the original purpose of clause 17 would be lost. I appreciate that the new clause is designed to encourage the consumption of healthy food, but clause 17(2)(e) already states that the data put forward by the Secretary of State will include statistics on

"food safety and consumer confidence in food."

[*Nick Fletcher*]

This would inevitably touch on aspects relating to the nutritional value of food and consumers' confidence that the food available to them was healthy to consume.

This has been a robust debate and I have appreciated the diverse range of views that have been expressed across the House. I end simply by stating that this Bill has my full support and will ease some of my constituents' environmental and food security concerns.

**Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con): This may be an agriculture Bill but it is also one of the most important environmental reforms in decades—a once-in-a-generation opportunity to change the way that land is managed in this country for the better.

Frankly, the dry phrase “public money for public goods” does not really convey the importance of what we are seeking to safeguard through clause 1 of this very important Bill: the air we breathe into our lungs every minute of the day; the precious soil that nurtures the crops that feed us; our rivers, streams and waterways; our hedgerows and wildflower meadows; our ancient woodlands and our rolling hills; the stunning countryside that is one of the greatest treasures of this United Kingdom we are lucky enough to call home. Of course, the “public goods” covered in the Bill also include the civilised and compassionate treatment of animals and the struggle to protect our planet from climate change.

To make a success of these reforms, we need, first, to give proper weight to food security. I was pleased to see this added to the Bill during my time as Secretary of State. Secondly, these reforms must be properly funded. I fought to secure a Conservative manifesto commitment that farm support would be maintained at current levels in every year of this Parliament. Bitter experience shows how hard it is to deliver change on this scale in the context of a shrinking budget.

Thirdly, we need sufficient time for a managed and orderly transition to ELM. If the Government want to stick to their seven-year timetable, I am afraid that we will need to see more detail very soon on how ELM will operate. Fourthly, in designing ELM we need to get the right balance between, on the one hand, ensuring that the schemes are widely accessed by farmers, including upland farmers, and can be delivered in practice; and, on the other hand, ensuring that significant, measurable, positive outcomes are delivered in relation to crucial public goods.

In this Bill, we are setting out on a path that has been closed to this Parliament for nearly half a century. Successive Governments have pushed CAP reform, but generally returned empty-handed from the Council tables in Brussels. Replacing the CAP means that we can deliver a better, brighter, greener future for farming in England, but we will not be able to realise that vision if we expose our farmers to unfettered competition from US imports produced to lower standards of animal welfare and environmental protection. We are already asking a great deal of farmers as we phase out basic payments. They will face even greater challenges if the negotiations with the EU do not initially deliver a free trade agreement. If we add in the complete liberalisation of trade with US producers, that would be a hit which many livestock businesses would not survive. The aftershock would be felt in all four corners of our United Kingdom

because of the centrality of livestock farming to communities in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and of course the north of England too.

The Conservatives were elected on a manifesto with commitments on animal welfare and the environment which are more far-reaching than any before in the long history of our party, but allowing unrestricted imports from jurisdictions with far weaker rules would mean offshoring carbon emissions and animal cruelty, not reducing them. If we are to keep our promises on the environment and on the decent treatment of animals, they must be reflected in our trade policy and in the Bill this afternoon.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: Madam Deputy Speaker. I would have loved to be with you this afternoon in the Chamber, but I am not allowed to be with you. I cannot look you in the eye, but I am here speaking up, I hope, for my constituency of Huddersfield, where we do have farms and farming. We are, of course, the centre for the great Syngenta, one of the leading agricultural science companies in the world. It used to be owned by my old employer, Imperial Chemical Industries—ICI. It is now owned by ChemChina, which is an arm of the Chinese Government.

Things are changing. What the Bill is about, and why I support the amendments that have been tabled, is getting the balance right, across parties, between having good-quality food for our constituents and our children to feed the people of this country and our need for a secure supply chain. Nothing has taught us more about supply chains than the recent coronavirus scandal and the terrible deaths that have been caused by it. The fact of the matter is that we have to have secure food supplies.

Only recently, there was a leaked document—I have to say from the Government side—that said, “Why do we need a farming sector any longer? Why don't we do what we do with everything else and get the cheapest possible deal in the global supermarket?” That is not the answer. We now know that we must have not only a vibrant farming sector but one that is compatible with a highly skilled and well managed industry. It also needs to be compatible with a diverse and bountiful countryside in which species are not being eradicated and where industrial agriculture does not destroy habitat.

I believe that this is Hedgehog Awareness Week. That is no laughing matter. When I was a young person it was very common to see a hedgehog in a garden. They have almost been eliminated in our country, as have many bird species, through an industrialisation of agriculture about which we must all be wary.

It would be wrong in this debate not to say that farming is under threat from the unscrupulous practices of many of our supermarkets. Getting that relationship between farming, the retailer and the supermarkets is extremely important. It is easy to say that our farming is the best. Our farming, where it is good, is very good indeed, but it is not perfect. We have a lot to learn from experience around the world, and not only in terms of high science, good management, good skills training and paying people well who work on the land. The fact of the matter is that we have to get the balance right between all those competing goals.

I am not someone who gets carried away with campaigns, but I hate the fact that we are eliminating the lovely

British badger. I believe that that is a wrong-headed, contrary to science campaign, and we should all deplore that.

There must be a right balance between the countryside, the environment and high-quality agriculture, as well as the opportunity for young people who want to become farmers to get hold of some land and get started. Very largely, the push for local authorities to sell off their land during the recent austerity has meant that many young farmers do not have that opportunity. There is much to go at beyond this Bill. Let us all do it together.

4 pm

**Tracey Crouch** (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): As a parliamentary hedgehog champion, it is a pleasure to follow Huddersfield's very own Mr Tiggy-Winkle, the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman).

I rise to speak to new clause 11 and amendment 37, tabled in my name and supported by colleagues, relating to the mandatory labelling of products with their farming method. Much of what we have heard already aims to put high animal welfare standards at the heart of this Bill. For the Committee stage, I tabled other amendments, including on labelling with the method of slaughter, but due to the truncated proceedings I can only raise one today, and trust that the Lords will consider others when the Bill passes to them. I hope the Government will be sympathetic to new clause 11 and amendment 37, given that they were first proposed in a previous incarnation of the Bill by the now noble Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park, who is responsible for this legislation when it continues its passage in the upper House. Knowing him as well as I do, I doubt very much that a red box has changed his deeply held beliefs on animal welfare.

I believe that, ultimately, consumers are best placed to drive improvement in animal welfare standards because consumer demands and changing behaviours force the agriculture and supermarket sector to adapt. The substantial shift away from caged to free-range eggs is testament to this. At present, more than half of egg production in the UK is free range, with more and more restaurants and supermarkets phasing out their use and sale of caged eggs as public demand changes. I would argue that the legislation that required eggs and egg packs to be labelled with the farming method has undoubtedly helped to accelerate this change and that extending it to other products simply follows.

I firmly believe, now we have left the EU and as we prepare to exit the transition period, that the Agriculture Bill, along with the Environment Bill, provides a once-in-a-generation opportunity to ensure that British agricultural standards are the best in the world. We can and should go beyond the current European framework and set a new standard for animal welfare. Greatly improved labelling for farming methods can be the first step in improving the availability of more ethically sourced food for a changing consumer market.

My new clause and amendment require the Secretary of State to make regulations regarding the labelling of meat, milk and dairy products as to farming method. At present, consumer demand is being impeded by lack of clear information at point of sale about how meat and dairy products have been produced. Therefore, British consumers are largely in the dark.

Plenty of consumer research has been carried out that shows an obvious want among the British public for clearer labelling to identify the farm system used to

produce the food that we put on our plates. I am not sure I have heard any good reason why we should not label better, so I am hoping that the Government will either accept the amendment, or reassure me that they agree with the principle and will bring it back in an acceptable form in the Lords. There is nothing to fear from clearer, better labelling, especially as we have heard in other areas of this debate about the desire to set a new global standard for our agriculture sector.

Finally, I commend the work that has been achieved by colleagues at DEFRA. I believe that this Bill will go a long way to improving standards in the UK, but I think we need to trust the consumer and allow consumers to have the information that will drive their decisions about what they purchase. I hope that the Minister will look at my new clause sympathetically and accept it.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I shall now suspend the House for 15 minutes, returning at 4.20 pm.

4.5 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

4.20 pm

*On resuming—*

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (PC) [V]: I want to speak on three key themes that intertwine with the amendments and new clauses that we are considering: first, the need to protect domestic food supplies; secondly, the need for joint decision making over the new British state internal food market; and thirdly, trade policy as it will apply to agriculture.

On our economy and food supplies, the current pandemic has exposed long-ignored issues, including our dependence on imports. Now is the time to rethink, reset and rebuild our food supply from the ground up. The regrettable long-term withdrawal of both the British and Welsh Governments from food policy has allowed our food retail industry to become ever more concentrated, so that just four companies now control 70% of the UK food retail market. The oligopoly of several large food retailers has given them unprecedented power to dictate ever lower prices to farmers, continually sapping the financial health of domestic agriculture and expanding an ever wider trade imbalance that undermines our food security. In short, a complete U-turn is needed in agricultural policy to promote food production. Central to that should be the development of local processing capabilities, so that we can help to build a stronger local economy where people can buy local produce more directly.

Following the debate since the EU referendum, it is plainly obvious that the proponents of leaving the EU have given little thought to its consequences for the British state. My preferred policy would have been to remain in the single market post Brexit—a luxury available to the six counties of the north of Ireland, but not Wales—and then there would have been no need for me to make this point. However, in leaving the single market, a new internal market will need to be created for Scotland, Wales and England in order to facilitate the free movement of goods, not least agricultural products. I am sure that, as time goes by, businesses in my constituency and across Wales will start asking why they cannot have the same access to the European single market as Northern Ireland. However, I digress.

[Jonathan Edwards]

The key issue that faces us now is how the new Welsh, Scottish and English internal market will be governed and regulated. I have little doubt that, due to the centralising tendencies of Westminster, British Government Ministers believe that that will be a matter for them and them alone. I remind the British Government, however, that Wales and Scotland have moved a considerable way in recent decades, and the people of our respective countries will not take kindly to the sidelining of our national Governments and national Parliaments. After all, during the EU referendum, Brexiteers were promising Wales a “bonanza” of new powers. To avoid the destructive contradictions caused by Brexit, it is clear that the British state needs to be restructured. Joint decision making between those constituent parts of the British state within the new internal market would be an obvious way of creating some stability.

I turn to trade policy. There is a complete absence in the original Bill of any commitment or means of upholding Welsh and British farming production standards in international trade negotiations. As UK negotiators are reportedly finding out in their deliberations with the US, every one of the 50 states has the right to impose conditions in their trade deals, so as to protect their respective core economic interests.

Welsh agriculture is the bedrock of our food and drink industry, worth nearly £7.5 billion in 2018. A core component of that is overseas trade, particularly with our European friends and allies, where nearly three quarters of all Welsh food and drink exports were destined in 2018. This trade underpins the employment of over a quarter of a million people in Wales. Trade in foodstuffs is therefore a national strategic imperative for my country.

Unrestricted, cheap, poor-quality imports threaten to not only damage the immediate vitality and strength of our domestic food sector, but also pose wider challenges to our environment and our rural economy. As things stand when it comes to trade policy, Wallonia, a region of Belgium, will have more influence over European Union trade policy than Wales will have over UK trade policy. The checks and balances in the EU, the US and other trade blocs are not intended to create problems. They are there to ensure coherence to trade policy.

We are fully justified in our concern in Wales. The absurdity of current British Government trade policy means that trade negotiations with the US are given equal billing to those with the EU, despite their own figures indicating that it would take 60 deals with Trump to make up for what will be lost as a result of a botched Brexit transition phase. Again, Northern Ireland’s farmers will be protected as they will effectively remain in the EU customs union. The British Government seem to think they can leverage concessions from Europe by holding parallel talks, but President Macron, as usual, has completely outmanoeuvred the British Government by saying plainly that if the UK pursues a US deal and agrees to the importation of cheaper, lower-standard food, they can forget the trade deal with the EU.

In closing, my message to the British Government is this: stick as close to the EU as possible and create joint decision-making structures between Wales, Scotland and England over internal market and trade policy. I fear, though, that ideological zealotry will trump my advice. *Diolch yn fawr.*

**Mark Garnier** (Wyre Forest) (Con) [V]: I want to talk about new clause 1, which is in the name of my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare), and new clause 4, which has not been selected but was tabled by me. New clause 4 seeks to make the Secretary of State a trade champion for the British agricultural industry. Although the Department for International Trade is absolutely the lead Department on negotiating free trade deals and trade promotion, trade promotion is of course a whole-of-Government exercise. It is incumbent on every Department to ensure that they promote at all times the fantastic products that we want to export to the entire world. I want to put a marker down for the whole of Government that they must be there to promote British exports.

Turning to the specifics, new clause 4 looks at several issues, and we need to get deep into the weeds of what the Department for Environment, Food and Rural actually does when it comes to food exports. One of the most important parts of exporting and, indeed, importing food is ensuring that foodstuffs are of a sufficient quality. Irrespective of the market access and tariffs that we secure in a trade deal, every country needs to allocate a licence to ensure that any food product class is sufficiently safe for their own consumers. For example, when people want to export food to the UK, DEFRA, through the Food Standards Agency, will license imports of sanitary and phytosanitary products.

When we are trying to export products, it is important that DEFRA works hard with licensing agencies in other countries to ensure that the audit of our producers and the audit of our regulators are done in such a way as to ensure that those licences are expedited as much as possible. They can take three years to get done, but we need to be doing things far quicker. From time to time, we get a problem whereby licences will be withdrawn, and we saw that with British beef over the years after Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease—mad cow disease. It is only in the past few years that we have seen the French lift their ban on British beef and the Americans lift their bans on British beef and lamb, and that came decades after CJD was a problem. That is a second area where the Secretary of State at DEFRA must do everything they can to lift such bans to ensure that we get proper market access.

Furthermore, other countries have local laws that may create problems. A good example of that is Thailand, which has perfectly acceptable religious views on alcohol and requires that alcohol is not promoted on the bottle. However, if someone is trying to sell a bottle of 21-year-old malt whisky, the law could interpret that as being a promotion of the product, rather than just a statement of fact that it is a very good whisky. We managed to resolve that problem through the Department for International Trade, as it turned out, but the point is that we need to ensure that we try to break down those inadvertent barriers to entry at every level.

Although new clause 1 is incredibly well intentioned, and my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset stands up enthusiastically for the interests of farmers, I am afraid that it is rather misguided. Apart from anything else, it goes against the World Trade Organisation laws. In seeking to ensure that standards are maintained within the UK, it misses the point that standards are defined as outcomes not process. That is a problem as we are particularly interested in outcomes. The process of ensuring that we have good animal welfare is laudable



and important and quite extensive for our producers, but the outcome is ensuring that our consumers are not poisoned by food, which is an important point. I completely sympathise with the objectives of the new clause, which looks to help farmers, but it would end up setting a barrier for ourselves. We would introduce a process-based regulation, rather than an outcomes-based regulation under WTO terms. What we must do is support our farmers by promoting exports. We need the Secretary of State to report back on an annual basis, but we do not want to create other barriers, which new clause 1 would introduce.

4.30 pm

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green) [V]: I am grateful for the opportunity to speak to my amendments this afternoon, and to support several others.

My new clause 5 would help to rectify the absence of anything in the Bill to cut pesticide use. This is a really serious omission, given the harm that pesticides cause to insect life, including bees and pollinators, and to other wildlife, as well as the risks to human health. New clause 5 would require the Secretary of State to take steps to protect members of the public from the hazardous health impacts of pesticide use—for example, by specifying a minimum distance between where a pesticide is being applied and public or residential buildings. We do not need to look hard to find evidence of the so-called insect apocalypse, and the serious risks of pesticides to humans and nature. Recently, a call from more than 70 scientists urged the phase-out of pesticides as a “no regrets” immediate step, stating:

“There is now a strong scientific consensus that the decline of insects, other arthropods and biodiversity as a whole, is a very real and serious threat that society must urgently address.”

On human health, pesticide cocktails are of particular concern, as they can be far more harmful than individual pesticides, yet our own regulatory system only assesses the safety of one chemical at a time. There is also the exposure of rural residents to pesticides applied to nearby farmland. The lack of anything on pesticides in the Bill is even more disturbing, given the Government’s dubious stance on the precautionary principle: refusing to transfer it fully into UK law and refusing to legislate against the risks of a US trade deal undermining it.

My amendment 42 is on the sustainability and resilience of agriculture more widely. It complements amendments 18 and 19 on agroecology tabled by the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), which I strongly support. Amendment 42 would enable the Secretary of State to set and monitor progress towards targets for the uptake of integrated pest management based on agroecological practices, including organic farming. This would help to ensure that the catch-all clause on productivity payments does not undermine environmental objectives.

This week, a leaked copy of the EU 2030 biodiversity strategy revealed proposals for at least 25% of farmland to be organic, alongside a wider uptake of agroecological practices, a 50% reduction in pesticide use and cuts to mineral fertiliser use. On Second Reading, the then Secretary of State claimed that leaving the EU meant a greener future for British farming, where the UK would apparently do so much better for wildlife and the landscape. If that is to be reality and not just rhetoric, we need an Agriculture Bill that matches or goes further than the EU proposals on pesticides, agroecology and organic farming.

In response to covid-19, some argue that we should downplay nature and sustainability, and dial up food production. But that would risk doubling down on a food system that is contributing to what scientists last month called a

“perfect storm for the spillover of diseases from wildlife to people”.

One example is forest loss driven by rocketing demand for vast quantities of soya that is then fed to pigs and chickens, including in the UK. Agroecology is our route out of a dangerous dead-end debate that pitches food security, environmental protection and public health against each other. We can and must do much better than that.

Finally, my new clause 14 would go some way to fixing the Bill’s worrying lack of attention to the climate emergency. Having highlighted regulation as a gaping hole in the Bill on Second Reading, I strongly support new clause 8 in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, and am pleased that it includes specific provisions on climate. New clause 14 would complement that by setting a target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions for agriculture and land use in the UK by 2050 at the latest. That is much too late in my view, but I hope that the Government will pick this up. It would also place a duty on the Secretary of State to publish interim emission-reduction targets, as well as policies to ensure that those targets are met.

The Committee on Climate Change has said that “strengthening the regulatory baseline” is an essential step that the Government must urgently deploy to meet climate goals, so I hope the Government will support not just specific climate targets for agriculture, as new clause 14 proposes, but rigorous policies to meet them that place equal emphasis on biodiversity and public health. The climate emergency is just one reason why Ministers must say no to business as usual and yes to a resilient, re-localised and regenerative food and farming system. My amendments would go some way towards putting those things at the heart of the Bill.

**Dr Liam Fox** (North Somerset) (Con): I wish to speak against new clause 1. A real issue needs to be dealt with: the high levels of regulation imposed on UK farming can and do add to increased costs for UK farmers. High standards can be an advantage in two ways: first, in what they say about the United Kingdom and our attitudes to animal welfare; and secondly, when it comes to exporting, when we can show to those who want to buy British agricultural produce that it is produced to very high standards—that was a huge advantage to me on a number of occasions when I was Secretary of State for International Trade.

The best way to help our farmers is to have a proper cross-governmental strategy to improve UK farming exports. The proposed changes do not deal with that particular problem, but they do create a number of others. There are three main unintended consequences: the first is the damage to our reputation for observing international treaty law; the second is that the proposals would damage our ability to conclude our current free trade agreements, and potentially future ones; and the third is that they make a mockery of our current negotiating position with the European Union.

First, the new clause is not compatible with WTO rules. Food safety and related issues are anchored in WTO law. Only the slaughter of animals is covered as a

[Dr Liam Fox]

welfare issue in the sanitary and phytosanitary agreement. There is nothing that the Government will do to undermine food safety standards in this country, and to suggest otherwise is a complete red herring in this whole debate. It would be a fine start to Britain's independent trade policy outside the European Union if we were to begin by finding ourselves in conflict with the very rules-based trading system that we believe to be necessary.

Secondly, the new clause would damage the chances of our completing our current free trade agreements. I can say from personal experience, in my discussions with the United States, that the US would walk were the proposals to become law in the United Kingdom, and it would be swiftly followed by others—the Australians, the New Zealanders and those involved in the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-Pacific partnership would be unlikely to take kindly to it. They do not want the incorporation of UK rules to become a prerequisite to trading agreements with the United Kingdom.

There is an additional problem: it is about not just our current FTAs but our ability to conclude future FTAs with developing countries, which simply cannot afford to have the same level of animal welfare standards as we enjoy in a country as wealthy as the United Kingdom. It would be a great pity if, after all the work we have done to promote development, we unintentionally undermined it by agreeing to this change.

Thirdly, the new clause makes a mockery of what we are doing in our negotiation with the European Union. We are currently telling the European Union that we cannot accept the introduction of rules made outside our own country as a precondition of trade with the European Union—the so-called level-playing-field approach—but that is exactly what the new clause would do in relation to everybody else. I can imagine nothing that would bring greater joy to the bureaucrats of Brussels than the UK scuppering its free trade agreement with the United States on the basis that we were insisting on a level-playing-field agreement that we have categorically ruled out in our dealings with the European Union.

I wish to go slightly beyond the content of the proposals to the wider consequences. I worry about what some of the proposed changes say about the signals we would send as a country and our approach to free trade in general. It is worth pointing out—because almost no one seems to have noticed—that global trading volumes went negative in the fourth quarter of 2019. Before covid, global trade was on a downturn, with inevitable long-term economic consequences. Since 2010, the world's wealthiest economies—the G20—have increased and increased the number of non-tariff barriers to trade: in 2010, they were operating around 300; by 2015, they were operating around 1,200.

There is a bit of environmental law here, a bit of consumer protection here and a bit of producer protection elsewhere. It all adds up to a silting up of the global trading system. Why does that matter? It matters because it risks the progress we have made in the past generation of taking a billion people out of abject poverty through global free trade. It is not morally acceptable for those countries that have done very well out of global trade to turn to the others that are still developing and pull the ladder up in front of them. We have benefited from a

global open trading system. It is not only economically sensible, but morally the right thing to do to ensure that that free trade continues.

**Abena Oppong-Asare** (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab)[V]: I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this Bill. I served on the Bill Committee and I have been contacted by a huge number of constituents, so I am enthusiastic about ensuring that the Government listen to the suggestions put forward by the people most affected by this Bill. There are huge insecurities throughout agriculture right now, with it anticipating new opportunities and challenges arising from leaving the European Union. Parliament is having to consider the Bill without knowing what those challenges will be and what our future relationships with other countries will look like. These insecurities have been highlighted by the sector for some time, and covid-19 means that the public have more recently been faced with these insecurities and the issues relating to the resilience of our domestic food supply chain. Closed restaurants, empty supermarket shelves and restrictions on imported food were issues that did not enter the public's mind until just a few weeks ago. We should use the experience of this crisis to guide policy to build future resilience for our food and environmental security.

Many farmers and businesses in the agricultural sector will be facing unexpected financial hardship because of covid-19. Having witnessed the fragility of our domestic supply chain, we must ensure that the Bill includes provisions to support the domestic industry throughout the rest of the crisis. We must also consider practices our industry and consumers may be exposed to if our domestic industry cannot sustain the food supply following this and we have to look more to outside sources. With new trading agreements yet to be made, now we have the perfect opportunity to ban unfair trading and unethical practices. The Bill should ensure that food imports are produced to the equivalent environmental, animal welfare and food safety standards of those required of producers in the UK. The Government should also ensure transparency in our future supply chain, so that consumers are able to make ethical decisions for themselves and that the UK agriculture sector is prioritised over international imports. British farmers must not be subject to a system where they are undercut by food produced to lower standards and then imported into the UK. British consumers must not be subject to food with lower nutritional value, unaware of how their food was farmed.

This Bill has an opportunity to have a positive impact on farmers, business, the wider public and the environment if we get it right. That is why I was pleased to see so many contributions to the Bill Committee and why it is important that we include suggestions that will mean that the Bill has much more of a wider impact. The Ramblers, Britain's largest walking charity, has asked that this Bill includes a requirement for landowners in receipt of public funds to fulfil their legal duty to keep public rights of way. I am supporting that suggestion from Ramblers, so that my constituents have the opportunity to explore nature and have access to a free way to stay active. That is just one way in which the Bill can support farmers to support the wider public. After two months of lockdown, I am sure that all Members from across the House, and the UK public, can appreciate the importance of access to nature and nutritious food.

We have pulled together as a country throughout the crisis, and we should use this momentum to continue to support one another.

I am pleased to be able to speak on the Bill, to support workers in the agriculture industry, who are important but often overlooked keyworkers in the crisis. It is essential that a future trade agreement protects British farmers and consumers, and that is why I support Labour's amendment. I hope that the Government have heard the important contributions we have heard, and take the opportunity today to legislate to protect the UK agriculture sector, and make use of our suggestions, which will have a positive impact on the wider public.

4.45 pm

**David Johnston** (Wantage) (Con) [V]: Here in Wantage I can hear cows mooing as I speak, so the debate is relevant to my constituency.

Beginning with imports, it is fair to say that across Wantage and Didcot we have first-rate farming—Brimstone farm in the west of my constituency is one example. The food that is produced and the environment, agriculture and welfare standards are extremely high. A number of my farmers would like me to support some of the proposals that we are considering, particularly new clauses 1 and 2. I thought hard about that, and was pulled in that direction, but in the end I decided not to do so. Even if that provided short-term help—I am not sure that it would, even if it were compatible with World Trade Organisation rules, and I am not sure that that is the case—in the long term it would not help exports from the great farmers here and across the country. There is a five-year requirement to report on food security. That is a minimum requirement, but I hope that we will hear about food security much more regularly.

In my judgement, public money for public good is one of the most exciting parts of the legislation. We will change entirely the system for paying farmers, and we will be able to do so in a way that helps to protect the environment. Farmers are the natural custodians of the environment, and measures that enable us to support them to improve air, soil and water quality as well as biodiversity are a hugely welcome development. Maybe—just maybe—it will help to reduce farmers' average age, which is 60 at the moment. They find it difficult to persuade their children and grandchildren to take on their work. This may be a step to help encourage others to maintain the land for the great purposes that support our efforts on climate change. In future, some people may try to minimise the food production aspect. I hope that that does not happen, because that should not be regarded as a contrast to efforts on the environment. These are mutually beneficial things that we can do together in the Bill.

Turning to exports, I voted to leave the European Union, and was surprised to be told that that meant that I believed in a closed society, rather than an open one. On the contrary—I wanted an open society that was open to more than just the EU. I would like to see British products in countries around the world, and I hope that we will do everything that we can to ensure that that is the case. I think that there is an opportunity on food labelling at the end of the transition period, so that we can clearly define and consistently apply food labelling that demonstrates and signals to the world the high standards that we have in this country.

There is undoubtedly more that we can do to promote our exports. We have the “Food is GREAT” campaign. I hope that we turbo-boost that in the coming years. Finally, I want to make sure that we remember small farms, because this is a tremendous opportunity for our farms, and I hope that we will support them in their contracts and by promoting their goods, so that they too can benefit from this groundbreaking legislation.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** We now go to Angus and Dave Doogan—[*Interruption.*] I beg your pardon. I am grateful to Members in the Chamber for correcting my mistake. We go to North Devon—[*Interruption.*] We go to North Down, and Stephen Farry.

**Stephen Farry** (North Down) (Alliance): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker; that was an interesting tour of the UK—from Scotland to the south-west and finally to Northern Ireland.

I want to speak primarily to new clause 9 in my name and those of the hon. Members for Foyle (Colum Eastwood) and for Belfast South (Claire Hanna) and others; to new clause 1, of which I am a co-sponsor; and to new clauses 2, 6 and 10, which are very similar.

By way of context, I stress the importance of the agri-food sector to the Northern Ireland economy. It represents about 10% of all activity, which is considerably higher than the UK average. Furthermore, the profile of agriculture and associated industry in Northern Ireland is different from that of the UK as a whole; we have a much higher profile of smaller farmers in particular. The Northern Ireland sector is based around quality rather than scale, and standards are critical and are a matter of pride to all stakeholders.

I passionately believe in an open and liberal international trading system, and we had that with our membership of the European Union and its trade deals with the rest of the world. Trade cannot be conceptualised in simplistic terms or around outmoded 19th-century economic thinking. Environmental, food safety, animal welfare and labour issues are now all vital considerations.

It is also important to acknowledge the unique situation in which Northern Ireland finds itself from the implementation of the Ireland-Northern Ireland protocol. That is of course the inevitable out-working of Brexit and in particular the decision of the UK Government to rule out a softer Brexit based around the customs union and single market, and therefore the ongoing need to ensure an open border on the island of Ireland and protection of the Good Friday agreement. Northern Ireland will consequently remain aligned to large aspects of EU regulation. Furthermore, there is ongoing uncertainty as to how Northern Ireland will interact with EU trade policy and also UK trade policy going forward, with the risk of being marginalised in both respects. Obviously, in the all-Ireland context, matters such as food safety and environmental considerations need to be aligned.

On the substance of new clause 9, I acknowledge that post Brexit there is a need for an initial UK-wide framework to provide breathing space in policy and payments, but there is a sunset clause in the Bill for some measures applying to Wales, and Scotland has already indicated its intention to shape its own policy. This Bill was conceived and drafted prior to the New Decade, New Approach agreement and the welcome

[Stephen Farry]

restoration of devolution in Northern Ireland, but there is no sunset clause for the application of schedule 6 to Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is therefore out of step with other devolved nations, yet, paradoxically, it is Northern Ireland that needs the greatest scope to shape policy to fit its particular circumstances, not least given that protocol.

The Bill provides for the local Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister to amend provisions by regulation, but most Members will appreciate the different processes and scope to enact them through primary legislation and regulation. Northern Ireland is at risk of losing the capacity of the much more rounded and participative process that comes from full legislative consideration. There is a broad range of farming and environmental stakeholders who deserve the opportunity to engage more fully in the development of policy.

In the Minister's opening comments, she indicated that matters covered in new clause 9 were largely for the devolved AERA Minister. However, I have already explained the difference between action by regulation and by primary legislation. The hon. Member for Upper Bann (Carla Lockhart) stated that the local Minister was happy with the Bill and the Assembly had already passed a legislative consent motion, but that Minister was only one voice and his views are not representative of the majority of Members of the Northern Ireland Assembly. The LCM was passed by the Assembly in anticipation that it could still pass its own bespoke legislation, and, importantly, the agriculture and environment Committee in the Assembly has expressed its support for a sunset clause.

Any sunset clause would run to 2026, which would provide ample time for local measures to be put in place; there would therefore be no risk. It would be a strange thing if the Northern Ireland Assembly did not want to shape policy in an area of its own competence.

**Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con) [V]:** I support the Bill overall. I think it is great for agriculture. It is a landmark Bill, and I thank my local National Farmers Union and local farmers for the engagement I have had with them over many months now.

I do, however, want to speak against new clauses 1 and 2, for which some NFU representatives have been encouraging MPs to vote. While there are good intentions—clearly I want to do what I can to support and help create opportunities for farmers up and down the country, including in south Somerset—the new clauses would in fact be damaging to their long-term interests and the long-term interests of the country. I will say a few things about the reasons for that and address some of the things that my hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) said. He said that he wanted us to be a beacon for standards around the world, and I agree with him, but I believe that we can champion higher standards much better if we are not a trade pariah, which we would be regarded as if we banned imports on a blanket basis, as the new clauses would effect. I am also, as is my hon. Friend, pro consumer safety, and it is important to understand that we will not be reducing import standards. We will have the Food Safety Agency to ensure that our products are safe and that our consumers are kept safe.

I am pro farmers' opportunities, and we have a lot of scope to increase the work that the Government can do to help farmers to market their products and develop new innovative products. I understand that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is looking at a new grant scheme to help with some of that. There are also the opportunities from trade itself, which are large. My hon. Friend said that he was pro food security, and I also support such a thing, but part of that is about having diversified supply chains, and that is exactly what would be damaged by the new clauses, which could effectively create a blanket ban on imports at the whim of the Government or of a food safety agency. I do not think that is in our interests either.

The bottom line is that we are not going to let standards slide, as the shadow Minister said was his fear. In fact, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) made the point that our high standards are often a very good marketing feature for our export products around the rest of the world. Being able to do these deals around the rest of the world is critical. At the end of the day, the new clauses, if passed, would interfere with our ability to sign new trade deals and to roll over the existing ones that we have with the EU. It would put us outside of the scope of our WTO agreements, and we would be that trade pariah.

I will finish by saying a couple of things. My neighbour and hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) said that he wanted lots of US exports. That simply would not happen under a trade deal, as he said he wanted, if the new clauses were agreed, because there would not be a trade deal.

Finally I want to address my hon. Friend the Member for Penrith and The Border (Dr Hudson). He had heartening faith in our trade negotiators, and I agree that we have some great trade negotiators who will fight hard for us and for our farmers. I will do what I can to aid the negotiators in that process of fighting for farmers, but I am afraid that however good they are, if the new clauses passed into law they would not make any difference; there would simply be no trade deals with any other nation. With that, I thank all the farmers of south Somerset for their support through this process.

5 pm

**Dave Doogan (Angus) (SNP) [V]:** I am happy to be able to make my observations on the Bill, its process and the material considerations at stake. As an MP representing a Scottish seat, I will necessarily keep my references confined to the narrow, yet vital, provisions that affect constituents in Angus and more widely in Scotland.

The Bill and its passage through Parliament afford us another example of the straining construct that the UK Parliament increasingly reveals itself to be. This is principally a Bill to provide legislative guidance, a regulatory framework and sector-specific support for English agriculture, yet here we are—MPs from all four nations of the United Kingdom—invested in its passage through this place. A far better proposition in recognising and respecting the devolved nature of agriculture would have been for the Government to table an English agriculture Bill under the EVEL—English votes for English laws—procedures so valued by Government Members, and a further agricultural co-operation Bill, which could have been agreed by consent with the devolved Administrations, with competencies over budgets, food standards, the

single market in the UK, animal welfare, environmental protections, and crucially of course, trade, but that ship has well and truly sailed.

That being the case, I must turn to the provisions of the Bill, or in fact, the absence of a key provision that most concerns stakeholders in the agricultural sector: the standard of imported agricultural produce to the UK. Representatives of farming, consumer, environmental and animal welfare organisations across the United Kingdom have been crystal clear on this point. Parliament must take this opportunity to ensure that the Bill introduces vital safeguards for the maintenance of high standards of production on food imports, founded in statute, mandated by law and applying no more than that which is applied to producers of food in the domestic market.

During this period of unprecedented turmoil in our history, farmers and food producers have ensured that the cycle of food production has continued no matter what. That is the calibre of this industry and the people who work within it. We owe it to them in this context, and referencing the generations of food production before it, to ensure that our farmers are not undercut by lower standards of imports that result from some future trade policy.

This import standards issue is a matter of unparalleled concern within the industry, and moreover, it enjoys political support from across all parties in this House—a rare thing indeed. It is not a new issue either and it has been prevalent throughout the course of the Bill. Ministers have been asked many times by Members to consider it. What is concerning is that when I and other right hon. and hon. Members ask this question about standards of imports, we receive the same response from the Secretary of State as we did from his predecessor in the role, the right hon. Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers): that the Government are committed to high standards of production within the UK. That is a hollow and unconvincing yet very telling response to a question that nobody is asking, and it speaks to tension between the Department for International Trade and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs that Members must circumvent today.

An early casualty, if we fail to act, will be the outstanding egg producers of these islands. It is a success story within food production that an industry that receives no subsidies provides countless farms with their egg cheque every month—so vital to the cashflow of seasonal enterprises such as farming. Yet, if the Bill fails to uphold their high standards of production on imports, they will face unparalleled if not insurmountable challenges in competing with foreign imports of egg products, dried and liquid, that could be produced to horrifically low animal welfare standards before ending up in unwitting consumers' food products here. Scottish and UK farmers and producers are not asking for any special deal or to be protected from cheaper products of the same or higher standards. The industry in Scotland and across these islands is well able to compete on the world stage. All they are asking for is that the competition is fair and on a level playing field. For this reason, I will be voting to introduce this most basic of provisions to the Bill in the interests of consumers, environmental protection and animal welfare.

**Julie Marson** (Hertford and Stortford) (Con) [V]: The Bill is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to shape the future of agriculture in the United Kingdom, including

how we farm, how we feed people and how we make farming sustainable for this generation and the next. It also comes at a time when we are fundamentally reassessing our trading relationships across the world, and at a moment of crisis when expansion of our international trade is essential to our recovery and future prosperity. The Bill, as it stands, opens the door for our farmers to the opportunities for growth that international trade brings, and with that it goes some way to addressing the regional imbalance of opportunity and wealth that this Government and I want to focus on.

Farmers in my constituency and across the country already sell exports to Europe worth about £24 billion, and the Bill sets a template for expansion into other regions, which will mean that members of our farming community will be able to compete abroad as never before. They will sell more of what they already sell, and enter new markets so that they can sell more of the same products and new products too. To bring the narrative back to how extending British farming into global markets will directly boost growth, it is just simple maths that growth leads to more jobs, and with that, better jobs. Growth in trade will create new opportunities in places that may have been left behind. It will help to keep local talent at home and attract new talent from afar, and the levelling up of society in every region of Britain will take one more step forward.

I support the aspirations of farmers in Hertford and Stortford who want to sell into foreign markets, and I want farmers and consumers to be clear that I support their desire for the highest food and animal welfare standards, as do the Government. We are leaving the European Union and the CAP, and we must be able to negotiate and sign meaningful trade agreements. We must resist calls for the protectionism that will squander opportunity, and not try to force dynamic alignment from others with us in the UK. Apart from anything else, it was those rigid rules that played a large part in our vote—my vote—to leave the EU, so what message would we be sending if we tried to enforce them ourselves now?

Concerns around the safety and standards of food in the UK have been addressed in the Bill. The same stringent standards that we are all used to and wish to see upheld will still apply to meat sold here, including those that exclude chlorinated chicken and hormone-injected beef. I want to reassure farmers and consumers in Hertford and Stortford that I will always support the highest environmental standards and celebrate the fact that farmers are the custodians of our wonderful countryside. I support the highest standards of food production and animal welfare here and around the world. I also support a principle of clarity in food labelling, to enable consumers to make informed choices about what products they buy.

I will always champion our wonderful UK farmers, producers and products. I will support the Bill, as I am satisfied that our food standards and safety are protected, and I want to see farmers in my constituency benefit from different markets, more product opportunities and a greater distribution of wealth and opportunity across the country. This is an opportunity to renew British farming and add vigour to our global aspirations. It is an opportunity to secure more resilient food supply chains and set global standards for sustainability through international co-operation and leadership.

**Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: What we should be doing in this Parliament is protecting our farmers, our food security, our food standards, our climate, our environment, our public health and our workers, but the Bill falls short on all those counts. The reality is that Britain is gripped by a once-in-100-years pandemic that has taken the lives of 33,000 people, yet this reckless Government refuse to extend the transition period in which we are required to get a deal with the EU, and indeed with the US. This puts all our interests at risk.

Members will know that something like 44% of our trade goes to the EU—in Wales three quarters of our food goes there—and that the United States is a very tough negotiator. It is interested in low-price, often substandard food that may be forced on us unless we ensure in this Bill that we secure the highest standards possible to limit what can be negotiated. The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, has confirmed that chlorinated chicken must be part of a post-Brexit UK trade deal. We have heard talk about hormone-impregnated beef. Basically, we are at risk of importing food below the standards we currently enjoy and torpedoing the opportunity to have a meaningful EU trade deal, which is of much greater significance than the US trade deal—something like 60 times more. It is important that we ensure environmental standards are built into trade deals and into Bills such as this one. If we do not build those food and environmental standards into our law, and they are not subsequently in trade deals, then when we try to increase our environmental and food standards we will be taken to an international court by Trump and others, and we will be unable to move our standards upwards.

On climate change, there is great concern about nitrogen fertilisers producing nitrous oxide, a powerful greenhouse gas used in cattle feed for indoor intensive farming, particularly in the United States. We do not want that here. We should rule that out. We should put that into our trade deal and into the quality controls we put in the Bill. More trade further afield with the US will be bad for climate change in any case, and we know the US does not respect the Paris agreement. We need to use Bills such as this one to protect our food standards and ensure that those standards go into trade deals.

It is interesting that the Bill does not mention air quality, despite the fact that DEFRA argued that agriculture was a more important source of particulates for air pollution than diesel. We know that during the lockdown, PM2.5 and NOx have actually gone down: PM2.5 went down by 10% and NOx by 40%. We know that ammonia is a precursor of secondary particulate pollution; in other words, even though we are using our cars less, we still need to ask what we should do about delivering World Health Organisation standards, particularly as we now know there are significantly more covid deaths in areas with air pollution. That is a great big hole in the Agriculture Bill.

On migration, there are limits on the number of people who can come over here and pick our fruit and vegetables. The Agricultural Wages Board in Wales—it was abolished in England—should be extended to England to support rural workers' wages. On protecting workers, it is critically important at this time that the workers in food production, abattoirs and food processing have proper PPE, testing and social distancing. We already

know there are a massively disproportionate number of those people dying from covid. Again, the Government have neglected that situation.

In conclusion, we need to put food standards centre stage. I will be supporting the amendments. We need to ensure the EU deal is the right one, which means extending the transition period. We need to ensure that the environment and climate change are centre stage, and they need to be part of the trade deals. We need to protect our workers and all our interests in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I now call Daniel Zeichner to wind up for the Opposition and ask that he speaks for no more than eight minutes.

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): It is a pleasure to be able to continue to debate these vital issues with the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Banbury (Victoria Prentis). We had many hours in Committee.

This Bill has been a long time coming: almost two and half years since it was started, with three Secretaries of State and two Prime Ministers. It seems a world away from when it was launched back in October 2018. Some things have not changed, however. The climate crisis, finally properly recognised by this Parliament last year, remains more than pressing. There is much in this Bill on which we can all agree. We welcome the improvements on the first version, but, as the debate this afternoon has shown, we still think that there is room for improvement and that there are some fundamental points of disagreement.

5.15 pm

We can all agree that we want to use public money to drive a more environmentally friendly farming system and help farmers to make that transition to a destination, which many of us would like to see, based on agro-ecological principles, recognising the need for good soil health and wise and sustainable use of water. Those points were very well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), who has been campaigning on these issues for many years, and by my hon. Friend the Member for Swansea West (Geraint Davies).

We would also hope that most could see the sense in a coronavirus emergency food plan, which we suggest in new clause 7, particularly given that I am sure the Government will want to implement as quickly as possible the ideas coming out of the work that is being done on the now much-needed national food strategy. We should also be able to agree that the new Environment Bill can set the context for tackling the climate crisis, although I am sorry to say that the Government sadly declined to use this Bill to set the net zero targets so badly needed to make progress in agriculture.

We can also mostly all agree on wanting to raise animal welfare standards. It is often much more a question of how we do it. Although we appreciate that this is a framework Bill, we are disappointed that the Government rejected our attempts to strengthen standards in many areas through amendments in Committee. We strongly agree on the principle of moving to a system of public money for public goods, but as the lengthy and detailed discussions in Committee around environmental land management schemes showed—I am sure the Minister

will remember them—there is much still to be resolved, and we share the concerns of many in the farming community about the financial uncertainties that lie ahead. The debates about the purposes to which public money should be put were a genuine attempt to flesh out and develop some fundamental issues. The tension between avoiding undue bureaucracy and ensuring positive environmental outcomes is not always easy, as some Members referred to earlier, but the opportunities are hugely exciting, and we will engage constructively in the iterative process promised by the Minister.

I must say, though, that all that agreement is worth nothing when it is distorted by a dash to remake our relationships with the rest of the world and to put in place new trade relationships in a hurry. We do feel that this is being done in the wrong order. The Environment Bill and the food strategy should have been determined first, but we are now driven by a timetable to replace the basic payment system and get those new trading relationships in place. It is on that new system in particular that agreement dissolves; it is that issue that divides this House fundamentally. The question of whether potential imports should meet our food safety, animal welfare and environmental standards has been at the heart of the arguments about this Bill from the beginning, and I shall return to that later.

Some sections of the Bill have drawn less attention today, but as recent events within food supply chains have shown, there is clearly, in our view, scope for improved regulation. Some of the issues in the dairy industry are long-standing, and any industry suffering the shock of losing a major part of its market overnight will struggle. None the less, pictures of farmers having to discard milk are testament to the need for reform, and there are other parts of the food production system where power imbalances distort the situation. That is why we and others continue to press for an extended role for the Groceries Code Adjudicator. A number of our amendments continue to make that case. I noted the characteristically robust comments from my hon. Friends the Members for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman) and for Weaver Vale (Mike Amesbury) about the dairy industry, and also from my hon. Friend the Member for Erith and Thamesmead (Abena Oppong-Asare), who sat on the Bill Committee. They all made points about the need to secure our food supply system.

We also supported amendments in Committee on helping tenant farmers with access to financial support schemes, and we are slightly disappointed that the Government have not taken those forward. I hope they might look closely at amendment 1, tabled by the hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish), the Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee, on ensuring that funds available previously through regional development schemes remain available, particularly for small farmers. That point was strongly made to us by the Landworkers Alliance. We do share worries that the emergence of different financial support systems across the devolved nations could create significant distortions and problems in future, perhaps creating particular challenges for farmers in England—we heard reference to that from some speakers today. Hopefully, many of these points will be pursued as the Bill goes through the Lords.

The two issues on which we seek Divisions this evening are the fundamentals. Our new clause 7 has been spoken to eloquently by many colleagues, and the crisis has

shone a light on pre-existing problems of hunger, poverty and food insecurity in our country. The new clause would give us a chance to tackle them as the country would expect.

We heard some powerful contributions from colleagues earlier in the debate. My hon. Friend the Member for South Shields (Mrs Lewell-Buck) has, of course, been campaigning on food insecurity issues for many years, and my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell) very powerfully described the shambles around the free school meals voucher system, which many have suffered from in our constituencies.

All the positive aspects of the Bill that I have referred to will be meaningless, however, if our farmers face imports from countries that apply lower standards. We all know that, in a delicious irony, it is clear that the current Secretary of State shares our view because, in his brief absence from the Government Front Bench last year, he tabled a comprehensive set of amendments to guard against that problem. He now, of course, has to disown that position and fall back on the promises that other colleagues in Government are offering. Good luck with that. This is his chance to be true to the 62 organisations who wrote to the Prime Minister in January, making this very point. They have written again this week to MPs. It is an extraordinary coalition—unprecedented, probably—of environmentalists and farmers united in a common cause, and we know that many Conservative Back Benchers actually agree with them.

An unusual vote is coming up—the first virtual vote on a real issue of substance. New clauses 1, 2 and 6 all seek to achieve the same thing—to safeguard our environment, our high food safety standards and our high animal welfare standards. Labour will support them all but, given the political arithmetic, the decision rests with Conservatives. I am still hopeful that at the last minute the Government will see sense and we will see a conversion, but if not, I hope that Conservative Members who are voting at home will think hard before they cast their vote. This is important.

The Minister assures us that our high standards will be translated into UK law. I have to say we had a debate about this in Committee and, as ever with things legal, we are not convinced that the position is so clear. How much better to put it into law tonight. We all want a transition to an environmentally friendly and sustainable food and farming system, and our pledge on this side is to work constructively with the Government to bring that about. We believe the best way to do it is to be proud of our high standards, not to undermine them, and to challenge others to meet them. On that basis, I seek support for our amendments.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I now call Minister Victoria Prentis to wind up for the Government. I ask that her speech lasts no more than 10 minutes.

**Victoria Prentis:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I cannot tell you how much I have enjoyed the debate this afternoon. I do not think that that is just because it is my first time out of the house for some weeks. We have heard from passionate colleagues on both sides of the House—colleagues who are passionate about farming, food and food security. We have heard

[Victoria Prentis]

from distinguished former Secretaries of State. We have heard from farmers. We have heard from those from farming families. We have heard from many Members who represent farming constituencies. We have heard from a vet, and we have heard from a number of colleagues, some mentioned by the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner), who love both food and food security. We also heard, indirectly, from the cows of Wantage.

I would like to take this opportunity to reassure Members that the Government understand the importance of agriculture to the nation. I know that British farmers are the best in the world. The Bill will ensure that they receive the support that they need to give us the food that we need and enjoy; to protect and enhance our beautiful rural landscape; and to ensure the health of the wider rural economy.

We have had a robust debate, which was well-intentioned on both sides. I need to reiterate at this point that there can be no question of sacrificing the UK livestock or other farming industries for the US trade deal. On the contrary, it is our view that a US trade deal is perfectly compatible with a thriving UK farming industry and very high standards. We have heard mention of the dreaded chlorine-washed chicken several times, and I would like to reassure the House that under existing regulations, which we will put into English law at the end of this year, chlorine-washed chicken is not allowed, and only a vote of this House can change that.

I think I also need to restate that the Government are willing to commit to a serious and rapid examination of what can be done through labelling, to reassure colleagues. It may well be that that would help colleagues to understand that we do intend to promote high standards and high welfare across the UK market. I agree that we must consider the case for consumer choice more fully when we look at this in some detail. I agreed earlier in the debate, and reiterate now, that we will consult on this at the end of the transition period. It is important that we look at how it would affect both the industry and consumers, and indeed retailers. I am keen to take that forward.

I thank my predecessor—now the Secretary of State, my right hon. Friend the Member for Camborne and Redruth (George Eustice)—for making the Agriculture Bill such a great piece of legislation. We will hear from him later, on Third Reading. I would like to gently tease the hon. Member for Cambridge about this. Isn't it great that we have a Secretary of State who stands up for high standards of British farming; and isn't it great that this framework Bill, and what has been said by our trade negotiating teams, and indeed by the Prime Minister and in the Conservative manifesto again and again, has reassured that champion for high standards in farming, who is behind this Bill, as I am sure he will tell us very shortly?

I am very grateful to the members of the Public Bill Committee for their diligent scrutiny. It is fair to say that this Bill has evolved, and indeed improved, during its passage through the House. I am so sorry that many of them have not been able to speak in this debate, but I think that, given the hybrid nature of the proceedings, we have had a pretty good go at discussing the issues that, as the hon. Member for Cambridge said, concerned the Committee.

I would like personally to thank especially our Parliamentary Private Secretaries to the Department. They have been towers of strength at a difficult time, when it is difficult to communicate with colleagues in a way that we would like to and are used to. I express my thanks and gratitude to all the civil servants who have worked on the Bill, especially Nathalie Sharman, the Bill manager, who is in the Box this afternoon.

I thank, more widely, those across the four nations who have worked hard on the Bill to get it to this stage. During the work that we have done in the taskforce for feeding the vulnerable over the past four months, we have worked very closely with my colleagues across the four nations, and I hope that we can continue with that spirit of co-operation as we take these policies forward.

I would also like to thank the Clerks and the House authorities for helping us to make history as the first Bill to be voted on using electronic voting. I hope I have not spoken too soon, Madam Deputy Speaker, and that it works!

This is, as we have said many times, a framework Bill. We have a long, long way to go, and many tests and trials, before the agricultural transition period comes to an end in 2028. I would like to reassure farmers that the Government will support them and ensure that consumers will continue to have access to great-quality British food to eat. We very much hope that that will mean consumers from all over the world.

Farming is more than a job. We must cherish the deep personal connection felt by those who farm the land to the soil and landscape they care for, and build upon it in the reforms that we make. This Bill gives us that framework for the future for farming and for our countryside outside the EU. It will allow us to reward public goods such as environmental improvements, it will support investment in technology and research to improve productivity, and it will help our farmers to produce the high-quality food that they are renowned for and that we all so enjoy eating. I commend this Bill to the House.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I now call Simon Hoare to wind up, and ask that his speech lasts no longer than two minutes.

**Simon Hoare:** Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I, too, am grateful to all hon. and right hon. Members from across the House who have spoken in the debate. It has been of noteworthy interest that Members representing both rural and urban constituencies have spoken with knowledge and passion on this.

Let us be absolutely clear: this is the Bill to set out these priorities. In previous iterations, we were told that the previous Trade Bill was not the vehicle and the Agriculture Bill was not the vehicle—in which case, it seems that we are going to try to travel without any form of vehicle at all. That would be rather foolish, so this does need to be in the Bill to give certainty, to give power to the elbow of our negotiators, and to say that the British Parliament thinks that these issues are important and is prepared to stand by them.

That said, there is, as the Opposition Front-Bench spokesman, the hon. Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner), said, much similarity between new clauses 1, 2 and 7. With the leave of the House, I will withdraw new



clause 1, in order for the House to have the opportunity to vote on new clause 2. I think the merit of new clause 2 is that it is a Select Committee-authored amendment. I believe that when the other place comes to deal with the Bill, that will carry some weight in their deliberations. I beg to ask leave to withdraw the clause.

*Clause, by leave, withdrawn.*

5.30 pm

*The Deputy Speaker put forthwith the Questions necessary to bring proceedings on consideration to a conclusion (Order, this day, and Standing Order No. 83E).*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Before I put the first Question, I confirm that the final determination is as follows. Remote Divisions will take place on new clause 2, new clause 7, amendment 39 and Third Reading. The Question, That Government amendments 20 to 22 be made, will not be subject to a remote Division.

### New clause 2

#### INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS: AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD PRODUCTS

“(1) A Minister of the Crown may not lay a copy of an international trade agreement before Parliament under section 20(1) of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 that contains provisions relating to the importation of agricultural and food products into the UK unless they have first made a statement confirming that—

- (a) the agreement contains an affirmation of the United Kingdom’s rights and obligations under the World Trade Organisation Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement, and
- (b) any agricultural or food product imported into the UK under the agreement will have been produced or processed according to standards which are equivalent to, or which exceed, the relevant domestic standards and regulations in relation to—
  - (i) animal health and welfare,
  - (ii) plant health, and
  - (iii) environmental protection.

(2) A statement under subsection (1) shall be laid before each House of Parliament.

(3) Before the first statement under subsection (1) may be made, the Secretary of State must by regulations specify—

- (a) the process by which the Secretary of State will determine—
  - (i) that the standards to which any agricultural or food product imported into the UK under a trade agreement is produced or processed are equivalent to, or exceed, the relevant domestic standards and regulations in relation to animal health and welfare, plant health and environmental protection, and
  - (ii) that the enforcement of standards in relation to any product under sub-paragraph (3)(a)(i) is at least as effective as the enforcement of the equivalent domestic standards and regulations in the UK;
- (b) the ‘relevant domestic standards and regulations’ for the purposes of subsections (1)(b) and (3)(a)(i).

(4) The Secretary of State may make regulations amending any regulations made under subsection (3).

(5) Regulations under subsection (3) or (4) shall be made under the affirmative procedure.

(6) In this section—

- ‘international trade agreement’ means—  
an agreement that is or was notifiable under—  
(i) paragraph 7(a) of Article XXIV of the General

Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, part of Annex 1A to the

WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time),  
or

(ii) paragraph 7(a) of Article V of the General Agreement on

Trade in Services, part of Annex 1B to the WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time),  
or

(b) an international agreement that mainly relates to trade, other than an agreement mentioned in sub-paragraph (i) or (ii);

‘Minister of the Crown’ has the same meaning as in the Ministers of the Crown Act 1975;

‘World Trade Organisation Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement’ means the agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, part of Annex 1A to the WTO Agreement (as modified from time to time);

‘WTO Agreement’ means the agreement establishing the World Trade Organisation signed at Marrakesh on 15 April 1994.”—(*Neil Parish.*)

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

*The House proceeded to a remote Division.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** The remote voting period has now finished. I will announce the result of the Division on new clause 2 after the House has voted on new clause 7.

### New Clause 7

#### CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY FOOD PLAN

“(1) The Secretary of State must, within six months of Royal Assent being given to this Act, prepare and lay before Parliament a document (a “coronavirus emergency food plan”) setting out measures to address the impact of coronavirus and coronavirus disease, and action taken in response, upon the supply of food.

(2) The coronavirus emergency food plan must assess and address—

- (a) the matters listed in section 17(2);
- (b) the following matters—
  - (i) the incidence of hunger, malnutrition and food poverty measured (a) nationally and (b) by local authority area;
  - (ii) the level of demand for emergency food aid and the adequacy of services to meet that demand;
  - (iii) the availability, distribution and affordability of nutritious and healthy food;
  - (iv) the ease of access to nutritious and healthy food across different socio-economic groups and communities;
  - (v) the functioning of the food supply chain, including stock levels of individual food items and any cross-border issues impacting upon the import and export of food; and
  - (vi) the level of any financial assistance provided by a public authority to farmers, growers and the fishing and fish processing sectors as a result of coronavirus or coronavirus disease.

(3) The plan may take account of information provided in response to a requirement under section 25 of the Coronavirus Act 2020 (power to require information relating to food supply chains), subject to the restrictions on the use and disclosure of information set out in section 27 of that Act (restrictions on use and disclosure of information).

(4) In this section—

“coronavirus” means severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2;

“coronavirus disease” means COVID-19 (the official designation of the disease which can be caused by coronavirus);

“financial assistance” means assistance provided by way of grant, loan, guarantee or indemnity, and any other kind of financial assistance (actual or contingent).”—(Luke Pollard.)

*This new clause would require the Secretary of State lay before Parliament a coronavirus emergency food plan, within six months of Royal Assent.*

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

*The House proceeded to a remote Division.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** The remote voting period in respect of new clause 7 has now finished. I will declare the result shortly, probably after the next Division.

## REMOTE DIVISION RESULT: NEW CLAUSE 2

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I can now announce the result of the remote Division on new clause 2.

*Question, That new clause 2 be added to the Bill.*

*The House divided: Ayes 277, Noes 328.*

## Division No. 42]

### AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
Abrahams, Debbie  
Ali, Tahir  
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena  
Amesbury, Mike  
Anderson, Fleur  
Antoniazzi, Tonia  
Ashworth, Jonathan  
Bardell, Hannah  
Barker, Paula  
Beckett, rh Margaret  
Benn, rh Hilary  
Betts, Mr Clive  
Black, Mhairi  
Blackford, rh Ian  
Blackman, Bob  
Blackman, Kirsty  
Blake, Olivia  
Blomfield, Paul  
Brabin, Tracy  
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
Brennan, Kevin  
Brock, Deidre  
Brown, Alan  
Brown, Ms Lyn  
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
Bryant, Chris  
Buck, Ms Karen  
Burgon, Richard  
Butler, Dawn  
Byrne, Ian  
Byrne, rh Liam  
Cadbury, Ruth  
Callaghan, Amy  
Cameron, Dr Lisa  
Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
Campbell, Mr Gregory  
Carden, Dan  
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
Chamberlain, Wendy  
Champion, Sarah  
Chapman, Douglas  
Charalambous, Bambos  
Cherry, Joanna

Clark, Feryal  
Cooper, Daisy  
Cooper, Rosie  
Cooper, rh Yvette  
Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
Coutinho, Claire  
Cowan, Ronnie  
Coyle, Neil  
Crawley, Angela  
Creasy, Stella  
Crouch, Tracey  
Cruddas, Jon  
Cryer, John  
Cummins, Judith  
Cunningham, Alex  
Davey, rh Sir Edward  
David, Wayne  
Davies, Geraint  
Davies-Jones, Alex  
Day, Martyn  
De Cordova, Marsha  
Debbonaire, Thangam  
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
Dodds, Anneliese  
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
Doogan, Dave  
Dorans, Allan  
Doughty, Stephen  
Dowd, Peter  
Duffield, Rosie  
Eagle, Ms Angela  
Eagle, Maria  
Eastwood, Colum  
Edwards, Jonathan  
Efford, Clive  
Elliott, Julie  
Elmore, Chris  
Eshalomi, Florence  
Esterson, Bill  
Evans, Chris  
Farron, Tim  
Farry, Stephen  
Fellows, Marion

Ferrier, Margaret  
Fletcher, Colleen  
Flynn, Stephen  
Fovargue, Yvonne  
Foxcroft, Vicky  
Furniss, Gill  
Gale, rh Sir Roger  
Gardiner, Barry  
Gibson, Patricia  
Gill, Preet Kaur  
Girvan, Paul  
Glindon, Mary  
Grady, Patrick  
Grant, Peter  
Gray, Neil  
Green, Kate  
Greenwood, Lilian  
Griffith, Nia  
Gwynne, Andrew  
Haigh, Louise  
Hamilton, Fabian  
Hanna, Claire  
Hanvey, Neale  
Hardy, Emma  
Harris, Carolyn  
Hayes, Helen  
Hayes, rh Sir John  
Henderson, Gordon  
Hendry, Drew  
Hill, Mike  
Hillier, Meg  
Hoare, Simon  
Hobhouse, Wera  
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret  
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
Hollern, Kate  
Hopkins, Rachel  
Hosie, Stewart  
Howarth, rh Sir George  
Hudson, Dr Neil  
Huq, Dr Rupa  
Hussain, Imran  
Jardine, Christine  
Jarvis, Dan  
Johnson, Dame Diana  
Johnson, Kim  
Jones, Darren  
Jones, Gerald  
Jones, rh Mr Kevan  
Jones, Ruth  
Jones, Sarah  
Jupp, Simon  
Kane, Mike  
Keeley, Barbara  
Kendall, Liz  
Khan, Afzal  
Kinnock, Stephen  
Kyle, Peter  
Lake, Ben  
Latham, Mrs Pauline  
Lavery, Ian  
Law, Chris  
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
Lewis, Clive  
Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
Linden, David  
Lockhart, Carla  
Loder, Chris  
Long Bailey, Rebecca  
Lucas, Caroline  
Lynch, Holly  
MacAskill, Kenny

MacNeil, Angus Brendan  
Madders, Justin  
Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
Malhotra, Seema  
Maskell, Rachael  
Matheson, Christian  
Mc Nally, John  
McCabe, Steve  
McCarthy, Kerry  
McCartney, Jason  
McDonagh, Siobhain  
McDonald, Andy  
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
McDonald, Stuart C.  
McDonnell, rh John  
McGinn, Conor  
McGovern, Alison  
McKinnell, Catherine  
McLaughlin, Anne  
McMorrin, Anna  
Mearns, Ian  
Miliband, rh Edward  
Mishra, Navendu  
Moran, Layla  
Morden, Jessica  
Morgan, Mr Stephen  
Morris, David  
Morris, Grahame  
Murray, Ian  
Murray, James  
Nandy, Lisa  
Newlands, Gavin  
Nichols, Charlotte  
Nicolson, John  
Nokes, rh Caroline  
Norris, Alex  
O'Hara, Brendan  
Olney, Sarah  
Onwurah, Chi  
Oppong-Asare, Abena  
Osamor, Kate  
Oswald, Kirsten  
Owatemi, Taiwo  
Owen, Sarah (*Proxy vote cast by Kate Osamor*)  
Paisley, Ian  
Parish, Neil  
Peacock, Stephanie  
Pennycook, Matthew  
Phillips, Jess  
Phillipson, Bridget  
Pollard, Luke  
Powell, Lucy  
Qureshi, Yasmin  
Rayner, Angela  
Reed, Steve  
Rees, Christina  
Reeves, Ellie  
Reeves, Rachel  
Reynolds, Jonathan  
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
Rimmer, Ms Marie  
Robinson, Gavin  
Rodda, Matt  
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
Saville-Roberts, rh Liz  
Shah, Naz  
Shannon, Jim  
Sharma, Mr Virendra  
Sheerman, Mr Barry  
Sheppard, Tommy  
Siddiq, Tulip

Simmonds, David  
Slaughter, Andy  
Smith, Alyn  
Smith, Cat  
Smith, Jeff  
Smith, Nick  
Smyth, Karin  
Sobel, Alex  
Spellar, rh John  
Starmer, rh Keir  
Stevens, Jo  
Stone, Jamie  
Streeter, Sir Gary  
Streeting, Wes  
Sturdy, Julian  
Sultana, Zarah  
Sunak, rh Rishi  
Tami, rh Mark  
Tarry, Sam  
Thewliss, Alison  
Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
Thompson, Owen  
Thomson, Richard

Thornberry, rh Emily  
Timms, rh Stephen  
Trickett, Jon  
Turner, Karl  
Twigg, Derek  
Twist, Liz  
Vaz, rh Valerie  
Villiers, rh Theresa  
Warburton, David  
Webbe, Claudia  
West, Catherine  
Western, Matt  
Whitehead, Dr Alan  
Whitford, Dr Philippa  
Whitley, Mick  
Whittome, Nadia  
Williams, Hywel  
Wilson, Munira  
Wilson, rh Sammy  
Winter, Beth  
Wishart, Pete  
Yasin, Mohammad  
Zeichner, Daniel

Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain  
Eastwood, Mark  
Edwards, Ruth  
Ellis, rh Michael  
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
Eustice, rh George  
Evans, Dr Luke  
Evennett, rh Sir David  
Everitt, Ben  
Fabricant, Michael  
Farris, Laura  
Fell, Simon  
Fletcher, Katherine  
Fletcher, Mark  
Fletcher, Nick  
Ford, Vicky  
Foster, Kevin  
Fox, rh Dr Liam  
Francois, rh Mr Mark  
Frazer, Lucy  
Freer, Mike  
Fuller, Richard  
Fysh, Mr Marcus  
Garnier, Mark  
Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
Gibb, rh Nick  
Gibson, Peter  
Gideon, Jo  
Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl  
Glen, John  
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert  
Gove, rh Michael  
Graham, Richard  
Grant, Mrs Helen  
Gray, James  
Grayling, rh Chris  
Green, Chris  
Green, rh Damian  
Griffith, Andrew  
Griffiths, Kate  
Grundy, James  
Gullis, Jonathan  
Halfon, rh Robert  
Hall, Luke  
Hammond, Stephen  
Hancock, rh Matt  
Hands, rh Greg  
Harman, rh Ms Harriet  
Harper, rh Mr Mark  
Harris, Rebecca  
Harrison, Trudy  
Hart, Sally-Ann  
Hart, rh Simon  
Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
Heapey, James  
Heaton-Harris, Chris  
Henry, Darren  
Higginbotham, Antony  
Hinds, rh Damian  
Holden, Mr Richard  
Hollinrake, Kevin  
Hollobone, Mr Philip  
Holloway, Adam  
Holmes, Paul  
Howell, John  
Howell, Paul  
Huddleston, Nigel  
Hughes, Eddie  
Hunt, Jane  
Hunt, rh Jeremy  
Hunt, Tom

Jack, rh Mr Alister  
Javid, rh Sajid  
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
Jenkinson, Mark  
Jenkyins, Andrea  
Johnson, rh Boris  
Johnson, Dr Caroline  
Johnson, Gareth  
Johnston, David  
Jones, Andrew  
Jones, rh Mr David  
Jones, Fay  
Jones, Mr Marcus  
Kawczynski, Daniel  
Kearns, Alicia  
Keegan, Gillian  
Knight, rh Sir Greg  
Knight, Julian  
Kruger, Danny  
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
Lamont, John  
Leadsom, rh Andrea  
Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
Levy, Ian  
Lewer, Andrew  
Lewis, rh Brandon  
Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
Logan, Mark  
Longhi, Marco  
Lopez, Julia  
Lopresti, Jack  
Lord, Mr Jonathan  
Loughton, Tim  
Mackinlay, Craig  
Mackrory, Cherylyn  
Maclean, Rachel  
Mak, Alan  
Malthouse, Kit  
Mangnall, Anthony  
Mann, Scott  
Marson, Julie  
May, rh Mrs Theresa  
Mayhew, Jerome  
Maynard, Paul  
McPartland, Stephen  
McVey, rh Esther  
Menzies, Mark  
Mercer, Johnny  
Merriman, Huw  
Metcalfe, Stephen  
Millar, Robin  
Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
Milling, rh Amanda  
Mills, Nigel  
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
Moore, Damien  
Moore, Robbie  
Mordaunt, rh Penny  
Morris, Anne Marie  
Morris, James  
Morrisey, Joy  
Morton, Wendy  
Mullan, Dr Kieran  
Mumby-Croft, Holly  
Mundell, rh David  
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
Neill, Sir Robert  
Nici, Lia  
Norman, rh Jesse  
O'Brien, Neil

### NOES

Adams, Nigel  
Afolami, Bim  
Afriyie, Adam  
Ahmad Khan, Imran  
Aiken, Nickie  
Allan, Lucy  
Anderson, Lee  
Anderson, Stuart  
Andrew, Stuart  
Ansell, Caroline  
Argar, Edward  
Atherton, Sarah  
Atkins, Victoria  
Bacon, Gareth  
Bacon, Mr Richard  
Badenoch, Kemi  
Bailey, Shaun  
Baillie, Siobhan  
Baker, Duncan  
Baker, Mr Steve  
Baldwin, Harriett  
Barclay, rh Steve  
Baron, Mr John  
Baynes, Simon  
Bell, Aaron  
Benton, Scott  
Beresford, Sir Paul  
Berry, rh Jake  
Bhatti, Saqib  
Blunt, Crispin  
Bone, Mr Peter  
Bottomley, Sir Peter  
Bowie, Andrew  
Bradley, Ben  
Bradley, rh Karen  
Brady, Sir Graham  
Braverman, rh Suella  
Brereton, Jack  
Bridgen, Andrew  
Bristow, Paul  
Britcliffe, Sara  
Brokenshire, rh James  
Browne, Anthony  
Buchan, Felicity  
Buckland, rh Robert  
Burghart, Alex

Butler, Rob  
Cairns, rh Alun  
Carter, Andy  
Cartlidge, James  
Cash, Sir William  
Cates, Miriam  
Caulfield, Maria  
Chalk, Alex  
Chishty, Rehman  
Chope, Sir Christopher  
Churchill, Jo  
Clark, rh Greg  
Clarke, Mr Simon  
Clarke, Theo  
Clarke-Smith, Brendan  
Clarkson, Chris  
Cleverly, rh James  
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse  
Colburn, Elliot  
Collins, Damian  
Costa, Alberto  
Courts, Robert  
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey  
Crabb, rh Stephen  
Crosbie, Virginia  
Daly, James  
Davies, David T. C.  
Davies, Gareth  
Davies, Dr James  
Davies, Mims  
Davies, Philip  
Davis, rh Mr David  
Davison, Dehenna  
Dinenage, Caroline  
Dines, Miss Sarah  
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
Docherty, Leo  
Donelan, Michelle  
Dorries, Ms Nadine  
Double, Steve  
Dowden, rh Oliver  
Doyle-Price, Jackie  
Drax, Richard  
Drummond, Mrs Flick  
Duddridge, James  
Duguid, David

Offord, Dr Matthew	Spencer, Dr Ben
Opperman, Guy	Spencer, rh Mark
Osborne, Kate	Stafford, Alexander
Patel, rh Priti	Stephenson, Andrew
Paterson, rh Mr Owen	Stevenson, Jane
Pawsey, Mark	Stevenson, John
Penning, rh Sir Mike	Stewart, Bob
Penrose, John	Stewart, Iain
Philp, Chris	Stride, rh Mel
Pincher, rh Christopher	Stuart, Graham
Poulter, Dr Dan	Sunderland, James
Pow, Rebecca	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Prentis, Victoria	Syms, Sir Robert
Pritchard, Mark	Thomas, Derek
Pursglove, Tom	Throup, Maggie
Quin, Jeremy	Timpson, Edward
Quince, Will	Tolhurst, Kelly
Raab, rh Dominic	Tomlinson, Justin
Randall, Tom	Tomlinson, Michael
Redwood, rh John	Tracey, Craig
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob	Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
Richards, Nicola	Trott, Laura
Richardson, Angela	Truss, rh Elizabeth
Roberts, Rob	Tugendhat, Tom
Robertson, Mr Laurence	Vara, Mr Shailesh
Robinson, Mary	Vickers, Martin
Rosindell, Andrew	Vickers, Matt
Ross, Douglas	Wakeford, Christian
Rowley, Lee	Walker, Sir Charles
Russell, Dean	Walker, Mr Robin
Rutley, David	Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Sambrook, Gary	Wallis, Dr Jamie
Saxby, Selaine	Warman, Matt
Scully, Paul	Watling, Giles
Seely, Bob	Webb, Suzanne
Selous, Andrew	Whately, Helen
Shapps, rh Grant	Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Sharma, rh Alok	Whittaker, Craig
Shelbrooke, rh Alec	Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Skidmore, rh Chris	Wiggin, Bill
Smith, Chloe	Wild, James
Smith, Greg	Williams, Craig
Smith, Henry	Williamson, rh Gavin
Smith, rh Julian	Wood, Mike
Smith, Royston	Young, Jacob
Solloway, Amanda	Zahawi, Nadhim

*Question accordingly negated.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I have been informed that a small number of Members have inadvertently cast their votes, by electronic means, in the opposite way to the one in which they intended to vote. I am informed that their use of technology was not quite as good as they felt it ought to be and that a few Members have made a mistake. There is no provision under the current temporary system by which a Member can change their vote once it has been cast, but I am satisfied that even if a small number of votes had been cast in a different way it does not affect the result of the Division.

#### Clause 42

REGULATIONS UNDER SECTION 40: CLASSIFICATION OF DOMESTIC SUPPORT AND PROVISION OF INFORMATION

*Amendment proposed:* 39, page 38, line 28, leave out subsections (4) and (5).—(*Deidre Brock.*)

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

*The House proceeded to a remote Division.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** The remote voting period in respect of amendment 39 has now finished. I will declare the result shortly.

#### REMOTE DIVISION RESULT: NEW CLAUSE 7

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I can now announce the result of the remote Division on new clause 7, which has just taken place.

*Question,* That new clause 7 be added to the Bill.

*The House divided:* Ayes 221, Noes 352.

#### Division No. 43]

#### AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Doughty, Stephen
Abrahams, Debbie	Dowd, Peter
Ali, Rushanara	Dromey, Jack
Ali, Tahir	Duffield, Rosie
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Eagle, Ms Angela
Amesbury, Mike	Eagle, Maria
Anderson, Fleur	Eastwood, Colum
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Edwards, Jonathan
Ashworth, Jonathan	Efford, Clive
Barker, Paula	Elliott, Julie
Beckett, rh Margaret	Elmore, Chris
Begum, Apsana	Eshalomi, Florence
Benn, rh Hilary	Esterson, Bill
Betts, Mr Clive	Evans, Chris
Blake, Olivia	Farron, Tim
Blomfield, Paul	Farry, Stephen
Brabin, Tracy	Fletcher, Colleen
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Fovargue, Yvonne
Brennan, Kevin	Foxcroft, Vicky
Brown, Ms Lyn	Foy, Mary Kelly
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Furniss, Gill
Bryant, Chris	Gardiner, Barry
Buck, Ms Karen	Gill, Preet Kaur
Burgon, Richard	Girvan, Paul
Butler, Dawn	Glindon, Mary
Byrne, Ian	Green, Kate
Byrne, rh Liam	Greenwood, Lilian
Cadbury, Ruth	Greenwood, Margaret
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Griffith, Nia
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Gwynne, Andrew
Carden, Dan	Haigh, Louise
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Hamilton, Fabian
Chamberlain, Wendy	Hanna, Claire
Champion, Sarah	Hardy, Emma
Charalambous, Bambos	Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Clark, Feryal	Harris, Carolyn
Cooper, Daisy	Hayes, Helen
Cooper, Rosie	Healey, rh John
Cooper, rh Yvette	Hendrick, Sir Mark
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Hill, Mike
Coyle, Neil	Hillier, Meg
Creasy, Stella	Hobhouse, Wera
Cruddas, Jon	Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Cryer, John	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Cummins, Judith	Hollern, Kate
Cunningham, Alex	Hopkins, Rachel
Davey, rh Sir Edward	Howarth, rh Sir George
David, Wayne	Huq, Dr Rupa
Davies, Geraint	Hussain, Imran
Davies-Jones, Alex	Jardine, Christine
De Cordova, Marsha	Jarvis, Dan
Debonnaire, Thangam	Johnson, Dame Diana
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh	Johnson, Kim
Dodds, Anneliese	Jones, Darren
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Jones, Gerald

Jones, rh Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Ruth  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Kane, Mike  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lynch, Holly  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonagh, Siobhain  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonnell, rh John  
 McGinn, Conor  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Moran, Layla  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Mr Stephen  
 Murray, Ian  
 Murray, James  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Norris, Alex  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah (*Proxy vote cast  
 by Kate Osamor*)  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby

Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reeves, Ellie  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz  
 Shah, Naz  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smyth, Karín  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Sultana, Zarah  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Webbe, Claudia  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittome, Nadia  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Wilson, Munira  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Winter, Beth  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

#### NOES

Adams, Nigel  
 Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Ahmad Khan, Imran  
 Aiken, Nickie  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Anderson, Stuart  
 Andrew, Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline  
 Argar, Edward

Atherton, Sarah  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Gareth  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, rh Steve  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Baynes, Simon

Bell, Aaron  
 Benton, Scott  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Bhatti, Saqib  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bradley, Ben  
 Bradley, rh Karen  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Braverman, rh Suella  
 Brereton, Jack  
 Bridgen, Andrew  
 Brine, Steve  
 Bristow, Paul  
 Britcliffe, Sara  
 Brokenshire, rh James  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buchan, Felicity  
 Buckland, rh Robert  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartledge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Cates, Miriam  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Chope, Sir Christopher  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, Mr Simon  
 Clarke, Theo  
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan  
 Clarkson, Chris  
 Cleverly, rh James  
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse  
 Colburn, Elliot  
 Collins, Damian  
 Costa, Alberto  
 Courts, Robert  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey  
 Crabb, rh Stephen  
 Crosbie, Virginia  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Gareth  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davies, Philip  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinenage, Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Donelan, Michelle  
 Dorries, Ms Nadine  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, rh Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Drummond, Mrs Flick  
 Duddridge, James

Duguid, David  
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain  
 Dunne, rh Philip  
 Eastwood, Mark  
 Edwards, Ruth  
 Ellis, rh Michael  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
 Eustice, rh George  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Farris, Laura  
 Fell, Simon  
 Fletcher, Katherine  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Fletcher, Nick  
 Ford, Vicky  
 Foster, Kevin  
 Fox, rh Dr Liam  
 Francois, rh Mr Mark  
 Frazer, Lucy  
 Freeman, George  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fuller, Richard  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Gale, rh Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
 Gibb, rh Nick  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Richard  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffith, Andrew  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, Sally-Ann  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Hayes, rh Sir John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heapey, James  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Henry, Darren  
 Higginbotham, Antony  
 Hinds, rh Damian  
 Holden, Mr Richard  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam

Holmes, Paul  
 Howell, John  
 Howell, Paul  
 Huddleston, Nigel  
 Hudson, Dr Neil  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, Jane  
 Hunt, rh Jeremy  
 Hunt, Tom  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Javid, rh Sajid  
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Johnson, rh Boris  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Fay  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Kearns, Alicia  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Knight, Julian  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 Lamont, John  
 Largan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherylyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria

Milling, rh Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Raab, rh Dominic  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander

Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Streeter, Sir Gary  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie  
 Trott, Laura  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh

Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

*Question accordingly negated.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** As Government amendments 20 to 22 are not subject to a remote Division, I will collect the voices in the usual way, but it must be noted that the voices will not and cannot trigger a remote Division.

## Schedule 5

### PROVISION RELATING TO WALES

*Amendments made:* 20, page 60, line 28, after “modify” insert

“any of the following legislation so far as it has effect in relation to Wales”.

*This Amendment and Amendment 21 remove the limitations on the purposes for which the Welsh Ministers may modify the legislation listed. The changes mean that the powers of the Welsh Ministers, in relation to Wales, are the same as those of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland, in relation to Northern Ireland.*

Amendment 21, page 60, line 32, leave out subparagraph (2).

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 20.*

Amendment 22, page 61, line 15, leave out “negative resolution procedure (unless section 47(5) applies)” and insert “affirmative resolution procedure”.—(*Victoria Prentis.*)

*As the effect of Amendment 21 is to broaden the powers of the Welsh Ministers, this amendment provides for an exercise of the power to be subject to the affirmative resolution procedure.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** As the next Question is contingent on the outcome of the remote Division that has just concluded, but the result of which we do not yet have, I have to suspend the House for a short time—about five minutes—while the report of the Division on amendment 39 is prepared.

6.26 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

**REMOTE DIVISION RESULT: AMENDMENT 39**

6.32 pm

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I can now announce the result of the remote Division on amendment 39.

*Question,* That amendment 39 be made.

*The House divided:* Ayes 56, Noes 362.

**Division No. 44]****AYES**

Bardell, Hannah	Hendry, Drew
Black, Mhairi	Hosie, Stewart
Blackford, rh Ian	Lake, Ben
Blackman, Kirsty	Law, Chris
Bonnar, Steven	Linden, David
Brock, Deidre	Lucas, Caroline
Brown, Alan	MacAskill, Kenny
Callaghan, Amy	MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Mc Nally, John
Chapman, Douglas	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Cherry, Joanna	McDonald, Stuart C.
Cowan, Ronnie	McFadden, rh Mr Pat
Crawley, Angela	McLaughlin, Anne
Day, Martyn	Monaghan, Carol
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Newlands, Gavin
Doogan, Dave	Nicolson, John
Dorans, Allan	O'Hara, Brendan
Eastwood, Colum	Oswald, Kirsten
Edwards, Jonathan	Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Fellows, Marion	Sheppard, Tommy
Ferrier, Margaret	Smith, Alyn
Flynn, Stephen	Stephens, Chris
Gibson, Patricia	Thewliss, Alison
Grady, Patrick	Thompson, Owen
Grant, Peter	Thomson, Richard
Gray, Neil	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Hanna, Claire	Williams, Hywel
Hanvey, Neale	Wishart, Pete

**NOES**

Adams, Nigel	Bhatti, Saqib
Afolami, Bim	Blackman, Bob
Afriyie, Adam	Blunt, Crispin
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Bone, Mr Peter
Aiken, Nickie	Bottomley, Sir Peter
Aldous, Peter	Bowie, Andrew
Allan, Lucy	Bradley, Ben
Anderson, Lee	Bradley, rh Karen
Anderson, Stuart	Brady, Sir Graham
Andrew, Stuart	Braverman, rh Suella
Ansell, Caroline	Brereton, Jack
Argar, Edward	Bridgen, Andrew
Atherton, Sarah	Brine, Steve
Atkins, Victoria	Bristow, Paul
Bacon, Gareth	Britcliffe, Sara
Bacon, Mr Richard	Brokenshire, rh James
Badenoch, Kemi	Browne, Anthony
Bailey, Shaun	Bruce, Fiona
Baillie, Siobhan	Buchan, Felicity
Baker, Duncan	Buckland, rh Robert
Baker, Mr Steve	Burghart, Alex
Baldwin, Harriett	Butler, Rob
Barclay, rh Steve	Cairns, rh Alun
Baron, Mr John	Campbell, Mr Gregory
Baynes, Simon	Carter, Andy
Bell, Aaron	Cartlidge, James
Benton, Scott	Cash, Sir William
Beresford, Sir Paul	Cates, Miriam

Caulfield, Maria	Gibb, rh Nick
Chalk, Alex	Gibson, Peter
Chishti, Rehman	Gideon, Jo
Chope, Sir Christopher	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Churchill, Jo	Girvan, Paul
Clark, rh Greg	Glen, John
Clarke, Mr Simon	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Clarke, Theo	Gove, rh Michael
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Graham, Richard
Clarkson, Chris	Grant, Mrs Helen
Cleverly, rh James	Gray, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Grayling, rh Chris
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Green, Chris
Colburn, Elliot	Green, rh Damian
Collins, Damian	Griffith, Andrew
Costa, Alberto	Griffiths, Kate
Courts, Robert	Grundy, James
Coutinho, Claire	Gullis, Jonathan
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Halfon, rh Robert
Crabb, rh Stephen	Hall, Luke
Crosbie, Virginia	Hammond, Stephen
Crouch, Tracey	Hancock, rh Matt
Daly, James	Hands, rh Greg
Davies, David T. C.	Harper, rh Mr Mark
Davies, Gareth	Harris, Rebecca
Davies, Dr James	Harrison, Trudy
Davies, Mims	Hart, Sally-Ann
Davies, Philip	Hart, rh Simon
Davis, rh Mr David	Hayes, rh Sir John
Davison, Dehenna	Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Dinenage, Caroline	Heapey, James
Dines, Miss Sarah	Heaton-Harris, Chris
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Henderson, Gordon
Docherty, Leo	Henry, Darren
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Higginbotham, Antony
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Hinds, rh Damian
Double, Steve	Hoare, Simon
Dowden, rh Oliver	Hollinrake, Kevin
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Drax, Richard	Holloway, Adam
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Holmes, Paul
Duddridge, James	Howell, John
Duguid, David	Howell, Paul
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Huddleston, Nigel
Dunne, rh Philip	Hudson, Dr Neil
Eastwood, Mark	Hughes, Eddie
Edwards, Ruth	Hunt, Jane
Ellis, rh Michael	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Hunt, Tom
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jack, rh Mr Alister
Eustice, rh George	Javid, rh Sajid
Evans, Dr Luke	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Evennett, rh Sir David	Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Everitt, Ben	Jenkinson, Mark
Fabricant, Michael	Jenkyns, Andrea
Farris, Laura	Johnson, rh Boris
Fell, Simon	Johnson, Dr Caroline
Fletcher, Katherine	Johnson, Gareth
Fletcher, Mark	Johnston, David
Fletcher, Nick	Jones, Andrew
Ford, Vicky	Jones, rh Mr David
Foster, Kevin	Jones, Fay
Fox, rh Dr Liam	Jones, Mr Marcus
Francois, rh Mr Mark	Jupp, Simon
Frazer, Lucy	Kawczynski, Daniel
Freeman, George	Kearns, Alicia
Freer, Mike	Keegan, Gillian
Fuller, Richard	Knight, rh Sir Greg
Fysh, Mr Marcus	Knight, Julian
Gale, rh Sir Roger	Kruger, Danny
Garnier, Mark	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Lamont, John

Largan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackrory, Cheryl  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Milling, rh Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Parish, Neil  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan

Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Raab, rh Dominic  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Streeter, Sir Gary  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie  
 Trott, Laura  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin

Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John

Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

*Question accordingly negated.*

*Third Reading*

*Queen's consent signified.*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I call the Secretary of State, who I am afraid has only two minutes to speak.

6.32 pm

**The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (George Eustice):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

I would like to acknowledge the work that has got us to this point. In particular, I would like to thank DEFRA officials, those who provided evidence and especially those Members who served on the Bill Committee. I am conscious that the restricted nature of the hybrid Parliament means that many of those Committee members have found it difficult to contribute to this stage of proceedings, but they all contributed comprehensively during earlier stages, and the points they raised have been heard.

The Government stood on a manifesto commitment to guarantee the current annual budget for farmers in every year of the new Parliament. Our farmers need stability, certainty and a smooth seven-year transition to adapt to our new policy of public money for public goods, and the Bill provides for that.

This is the second outing of this Bill. I was involved in the last Parliament at Committee stage for the first. We have made a number of changes since then, including strengthening parliamentary scrutiny with the requirement for a multi-annual plan; a strengthened duty around food security, with five-yearly reviews of food security; and a new clause on the importance of food production. Finally, I am conscious that animal welfare has been a big feature of the debate. The Government have a manifesto commitment that in all trade deals, they will not compromise on our high environmental protection, animal welfare and food standards.

6.34 pm

**Luke Pollard:** Labour will not allow farmers to go out of business to secure a trade deal with Donald Trump. It is unusual for any party to vote against Third Reading of a Bill, but we will vote against this Bill because the issue of farm standards for our food is not a technical one; it is fundamental to what kind of country we are. We support high standards for our British farmers, and we demand that all food imported into our country after our Brexit transition period ends adheres to those same high standards that our British farmers have to adhere to.

*Two hours and fifteen minutes having elapsed since the resumption of proceedings on consideration, the debate was interrupted (Order, this day).*



6.35 pm

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** Before I put the Question, I confirm that my final determination is that the Question should be decided by remote Division. There is therefore no need for me to collect the voices or for Members present in the Chamber to shout Aye or No.

*Question put forthwith (Order, this day),* That the Bill be now read the Third time.

*The House proceeded to a remote Division.*

6.51 pm

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** The remote voting period has now finished. I will announce the result of the Division shortly.

## Business without Debate

### STANDARDS

*Ordered,*

That Bridget Phillipson be discharged from the Committee on Standards and Chris Elmore be added.—(*Stuart Andrew.*)

### PRIVILEGES

*Ordered,*

That Bridget Phillipson be discharged from the Committee of Privileges and Chris Elmore be added.—(*Tom Pursglove, on behalf of the Committee of Selection.*)

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I shall now suspend the sitting while the report of the Division on Third Reading is prepared.

6.53 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

### REMOTE DIVISION RESULT: AGRICULTURE BILL (THIRD READING)

6.54 pm

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I can now announce the result of the remote Division that has just taken place.

*Question,* That the Agriculture Bill be now read the Third time.

*The House divided: Ayes 360, Noes 211.*

### Division No. 45]

#### AYES

Adams, Nigel	Bacon, Mr Richard
Afolami, Bim	Badenoch, Kemi
Afriyie, Adam	Bailey, Shaun
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Baker, Duncan
Aiken, Nickie	Baker, Mr Steve
Aldous, Peter	Baldwin, Harriett
Allan, Lucy	Barclay, rh Steve
Anderson, Lee	Baron, Mr John
Anderson, Stuart	Baynes, Simon
Andrew, Stuart	Bell, Aaron
Ansell, Caroline	Benton, Scott
Argar, Edward	Beresford, Sir Paul
Atherton, Sarah	Berry, rh Jake
Atkins, Victoria	Bhatti, Saqib
Bacon, Gareth	Blackman, Bob

Blunt, Crispin	Edwards, Ruth
Bone, Mr Peter	Ellis, rh Michael
Bowie, Andrew	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Bradley, Ben	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Bradley, rh Karen	Eustice, rh George
Brady, Sir Graham	Evans, Dr Luke
Braverman, rh Suella	Evennett, rh Sir David
Brereton, Jack	Everitt, Ben
Bridgen, Andrew	Fabricant, Michael
Brine, Steve	Farris, Laura
Bristow, Paul	Fell, Simon
Britcliffe, Sara	Fletcher, Katherine
Brokenshire, rh James	Fletcher, Mark
Browne, Anthony	Fletcher, Nick
Bruce, Fiona	Ford, Vicky
Buchan, Felicity	Foster, Kevin
Buckland, rh Robert	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Burghart, Alex	Francois, rh Mr Mark
Butler, Rob	Frazer, Lucy
Cairns, rh Alun	Freeman, George
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Freer, Mike
Carter, Andy	Fuller, Richard
Cartlidge, James	Fysh, Mr Marcus
Cash, Sir William	Gale, rh Sir Roger
Cates, Miriam	Garnier, Mark
Caulfield, Maria	Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Chalk, Alex	Gibb, rh Nick
Chishti, Rehman	Gibson, Peter
Chope, Sir Christopher	Gideon, Jo
Churchill, Jo	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Clark, rh Greg	Girvan, Paul
Clarke, Mr Simon	Glen, John
Clarke, Theo	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Gove, rh Michael
Clarkson, Chris	Gray, James
Cleverly, rh James	Grayling, rh Chris
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Green, Chris
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Green, rh Damian
Colburn, Elliot	Griffith, Andrew
Collins, Damian	Griffiths, Kate
Costa, Alberto	Grundy, James
Courts, Robert	Gullis, Jonathan
Coutinho, Claire	Halfon, rh Robert
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Hall, Luke
Crabb, rh Stephen	Hammond, Stephen
Crosbie, Virginia	Hands, rh Greg
Crouch, Tracey	Harper, rh Mr Mark
Daly, James	Harris, Rebecca
Davies, David T. C.	Harrison, Trudy
Davies, Gareth	Hart, Sally-Ann
Davies, Dr James	Hart, rh Simon
Davies, Mims	Hayes, rh Sir John
Davies, Philip	Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Davis, rh Mr David	Heapey, James
Davison, Dehenna	Heaton-Harris, Chris
Dinagen, Caroline	Henderson, Gordon
Dines, Miss Sarah	Henry, Darren
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Higginbotham, Antony
Docherty, Leo	Hinds, rh Damian
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Hoare, Simon
Donelan, Michelle	Hollinrake, Kevin
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Double, Steve	Holloway, Adam
Dowden, rh Oliver	Holmes, Paul
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Howell, John
Drax, Richard	Howell, Paul
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Huddleston, Nigel
Duddridge, James	Hudson, Dr Neil
Duguid, David	Hughes, Eddie
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Hunt, Jane
Dunne, rh Philip	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Eastwood, Mark	Hunt, Tom

Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Javid, rh Sajid  
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil  
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard  
 Jenkins, Mark  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Fay  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Kearns, Alicia  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Knight, Julian  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 Lamont, John  
 Langan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherylyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Milling, rh Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy

Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Parish, Neil  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Raab, rh Dominic  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Streeter, Sir Gary  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham

Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie  
 Trott, Laura  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian

Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

## NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
 Abrahams, Debbie  
 Ali, Rushanara  
 Ali, Tahir  
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena  
 Amesbury, Mike  
 Anderson, Fleur  
 Antoniazzi, Tonia  
 Ashworth, Jonathan  
 Barker, Paula  
 Beckett, rh Margaret  
 Begum, Apsana  
 Benn, rh Hilary  
 Betts, Mr Clive  
 Blake, Olivia  
 Blomfield, Paul  
 Brabin, Tracy  
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brown, Ms Lyn  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burgon, Richard  
 Butler, Dawn  
 Byrne, Ian  
 Byrne, rh Liam  
 Cadbury, Ruth  
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
 Carden, Dan  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Chamberlain, Wendy  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Charalambous, Bambos  
 Clark, Feryal  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Cooper, rh Yvette  
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cryer, John  
 Cummins, Judith  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Davey, rh Sir Edward  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint

Davies-Jones, Alex  
 De Cordova, Marsha  
 Debbonaire, Thangam  
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
 Dodds, Anneliese  
 Doughty, Stephen  
 Dowd, Peter  
 Dromey, Jack  
 Duffield, Rosie  
 Eagle, Ms Angela  
 Eagle, Maria  
 Eastwood, Colum  
 Efford, Clive  
 Elliott, Julie  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Eshalomi, Florence  
 Esterson, Bill  
 Evans, Chris  
 Farron, Tim  
 Farry, Stephen  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Fovargue, Yvonne  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Foy, Mary Kelly  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gill, Preet Kaur  
 Glindon, Mary  
 Grant, Mrs Helen  
 Green, Kate  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Greenwood, Margaret  
 Griffith, Nia  
 Gwynne, Andrew  
 Haigh, Louise  
 Hamilton, Fabian  
 Hanna, Claire  
 Hardy, Emma  
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet  
 Harris, Carolyn  
 Hayes, Helen  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hendrick, Sir Mark  
 Hill, Mike  
 Hillier, Meg  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon

Hollern, Kate  
 Hopkins, Rachel  
 Howarth, rh Sir George  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Johnson, Dame Diana  
 Jones, Darren  
 Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Ruth  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Kane, Mike  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lynch, Holly  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonagh, Siobhain

McDonald, Andy  
 McDonnell, rh John  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGinn, Conor  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Moran, Layla  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Mr Stephen  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Murray, Ian  
 Murray, James  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Norris, Alex  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah (*Proxy vote cast  
 by Kate Osamor*)  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Qureshi, Yasmin

Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reeves, Ellie  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Shah, Naz  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stevens, Jo

Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Sultana, Zarah  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Webbe, Claudia  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittome, Nadia  
 Wilson, Munira  
 Winter, Beth  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Bill read the Third time.*

#### ADJOURNMENT

6.55 pm

*House adjourned without Question put (Order A(5),  
 22 April).*



# Written Statements

Wednesday 13 May 2020

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### Coronavirus Loan Schemes

**The Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Alok Sharma):** I am tabling this statement for the benefit of hon. and right hon. Members to bring to their attention the changes we have made to the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme and the Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme so that more businesses can access the finance they need.

The Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme was launched on 23 March and is facilitated by the Government-owned British Business Bank and delivered through its delivery partners. Lenders offer loans of up to £5 million to support small and medium sized businesses with a turnover up to £45 million that are affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

The Coronavirus Large Business Interruption Loan Scheme was launched on 20 April. Lenders can offer loans of up to £50 million to support viable businesses with a turnover of £45 million and above that are affected by the coronavirus outbreak.

On 3 April we announced changes to the CBILS scheme. The first change was to the use of personal guarantees under the scheme. Since the launch of CBILS, lenders had been permitted, but not obliged, to require a personal guarantee from businesses for loans of any size provided through CBILS. Lenders were never and will never be permitted under any circumstances to use business directors' or their families' principal residence as security. We made changes to the use of personal guarantees through the scheme to provide further reassurance regarding personal assets during this difficult time.

The largest CBILS lenders had already confirmed, on a voluntary basis, that they would not require personal guarantees for CBILS loans under £250,000. The changes we made to the terms of the scheme mean that no lender will be permitted to require a personal guarantee for loans or other CBILS facilities under £250,000.

For CBILS loans over £250,000, lenders are still permitted to require a personal guarantee, although under no circumstances may they use primary personal residences for this. Upon launch, in the event of a default, lenders were previously expected to seek to recover the loss from business assets and then using any personal guarantees. Only when these had been exhausted were they permitted to claim the residual loss under the guarantee agreement. We made changes to these terms so that lenders may now only look to the personal guarantee for a maximum of 20% of the remaining debt before claiming 80% of the residual loss under the guarantee agreement.

The second change concerned the requirements businesses had to meet to access CBILS. At launch, CBILS was designed to support SMEs unable to secure finance on commercial terms. Because CBILS was only

available to companies that could not otherwise secure a debt facility, it meant that preferable terms, such as the Government's coverage of initial interest payments, were unavailable to those businesses that were able to secure facilities on commercial terms.

We therefore removed this requirement, meaning CBILS can now support lending to smaller businesses even where they could have secured a loan on commercial terms. This means that in addition to meeting company size and sectoral restrictions, the only other requirement for businesses is to be able to demonstrate they have been adversely affected by Covid-19 and for lenders to judge that the business is viable. This means that more businesses affected by the outbreak will be able to benefit from a CBILS facility and the Government's 12-month business interruption payment and resulting lower initial repayments.

On 27 April, we announced further changes to the scheme. The cap on gross Government liability at the level of the lenders whole CBILS portfolio has now been removed. Previously the Government's gross liability was capped at 75% of losses across the lender's whole CBILS portfolio. Removing the portfolio cap therefore gives lenders an 80% guarantee across all CBILS lending. This change should provide further confidence to lenders to support the timely supply of finance to businesses.

We are also removing the 'forward looking' element of the viability test. The current economic uncertainty means that many businesses are having difficulties providing cashflow forecasts, which is slowing down some lending decisions. Allowing lenders to base lending decisions purely on an assessment of business liability pre Covid-19 removes the requirement for lenders to ask for evidence of future cashflow, thereby speeding up lending decisions.

Finally, charities and further education colleges need no longer show that at least 50% of their income comes from trading to be eligible for both CBILS and CLBILS loans. In practice, this requirement precluded a large number of organisations in these sectors from accessing support through these schemes, and its removal will support these organisations to access both schemes.

The removal of the portfolio cap increases the statutory contingent liability of the CBILS scheme, and I will be laying an updated departmental minute today containing a description of that revised liability undertaken. The other changes do not impact the statutory contingent liability of the CBILS scheme.

The removal of the requirement for at least 50% of the income of charities and further education colleges to come from trading to be eligible for CLBILS also does not impact the statutory contingent liability of the CLBILS scheme.

For more information on this and other support for business, please go to: <https://www.businesssupport.gov.uk/>.

[HCWS232]

## TREASURY

### Coronavirus-related Home Office Expenses

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Jesse Norman):** To support employees who are working from home and need to purchase home office equipment as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, a temporary tax exemption and national insurance disregard will come into effect to ensure that the expense will not attract tax and NICs

liabilities where reimbursed by the employer. The expenditure must meet the following two conditions to be eligible for relief:

That equipment is obtained for the sole purpose of enabling the employee to work from home as a result of the coronavirus outbreak, and

The provision of the equipment would have been exempt from income tax if it had been provided directly to the employee by or on behalf of the employer (under section 316 of ITEPA).

The exemption is a temporary measure and will have effect from the day after the regulations come into force until the end of the tax year 2020-21.

HMRC will exercise its collection and management discretion and will not collect tax and NICs due on any reimbursed payments made from 16 March 2020 (the date the Government recommended working from home) to the date these regulations take effect.

This measure is being announced outside the normal fiscal process in order to ensure that employers and employees are able effectively to manage their working from home arrangements as soon as possible.

The Government will lay the statutory instruments to update these charges before the House in due course. A tax information and impact note (TIIN) will be published at: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/tax-information-and-impact-notes-tiins](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/tax-information-and-impact-notes-tiins).

[HCWS237]

## EDUCATION

### Education and Childcare Settings

#### **The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):**

This week I have published guidance to set out how we will support early years, schools and colleges to welcome back more children from 1 June at the earliest.

It is over seven weeks since we asked schools, colleges, and childcare settings to allow only vulnerable children and those of critical workers to attend, and I encourage them to continue to take up this offer. This has been a huge ask of teachers, parents and children. I am immensely grateful for the response of all those working in education, childcare and children's social care who have undoubtedly helped to support the NHS and save lives.

But we all know the best place for children to be educated is in school and it was always my intention to get them back there as soon as the scientific advice allowed.

As the Prime Minister has confirmed, we are now past the peak of the virus and he has set out a road map for the next phases of our recovery. If progress continues to be made we expect that, from 1 June at the earliest, we will be able to begin a phased return to school, college and childcare for children and young people in key transition years, alongside the priority groups currently eligible to attend:

Primary schools in England will be able to welcome back nursery, reception, year 1 and year 6 children, in smaller class sizes.

Nurseries and other early years providers, including childminders, will be able to begin welcoming back children of all ages.

Secondary schools and colleges will be able to provide some face-to-face support for year 10, year 12, and 16 to 19 college students who are due to take key exams and assessments next year.

I have published the following guidance to support education and childcare settings to prepare for these changes on gov.uk.

Actions for educational and childcare settings

Implementing protective measures in education childcare settings

Information for parents and carers

Initial planning framework

This guidance sets out protective measures that settings should put in place to reduce the risk of transmission. These include children and young people staying within their new, smaller, classes wherever possible and limiting contact between different groups. We have also set out a range of additional protective measures including frequent cleaning, encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene, considering refreshing the timetable to limit movement and stagger break and lunchtimes, and using outdoor space.

Staff and pupils in all settings will be eligible for testing if they become ill with coronavirus symptoms, as will members of their households, to enable a track and trace approach to be taken in response to any confirmed cases.

We continue to follow the best medical and scientific advice and believe that this phased return is the most sensible course of action to take. We will only do this provided that the five key tests set by Government justify the changes at the time

We will also be updating our guidance for early years settings to confirm that paid childcare can be provided to the children of one household from today, Wednesday 13 May, including by childminders, who may choose to look after the children of one household if they are not already looking after vulnerable children or those of critical workers.

[HCWS236]

## HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

### Covid-19: Construction Industry

**The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):** "Our Plan to Rebuild: the UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy" published by the Government on Monday 11 May makes clear that construction work can be undertaken across England providing sites are able to operate safely in line with the new covid-19 secure guidelines. A number of developers have already announced plans to restart work on sites.

In doing so, the Government recognise that the construction industry needs to be able to adapt its normal practices. As part of this, temporary extensions to working hours may be required on some sites to facilitate safe working and allow tasks to be completed where social distancing can be challenging. Longer working hours may also be needed to facilitate social

distancing in the wider community, for instance by reducing pressure on public transport. It might be necessary to start work earlier in the day or work until later in the evenings.

However, many construction sites in England are subject to controls which restrict their hours of operation. These controls include planning conditions, which might directly restrict working hours or which might restrict working hours through a construction management plan. These conditions may be necessary, for example, to make the development acceptable to local residents and businesses who might otherwise suffer from traffic, noise and other local amenity issues.

The purpose of this written statement is to make it clear that, with immediate effect, local planning authorities should take a swift and positive approach to requests from developers and site operators for greater flexibility around construction site working hours. This is to ensure that, where appropriate, planning conditions are not a barrier to allowing developers the flexibility necessary to facilitate the safe operation of construction sites during the response to the covid-19 pandemic and to proceed at pace with work otherwise delayed as a result of covid-19.

The National Planning Policy Framework already emphasises that planning enforcement is a discretionary activity and local planning authorities should act proportionately in responding to suspected breaches of planning control.

Where only a short term or modest increase to working hours is required, local planning authorities should, having regard to the reason for the condition and to their legal obligations, not seek to undertake enforcement action.

Where developers require longer term or more significant changes to working hours, they should apply to the local planning authority to temporarily amend a condition or a construction management plan in the usual way. In doing so, it will be important for applicants to consider potential impacts and, where necessary, to put forward brief plans to manage concerns, drawing on existing good practice. In return, local planning authorities should respond speedily and sympathetically and engage positively with applicants to find solutions. Local authorities should prioritise these types of applications and give early clarity on the acceptability of extended hours to developers. They should ensure that decisions are issued quickly—with the aim of doing so within 10 working days.

In allowing greater flexibility, the Government recognise the need to mitigate the impact that any temporary relaxation of working hours could have on local residents and businesses. Requests to extend working hours should be proportionate and should not involve working on Sundays or bank holidays.

However, local authorities should not refuse requests to extend working hours until 9pm, Monday to Saturday without very compelling reasons for rejection. In some cases, such as in areas without residential properties, extending working hours beyond this, including allowing 24 hour working where appropriate, may be justified. In all cases, sympathetic site management should be demonstrated to mitigate local impacts and local authorities should show best endeavours to facilitate such requests.

Applications should only be refused where there are very compelling reasons such as significant impact on neighbouring businesses or uses which are particularly sensitive to noise, dust or vibration, which cannot be overcome through other mitigation, or where impacts on densely populated areas would be unreasonable.

Any temporary changes to construction working hours conditions granted by local planning authorities should not extend beyond 13 May 2021.

This statement covers England only. The need for the statement will be reviewed when the requirement for social distancing on construction sites diminishes.

[HCWS234]

### **Covid-19: Planning System and Virtual Working**

**The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick):** The planning system has a vital role to play in enabling the delivery of housing and economic growth that will support the UK's economic recovery. It is important that the system continues to operate effectively, ensuring that all those involved, including local authorities, the Planning Inspectorate, developers, statutory consultees, local communities and others can engage in the process while adhering to the Government's guidance on social distancing.

This statement sets out the Government's expectations for how the planning system should be operating during the covid-19 emergency. It applies to applications and appeals under the Town and Country Planning Act; development consent orders under the Planning Act 2008; the compulsory purchase order regime and to development plans, including neighbourhood plans and spatial development strategies.

#### *The role of digital*

Local planning authorities and the Planning Inspectorate drive the planning process forward and should ensure that it continues to operate effectively to support economic recovery. Moving to digital events and processes will be critical. This means adapting to working virtually, including virtual hearings and events (such as using video-conferencing and/or telephone) and making documents available for inspection online. The Government expect everyone involved in the planning process to engage proactively.

The Government consider that the current legislative framework allows for virtual hearings. They are confident that processes can be put in place in the vast majority of cases to allow for the participation of all parties. The Government recognise that the method by which hearings and events are conducted is a matter for the Inspectorate, operating in accordance with its legal obligations, and they expect these arrangements to be made as the default method of operation in the vast majority of cases. The Government recognise that in exceptional circumstances it may not be fair to proceed virtually and that alternative arrangements may be needed. These alternative arrangements should be taken forward speedily, where possible, taking into account the Government's guidance on social distancing.

The Government expect opportunities for virtual hearings and processes to be maximised. They will draw from current and emerging practice to inform policy and process in the longer term.

### *Virtual events*

The Government fully support the Planning Inspectorate's programme for moving to digital inquiries, hearings, meetings and other events. Digital events present opportunities to increase participation in planning processes which are important for local communities and will minimise the impacts of delays to planning decisions which might otherwise occur due to the requirements for social distancing.

The Inspectorate conducted the first digital hearing event on 11 May and will be quickly scaling up in relation to further virtual events during May and early June where this is consistent with fair participation. In doing so it will accommodate essential legal and procedural requirements. The Government expect events to be taking place virtually by mid-June, other than in exceptional circumstances.

The Government expect inspectors and examining authorities to take decisions about whether and how virtual events should proceed and to consider the practical measures needed to ensure fair participation.

The courts have led in demonstrating the successful use of technology to continue their work. Recognising that the use of technology to support virtual planning events may be challenging, the Government expect that appropriate measures are put in place by the Inspectorate to test the technology and ensure that it enables fair participation. It also expects the Inspectorate to identify those more exceptional circumstances where a virtual event may not be appropriate, making decisions about how to proceed based on the facts of each particular case.

### *Digital documentation*

The effects of covid-19 mean that it is not always possible to access public buildings. As a result, access to planning documents by making them physically available for inspection at local libraries, council offices etc, is now not available. During these exceptional circumstances, the Government consider that online inspection of documents should be the default position across all planning regimes, and they are actively exploring all options to achieve this.

The Government recognise there are sections of the community with limited or no access to the internet and authorities and developers should take reasonable steps to ensure those without access are involved and consider alternative and creative ways to achieve this where possible. This could for example, include sending out documents by CD or USB stick where this meets the needs of those requesting such documents.

As restrictions are eased, planning authorities and others should integrate the range of methods that are available to them into their approaches to ensure all sections of the community are reached as thoroughly as is practically possible.

### *Site visits*

Site visits, whether conducted by local authorities, planning inspectors or statutory consultees, are an important part of the process of considering development proposals and plans. Where site visits are required or necessary, they should be undertaken in line with the Government's guidance on social distancing and safety requirements.

The Planning Inspectorate will be restarting site visits from mid-May. The Government support the Inspectorate's determination to facilitate site visits. It will expect inspectors to use their judgement in deciding if a site visit is necessary or whether alternative approaches are acceptable, taking account of the particular circumstances.

### *Publicity and community engagement*

The Government will introduce from tomorrow temporary regulations to supplement the existing statutory publicity arrangements for planning applications, listed building consent applications and environmental statements for EIA development.

Local planning authorities (and applicants of EIA development under the TCPA) now have the flexibility to take other reasonable steps to publicise applications if they cannot discharge the specific requirements for site notices, neighbour notifications or newspaper publicity. These steps will notify people who are likely to have an interest in the application and indicate where further information about it can be viewed online. These steps can include the use of social media and other electronic communications and must be proportionate to the scale and nature of the proposed development.

Guidance to accompany these regulations will also be published to highlight what alternative publicity local planning authorities could undertake. In particular, if local newspapers are not circulating in their area, authorities should seek to use local online news portals in the first instance.

In relation to development plans, the Government have issued additional planning guidance on reviewing and updating statements of community involvement and neighbourhood planning to support authorities and neighbourhood planning groups in engaging with their communities on their plans at this time.

### *Guidance and Advice*

The Planning Inspectorate has published and regularly updates guidance on its work during the covid-19 social distancing measures, which can be viewed here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-planning-inspectorate-guidance>

[HCWS235]

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### Negotiations with Japan

**The Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss):** Coronavirus is the biggest threat this country has faced in decades. The Government are doing all they can to protect business from the worst effects of coronavirus in the immediate term. We must take steps to support our economy, reduce impacts and provide opportunities for the future economic recovery.

More trade is essential if the UK is to overcome the unprecedented economic challenge posed by coronavirus. It can give us security at home and opportunities abroad—opening new markets for business, bringing investment, better jobs, higher wages and lower prices just as we need them most. At a time when protectionist barriers are on the rise, all countries need to work together to ensure long-term prosperity and international trade is central to this co-operation.

That is why we will use our voice as a new independent trading nation to champion free trade, fight protectionism and remove barriers at every opportunity. The Government's



ambition is to secure free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries covering 80% of UK trade within the next three years, to become a truly global Britain.

An enhanced FTA with Japan, the third largest economy in the world in 2018, represents significant opportunities throughout the economy, from agriculture to digital. It will also help us increase the resilience of our supply chains and the security of our whole economy as we diversify our trade.

A deal with Japan will be a driving force to maximise the UK's advantage in the opportunities Asia Pacific affords. These bilateral negotiations are a logical first step to joining the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), given that Japan is CPTPP's largest economy.

Japan is a developed economy with high standards and we are major investors in each other's economies. Trade with Japan is integral to UK jobs and businesses. In 2018, around 9,500 VAT registered businesses exported £6 billion worth of goods to Japan, employing 2.4 million people. Around 6,700 VAT registered business, employing 2.5 million people, imported £10 billion worth of goods from Japan.

An enhanced FTA with Japan is therefore expected to deliver a significant and sustained long-term boost to every region in the UK. Our analysis shows that in the long run, the UK economy could benefit from a £1.5 billion boost, as the trade deal could increase trade flows between both countries by £15.2 billion. UK workers' wages could increase by £800 million in the long run as a result of the deal.

Total annual tariff reductions on goods imports from Japan could be worth up to around £275 million per year in the long run. Some 59% of all Japanese goods imported into the UK and 44% of all UK goods exported into Japan are used in supply chains (average 2016-18). So as well as reducing the price of consumer goods, lower tariffs could also cut the costs of domestic production in both countries.

Removing trade barriers with Japan could deliver huge gains, both for the 8,000 UK small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the UK already exporting goods with Japan as well as those making plans to enter the Japanese market. For example, total annual tariff reductions on goods exports to Japan could be worth around £33 million per year in the long run.

The deal will also provide cutting edge provisions on digital trade that maximise opportunities for trade across all sectors of the economy, providing trust and stability for UK businesses, entrepreneurs and exporters. Such provisions will reduce trade barriers and make it easier for the SMEs already exporting goods to Japan. UK businesses will have the opportunity to lead on innovation, supporting the development of important emerging technologies, such as quantum computing. E-commerce and the creative industries will also benefit from the free flow of data and strong copyright provisions.

That is why today, the Department for International Trade is publishing a comprehensive document setting out the UK's strategic approach to an enhanced FTA between the UK and Japan. We will be placing copies in the Libraries of both Houses. The document is set out in three parts:

The Government's negotiating objectives for an enhanced FTA with Japan, using the existing EU-Japan economic partnership agreement as a basis.

The Government response to the call for input on trade negotiations with Japan, providing an overview of the responses received and setting out how these have fed into our policy development.

A scoping assessment providing a preliminary assessment of the potential long-term economic impacts of an enhanced FTA between the UK and Japan.

The objectives published today are informed by our call for input, which ran for six weeks between 20 September and 4 November 2019 and gave businesses, interest groups and members of the public the opportunity to highlight their priorities for a potential future agreement with Japan.

A deal with Japan will help us to deliver opportunity and unleash the potential of every part of our United Kingdom. Analysis in the scoping assessment shows a UK-Japan enhanced FTA could have a positive impact on every UK nation and region in the long run, with Scotland, the East Midlands and London expected to benefit the most.

We are engaging with the devolved Administrations, Crown dependencies and overseas territories to ensure that we develop an enhanced FTA that works for the whole of the UK.

Our negotiating objectives clearly set out our priorities for an ambitious and comprehensive agreement, which will build on our existing EPA to strengthen the economic relationship with one of our largest bilateral trading partners.

The Government are committed to transparency and we will continue to ensure that parliamentarians, UK citizens and businesses have access to the information they need on our trade negotiations.

[HCWS231]

## TRANSPORT

### M25 Junction 10/A3 Wisley Interchange

**The Secretary of State for Transport (Grant Shapps):** This statement concerns the development consent order application for the M25 junction 10/A3 Wisley interchange improvement made by Highways England under the Planning Act 2008, which had been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate on 19 June 2019.

Under section 98(1) of the Act the examining authority appointed to examine the application must complete its examination within six months. Under section 98(4) the examining authority must submit its recommendation report to the Secretary of State within three months of its completion of the examination. Under section 107(1) of the Act, following receipt of the examining authority's recommendation report, the Secretary of State must decide whether to grant development consent within three months.

Sections 98(4) and 107(3) of the Act give the relevant Secretary of State power to set new deadlines in respect of the above which are later than the statutory maxima. For this application, the relevant Secretary of State is the Secretary of State for Transport. In exercising this power, the Secretary of State for Transport must, among other things, make a statement to Parliament announcing the new deadlines.

The examination for the M25 Junction 10 DCO began on 12 November 2019 and is due to close on 12 May 2020. The recommendation report would need to be sent to the Secretary of State on or before 12 August 2020. A decision in this case would therefore be made on or before 12 November 2020.

The deadline for the completion of the examination is to be extended to 12 July 2020 (an extension of two months) to enable examination hearings postponed in the light of Government advice concerning coronavirus (covid-19) to be rescheduled and held in a virtual forum. Consequently, the deadline for the examining authority

to submit its recommendation report to the Secretary of State for Transport is amended to 12 October 2020 and the deadline for the Secretary of State for Transport to take his decision is amended to 12 January 2021.

The decision to extend the examination under the Planning Act 2008 regime is not taken lightly and reflects the exceptional public health circumstances the country finds itself in.

The decision to set new deadlines is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.

[HCWS233]

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