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20 May 2020**

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Wednesday 20 May 2020

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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

SCOTLAND

The Secretary of State was asked—

Covid-19: Discussions with Scottish Government

Allan Dorans (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the covid-19 outbreak. [902836]

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP): What recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the covid-19 outbreak. [902837]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack): I regularly attend cross-Government meetings, which include the devolved Administrations, to discuss how to minimise the impact of covid-19. There is a high level of co-operation between all Administrations and there will continue to be. We are committed to a UK-wide approach, as we have been from the start.

Allan Dorans [V]: What justification does the Secretary of State have for ignoring the Scottish Government guidelines to stay home, protect the NHS and save lives, by undertaking an almost 700-mile round trip to Westminster when he could safely have worked from home today virtually? What kind of message does that send to the Scottish people? Will the Secretary of State be self-isolating on his return to his constituency?

Mr Jack: To be absolutely clear, first, as the hon. Gentleman's colleague, the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart), has made clear, Members of Parliament are key workers. More importantly, as a Cabinet Minister and a Secretary of State, it is right that I should be here in the Chamber so that I can be properly scrutinised and answer these questions. I came down at the weekend and travelled on a train very safely. I will return safely and I will be isolating myself when I do, but that is solely because I go back to family. I do not see why we cannot have proper scrutiny of Parliament when we have the virtual proceedings, which work for some, but for me it is absolutely about being here, being scrutinised and being at the Dispatch Box.

Chris Law [V]: At last week's Scottish Affairs Committee sitting, the Secretary of State made the welcome admission that the Prime Minister's announcement on exiting lockdown did cause confusion, given that the advice applied only to England. The crystal-clear message in Scotland remains to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives. In that same spirit, will the Secretary of State accept that prematurely ending the modern ways in which we are currently working in Parliament would disregard Scotland's clear public health guidance, increase infection in our communities and put our constituents at risk by forcing people to travel hundreds of miles back and forth to London?

Mr Jack: I have already given the answer on the first point. On the messaging, the messaging in Scotland is different to that in England, which is fine, but the "stay alert" message in England is that people should stay at home and work from home if they can work from home, but if they cannot, they can go to work. That is very clear. In going to work, they stay alert, wash their hands and socially distance themselves—they do all those things. If Scottish Members of Parliament do not want to come back to be scrutinised or to scrutinise Ministers, that will be a matter for them, but at some point we will have to move to a stage where Parliament is operating on a virtual and covid-safe basis, and that is exactly as it should be.

Mr Speaker: I welcome the shadow Secretary of State for the first of his two questions from the Front Bench.

Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab): That is very kind of you, Mr Speaker; thank you very much indeed.

The Secretary of State will be aware of the February outbreak of covid-19 at an international Nike conference in central Edinburgh. In a catastrophic error of judgment, the Scottish Government decided that the Scottish public would not be informed, despite that being contrary to Scottish public health legislation. The public could have helped with the tracing and used their own common sense, as the Prime Minister has said, to make choices about attending large events and gatherings. A BBC documentary reported that a lockdown then could have saved 2,000 Scottish lives. Will the Secretary of State tell the House whether the UK Government were informed; why the public were not told, given the subsequent disinfecting and closure of Nike outlets all over the UK; and how many UK lives could have been saved as a result?

Mr Jack: I welcome the hon. Gentleman back to his rightful place on the Opposition Front Bench. I fear he spent far too long in the wilderness that was the previous regime's Back Benches. That said, I must pay tribute to his predecessor, the hon. Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd), who I am pleased is making good progress in recovering from a very nasty bout of coronavirus.

On the shadow Secretary of State's question, I believe that maximum transparency is important when it comes to matters of public health, because it is important that we treat the public as adults. To that end, I wish to make it clear that the Scottish Government informed Public Health England—an agency, as Members know—of one case of covid-19 on 2 March and two further cases on 4 March. I should also make it absolutely clear at the

Dispatch Box that the chief medical officers of the four nations agreed, before there were any confirmed cases, that each Administration would announce their own cases and take their own decisions about what was appropriate to release and when they released it, so it is a matter for the Scottish Government and how they handled it.

Ian Murray: I accept that response from the Secretary of State, but the UK Government did have a responsibility, given that Nike outlets across the United Kingdom were closed and disinfected.

I thank the Secretary of State for his welcome and for what he said about my hon. Friend the Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd), whom I spoke to shortly after being appointed; he is back and fit, with his old sense of humour—he has not lost that, thankfully. My hon. Friend the Member for Ogmore (Chris Elmore) and I will work closely with the Government when they agree with us, but we will be a ferocious Opposition when we disagree. We should work collaboratively when we agree, but we will be ferocious when we do not.

In advance of a vaccine, the only way to ease lockdown measures is to test, trace, track and isolate. The key to that process is mass testing. Given that the UK Government consistently fail to hit their 100,000 a day target, and Scotland has one of the worst testing rates in the whole world, we need mobilisation of both Governments to have testing centres everywhere—mobile, workplace, home testing, in airports and so on—to make this strategy work. A “go it alone” policy, encouraged by the Prime Minister’s clumsy announcements, is counterproductive. What work is going on across both Governments to ensure not only that the capacity of testing is exponentially increased, but that there is a system in place for effectively testing and retesting the majority of the population, starting in our care homes?

Mr Jack: The hon. Gentleman makes a good point. The testing capacity in Scotland is 12,000 tests a day. On Monday, they only used 4,559 of those. That is a matter for the Scottish Government, because health is devolved, and they determine what tests are undertaken. I want to make it clear that the UK Government have funded for the Scottish Government five operating drive-through test centres in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Inverness and Perth. The Ministry of Defence is operating 30 pop-up units across Scotland. Again, they can go at the behest of the Scottish Government. There is plenty of capacity there. It is not being used. It should have been used more in care homes; I agree with him on that. There is a firm line between the Scottish Government being cautious and being slow, when in fact, they could be less cautious about easing the lockdown if they had been a lot quicker on testing.

Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP) [V]: I welcome the shadow Secretary of State, the hon. Member for Edinburgh South (Ian Murray), to his position. Given that England has decided to ease lockdown measures earlier than the other three nations of the UK, can the Secretary of State give assurances that the citizens of the devolved nations will still have access to the UK furlough scheme for as long as lockdown must continue in the devolved nations?

Mr Jack: This is the first time that the hon. Lady and I have met, in virtual circumstances, and I welcome her to her role. The answer is one for the Chancellor. That is a matter for the Treasury.

Mhairi Black: If this Parliament insists on following a policy of England’s way or no way and does not leave any leeway for the devolved nations, will the Secretary of State, as Scotland’s representative in Government, lobby the Prime Minister for the devolution of the fiscal powers necessary for the Scottish Government to implement their own furlough scheme?

Mr Jack: This is not the time for the Scottish fiscal framework to be opened up and looked at again. The UK Government have given huge support to the whole United Kingdom through the furlough scheme, the self-employed scheme, the bounce-back loans and the coronavirus business interruption loan scheme. There has been a huge package of measures to keep money in people’s pockets and to keep the economy as strong as it can be when we return to something near normal. Have I argued Scotland’s case? Yes, I have. We have an extension coming on 1 August, running to 31 October. I hope that we can get people back to work over that period and get the economy up and running, to save people’s livelihoods. While we are very focused on saving people’s lives, we must remember that after that comes saving their livelihoods.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP) [V]: It is so disappointing to see the Secretary of State and his “better together” shadow in the House of Commons in London today. Their Government are telling them to stay at home and not to travel unnecessarily, but there they are in the House of Commons today. The Secretary of State is right that virtual proceedings allow Scottish Members of Parliament to work from home, so why are the Government pulling the plug on the virtual proceedings today? He is the voice of Scots in the Cabinet. What is he doing to ensure that Scots’ voices continue to be heard in the House of Commons on behalf of our constituents and to allow us to do our work?

Mr Jack: The hon. Gentleman might be jumping the gun on that, because discussions are ongoing between the Whips Office and the House authorities. I want to make it clear to him that we are not going to put anyone at risk. However, we have to recognise that if we are asking schools to go back and the public to go back to work, we should lead by example, and we should return to a covid-safe—I emphasise that: covid-safe—working environment.

Covid-19: Scottish Universities

Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with the Education Secretary in the Scottish Government on the effect of the covid-19 outbreak on Scottish universities. [902841]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack): Higher Education in Scotland is, for the most part, a devolved responsibility. However, the UK Government very much recognise the difficulties faced by students, staff, and institutions across the UK, and we are working closely with the sector. The Department for Education

has been engaging closely with ministerial and official colleagues in Scotland to discuss a range of higher education areas affected by the covid-19 outbreak.

Jerome Mayhew [V]: Further and higher education needs to adapt to the long-term consequences of covid-19 in much the same way as our schools and other public services do. Although the crisis has taught us how well long-distance learning can be employed, will my right hon. Friend agree to discuss with the Scottish Government how such lessons can be implemented in the future to provide valuable education and, importantly, value for money for undergraduates and postgraduates?

Mr Jack: I thank my hon. Friend for his question. The Department for Education has been engaging closely with ministerial and official colleagues in Scotland to discuss a range of higher education areas that are affected by covid-19. I am also pleased to say that the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross), is meeting Universities Scotland's funding policy group later this week.

Mr Speaker: We now come to Chris Elmore in his new role on the Front Bench.

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): Scotland's 19 universities are not immune to the financial hardship caused by the pandemic. They currently face immediate in-year losses of £72 million, and Universities Scotland anticipates that 18 of Scotland's 19 universities will go on to report deficits in this financial year. May I press the Secretary of State further on what work he will do as part of a UK Government working with the Scottish Government to ensure that any detrimental impact to universities across Scotland is dealt with and that universities are supported and helped in relation to the pandemic?

Mr Jack: Funnily enough, I have spoken to the Education Secretary on that very subject. The UK Government are providing considerable funds to support research by Scottish universities, as indeed they do for other universities in the UK. Regarding the shortfall for universities, which I believe has been highlighted, I am told that that is largely due to the policy of the Scottish Government over the past 10 years of giving free tuition to Scottish nationals and charging English students and overseas students more. I have to say that that element of the budget is, and always has been, devolved and it is absolutely the responsibility of the Scottish Government to rectify that problem.

Covid-19: UK-wide Response

Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on co-ordinating a UK-wide response to the covid-19 outbreak. [902844]

John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on co-ordinating a UK-wide response to the covid-19 outbreak. [902846]

Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on co-ordinating a UK-wide response to the covid-19 outbreak. [902847]

Dr James Davies (Vale of Clwyd) (Con): What recent discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on co-ordinating a UK-wide response to the covid-19 outbreak. [902848]

The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack): I have regular discussions with all my Cabinet colleagues on the covid-19 outbreak, including on the co-ordination of a UK-wide response. The Government are absolutely committed to a UK-wide approach and we will continue to work together with the devolved Administrations to ensure a co-ordinated approach across the UK, while respecting the devolution settlements.

Alexander Stafford [V]: Because of the actions taken by this UK Government, the Scottish Government will receive more than £3.7 billion in extra Barnett funding to help deal with the covid-19 outbreak. Does my right hon. Friend believe that this demonstrates the importance of tackling the pandemic as one United Kingdom, and that it is in the best interests of all four nations to work together as we emerge from this crisis?

Mr Jack: As my hon. Friend correctly points out, Scotland has been allocated a total of £3.7 billion in extra funding so far, and, yes, I agree with him on the one United Kingdom approach.

John Stevenson [V]: In places such as Carlisle and south Scotland, we have a substantial amount of cross-border activity, including travel to work. Does the Minister agree that it would be far better to have a UK-wide policy on movement rather than having the Scottish Government causing unnecessary confusion, which does not help people in this part of the country?

Mr Jack: Yes, absolutely.

Craig Whittaker [V]: As we know, different parts of the United Kingdom are experiencing this pandemic at different rates, so it is right to be flexible and to move at different speeds, as we have seen. But will my right hon. Friend confirm that he remains fully committed to working constructively with the Scottish Government, so that we can, as he says, get through this crisis together as one United Kingdom?

Mr Jack: I can confirm to my hon. Friend that we are absolutely committed to working constructively with the Scottish Government on all fronts.

Dr James Davies [V]: Does the Secretary of State agree with Adam Marshall, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, has said:

"We need to see the whole of the UK moving together—the alternative for business is additional confusion and cost. Avoiding divergence for the sake of politics is important."

Does the Secretary of State agree?

Mr Speaker: I do not know if the Secretary of State could hear that—if not, we will move on.

Mr Jack: I think my hon. Friend said, "avoiding divergence for the sake of politics", or something, towards the end. If that is indeed what he said, I completely agree with him.

Rescheduling of COP26

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): What discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the rescheduling of COP26 to be held in Glasgow in 2021. [902849]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Douglas Ross): The decision on a revised date for COP26 in 2021 will be taken by the COP Bureau of the United Nations framework convention on climate change, in co-operation with the UK and Italy.

Barry Gardiner: As a man born and bred in Glasgow, I welcome the fact that COP26 is going to be hosted there. However, the original plan included a proposal to house 30,000 delegates in cruise liners docked in the Clyde. Not only was that ludicrously expensive, but the pollution from the diesel from those vessels would have sent entirely the wrong message from the COP. What assurance can the Minister give that more suitable accommodation is now being prepared?

Douglas Ross: Clearly, decisions will continue to be taken on COP26 when it is rescheduled. The point about the 30,000 delegates is important, because that will make COP26 in Glasgow—a UK-secured summit—the biggest-ever summit, delegate-wise, in the United Kingdom, and that is something we should celebrate. We will continue to work on the valuable point that the hon. Gentleman has made. Glasgow will be ready to host this outstanding international conference.

Growth Deals

Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con): What progress his Department has made on delivering growth deals for every region in Scotland. [902852]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Douglas Ross): I am pleased to confirm that we have agreed a city or growth deal for each of Scotland's seven city regions. We have also agreed, or are in the process of agreeing, growth deals for Ayrshire, Borderlands, Argyll and Bute, Falkirk, the Islands, and my own home area of Moray. Together, this will mean that a city or growth deal will be part of every area of Scotland.

Andrew Griffith [V]: I thank my hon. Friend for his reply and for his Department's excellent work in delivering these growth deals for Scotland. But does he agree that we now need a growth deal for the whole United Kingdom based on free enterprise, an export boost from new free trade deals, and locking in some of the productivity gains we have made during this crisis on a transition to a more digital and cashless economy?

Douglas Ross: I do agree that as we come out of this pandemic we have to ensure that steps are taken to protect and restore people's livelihoods, which are clearly at the forefront of everyone's minds at the moment, because a strong economy is the best way to protect jobs and fund vital services that are required. I am certain that city and growth deals in Scotland and across the UK will play their part in helping to achieve this.

Mr Speaker: Sam Tarry has withdrawn, so we go to the substantive question from Jacob Young.

Oil and Gas Industry

Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con): What steps he is taking to support the oil and gas industry in Scotland. [902833]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Douglas Ross): In my role in the Scotland Office, along with the Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth, there is regular UK Government engagement with the Oil and Gas Authority and with the wider industry to discuss the significant levels of Government support available to it as part of our unprecedented package of support to business.

Jacob Young [V]: This is an extremely difficult and uncertain time for oil and gas companies in Scotland and across the UK. I am sure my hon. Friend shares my concern about the impact this uncertainty is having on thousands of people who work in the sector, so will he outline what support is available to British oil and gas workers, and will he work with the sector to prevent job losses during this pandemic?

Douglas Ross: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for that question. This is an issue that has been raised in my own constituency. People in Moray travel around the world working in the oil industry. Clearly, the coronavirus job retention scheme is open to the oil and gas industry. Oil and Gas UK has reported that about 30% of respondents to its recent business survey said that they were successful in securing that funding. I would encourage others to look at that as an option to protect their workforce.

Covid-19: Strengthening the Four-nation Approach

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Minister for the Cabinet Office on strengthening the four-nation approach to the covid-19 outbreak. [902834]

Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Minister for the Cabinet Office on strengthening the four-nation approach to the covid-19 outbreak. [902835]

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with the Minister for the Cabinet Office on strengthening the four-nation approach to the covid-19 outbreak. [902857]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Douglas Ross): I have regular discussions with the Minister for the Cabinet Office and the Scotland Office in regular dialogue with Scottish Government Ministers to ensure that the most effective measures are put in place in all parts of the United Kingdom. Throughout the covid-19 outbreak, we have been committed to a four-nations approach.

Alison McGovern [V]: From the Secretary of State's comments earlier, we know that the Government accept that coronavirus will affect different places differently. What discussions has the Minister been having with other Ministers about getting an official, sub-regional transmission rate—a sub-regional R rate—for the whole

United Kingdom to enable authorities in different parts of the country to respond in the way that helps them locally?

Douglas Ross: There have been ongoing discussions about this. As the Secretary of State said—indeed, the Prime Minister included it in the UK Government document—not only will different nations of the United Kingdom come out of the pandemic at different rates, but different regions of England may also come out of the pandemic at different rates. It is right that this Government are committed to supporting everyone, no matter where they live, to have the best chances to come out of coronavirus and its effects. We will continue to do that as a Government, in dialogue and constructive discussion with the devolved Administrations.

Grahame Morris [V]: Is the Minister aware of a survey by the charity Radiotherapy4Life, which says that there may be between 2,500 and 7,000 avoidable cancer deaths in Scotland as a result of deferred treatments for cancer patients as a consequence of the NHS focusing on the covid-19 response? Will he work with his counterparts in the four nations to put the case to prioritise advanced radiotherapy by seeking to increase funding, and to remove bureaucratic barriers and restrictions to modernising radiotherapy and encouraging the use of advanced radiotherapy?

Douglas Ross: The hon. Gentleman raises an extremely important point. We have to make it clear in Scotland, Wales, England and Northern Ireland that our NHS remains open. That message has been loud and clear. Cancer patients should be aware that we will do everything we can across the four nations of the United Kingdom to get the treatment they need and deserve, but the ultimate message is, yes, coronavirus has an impact on our NHS. Because of the actions of the Government and the public, we have been able to suppress the covid outbreak to ensure that we have not breached capacity, but we cannot allow important medical matters to go untreated for too much longer. That message is heard loud and clear throughout the Government.

Steve McCabe [V]: When the Prime Minister ditched “Stay at Home” for “Stay Alert”, he did not appear to have been too alert to the fact that the other three nations were not with him. Is it not time to re-establish the four-nation approach as soon as possible?

Douglas Ross: I think we have seen a slight divergence in some areas, but together the four nations continue to work strongly in lockstep to ensure that we can beat coronavirus and save not only lives, but livelihoods. I am encouraged that Scotland will shortly announce similar measures to the rest of the United Kingdom to release some of the restrictions that are in place, but it is important that these decisions are taken in the devolved Administrations where public health is devolved to the respective Governments.

PPE Procurement

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab): What steps he is taking to ensure that the procurement of personal protective equipment in response to the covid-19 outbreak operates effectively between the UK and Scottish Governments. [902838]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Douglas Ross): The UK Government are working tirelessly to procure PPE both internationally and domestically for UK-wide distribution. This is in addition to the Scottish Government’s own procurement processes. We are working with the devolved Administrations to ensure that the different parts of the UK do not compete against one another in the international market, and that the Foreign and Commonwealth Office can make a single approach to foreign Governments.

Bill Esterson [V]: The lack of PPE is a scandal. It is part of the reason for the high mortality rate in care homes across the UK. What discussions has the Minister had with the Scottish Government to ensure that nations are not competing against one another for the vital PPE that our essential frontline workers need?

Douglas Ross: As I said in my opening remarks, the UK Government are committed to ensuring that we work as a United Kingdom, and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has taken a lead on this issue to ensure that that can happen. I have had regular discussions with Donald Macaskill of Scottish Care about PPE, but also about the outstanding work that our care workers are doing in care homes and around the community across Scotland and the whole of the United Kingdom; they deserve our praise for what they are doing.

PPE: Distribution to Scotland

Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (Ind): What steps he is taking to ensure the equitable distribution of imported personal protective equipment to Scotland. [902839]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Douglas Ross): We are working closely with the devolved nations to ensure that supplies of PPE, both domestic and imported, are distributed equally across the four nations. As I mentioned in my previous response, we are also working to ensure that different parts of the UK do not compete against one other when procuring PPE internationally.

Neale Hanvey [V]: Despite the England-only designation of some PPE imports, the grassroots medical association EveryDoctor has been collating a range of data on PPE availability, and anecdotal evidence suggests that the Scottish Government’s system of procurement and distribution of PPE for Scotland’s NHS has been more efficient and effective from its perspective than that experienced by frontline medical staff in the English NHS. Can the Minister advise the House of what discussions he has had—

Mr Speaker: Order. I think we’ve got the question. I call the Minister.

Douglas Ross: I have had regular discussions with the Scottish Government about procuring PPE. Of course, it was the Scottish Government who had a delivery into Prestwick airport of PPE that was not properly labelled, which sat in the airport unable to get out into the care homes to protect the people we needed it to get to. The

four nations across the United Kingdom continue to prioritise this issue. It is important for our NHS workers, our careworkers and Scotland and the United Kingdom as a whole.

PRIME MINISTER

The Prime Minister was asked—
Engagements

[902883] **Claudia Webbe** (Leicester East) (Lab): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 20 May.

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): One hundred and eighty-one NHS and 131 social care workers' deaths have sadly been reported involving covid-19. I know that the thoughts of the whole House are with their families and friends.

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

Claudia Webbe [V]: The Government keep saying that this virus does not discriminate, but that is not true. Office for National Statistics figures show that black people, African and African Caribbean people are four times more likely to die from covid-19. The figure is also disproportionately high for Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Indian communities. What is the Prime Minister going to do now about this, - and will he act now to ensure that African, Asian and minority ethnic communities in Leicester East and across the country are supported in the next phase of this virus?

The Prime Minister: Yes. As the hon. Lady may know, we are looking at all the comorbidities associated with the coronavirus and all the reasons why people might be disproportionately affected. A rapid review is now being conducted by Professor Fenton, who will report at the end of the month about particularly vulnerable groups. We will take steps to ensure that they are protected where that is appropriate.

[902885] **Mr Richard Holden** (North West Durham) (Con): Today I submitted a formal expression of interest for a new rail line between Consett and the Metrocentre, connecting my constituency to the heart of the north-east in Newcastle. As part of the levelling-up agenda, may I ask the Prime Minister for his support for this scheme, as my constituents have supported him and me?

The Prime Minister: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his imagination and his plan for a new railway. It is entirely in keeping with our infrastructure revolution, and I can assure him that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Transport will be getting back to him. I note that Nexus has already identified several possible extensions of the Tyne and Wear Metro scheme, which may be of advantage to his constituents.

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): Last Friday, the Health Secretary said:

“Right from the start we've tried to throw a protective ring around our care homes.”

That caused quite a reaction. Yesterday, it was flatly contradicted by the chief executive of Care England.

He was giving evidence to the Select Committee on Health and Social Care, and he said that we should have been focusing on care homes from the start and that despite what is being said, there were cases of people who either did not have a covid status or were symptomatic who were discharged into our care homes. The Government advice from 2 to 15 April was:

“Negative tests are not required prior to transfers/admissions into”

care homes. What is protective about that?

The Prime Minister: As the right hon. and learned Gentleman knows full well—of course he is right to draw attention to what has happened in our care homes, and we mourn the loss of every victim—no one was discharged into a care home this year without the express authorisation of a clinician, and they have the interests of those patients at heart. As I said to him last week—he does not seem to have remembered—actually, the number of patients discharged from hospitals into care homes was 40% down in March on January. The guidance was changed to reflect the change in the epidemic, and that guidance was made available to care homes—and, of course, since the care homes action plan began, we have seen a sharp reduction in the number of deaths in care homes. Indeed, since I last stood before the House, the number of deaths in care homes has come down by 31%. I think he should pay tribute to all those who have helped to fight that epidemic across the NHS and across our local services.

Keir Starmer: I think the Prime Minister rather missed the point. The question was whether people were tested going back into care homes. The chief executive of Care England says that because they were not, people who had no covid-19 status or who were symptomatic were discharged into care homes. That is a very serious issue that requires an answer.

Yesterday, the chief executive of Care England, in his evidence, was also asked when routine testing would start in care homes. This is the answer he gave yesterday: “I think the short answer is that we've had the announcement, but what we haven't had is delivery, and we are not really clear when that will arrive.” This is the chief executive of Care England in his evidence. Even the Government's Command Paper, published last week and introduced by the Prime Minister to this House, says within it—[*Interruption.*] The Health Secretary says, “He's wrong.” I am quoting the Government's paper. It says that

“every care home for the over 65s will have been offered testing for residents and staff”

by 6 June.

That is from the Prime Minister's Command Paper. That is over two weeks away. What is causing the continued delay in routine testing in our care homes?

The Prime Minister: I am afraid the right hon. and learned Gentleman is simply in ignorance of the facts. The reality is that already 125,000 care home staff have been tested, 118,000—[*Interruption.*] Perhaps he did know that. One hundred and eighteen thousand care home workers have been tested, and we are absolutely confident that we will be able to increase our testing, not just in care homes but across the whole of the community. Thanks to the hard work of my right hon.

Friend the Health Secretary and his teams, we will get up to 200,000 tests in this country by the end of this month. The right hon. and learned Gentleman may know this—perhaps it is one of those international comparisons he hesitates to make—but actually this country is now testing more than virtually any other country in Europe.

Keir Starmer: Again, the question was when would routine testing start, and the chief executive of Care England, who knows what he is talking about, gave evidence yesterday that it has not. *[Interruption.]* If the Prime Minister is disputing the evidence to the Select Committee, that is his own business. *[Interruption.]*

Mr Speaker: Order. Secretary of State for Health, please. I do not mind you advising the Prime Minister, but you do not need to advise the Opposition during this. *[Interruption.]* Sorry, do you want to leave the Chamber? We are at maximum numbers. If you want to give way to somebody else, I am more than happy.

Keir Starmer: To assure the Prime Minister, I am not expressing my own view; I am putting to him the evidence of experts to Committees yesterday.

Testing was referred to by the Prime Minister. That on its own is obviously not enough. What is needed is testing, tracing and isolation. At yesterday's press conference, the deputy chief scientific adviser said that we could draw particular lessons from Germany and South Korea, which have both had intensive testing and tracing. The number of covid-19 deaths in Germany stands at around 8,000. In South Korea, it is under 300. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, despite 2 million tests having been carried out, there has been no effective tracing in place since 12 March, when tracing was abandoned. That is nearly 10 weeks in a critical period without effective tracing. That is a huge hole in our defences, isn't it, Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: I must say that I find it peculiar, because I have given the right hon. and learned Gentleman repeated briefings on this matter. He is perfectly aware of the situation in the UK as regards testing and tracing in early March. It has been explained many times to him and to the House. I think his feigned ignorance does not come very well. However, I can tell him that today I am confident that we will have a test and trace operation that will enable us, if all the other conditions are satisfied—it is entirely provisional—to make progress. I can also tell him that we have already recruited 24,000 trackers, and by 1 June we will have 25,000. They will be capable of tracking the contacts of 10,000 new cases a day. To understand the importance of that statistic, I remind the right hon. and learned Gentleman that today the new cases stand at 2,400. We are making vast progress in testing and tracing and I have great confidence that by 1 June, we will have a system that will help us greatly to defeat this disease and move the country forward. I therefore hope that he will abandon his slightly negative tone and support it.

Keir Starmer: Thirty-four thousand deaths is negative. Of course I am going to ask about that, and quite right too. The Prime Minister says “feigned ignorance”, but he knows that for 10 weeks there has been no tracing,

unlike in Germany and South Korea. Tracing is critical—there is no getting away from that. The Prime Minister knows it is vital—he made a great deal of it in his speech to the nation Sunday week ago. He said,

“we cannot move forward unless we satisfy”

the tests that he has set, one of which is a “world-beating” test and trace system. World-beating. Leaving aside the rhetoric—“effective” will do—there now appears to be some doubt about when the system will be ready. This is the last Prime Minister's questions for two weeks. Can the Prime Minister indicate that an effective test, trace and isolate system will be in place by 1 June—Monday week?

The Prime Minister: The right hon. and learned Gentleman seems to be in the unhappy position of having rehearsed his third or fourth question but not listened to my previous answer, brilliant forensic mind though he has. He has heard that we have growing confidence that we will have a test, track and trace operation that will be world-beating, and yes, it will be in place by 1 June.

To repeat the figures, since the right hon. and learned Gentleman has invited me to do so, there will be 25,000 trackers, who will be able to cope with 10,000 new cases a day. That is very important because currently new cases are running at about 2,500 a day. They will be able to trace the contacts of those new cases and stop the disease spreading. I hope very much, notwithstanding the occasional difficulty of these exchanges—and I totally appreciate the role that the right hon. and learned Gentleman has to fulfil—that he will support us as we go forward, that he will be positive about the test, track and trace operation and that we can work together to use it to take our country forward. That is what the people of this country want to see.

Keir Starmer: I am very happy to work with the Prime Minister on that. He knows that from our previous exchanges.

Every Thursday, we go out and clap for our carers. Many of them are risking their lives for the sake of all of us. Does the Prime Minister think it is right that careworkers coming from abroad and working on our frontline should have to pay a surcharge of hundreds, sometimes thousands of pounds to use the NHS themselves?

The Prime Minister: I have thought a great deal about this, and I accept and understand the difficulties faced by our amazing NHS staff. Like the right hon. and learned Gentleman, I have been a personal beneficiary of carers who have come from abroad and frankly saved my life. I know exactly the importance of what he asks. On the other hand, we must look at the realities. This is a great national service—it is a national institution—that needs funding, and those contributions help us to raise about £900 million. It is very difficult in the current circumstances to find alternative sources, so with great respect for the right hon. and learned Gentleman's point, I think it is the right way forward.

Keir Starmer: I am disappointed, because the Prime Minister knows how raw this is. The fee in question, the immigration health surcharge, is currently £400 a year.

From October, that goes up to £624 a year. For a careworker on the national living wage, that will require working for 70 hours to pay off the fee.

The Doctors Association and a number of medical groups wrote to the Home Secretary this week, and they set it out this way:

“At a time when we are mourning colleagues, your steadfast refusal to reconsider the deeply unfair immigration health surcharge is a gross insult to all”—

of us—

“who are serving this country at its time of greatest need.”

We agree, and Labour will table amendments to the immigration Bill to exempt NHS and careworkers from this charge. Can I urge the Prime Minister to reconsider his view as we go through this crisis?

The Prime Minister: I have given my answer, but what I will say is that I think that it is important that we support our NHS and that we invest massively in our NHS. This Government—this one nation Conservative Government—are determined to invest more in our NHS than at any time in modern memory. We have already begun that, and we will want to see our fantastic frontline workers paid properly. That is, I think, the best way forward. I want to see our NHS staff paid properly, our NHS supported and I want to continue our programme not just of building 40 more hospitals, but recruiting 50,000 more nurses and investing hugely in our NHS, and I believe that will be warmly welcomed across the whole of our establishment of our fantastic NHS.

Mr Speaker: We are going to lovely Lancashire with Sara Britcliffe.

[902891] **Sara Britcliffe** (Hyndburn) (Con) [V]: Looking at the economic recovery process, I am sure the Prime Minister will join me in thanking SELRAP—the Skipton and East Lancs Rail Action Partnership—for the continuing campaign to reopen the Skipton to Colne railway line, on which it has been confirmed that plans will be moving forward. It is also great news that the potential of the freight terminal is being considered, but can the Prime Minister assure me that Hyndburn and Haslingden will continue to be supported by potential investment in our town centres, business and the transport links that we so desperately need?

The Prime Minister: Indeed, I can, and I am grateful to my hon. Friend. Hyndburn and Haslingden will indeed continue to receive funding for their town centres—indeed, the high streets taskforce will be increasing that support—in addition to 118 km of safe new green cycleways thanks to the Lancashire local growth fund, for which I know she has also campaigned.

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP) [V]: Our thoughts this morning are with the communities in India and Bangladesh dealing with the landfall of super cyclone Amphan. I am sure the Government will be monitoring the situation and will seek to give all necessary support.

Every week, members of this Government applaud our truly heroic NHS and care staff, who have been on the frontline of this pandemic, regardless of whether they were born here or elsewhere. Indeed, the Prime Minister has thanked the nurses who cared for him, who were from New Zealand and from Portugal. The

UK has the highest number of deaths in Europe, and without their sacrifice, we would be facing something much worse. I know the Leader of the Opposition has already asked the Prime Minister about overseas careworkers, but on Monday the Prime Minister ordered his MPs to vote for an immigration Bill that defines many in the NHS and care sector as low-skilled workers. Given their sacrifice, is the Prime Minister not embarrassed that this is how his Government choose to treat NHS and care workers?

The Prime Minister: This is a Government who value immensely the work of everybody in our national health service and our careworkers across the whole community. I can tell the right hon. Gentleman that the reason for having an immigration Bill of the kind that we are is not to keep out people who can help in our NHS; on the contrary, we want an immigration system that works for the people of this country and works for our NHS. I think what the people of this country want to see is an immigration system where we control it, we understand it and we are able to direct it according to the needs of our NHS and the needs of our economy, and that is what we are putting in place.

I know it is rejected by the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer), and indeed by the right hon. Gentleman himself, but it is the right way forward.

Ian Blackford: The harsh reality is that the Prime Minister does not even pay NHS and care staff the real living wage and wants to block many of them from working here at all. We need an immigration system that is fit for purpose. The Home Secretary and the Prime Minister seem hell-bent on implementing a purely ideological immigration policy with no basis in fairness or economics. The Government have talked about giving back to our NHS and care staff. It is time for him to deliver. People migrating to these nations and choosing to work in our NHS and care sector must have the Government’s cruel NHS surcharge removed immediately. Will he make that pledge today, or will he clap on Thursday, hoping that no one really notices that he is giving with one hand and raking it in with the other?

The Prime Minister: First, the right hon. Gentleman mentions the living wage. This is the party and Government who instituted the living wage and have just increased it by a massive amount. Secondly, this is the party that is putting £34 billion into the NHS—the biggest investment in modern times—and believe me we will continue with that investment. He talks about discriminatory policies at the border. The logic of his policy is to have a border at Berwick.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con) [V]: The Defence Select Committee heard recently that France is conducting a root-and-branch review of its defence supply chain following concerns that China is buying up defence-related companies that are going bust during the pandemic. Does my right hon. Friend think it might be wise to consider doing the same thing here in addition to rowing back from his plans to allow Huawei to roll out 5G?

The Prime Minister: I am sure there is a legal term for imputing to me a policy that I have not yet announced, but my hon. Friend is right to be concerned about the

buying up of UK technology now by countries that may have ulterior motives, and we are certainly introducing measures to protect our technological base. He will be hearing a lot more about that in the next few weeks.

Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP) [V]: In Ireland, both jurisdictions are working hard to organise contact tracing on a north-south basis, but the Prime Minister's obsession with avoiding a Brexit transition extension means we risk crashing out without a data-sharing framework, which will critically undermine our ability to protect people from covid-19. When will he put the lives of people in our community above petty, narrow Brexiteer politics?

The Prime Minister: I must respectfully disagree with the hon. Gentleman. We are working very closely not just with our colleagues in the Government in Northern Ireland but with our colleagues in Dublin. I had a very good conversation with Leo Varadkar the other day and we saw eye to eye on the way forward. There is a huge amount shared between the UK and Ireland, and it will continue to be so.

Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con) [V]: As a stunning coastal destination built on hospitality and tourism sectors hard hit by the impact of the virus, Eastbourne is none the less looking to bounce back when it is safe to do so and is part of work on a covid-secure kitemark to inspire public confidence. Does my right hon. Friend see merit in this, and when the coast is clear, will he visit?

The Prime Minister: I am sure the coast is always clear in Eastbourne. I will do my utmost to get there as soon as I can within the social distancing rules that we must all observe. We will look at the kitemark idea. The best I can say is that my hon. Friend is a fantastic champion for Eastbourne and its attractions, and I look forward to supporting her in any way I can.

[902884] **Rosie Duffield** (Canterbury) (Lab): Women make up the vast majority of the workforce in our NHS, social care sector and schools. However, there is only a handful of women on the SAGE committee and only one woman in the Cabinet has led the Downing Street briefing in the past eight weeks on very few occasions. Does the Prime Minister agree with me, as the chair of the largest group of female MPs in the House, that we need a change of tone and more female voices at the top of Government to reflect the majority of the UK population, almost 52% of whom are women? If not, why not?

The Prime Minister: Actually, I think that the hon. Lady has an extremely important point, and I have taken dramatic action, even before a reshuffle. The two most important appointments that we have made recently, after Lord Deighton doing the personal protective equipment, was Dido. One of the reasons we are making such fast progress, I think, now on test and trace is that Dido Harding has come on board, and Kate Bingham is leading the national effort to co-ordinate our search for a vaccine with other countries.

Chris Loder (West Dorset) (Con): I am very grateful for my right hon. Friend's hard work, and in particular, his commitment to doing whatever it takes to help

people to make ends meet during this pandemic, but in West Dorset I have many constituents who were employed before 19 March who are not eligible to be furloughed under the job retention scheme—particularly those who have changed jobs. Will he look at this area again to see, please, what he can do to help those who have slipped through the net and those who have no financial support at this time?

The Prime Minister: Yes. We have pushed back the cut-off date in order to help people, but we are also looking to support people who are in difficulties with some temporary measures on welfare, as he knows—the significant £1,040 increase in universal credit standard allowance and the working tax credit basic element. If there are particularly hard cases, and there will be hard cases, I say what I have said before to the House: I am happy to take them up on my hon. Friend's behalf.

Mr Speaker: We go north of the border, to Allan Dorans.

[902886] **Allan Dorans** (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP) [V]: Will the Prime Minister condemn or condone the reckless behaviour of the Secretary of State for Scotland in making a round trip of almost 700 miles to be physically in the Chamber today, in clear breach of the guidance from the Scottish Government to stay home, protect the NHS and save lives, when he could easily have taken part in the proceedings virtually from the safety of his home? Condemn or condone, Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: All I can say is, no, I will not, and I think that the Secretary of State for Scotland does an admirable job.

Tom Randall (Gedling) (Con) [V]: My constituent, Elizabeth Gull, has proposed the creation of a medal for NHS workers and others to recognise their distinguished service in their work against coronavirus. I think that this idea has merit. Will my right hon. Friend consider a medal or other accolade in the fullness of time for those who have gone above and beyond in the last few months?

The Prime Minister: As I am sure the whole House can imagine, we are indeed looking at the excellent suggestion made by my hon. Friend's constituent, Elizabeth. We are thinking how to recognise the work of healthcare staff, carers and many others, and we are engaging with staff and employers at the present time.

[902887] **Marion Fellows** (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP) [V]: A senior Government figure told a reporter for *The Sunday Times* that the UK Government will end the job retention scheme even if the Scottish Government decide to continue with the lockdown to save lives in Scotland. This would be an act from the UK Government that undermined devolution and the Scottish Parliament by slashing incomes to force Scots back to work when it is potentially unsafe. Will the Prime Minister agree to extend the job retention scheme in Scotland for the length of time that Scotland's Government and Parliament deem a lockdown necessary?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps I can just say that I continue to be very happy with the level of co-operation, in spite of what we sometimes hear in this Chamber,

between the Governments of all four nations, particularly Scotland. I just remind the hon. Lady, of course, that Scotland has benefited from about £1 billion of coronavirus funding in the last period and will get about £3 billion overall, which is perhaps a material consideration on which she might like to reflect.

Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con): Unemployment in the under-24 age group has already doubled in Telford compared with this time last year, and it is clear that the aftermath of the pandemic will hit our young people hardest, with disruption to education and training, as well as job losses. I know that my right hon. Friend is passionate about opportunities for young people, particularly in areas such as Telford, which has suffered disproportionately in previous recessions. Will he ensure that the recovery strategy focuses on young people and equipping them with the skills they need to survive in a post-pandemic economy and, indeed, thrive in the longer term?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to speak up for the young people of Telford and their immense potential, and that is why we will be supporting her and them with a new national skills fund worth £2.5 billion, so that young people can be at the very forefront of our effort to come out of this epidemic.

Mr Speaker: That is the end of PMQs. Before the urgent question, I should say that I plan to allow a statement by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the UK's approach to Northern Ireland protocol as part of the scrutiny proceedings. I will allow less time for the urgent question and the business statement as a consequence.

We now come to the urgent question to the Leader of the House. I will end the urgent question at 12.55. I call the Leader of the House, Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg, to answer the urgent question from Alistair Carmichael. The Leader of the House should speak for no more than three minutes.

Conduct of Business After the Whitsun Recess

12.30 pm

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD) [V]: (*Urgent question*): To ask the Leader of the House if he will make a statement on the conduct of business after the Whitsun recess and if he will bring forward the necessary motions to continue the online participation of Members in the business of the House.

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg): Mr Speaker, may I first recognise your commitment to ensuring that the House operates as fully as it can while adhering to guidance from Public Health England? Your dedication and that of the House Clerks and digital team has been instrumental in establishing the hybrid proceedings that allowed us to return after Easter but as you have always agreed, the present arrangements were only ever envisaged as temporary, because they fundamentally restrict the House's ability to perform its functions fully. Complaints about our debates becoming stilted, scripted affairs are one thing, but the impact on legislative scrutiny is another.

Under the hybrid proceedings, the time this House is able to spend debating legislation faces being cut by around two thirds. I am sure all Members will agree that each and every one of the 36 Bills put forward by the Government in the Queen's Speech deserves the proper level of scrutiny. We have to recognise that if we persist with the present arrangements, it will become harder to make progress in a timely fashion. That is why, in line with Government advice for those who cannot do their jobs from home, I am asking Members to return to their place of work after Whitsun.

We will not be returning to the crowded, bustling Chamber of old. We will be observing social distancing. As a member of the House of Commons Commission, I was reassured yesterday by the progress being made in making the parliamentary estate a covid-19 secure workplace. That work has been expertly led by Marianne Cwynarski, the head of governance and central services, and I particularly commend her for her efforts in ensuring that staff already coming in to work in the Palace have the support they need.

Only yesterday, Mr Speaker, you organised the test of a new system for Divisions that will ensure Members can vote while remaining 6 feet apart. We will minimise the number of other passholders on the estate, strongly encouraging MPs' staff and others to continue working from home. We will continue to work closely together in consultation with Members across the House, not least the Select Committee on Procedure, on the appropriate next steps.

We will need to understand from the House authorities where adaptations can be implemented, as the Procedure Committee itself acknowledges is key, without prejudice to the House's ability to carry out its business effectively. At the same time, we will want to ensure that any steps taken are in line with the Government's advice to the country at large.

I will consider the Procedure Committee's views very carefully and keep these issues under review, but I would finally like to reassure those Members with underlying health conditions who have been told to

shield or are receiving specific Government advice about their health that we are working with the House authorities to see how they can continue to contribute to proceedings within the House.

Mr Speaker: I will now call Alistair Carmichael, who is asked to speak for no more than two minutes.

Mr Carmichael: Thank you for allowing this urgent question, Mr Speaker. I do not want this debate today to be all about Members of Parliament. Let us remember what has brought us to this point. Yesterday, the number of recorded deaths from covid-19 reached 35,341—a rise of 545 from the day before. Today, the Government's response to that is to insist that Members of Parliament should undertake non-essential journeys—in my case, that is almost the entire length of this country—to stay in second homes. When that was done by leading Government advisers, it led to their resignation. If ever there was a case of do as I say and not as I do, then this is it.

None of us is blind to the inadequacies of online scrutiny. Like many Members I find it stilted and artificial, but if it is a choice between that, and putting the safety of Members, their families and the staff of the House at risk, that is no choice at all. This system should end only when it is safe to do so—and safe for all Members, not just those who live within driving distance of Westminster.

As trade union representatives explained to the Commission yesterday, the House of Commons is supported by approximately 3,000 employees. Is the Leader of the House really satisfied that we can bring MPs back from 2 June while discharging our duty of care towards those staff? How many staff will be able to return to work without risk to themselves or those with whom they live?

It is widely reported that the motivation for this over-hasty return is to get a support pack behind the Prime Minister on Wednesday afternoons. Today, it has even been reported that yesterday, the Leader of the House suggested to the Commons Commission that to get more MPs in, perspex screens should be installed between the Benches and between Members—someone has obviously told him how things are being done in Tesco these days. In recent weeks we have demonstrated that the business of this House can be done from behind a screen, as we do right now, but it is from behind a computer screen, not a screen of perspex, the only purpose of which would be to shield the Government from scrutiny and the Prime Minister from ridicule. The Leader of the House must think again.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The point made by the right hon. Gentleman about Prime Minister's questions is fundamentally trivial and beneath him, and therefore I shall ignore it. I am very sorry that he does not think that proper scrutiny of the Government is an essential task in a democracy. I think that is an extraordinary position for a former member of a Government, and a leading figure in the Liberal party—if it has leading figures—to take. Democratic accountability is fundamental to how our system works.

The right hon. Gentleman, from his eyrie in the Shetland Islands, tells us that a remote system does not work well enough. He then says that we should none the

[Mr Rees-Mogg]

less continue with it. As Members of Parliament, I think we have a duty to return to doing our work thoroughly, properly, and effectively, and that is what we will do, in line with Government advice and the five tests, and by ensuring a safe working environment. I reiterate my thanks to Marianne Cwynarski for what she has done. People working in the House, employees of the House, are able to work safely, and the numbers expected to come in are not thought likely to rise significantly when the House returns after Whitsun.

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): I thank the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael), and you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question. Last week the Leader of the House gave a fantastic performance about democracy and parliamentary sovereignty, but it was all style and no substance. If this was not so serious, I would have nominated him for a BAFTA.

We have had a joint Commission with the other place, and at a Commission meeting we had a briefing from Public Health England. Before his unilateral declaration that the Government will not renew the temporary hybrid proceedings, did the Leader of the House hold a discussion with Public Health England? What was its advice, and will he publish it?

May I correct the Leader of the House again? He keeps saying that if others are going to work, the Government expect us to go to work, but we are at work. We are at work at all times. The Government's own advice is that those who can work from home should do so—that is still the Government's advice, on grounds of working and travelling safely. Will he confirm that he is not contradicting Government advice, and will he say how Members are expected to travel down when there is a reduced service?

Everyone knows someone who has been a victim of this disease, including those who have not just suffered from it, but who have died. This is not a bounce-back virus, as the Prime Minister said; it is not about the survival of the fittest. We have a diverse workforce in our community here, which we encourage. What risk assessment has the Leader of the House asked to be made, to ensure that Members, and the extra House staff required for return, can return safely? Will he confirm that on returning to physical-only proceedings, proper social distancing measures will have been worked out and will be sustainable in the Chamber? What was the extra waiting time for voting at the practice voting?

This is not a battle of “Government good; everyone else bad”, or of “shirkers versus workers” as some Ministers have said. This is about Parliament about being a good model employer. We need a phased return, so as not to overpower the NHS or House staff, and where everyone can be safe.

Finally, can the Leader of the House confirm that the parliamentary estate is covid-free? Does he agree with the scientific advice that it is about observed levels of infection and not a fixed date?

Mr Rees-Mogg: Most of those questions were actually answered at the Commission meeting—the right hon. Lady is a member—that we had on Tuesday. Unfortunately, because of a dodgy connection, we could hardly hear

her during the proceedings of the Commission and perhaps she could not hear all the points that were made.

We had reassurance from the House authorities that, yes, this will be a covid-19-secure workplace by the time we come back after the Whitsun recess; that a risk assessment has been carried by the parliamentary authorities; and that enormous steps are being taken to help and to assist parliamentary staff. What is the House doing? Well, there is extra cleaning going on. The same mechanisms will be used to clean pads as are used on the London Underground to try and ensure there is safety there; the congestion charge is being paid for members of staff so that they can drive to work and the Abingdon car park is being made available. Considerable steps have been made by the House authorities, as the right hon. Lady knows, to ensure that it is safe to work here.

Is this in line with Government advice? Yes, of course it is. The key question for right hon. and hon. Members to ask themselves is: do they think that proper scrutiny and proper legislative processes are essential? If they are, we need to be here. If they are not, they can work remotely. It seems to me, unquestionably, that those proper processes are an essential part of our country functioning. Therefore, we cannot do our jobs properly from home and therefore that is in line with the Government's advice.

Selaine Saxby (North Devon) (Con) [V]: I would like to thank my right hon. Friend for the work being done to ensure that Parliament is a safe working environment for all. Does he agree that while we have had to improvise due to the unprecedented situation we find ourselves in, we cannot effectively do our jobs from home? We should lead by example when asking the country to return to work. We could improvise further in Westminster, for example by taking advantage of more of the space available to enable more of us to participate fully and safely.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The Government's advice is clear: work from home if you can. But what I and many others have increasingly realised is that this House cannot work effectively without meeting physically. Take last week for example: no debates on secondary legislation; no Public Bill Committees; no Delegated Legislation Committees. Compare that to a fairly standard and not particularly busy physical sitting week, such as the week commencing 2 March. That week the Commons considered the stages of four Bills instead of one and nine statutory instruments instead of none. In addition to Chamber time, the House held seven Delegated Legislation Committees and four Public Bill Committee sittings. I therefore very much welcome my hon. Friend's valuable point that MPs' work is absolutely essential and that we cannot do it from home.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP) [V]: The position taken by the Leader of the House is reckless, cavalier and downright dangerous. Surely it is his job to make sure that elected Members can represent the views of their constituents, yet he now proposes to force Members to make a choice between standing up for those who elected them and putting their own health and the health of others at risk. The Leader of the

House talks of an ancient right to enter Parliament, but what good is that right if it cannot be executed without endangering the lives of one's family and constituents? Switching off the computer and barring Members from participating online will reduce the ability of Members of Parliament to scrutinise the Government. It is simply Orwellian to pretend that it will enhance it. Moreover, this will not affect everyone equally. Those who are older and suffer ill health will be disproportionately affected, as will those who live farthest away. Has he undertaken an equalities assessment of this proposal, and does he think that removing the existing arrangements is compatible with the laws of equality of treatment of persons in the United Kingdom?

Mr Rees-Mogg: May I draw the hon. Gentleman's attention to the remarks I made some moments ago when I said that I would like to reassure those Members with underlying health conditions who have been told to shield or who are receiving specific Government advice about their health that we are working with the House authorities to see how they can continue to contribute to proceedings within the House? We recognise the importance of that, but we also recognise the need for business to continue. I understand that the Parliament in Holyrood is still meeting, although with a third of Members turning up and moving all over Scotland to get there, so I slightly think that what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab) [V]: If the Leader of the House thinks that this is safe, he is trying to kid everyone but he is fooling no one. This is about those Members of Parliament who have underlying health conditions, those over 70 who absolutely should not be going anywhere, those of us who have family members with underlying health conditions and those of our staff who face the same challenges. With so many Members with underlying health conditions, of that age or with family members who are at risk, how on earth can this possibly be right or democratic, and how can our constituents possibly be represented properly?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I think the issue is that members of staff of MPs do not need to come in. They clearly can carry on working from home. There is no change there, and numbers coming on to the estate will be limited. What I would say to the hon. Gentleman is that we are facing exactly the same issues as other workplaces where working from home is not good enough. These are not unique to us. We are in the same situation as the rest of the nation, and we should not think that Members of Parliament are some special priestly caste who must be treated differently. We should stand with our own constituents.

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con) [V]: I welcome the comments of the Leader of the House. It is clear to me that although the House authorities have done a fantastic job in seeing us through the last few weeks, this is not a sustainable way to run Parliament in the future. May I seek my right hon. Friend's reassurance that this model, which some people seem to think can be a model for the future, will not now be applied to projects such as restoration and renewal, which, in my view, would again create a situation in which Parliament simply could not function properly?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend, who has experience as a former Leader of the House and knows and understands how this place ought to work. The measures that we are using currently are a remarkable achievement by the House authorities in a very particular circumstance, and it is very unlikely that this way of operating would be suitable to other circumstances.

Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab) [V]: Just like our communities, this House is made up of people with a range of different situations who are following Government advice and Public Health England advice and shielding or self-isolating or who have childcare or elder care responsibilities arising from these unique covid circumstances, yet they are continuing to represent their constituents although they cannot be here in person. Will the Leader of the House tell us what arrangements will be in place to ensure that all Members can continue to take part fully in the work of Parliament, in person or virtually?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The point that the hon. Lady makes is a serious one, and it is being considered by my office and by the House more generally. Discussions will continue over Whitsun to try to work out how those people who are receiving specific medical advice or being instructed to shield may be helped to participate in proceedings once we return, and how the technology may work with regard to that, but the importance of the point is one that we understand.

Kate Griffiths (Burton) (Con) [V]: I welcome the commitment from the Leader of the House to ensure that those Members who are vulnerable will not be disadvantaged and will be able to continue to represent their constituents in the House. Can he confirm that these arrangements will also be available to Members who, like many working parents, rely on grandparents who might be in the vulnerable category to supplement their childcare and therefore cannot travel to Westminster at this time?

Mr Rees-Mogg: We are listening to the representations that people are making about the difficulties that they face with regard to attending the House. The Procedure Committee has looked at a number of these issues and written to you, Mr Speaker, about the return to physical proceedings, and I have had representations from a number of Members.

The reality is that Parliament is most effective when it meets physically. The hybrid parliamentary proceedings have allowed only a small proportion of Parliament's functionality to take place. As we have seen in this sitting, with Members being cut off, the hybrid proceedings have limited Members' ability to represent their constituencies across the country. What we will do is to return physically in a way that is advised, and properly orchestrated and organised, in accordance with the recommendations from the Government and, indeed, from the House of Commons authorities.

Mr Speaker: And Public Health England. I call Gavin Robinson.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP)[V]: I am grateful to be called in this urgent question. I am thankful to the Leader of the House, because I know that he recognises

[Gavin Robinson]

that we all have an equal duty to represent our constituents, but the travel to and from Westminster is not equal for us all. Indeed, taking a plane from Belfast is not as socially distant as we would like. I ask the Leader of the House to consider the issue that will be most vexatious and difficult to solve, which is voting. I ask him whether remote voting can continue, given that the ability to travel between Westminster and Northern Ireland is severely constrained, with less than two planes per day from Northern Ireland to London when ordinarily there would have been more than 20.

Mr Rees-Mogg: The issue with voting, as you have made clear, Mr Speaker, is that we can run one system or the other. The two systems are not compatible. We are looking to have a physical return of the House, and therefore to have physical voting. I think that is an important way of getting back to being a normal Parliament, with all the benefits that come from having physical voting.

Mr Speaker: We will now try to reconnect Karen Bradley, Chair of the Procedure Committee.

Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con) [V]: Thank you, Mr Speaker; I am audio only, I am afraid. I thank my right hon. Friend for his answer. I firmly believe, as Chair of the Procedure Committee, that the House should be allowed to have its say on these changes. It is important that an opportunity is provided for the House to do that.

Will the Leader of the House reflect on the resolution that the House passed on 21 April, which stays in place while Public Health England advice remains, and which allows for both virtual participation and parity of treatment for all Members? Is the Leader of the House intending to amend or rescind that resolution, or does he believe that it no longer applies?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I thank my right hon. Friend for the invaluable work that she and her Committee have been doing, and for the suggestions that they have made about how we can make the hybrid work and how we can get back to a real Parliament. We see in her absence the difficulties with a hybrid Parliament. I am glad that the technology was able to reconnect her, in voice only, but being here in the flesh does have advantages.

The motion of the House stands, but to allow it to be effective it requires subsidiary motions that will lapse. Of course, the Government take motions of the House very seriously and wish to ensure that their details are

reflected in the way the House operates, although sometimes these are matters more for Mr Speaker than for the Leader of the House.

Jo Gideon (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Con) [V]: I am pleased that the Leader of the House has announced that measures will be considered to protect MPs who have been shielding or carrying out caring responsibilities for vulnerable family members who are at high risk of coronavirus. Will we be advised on what the new measures will be before people decide whether they can come back early?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I will continue, as will others across the House, to listen to and reflect on the views of hon. and right hon. Members from across the House. Yesterday afternoon, the Procedure Committee wrote to me and the Speaker to set out its views on how we should return to physical proceedings. I welcomed the opportunity for further discussions with the Committee on Monday, and I am grateful for its work. I have also had representations from many other Members. This is a work in progress to finalise the details. Any changes in our procedures will need to be made by a motion in this House, and those cannot be made until the House meets again, so the assumption must be that we continue as we usually continue until such time as, or if, anything changes.

Mr Speaker: We will have to be very quick. Steven Bonnar—last question.

Steven Bonnar (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP) [V]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. Across Scotland, we are dissuading people from travelling large distances, for fear of spreading the virus further and overloading rural communities. Does the Leader of the House understand that there are real concerns, beyond threatening the safety of MPs, that by removing votes unless we are physically present and insisting we return to that place we will undoubtedly undermine the public safety message, which has been key to preventing covid from spreading even more widely in our communities?

Mr Rees-Mogg: What is being proposed for the House is completely in line with what is being proposed by the Government generally; it is a question of working through the five tests and of those who can go back to work, because they cannot work effectively from home, being encouraged to go back to work. We are in the same situation as everybody else. Measures are being taken, have been taken and will continue to be taken to ensure that coming to the House of Commons is as safe as it possibly can be.

Business of the House

Mr Speaker: I will now call the Leader of the House to make a business statement, which I will run until 1.20 pm.

12.56 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg): The business for the week commencing 1 June will include:

MONDAY 1 JUNE—The House will not be sitting.

TUESDAY 2 JUNE—Second reading of the Parliamentary Constituencies Bill.

WEDNESDAY 3 JUNE—Consideration of a business of the House motion, followed by all stages of the Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill.

THURSDAY 4 JUNE—Remaining stages of the Sentencing (Pre-consolidation Amendments) Bill [Lords], followed by debate on a motion relating to the EU's mandate for negotiating a new partnership with the UK.

FRIDAY 5 JUNE—The House will not be sitting.

12.57 pm

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for giving us the business statement. There we are, we are sitting up until Thursday with a hybrid, virtual Parliament, so it can be done. First, will he ensure that the Government make a statement on the guidance on people returning to work here safely on the first day back? The advice from the scientists is that lockdown should not be eased until track and trace is in place and that we should look at the observed levels of infection, not just at the fixed date. Does he agree that even the testing has not been got right and that the Government have extended it? Can he say whether there are enough home tests for the House and whether enough masks will be available? At this point, I, too, want to pay tribute to Marianne Cwynarski and everybody on the House staff, who have worked so hard to keep us safe.

Like us, following the Leader of the House's outburst last week, which came with no consultation, what our teachers want is a discussion and time to prepare. They have been given a confused message, because the British Medical Association has said that the children are not safe to go back. Let us remember that teachers have been at work looking after our children now—they have been looking after key workers' children—and they are the best people to say whether they are ready or not. The Government cannot compare this country to Denmark, because Denmark has not had as many deaths as we have had here. So what advice have the Government given teachers, particularly on the inflammatory disease affecting children? Given that a poll of almost 30,000 members of the NASUWT found that just 5% said that the schools were safe to return and 81% of parents said that they do not want to send their children back, may we have an urgent statement from the Education Secretary when we return on the evidence that it was safe for children to return? I say that given that a member of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies told the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee that the decision on schools was "political" and not based on science.

On Monday, we voted on the Second Reading of the immigration Bill, which contains swathes of Henry VIII powers. As the Leader of the House is a believer in parliamentary sovereignty and parliamentary democracy, does he think that is appropriate? Will he guarantee that Government time will be given to debate any statutory instruments that are prayed against by the Opposition? We clap our care workers into the NHS, but with this immigration Bill the Government are, in effect, clapping them out of the country.

A constituent of mine is the general manager of an SME—small and medium-sized enterprise—employing 65 people. Indirectly, they support the NHS, the Nightingale hospitals, manufacturing valuable items that people need quickly. They had a five-week wait, and their bank refused them a loan—just 20%—though they are a profitable company. They and many other businesses are struggling to find a way to stay open. If I forward details to the Leader of the House, will he take that up with the Chancellor, please?

Last week I asked about dentists. Will the right hon. Gentleman follow that up with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care? It was mentioned in the House on Monday, but we did not get a response. The regulatory body has been checking on personal protective equipment for dentists returning—again, small businesses hoping to help our country return to normal. There is an issue about their PPE. Will he ensure that major PPE companies fast-track the powered air-filtered PPE face masks particular to dentistry? We have not had an answer to that. Dentists could get back to work to protect our constituents, some of whom are having to pull out their own teeth.

I thank the Leader of the House for his response last week on Nazanin and Anoush. It was very helpful. Will he make sure that the Foreign Secretary ensures that all British citizens abroad are able to get consular visits and advice? No one is asking for a fanfare when the ambassador visits, but we want Nazanin, Anoush and Kylie to be visited. At this time, they deserve clemency, and the Leader of the House knows that this is an important day for them. I remind all hon. Members to light a candle for them all today.

Finally, Mr Speaker, it is National Epilepsy Week. I thank you for your statement on Mental Health Awareness Week, which was very helpful. Let us hope that we can all encourage everyone to look out for each other.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I completely endorse what the right hon. Lady said about Epilepsy Week and mental health: we do indeed need to look out for each other, particularly at a time of lockdown, when many people are suffering, and loneliness is a particular and difficult problem, especially for people who are shielding and must take particular care. That is obviously at the forefront of the Government's mind.

With regard to Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, consular work continues, but it is not always best to argue this on the Floor of the House, if the right hon. Lady will forgive me for not giving more details on this occasion.

To come to the more politically controversial issues, on the guidance for Members coming back, they know what the national guidance is—the guidance provided for people returning to work, on how they should try to come back to work, what the procedures are and how they should try to distance themselves socially.

[Mr Rees-Mogg]

Members who are already here will see in the House how much marking out has been done to help people to stick to the guidelines.

The work done with members of staff has been exemplary. It is reassuring to know that the numbers of House staff expected back with MPs returning after Whitsun is not expected to change significantly from the number currently coming in to facilitate the hybrid Parliament. The burden on our staff is not the burden; the burden is on us as Members of Parliament and therefore it is one that we should undertake, because we are like the rest of the country in these circumstances.

The right hon. Lady asked questions about schools and wants a statement from the Secretary of State for Education. He responded to an urgent question last week. I hope it is not indiscreet of me to say, but he was himself very keen to make a statement, although the scheduling did not allow for that. He is keen to report to Parliament, and to keep Parliament up to date. There is, however, a real issue with the widening attainment gap, with schools not being open. That is why it is important for schools to open—if they can—in accordance with the five tests that the Government have set out.

With regard to praying against SIs, most Henry VIII powers are subject to affirmative SIs, rather than negative SIs, and are therefore automatically subject to a process in the House. The general policy of the Government, however, as of many previous Governments, is that when SIs are prayed against by the official Opposition, usually, if it is a reasonable prayer, debating time will be found. That is an important constitutional matter, but it is also why we need a physical Parliament back because there would not be any time for praying against statutory instruments if we were not back. I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for making my argument about the essential need for Parliament's returning reasonably soon.

I am obviously sorry to hear about the difficulties that the right hon. Lady's constituent is facing. I would point out that £11.1 billion is being paid out in furlough money and £7.5 billion in loans backed to 80% by the Government. That is major support for industry, and I think the Chancellor has done a quite phenomenal amount in getting support to businesses, but I would happily take up the specific case with the right hon. Lady, and likewise for the dentists in her constituency. I cannot claim to be an expert on the type of PPE that she is referring to, but I am sure there are people in Government who are and who can get her a proper response.

Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con) [V]: During this lockdown, we have seen numerous cases of broadcast media interviewing people in a manner that suggests they are independent experts, whereas they are in fact partisan political activists. That, of course, culminated in the notorious "Panorama" programme last month, but there are many other examples. Can we therefore have a debate on the guidelines that broadcasters are meant to use in order to provide their viewers with an informed picture of what they are actually watching?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend makes an important point. I know that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has written to the BBC asking for an explanation of that "Panorama"

programme, which seemed to have Communists in the background giving advice on how the programme was structured. I did not realise there were any Communists left in this country, but the BBC managed to dredge them up. He is absolutely right to ask for a for a debate—*[Interruption.]* The right hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) heckles, Mr Speaker. It is so unlike her; she is normally so ladylike and does not heckle. I would say that yes, it is a free country, but the BBC is obliged to be impartial. It has charter obligations. The issue regarding debates is that when the House is back in real form, there will be more opportunity and more time for debates, which I hope will satisfy many hon. and right hon. Members.

Mr Speaker: We now go to the SNP spokesperson, who has up to two minutes.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP) [V]: Let me take up where I left off 25 minutes ago. I have still not had an answer on whether the Leader of the House believes his proposals for Parliament's return are compatible with the equalities legislation of the United Kingdom, and I would like him to comment on that matter. I also have two further points, Mr Speaker.

First, we are told that Public Health England will again inspect the building during recess and advise on whether and how business can be conducted safely. What happens if Public Health England says that that cannot happen? Do the Government then intend to override the public health advice given by their own agency? Would it not have been more sensible to make these decisions after rather than before determining whether they can be implemented safely, or is this a case of wishful thinking taking the place of evidence-based policy? If the advice is that the number of hon. Members must be restricted, on what basis will the Government determine who can attend and who cannot?

Finally, I turn to the question of remote voting. While everyone can see that online participation in debates is not ideal, although it is better than no participation at all, that is not the case with online voting. The process is simple and secure. This is not an abstract or theoretical question: the system is there. It works. Why on earth switch it off when there is no need to do so? It is accepted that voting cannot be the same as it used to be, with hon. Members crammed into Lobbies, queuing to give their name to a Clerk. I know that a physical vote has been trialled; indeed, I have seen the pictures, and I think once the public see how that is proposed, we will be in danger of exposing this Parliament to even greater ridicule. So why is the Leader prepared to go to any lengths, it seems, no matter how ridiculous, not to continue with the system that is already in place and that works?

Mr Rees-Mogg: The hon. Gentleman is, of course, a separatist, and he gives the game away when he refers to "even greater ridicule", because he does not wish this Parliament to be the Parliament of the United Kingdom. He wants to separate himself from it and therefore uses every opportunity to ridicule it, which I am not sure is entirely helpful or reflects the views of the majority of Members.

As regards remote voting, there was a very clear undertaking that it would be temporary. The consensus reached within the House to allow the hybrid Parliament was based on consent, on the basis of it being temporary.

If people want to make an argument for the longer term about remote voting, they are absolutely entitled to do so, and no doubt the Procedure Committee will look at it, but that is an argument for another day. I would be acting in bad faith if I did not deliver on the commitment to those who never wanted remote voting in the first place that it will stop at the point at which we return to a physical Parliament.

As regards how numbers will be kept down, there is a well tried and tested pairing system, and discussions are going on between the Whips. I expect that any Member who is concerned about coming here will not have to attend or will not be whipped to attend.

With regard to Public Health England, Mr Speaker, you and the spokesman for the Commission are probably better placed to answer these questions, but Public Health England has been involved in many discussions. The House authorities have liaised very closely with PHE throughout the whole process. That is why these markings are down on the floor. That is why, Mr Speaker, your plan for effectively a roll-call Division is being tested—it worked rather well yesterday—rather than using the Division Lobbies. That is on advice, which is being followed, and we are acting in line with other businesses that are planning to come back to work. Finally, as regards the hon. Gentleman's question on whether we are obeying the law, of course the House of Commons and Her Majesty's Government are obeying the law.

Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con) [V]: My right hon. Friend was undoubtedly correct in his answer to the shadow Leader of the House a moment ago when he said that the Government's support for employment, business and industry has been extraordinary and hugely impressive, especially the retail, leisure and hospitality industries. However, many companies that supply those industries are not covered by those provisions, which risks risking the future of those industries, because they are experiencing difficulties. Can we have a debate in Government time on the future of the UK hospitality and leisure industries and the companies that supply them?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful for my hon. Friend's reference to the support the Government have given. I really think that my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has managed to be stunningly innovative in providing support for businesses in a way that, historically, is not what Finance Ministers across the world manage to do. His achievement is of historic proportions, and I am grateful for what my hon. Friend said. As regards a debate in Government time on the hospitality industry, that is one of the great virtues of our coming back to a physical House—there will be more opportunity for debates, and we will have to see whether such a debate can be slotted in or will fit into any of the other discussions that will be taking place.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab) [V]: Welcome to a very warm and sunny Gateshead. I note from the Leader of the House's statement that a general debate on Thursday 4 June has been facilitated. The members of the Backbench Business Committee and applicant Back-Bench Members across the House will be disappointed to learn that there is no place for any Backbench business debates if the House returns in the first week of June. In particular,

there are many aspects of the Government's response to the coronavirus pandemic that Members across the House wish to see aired, with answers to concerns and questions gained from Ministers. Could the Leader of the House facilitate that as soon as possible? Could he confirm that, if we return on 2 June, Select Committees—one of which I sit on—will still be meeting virtually, so I will have to travel 300 miles to attend Select Committee meetings virtually from my office in Westminster?

Mr Rees-Mogg: If the hon. Gentleman's background is anything to go by, the sun is very bright in Gateshead—almost blindingly so. On the last point, the motion for Select Committees runs until 30 June and is then renewable at your discretion, Mr Speaker; that is therefore a matter for you, and it would be wrong of me to trespass on your prerogatives. [Interruption.] I am being heckled by Mr Speaker!

As regards the debate on 4 June and the motion put forward in relation to the European negotiations, there is a statutory obligation on the Government to provide time for that, so it is not like a Backbench business debate. However, I have a great deal of sympathy for what the hon. Gentleman says. I understand that there is a widespread demand for a wide range of Backbench business debates, as we see in these sessions every week, and once we get back to normal, there will be more opportunity to ensure that we get back to complete normal, rather than semi-normal.

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con) [V]: I thank the Leader of the House for the reassurances he has given on safety so that Parliament is able to return physically as soon as possible. Areas of the country such as Stoke-on-Trent, where we need to level up our economy, could be hit hard by the impacts of coronavirus, so may we please have a debate in Government time on continuing and redoubling the levelling up agenda, so that we see investment into areas that have historically missed out?

Mr Rees-Mogg: I am grateful for the points made by my hon. Friend from, I assume, his wonderful constituency, which I visited for a Conservative tea last year, when we were still able to move throughout the country. There is serious economic disruption as a result of coronavirus and, as the Office for Budget Responsibility has outlined, without the package of unprecedented measures, the impact would be much worse. Councils have been given £3.2 billion of extra money and there is a further £2.6 billion in deferred business rate payments coming from central Government, but I agree with my hon. Friend entirely that we have to think of ways in which to grow the economy of our whole nation. I encourage him to speak to the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, but I add once again that once we are back normally there will be the opportunity to have these important debates.

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab) [V]: Hull's proud status as a maritime city is at risk of being tarnished because of the damaging actions by P&O Ferries, which appears to be using the covid-19 crisis to replace UK seafarers with exploited Filipino workers who are paid much less and forced to work much longer hours, putting at risk the safety of everybody aboard the ferry. My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull East (Karl Turner) has raised this

[Emma Hardy]

issue before, and the situation is now even more urgent. May we please have a statement in the House from the maritime Minister on how the Government are going to protect UK seafarers' jobs?

Mr Rees-Mogg: This issue has indeed been raised in the House before and is something that the Government are aware of. I will take it up with the Department for Transport so that a fuller answer can be prepared for the hon. Lady.

Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con) [V]: I am sure the Leader of the House will have seen the sad news today of potentially thousands of redundancies at Rolls-Royce's Derby plant. In the light of the large amount of redundancies that might keep happening, will he be able to find time for a debate on how we can best support people to find new work after this crisis is over?

Mr Rees-Mogg: My hon. Friend raises a point that will affect many of us in many constituencies. As the Chancellor explained to the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, the effect of the coronavirus is of the greatest seriousness and depth, and the Government and Parliament will want to consider and debate very carefully how we recover from it. Of course, I reiterate that once we are back normally, there will be so much more time for debate.

Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP) [V]: May we have a statement on the importance of having a disability-inclusive covid-19 response? It is Mental Health Awareness Week, and a letter written to the Prime Minister by the all-party group on disability, which I chair, has been co-signed by 101 parliamentarians from both Houses. The letter advises that people with disabilities need additional support at this time. Many are lonely, anxious and isolated. This is an urgent matter that the House should address.

Mr Rees-Mogg: I absolutely accept that it is a very important issue and that support for people with disabilities is crucial. The Government have a good record of supporting people with disabilities over the past few years,

and that is something we will continue. The instance of covid-19 is a further reason to remember and to help people with disabilities.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con) [V]: May I appeal to the Government for a statement on the plight of people, many approaching retirement, with endowment mortgages that are due to mature in the middle of this covid crisis? Such a statement would give the Government the opportunity to urge companies such as the Prudential to extend the maturation date until normality returns and the yield enables people's mortgages to be cleared in the usual way.

Mr Rees-Mogg: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to refer to people with endowments and the difficulty that they face. Having spent a lifetime—before politics intervened—in financial services, I can say that there is never an obviously right time to redeem investments, so the difficulty would be the Government intervening and setting a new time and that time not necessarily being any better than the existing time. I think that my giving financial advice from the Dispatch Box would be singularly unwise, but I will take up his point with the Treasury.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: The Leader of the House has said that MPs being in Parliament will enable proper scrutiny. If that return to Parliament has to be physical, can he tell us what provision will be made for MPs and their staff who have childcare or caring responsibilities? I know that he is not a fan of the nanny state, but not all of us have nannies.

Mr Rees-Mogg: Not all have six children, either, which I am very lucky and fortunate to have. I absolutely understand, therefore, child caring responsibilities—all my children are quite young. The nursery in the House of Commons is open. Members of Parliament are key workers and therefore schools are available in England for their children. As regards MPs' staff, they do not need to come back to Parliament. Speaking for my own staff, they are working extremely well and extremely hard from home. This is the first time that I have ever had the opportunity to thank them publicly for the remarkable work that they do for my constituents in North East Somerset. I am sure that many feel the same about their parliamentary staff, and they do not need to come back to the parliamentary estate.

Northern Ireland Protocol: UK Approach

Mr Speaker: I will run this statement until 1.50 pm. I call Michael Gove, who should speak for no more than eight minutes.

1.21 pm

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): With permission, Mr Speaker, I will make a statement on the Government's approach to implementing the Northern Ireland protocol as part of the withdrawal agreement with the European Union.

The protocol exists to ensure that the progress that the people of Northern Ireland have made in the 22 years since the Belfast/Good Friday agreement is secured into the future. The Belfast agreement is built on the principle of consent. It was ratified by referendums in both Northern Ireland and Ireland, and the agreement is crystal clear that any change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom can come only if the majority in Northern Ireland consent to any change.

The vital importance of consent is recognised in the provision for any alignment in the protocol to be disapplied if Northern Ireland's political representatives conclude that it is no longer desirable. Embedding that recognition of consent in the protocol was intrinsic to its acceptance by the Government. Therefore, for the protocol to work, it must respect the needs of all Northern Ireland's people, respect the fact that Northern Ireland is an integral part of the customs territory of the UK, and respect the need to bear as lightly as possible on the everyday life of Northern Ireland.

Although there will be some new administrative requirements in the protocol, these electronic processes will be streamlined and simplified to the maximum extent. As the European Commissioner's own negotiator, Michel Barnier, has spelled out, the protocol's procedures must be as easy as possible and not too burdensome, in particular for smaller businesses. As is so often the case, but not always, Monsieur Barnier is right. The economy of Northern Ireland is heavily dependent on small and medium-sized enterprises. Subjecting traders to unnecessary and disproportionate burdens, particularly as we wrestle with the economic consequences of covid-19, would not serve the interests of the people of Northern Ireland, for whom the protocol was designed. The protocol text itself is explicit that implementation should impact as little as possible on the everyday life of communities.

In that context, it is important for us all to recall that the clear majority of Northern Ireland's trade is with the rest of the United Kingdom, so safeguarding the free flow of goods within the UK's internal market is of critical importance to Northern Ireland's economy and people.

Today, we are publishing a Command Paper that outlines how the protocol can be implemented in a way that would protect the interests of the people and the economy of Northern Ireland, ensure the effective working of the UK's internal market, and also provide appropriate protection for the EU single market, as well as upholding the rights of all Northern Ireland's citizens. Delivering on these proposals will require close working with the Northern Ireland Executive, underscoring once again the significance of the restoration of the Stormont

institutions in January. I would like to put on record my gratitude for the constructive approach that has been shown by Northern Ireland politicians, including by the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, as well as by hon. Members from across this House.

There are four steps we will take to ensure the protocol is implemented effectively. First, we will deliver unfettered access for NI producers to the whole of the UK market. Northern Ireland to Great Britain goods movements should take place as they do now. There should not be export declarations or any other processes as goods leave NI for GB, and we will deliver on unfettered access for Northern Ireland goods through legislation by the end of this year.

Secondly, we will ensure that there are no tariffs on goods remaining within the UK customs territory. In order to ensure that internal UK trade qualifies for tariff-free status, there will need to be declarations on goods as they move from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, but these systems will be electronic and administered by UK authorities. It will be for our authorities to determine any processes that are required, using the latest technology, risk and compliance techniques to keep these to an absolute minimum.

That will also allow us to deliver on our third key proposal, which is that implementation of the protocol will not involve new customs infrastructure. We acknowledge, however, as we have always done, that on agrifood and live animal movements, it makes sense to protect supply chains and the disease-free status of the island of Ireland, as has been the case since the 19th century. That will mean some expansion of existing infrastructure to provide for some additional new processes for the agriculture and food sector, but these processes will build on what already happens at ports such as Larne and Belfast, and we will work with the EU to keep these checks to a minimum, reflecting the high standards we see right across the UK. There is no such case, however, for new customs infrastructure, and as such there will not be any.

Fourthly, we will guarantee that Northern Ireland businesses will benefit from the lower tariffs that we deliver through new free trade agreements with third countries. This ensures that Northern Ireland businesses will be able to enjoy the full benefits of the unique access that they have to the UK and EU markets.

These four commitments will ensure that, as we implement the protocol, we give full effect to the requirements in its text to recognise Northern Ireland's place in the UK and in its customs territory. As we take the work of implementation forward, we will continue to work closely with the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister, with Northern Ireland MPs from across parties, and with the business community and farming groups that have provided such valuable feedback for our approach.

Of course, we have already guaranteed, in the "New Decade, New Approach" deal, that the Northern Ireland Executive have a seat at the table in any meeting where Northern Ireland is being discussed and the Irish Government are present. Alongside that, there will be a new business engagement forum to exchange proposals, concerns and feedback from across the community on how best to maximise the free flow of trade, and we will ensure that those discussions sit at the heart of our thinking.

[Michael Gove]

We recognise that there will be a wide range of voices and responses to our Command Paper. We will listen to these respectfully while we continue to put our own case with conviction at the Joint Committee. Our approach will of course continue to be informed by extensive engagement with businesses, politicians and individuals right across communities in Northern Ireland. We stand ready to work with the EU in a spirit of collaboration and co-operation so that a positive new chapter can open for Northern Ireland and its people in every community, and it is in that spirit that I commend this statement to the House.

Mr Speaker: I now call Rachel Reeves, who has four minutes.

1.27 pm

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): I thank the Minister for advance sight of his statement and the Command Paper.

During the election campaign, the Prime Minister told Northern Irish businesses that if they were asked to fill in any extra paperwork, they should call him personally and

“I will direct them to throw that form in the bin”.

On 22 January, when the Prime Minister was asked in this House whether that meant unfettered access between Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and Northern Ireland and Great Britain, he said: “Emphatically it does.” But today, for the first time, the Command Paper states that there will be “some new administrative requirements”.

Checks on animals and agrifood will be a significant escalation of what currently takes place and will mean a border management system that is quite new in terms of its scope and scale. The document published today states that we will need to

“expand some existing entry points...to provide for proportionate additional controls.”

Will the Minister confirm what proportion of animal and agrifood products he expects will require additional physical checks? Will those checks take place at ports in Northern Ireland? Physical checks require a product to be taken off the lorry, opened, inspected, tested and quarantined until deemed legitimate. That is quite a burden. Can the Minister confirm that there will be physical checks, or, indeed, that there definitely will not be physical checks?

The document published today states that

“some new administrative process for traders,”

including

“electronic import declaration requirements, and safety and security information, for goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK”

will apply.

This is no small matter. Import declarations can require 40 separate data points, and Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs has estimated that each declaration for shipment will cost between £14 and £56. Can the Minister confirm the number of checks and the costs of those checks to businesses? For the 1.8 million goods vehicles that crossed from Great Britain into Northern Ireland last year, that certainly adds up.

On tariffs, the Government have previously promised that there would be no tariffs on goods traded either way between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Indeed, they have said that there will be no tariffs, fees or charges or quantitative restrictions. But today, for the first time, the Government have accepted that there will be tariffs on goods entering Northern Ireland. The Command Paper says that

“goods ultimately entering Ireland...or at clear and substantial risk of doing so, will face tariffs.”

So can the Minister say who will be levying or administering those tariffs, what “clear risk” means, and who will define it? Could tariffs be applied and later reimbursed, and if so, what would the timetable for that be? The Command Paper says:

“We will produce full guidance to business and third parties before the end of the transition period.”

That does not give much time for businesses to prepare for what could be quite profound changes.

The Minister says that goods moving from Great Britain do not need to be checked because the majority will remain in the UK. This is a hugely important point. Indeed, 70% of goods that flow from Great Britain are destined for the high street. I hope that a way forward can be found so that those goods can move freely. However, the Command Paper accepts that

“some new administrative process for traders, notably new electronic import declaration requirements, and safety and security information, for goods entering Northern Ireland from the rest of the UK”

will apply. So can the Minister confirm that that will include rules of origin checks, safety and security checks and import declarations, and if so, where and how will those checks take place? There is no mention in the document published today of a trusted trader scheme, which is surely essential for ensuring the free flow of goods without tariffs from Great Britain into Northern Ireland that we all want to see.

We welcome this statement, but it does expose the broken promises made by the Prime Minister. Today, for the first time, there has been an admission that there will be additional checks and that there will be tariffs on goods at risk of entering the single market. Even now, many fear that the Government are not willing to admit the full extent of those. We have seven months to get this right, and we must.

Michael Gove: I am grateful for the welcome that the hon. Lady gives to the approach that we are taking, and grateful also for her commitment and her party’s commitment to supporting the implementation of the protocol in a way that safeguards the gains of the Good Friday agreement.

The hon. Lady says that as a result of the implementation of the protocol there will inevitably be checks on not just animals but agri-food products, but, as she is aware, those checks already exist for live animals. Checks are already carried out in the port of Larne and the port of Belfast. We will of course exercise any new checks on agri-food products in a proportionate way, but in doing so we imagine that the proportion of goods that will need to be checked will be very minimal. Of course, because of the very, very high standards that we will maintain in this country on SPS—sanitary and phytosanitary—matters, people can have absolute confidence that the quality of goods that are being placed on the Northern Ireland market is of the highest level.

The hon. Lady asked about the cost of the checks. We will be working with HMRC in order to ensure that the checks are as light-touch as possible and integrated, for example, into the operation of VAT returns and other processes with which businesses are already familiar. We are confident that Northern Ireland's businesses and HMRC can work collaboratively in the course of the remaining seven months before the transition period ends in order to have a system that is operational, light-touch, effective and unobtrusive.

The hon. Lady makes a point about tariffs. Of course, tariffs would apply only in the case of there being a zero-tariff, zero-quota free trade agreement with the European Union. The European Union is committed in the political declaration to securing such a zero-tariff, zero-quota arrangement, in which case the provisions in the protocol for the remittance of tariffs would not be required. I refer her to paragraph 27 of the Command Paper, which makes it clear that if it were the case that there were no agreement and that tariffs did have to be levied, the Government would

“make full use of the provisions in the Protocol giving us the powers to waive and/or reimburse tariffs on goods moving from Great Britain to Northern Ireland, even where they are classified as ‘at risk’ of entering the EU market.”

So there would be no additional costs for businesses.

The approach that we have taken, as the hon. Lady knows, is designed to ensure the maximum level of security for the businesses of Northern Ireland. If the protocol is implemented in line with our approach, that means that they will have unfettered access to the rest of the UK's internal market and also free access to the EU's single market. That is a great prize and one that I believe all businesses in Northern Ireland would want us to help them to grasp.

Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con) [V]: I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his statement. Will he confirm that, as from 1 January 2021, Northern Ireland—that is, a part of the United Kingdom—will be required to abide by EU regulations on certain goods until at least 2024 and potentially indefinitely?

Michael Gove: I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend for her question. Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to her for her work during her time as Prime Minister to ensure that the position of Northern Ireland could be secured within the United Kingdom even as we left the European Union. It is the case that there will be EU regulations and aspects of the *acquis* that will apply in Northern Ireland until 2024, but of course she draws attention to a very important point. If the workings of the protocol are viewed by the people and parties of Northern Ireland as onerous, too much, intrusive and unacceptable, they have the opportunity to vote them down in 2024. That is why it is so important that we design an approach that can continue to command consent.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call Pete Wishart, who has 90 seconds.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP) [V]: Ninety seconds? Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Today, we seem to be presented with another episode of Schrödinger's border—one that is both there and not quite there, all dependent on what side of the EU negotiations a person happens to be on. UK Ministers

have repeatedly said that there will be no border or any checks down the Irish Sea. We now know that that is not exactly the case, as we heard in the last response. From the very beginning, the possibility of that was crystal clear given what is in the withdrawal agreement and the need for a level playing field between the EU and Northern Ireland. We all know that there will be customs checks between the rest of the UK and Northern Ireland, so why do the UK Government not just acknowledge that fact? The EU has said that there must be the introduction of customs procedures and formalities in Northern Ireland for all goods traded between Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

There have been no discussions about this with the Scottish Government, even though we will be placed at a competitive disadvantage with Northern Ireland because of these arrangements. We would give our national right hand to have the arrangements and competitive advantage that Northern Ireland will have, so why can we not get some of this if Northern Ireland does not want it?

These negotiations need skill, guile and dexterity, and I think we have seen again today a Government who are singularly not up to it.

Michael Gove: Skill, guile and dexterity are all virtues that we associate with the hon. Gentleman, so if he wants to join the Government negotiation team, he would be more than welcome on board. The point about customs infrastructure and customs checks is a misunderstanding on his part. We want to ensure, as he recognises in his question, that the people and businesses of Northern Ireland have the opportunity to benefit both from their secure position within the United Kingdom and access to the EU market. Northern Ireland's history, its traditions and its geography put it in a unique position, but the proposal that we put forward today means that there is no need for new customs infrastructure and at the same time Northern Ireland stays within the customs territory of the United Kingdom. I know that the hon. Gentleman is an enthusiast for border posts and would want to have them not just at Belfast but at Berwick, but my own view is that our United Kingdom is better off without them.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con) [V]: If we are correct to presume that any paperwork will be digital, can my right hon. Friend assure me that there will be compatibility between the IT systems of HMRC and those of the European Union in order to ensure that that system can work swiftly and smoothly? He mentioned consultation in his statement. We have been hearing in the Select Committee inquiry on this important issue of precious little engagement with the business community by his Department. May I urge him to sharpen his pencil and engage with the community to ensure that it is understood and that his Department understands that most businesses are mostly focused on dealing with covid and trying to survive?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): We have very little time, so I would encourage right hon. and hon. Members to ask short questions and obviously the Minister to give short answers.

Michael Gove: We will of course work to make sure that IT systems are efficient and compatible and consult with business. In fact, my right hon. Friend the Secretary

[Michael Gove]

of State has a business roundtable this afternoon. Engagement with Northern Ireland's citizens and its many small and medium-sized enterprises is critical to making everything work.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab) [V]: We all hope there will be an exit agreement with the EU, but if there is not, how will the Government stop goods, such as cars made in the EU, which in those circumstances would attract a 10% tariff, from entering Great Britain tariff-free via Northern Ireland? The right hon. Gentleman has told the House that goods would have unfettered access moving from Northern Ireland to GB. Would there in fact have to be checks if people tried to do that?

Michael Gove: We will have market surveillance, and if people try to break the law, they will face the consequences.

Mr William Wragg (Hazel Grove) (Con) [V]: The way the UK and the EU seek to address "Ireland's unique geographic situation" in the negotiations could have constitutional and practical implications for Northern Ireland's status within the UK. Could my right hon. Friend reassure me that he can square that circle, or is it, on the current trajectory of the talks, an impossible objective?

Michael Gove: That circle can be squared using an exercise of what I believe in the EU is known as variable geometry. The truth of course is that Northern Ireland's position within the UK is constitutionally secure and unchanged.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP) [V]: The Minister will be aware that we voted against the withdrawal agreement because of the Northern Ireland protocol, but we welcome the clarity that this statement brings—that Northern Ireland will remain part of the UK customs territory, that there will be no new customs infrastructure, that there will be no tariffs on goods flowing between Great Britain and Northern Ireland and that Northern Ireland businesses will have unfettered access to the Great Britain market. Will the Minister and his team continue to work with us and the business community in Northern Ireland to ensure that these matters are taken forward and that Northern Ireland remains an integral part of the UK single market?

Michael Gove: Yes, we absolutely will. Our whole approach is about making sure that the protocol, which of course was unwelcome in many quarters in Northern Ireland, is implemented now that it is law, but in a way that goes with the grain of Northern Ireland opinion and reflects the interests of Northern Ireland's peoples, whom the right hon. Gentleman so eloquently defends.

Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con) [V]: I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement confirming Northern Ireland's continued position as an integral part of the United Kingdom and customs territory and that he will deliver on the apparently contradictory demands of the protocol, which requires that the single market be respected and its integrity not damaged. The Alternative Arrangements Commission came up with very sensible

suggestions that would conform with these requirements and square the circle through the use of enhanced authorised economic operators. Will he work with leading companies that ship goods across the Irish sea in both directions to set up trials in the next few weeks so that by the autumn, whether we have a free trade agreement or not, we are in a position to present the EU with a practical solution to ensure continued unfettered trade across the Irish sea in both directions?

Michael Gove: My right hon. Friend, who was a brilliant Northern Ireland Secretary as well as a brilliant Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, is absolutely right. Building up the capacity of authorised economic operators and other trusted traders can make the protocol and the economy of Northern Ireland work better.

Claire Hanna (Belfast South) (SDLP) [V]: The Minister has finally confirmed that there will be a large increase in the amount of red tape and therefore the costs to consumers and businesses in Northern Ireland. Although I welcome latterly from the Minister language around commitment to the Good Friday agreement, I do not believe the rhetoric in the statement reflects the uniqueness of the place. Does he accept that every divergence and further political choice that his Government choose to make in pursuit of castles in the air—trade deals with the United States—increase the checks required in the Irish sea and that the only way to ensure that there is no fettering and barriers to trade is to soften Brexit?

Michael Gove: No, I do not accept that. The primacy of the interests of Northern Ireland's businesses and indeed the primacy of Northern Ireland's people is at the heart of our approach to implementing the protocol. The Good Friday agreement depends on consent across Northern Ireland, from Unionist, from nationalist and from non-aligned individuals. We want to ensure that their interests come first through the light-touch approach that we propose.

Julian Smith (Skipton and Ripon) (Con): I welcome the Command Paper, but we now, as my right hon. Friend has said, need quickly to reassure the Unionist grassroots on their fears about the exact nature of the processes referred to, and nationalist and non-aligned voters who have serious concerns about leaving the EU. Above all, on business, I am not sure that we have got seven months. Businesses in Northern Ireland, as in the rest of the UK, have got their backs against the wall with covid. Please, please will my right hon. Friend use all his energy to work with them on exactly what they will need and a constructive approach with the EU to getting a practical solution?

Michael Gove: Yes. I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend—we would not have been able to make progress in this way if it had not been for him and the "New Decade, New Approach" document, which he was responsible for bringing to life in the Northern Ireland Executive, which he helped restore. He is absolutely right: we have got to get cracking. That is why I hope that we will have positive engagement from the EU as well as the positive engagement that we will have with Northern Ireland's businesses.

Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP) [V]: Last November, the Prime Minister told Northern Irish business leaders that there would be no forms, no checks, no barriers of any kind. He said that he would recommend that any such forms be put in the bin. Of course, the Secretary of State's paper today does refer to new administrative processes and acknowledges the potential for them to be disproportionately burdensome. Does he therefore appreciate that the need for clarity on what the Government actually mean and how it might be implemented is yet another reason why we must have an extension to the transition period?

Michael Gove: I do not think we need an extension to make the processes work. We just need good will on all sides.

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con) [V]: The arrangements that my right hon. Friend has described are potentially good news for businesses and consumers in Northern Ireland and a great opportunity but may I press him on what he describes as very minimal checks? Does he mean the 4% of imports that are currently checked coming into the United Kingdom and the 1% that are physically checked? Does he mean more or less than that? Clearly, the European Union thinks that substantial checks will be required, presumably exceeding those levels, because it is setting up a bureaucracy in Belfast to cope with it.

Michael Gove: My right hon. Friend makes a very good point about the number of checks that are currently required as goods move into the United Kingdom, often from jurisdictions that do not have such high SPS standards as we uphold. We will continue to have high SPS standards, so the proportion of physical checks required is almost certain to be fewer than are currently required for goods coming from outside.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP) [V]: The withdrawal agreement and its separate arrangements for Northern Ireland will always be offensive to Unionists, regardless of what allowances the Government try to make. Will the right hon. Gentleman give us an assurance that at least any of these arrangements will be totally in the control of the UK Government and not the EU, and that the Government will resist all attempts by the EU and the European Court of Justice to dictate how business regulations and human rights laws should be applied in Northern Ireland?

Michael Gove: The right hon. Gentleman makes a very good point. It is the case that it is for the UK Government to be responsible for the application and delivery of the protocol. We are one customs territory; we are one United Kingdom; and it is in that spirit that we have said to the EU that we do not think it is a good idea for it to establish a new mission in Belfast because, again, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, that would be seen by many in Northern Ireland as unnecessary and not in keeping with the spirit of the Belfast agreement.

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): When I was in business in the 1990s, exporting all over the world, I just wanted to know what the rules were, then I would comply with them and then sell my goods. Could the Secretary of State assure the House that the rules will

be made available to businesses in Northern Ireland at the earliest possible opportunity? Then they will get on with doing business.

Michael Gove: Yes, we will apply a principle that I know my hon. Friend will recognise, which is KISS—keep it simple, sonny.

Wendy Chamberlain (North East Fife) (LD) [V]: Twice this year, I have come to Northern Ireland oral questions and asked both the Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the same question: will there be checks? Twice I was told no, but now the Minister today is saying, yes, there will be checks in some form. Will his colleagues come to the House to correct the record and also to detail their assessment of the financial impact such checks are likely to have on the Northern Ireland economy?

Michael Gove: There will not be any customs infrastructure and there will not, save in the specific example of agrifoods and products of animal origin, be the requirement for physical checks of the kind about which I believe the hon. Member has expressed concern. It will be the case that we will implement these principles in a way that has the lightest possible touch, so that Northern Ireland's businesses—wrestling with covid-19—have the brightest possible future.

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab) [V]: The Prime Minister's advice to Northern Ireland when he last visited was to throw any border forms "in the bin". Does this remain the Government's advice, and does this apply in a no-deal Brexit scenario?

Michael Gove: The whole point of the protocol is that it is part of the withdrawal agreement. We cannot have a no-deal scenario because the withdrawal agreement is a deal. However, in a spirit of generosity, I know what the hon. Member means: if we have an Australian-style trading relationship rather than a Canadian-style one, will the protocol apply? The protocol exists for just such an eventuality. As for bins, there will be no need for forms, because it will all be done electronically.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP) [V]: I welcome the insertion of "substantial" to the test of whether goods are at risk of further transit into the European Union. Will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster indicate how realistic he thinks it is that the Commission will agree to that insertion, and will he give us a progress report on the pragmatic development of what is considered to be a good at risk of further transit?

Michael Gove: The hon. Gentleman knows that the majority of Northern Ireland's trade is with the UK, a smaller proportion is with the Republic of Ireland and the amount of produce that goes from GB, through NI and into Ireland is very, very small, so we are taking a risk-based approach. We are saying to the European Commission, "We know that you want to safeguard the gains that Northern Ireland has made in the last 22 years, and one of the best ways to do that is to recognise that, in the same way as Chairman Mao said that the kingdom of heaven was upheld by both men and women, so the Belfast agreement depends on the support of both nationalists and Unionists."

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the interests of Northern Ireland will always be as important as those of the rest of the United Kingdom?

Michael Gove: Yes. I think it was Margaret Thatcher who said that Northern Ireland was “as British as Finchley”, and that has always been my view. It is of course the case that the Belfast agreement recognises the particular history, traditions, geography and conflict that has existed in Northern Ireland, but the people of Northern Ireland have decided and voted consistently to remain part of the United Kingdom, and I celebrate that.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): That concludes scrutiny proceedings. I suspend the House for five minutes—until 1.58 pm.

1.53 pm

Sitting suspended.

1.58 pm

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

BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN UNION WITHDRAWAL (IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Sir Edward Davey presented a Bill to require Her Majesty’s Government to seek a two-year extension of the implementation period under Article 132 of the Withdrawal Agreement; to repeal the prohibition on agreeing to such an extension under section 33 of the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Act 2020; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on 12 June 2020, and to be printed (Bill 130).

Business of the House

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): We come now to the motion on business of the House. Mr Speaker has not selected the amendment in the name of the shadow Leader of the House. The reference in the motion to the statement that has already taken place is superseded, but this does not affect the remainder of the timings. This item of business is debatable. My provisional determination is that there will be a remote Division on the motion. I propose to call only the Leader of the House to move the motion, the shadow Leader of the House, the Chair of the Procedure Committee and the Scottish National party spokesperson. I will ask each of them to speak for no more than two minutes. I call the Leader of the House to move the motion.

Motion made,

That—

(1) The following arrangements shall apply to today’s business:

Business	Timings	Remote division designation
Statement: The UK’s approach to the Northern Ireland Protocol	30 minutes from the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order	None
Corporate Insolvency and Governance Bill	No debate (Standing Order No. 57)	None
Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Bill	No debate (Standing Order No. 57)	None
Trade Bill: Second Reading	Up to two hours and 15 minutes from the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order; suspension; up to three hours and 30 minutes from the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order	Remote division
Trade Bill: Programme	No debate (Standing Order No. 83A(7))	Remote division
Trade Bill: Money	No debate (Standing Order No. 52(1)(a))	Remote division
Liaison (Membership)	Up to four hours and 30 minutes from the commencement of proceedings on the Motion for this Order	Remote division

At the conclusion of each debate, the Speaker shall put the Question on each of the motions on the Order Paper relating to the business listed in the table for that debate.—(*Mr Rees-Mogg.*)

1.59 pm

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I thought you were going to offer me the Leader of the House’s two minutes.

The coronavirus crisis has created unique challenges for this House and how it conducts its business, and the House has risen to those challenges. To manage the way the House works, we have come together, and all three parties have approved Business of the House motions, as happened on every previous occasion. That consensus allowed the business of the House to continue smoothly, yet for some reason the Government now seem to be hell-bent on breaking that consensus, bringing the hybrid virtual Parliament to an end by any means. The Government are preventing the House from having the opportunity to debate the continuation of the hybrid virtual Parliament, and remote voting procedures. Instead, they are unilaterally deciding to let the orders that cover the virtual Parliament expire without debate.

Will the Leader of the House explain why the Government are so unwilling to let the House express a view on the continuation of the hybrid virtual Parliament? Does he recognise that there is no evidence from Public Health England that it is safe to return to Parliament in the numbers that the Government intend? How will social distancing be maintained in the Chamber? Will he confirm reports in *The Times* today that he is keen to install perspex boxes in the Chamber to double the number of Conservative MPs behind the Prime Minister during Prime Minister's questions, harnessing Churchill who said that there must be

“a sense of crowd and urgency”—[*Official Report*, 28 October 1943; Vol. 393, c. 404.]

in the Chamber? How long does the Leader of the House estimate that a socially distant division will take? Is it true that it will take longer than the remote voting system we currently use?

We are not back to normal—only on Monday, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care added a new symptom to the list. This House has a duty to lead by example, and the Government's advice is that those who can work from home should do so. Parliament has developed a successful system to ensure scrutiny of the Government and the passing of legislation, while working remotely and keeping people safe in the middle of a pandemic. The Government have not provided an honest explanation for why they want to end the hybrid virtual Parliament. They are determined not to allow Parliament to register its dissatisfaction with the Government's decision, but simply to let hybrid proceedings expire without consulting the House.

The House has a right and a duty to decide proceedings after a debate and a vote, just as we did on 21 April. The Government should follow their own advice and retain the hybrid Parliament, and remote voting, until such time as there are robust safeguards in place, backed by medical evidence, and in consultation with Opposition parties and the House authorities, and with assurances that everyone on the estate can be safe.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call Karen Bradley, Chair of the Procedure Committee, who I think is audio only. You have no more than two minutes.

Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con) [V]: I am afraid I am audio only, having had a broadband failure. I will not repeat much of what has already been said, but as Chair of the Procedure Committee, I ask the Government to take great care in reviewing the Committee's recommendations. We have written to the Speaker, and

we will produce a short report on this matter, and ask the Government to consider it. As I said during the urgent question, this is a matter for the House. The House must be in agreement with the way that it conducts business. You, Madam Deputy Speaker, and Mr Speaker are servants of the House, and we must do what the House asks us to do. I ask the Leader of the House to please reflect on that.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call Tommy Sheppard to speak for no more than two minutes.

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP) [V]: I wish to endorse and amplify the comments of the shadow Leader of the House. This is undoubtedly the greatest crisis that our world has faced in our lifetimes, and we know that the threat to our health, our society, and our economy is unprecedented. That is why Opposition Members have refused to make political capital out of the Government's handling of the crisis, and we have sought to achieve consensus wherever we can.

Nowhere has that been more apparent than in discussions about how Parliament itself should operate. We have worked cross-party to make things work as best we can, using technology to allow remote participation—until now. I object to this agenda, because there is nothing on it to extend or modify these procedures—nothing at all. They are simply to be scrapped.

The Government seem determined to force things back to the way they used to be. They cannot and will not answer myriad questions. Can Parliament come back safely? What about Members who are sick or vulnerable? How will numbers be limited? Should we ignore public health advice? Most of all, what essential functions cannot be undertaken remotely? Those questions should be answered before remote engagement is scrapped, not after.

Unable to get us to agree, the Government have thrown their toys out of the pram. This is bizarre behaviour. It would be daft in normal times, but it seems absurd in the midst of a public health emergency, especially as none of us knows what might happen in the next two weeks. My question to the Leader of the House, to which I hope he will respond, is this: will he give an assurance to Opposition parties that he will consult and seek to agree how Parliament should operate after the recess, and will he be prepared to revise his current opinion that all remote working should be abandoned if it can be demonstrated that a solely physical meeting of Parliament presents unacceptable risks to Members' staff and the public?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): 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”. The question is, as on the Order Paper. The Question falls to be decided by a remote Division. The Clerk will now initiate the Division on MemberHub. The remote voting period is now open. Members are invited to record their votes using the remote voting system. They will have 15 minutes to record their votes. I will make an announcement when the remote voting period has ended.

Question put.

The House proceeded to a remote Division.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The remote voting period has now finished. I will announce the result of the Division shortly. I shall suspend the House for five minutes, until 2.26 pm, and will announce the result when the House resumes.

2.21 pm

Sitting suspended.

On resuming—

2.26 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I can now announce the result of the remote division that has just taken place.

Question put,

That the Business of the House (20 May) motion be agreed to.

The House divided: Ayes 350, Noes 258.

Division No. 47]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Ahmad Khan, Imran
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
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 (*Proxy vote cast by Eddie Hughes*)
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
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
Brady, Sir Graham
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona

Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Robert
Burghart, Alex
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Cates, Miriam
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
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
Crabb, rh Stephen
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
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
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
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
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
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
Girvan, Paul
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
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
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
Jenrick, rh Robert
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
Lockhart, Carla
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopresti, Jack
Lord, Mr Jonathan
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
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
Metcalf, Stephen
Millar, Robin
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
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
 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
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 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
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 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
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana

Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bonnar, Steven
 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
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 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
 Doogan, Dave
 Dorans, Allan
 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
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glendon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil

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
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian

Miliband, rh Edward	Sheppard, Tommy
Mishra, Navendu	Siddiq, Tulip
Monaghan, Carol	Slaughter, Andy
Moran, Layla	Smith, Alyn
Morden, Jessica	Smith, Cat
Morgan, Mr Stephen	Smith, Jeff
Morris, Grahame	Smith, Nick
Murray, Ian	Smyth, Karin
Murray, James	Sobel, Alex
Nandy, Lisa	Spellar, rh John
Newlands, Gavin	Starmer, rh Keir
Nichols, Charlotte	Stephens, Chris
Nicolson, John	Stevens, Jo
Norris, Alex	Stone, Jamie
O'Hara, Brendan	Streeting, Wes
Olney, Sarah	Stringer, Graham
Onwurah, Chi	Sultana, Zarah
Oppong-Asare, Abena	Tami, rh Mark
Osamor, Kate	Tarry, Sam
Osborne, Kate	Thewliss, Alison
Oswald, Kirsten	Thomas, Gareth
Owatemi, Taiwo	Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Owen, Sarah (<i>Proxy vote cast by Kate Osamor</i>)	Thompson, Owen
Peacock, Stephanie	Thomson, Richard
Pennycook, Matthew	Thornberry, rh Emily
Perkins, Mr Toby	Timms, rh Stephen
Phillips, Jess	Trickett, Jon
Phillipson, Bridget	Turner, Karl
Powell, Lucy	Twigg, Derek
Qureshi, Yasmin	Twist, Liz
Rayner, Angela	Vaz, rh Valerie
Reed, Steve	Webbe, Claudia
Rees, Christina	West, Catherine
Reeves, Ellie	Western, Matt
Reeves, Rachel	Whitehead, Dr Alan
Reynolds, Jonathan	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell	Whitley, Mick
Rimmer, Ms Marie	Whittome, Nadia
Rodda, Matt	Williams, Hywel
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd	Wilson, Munira
Saville Roberts, rh Liz	Winter, Beth
Shah, Naz	Wishart, Pete
Sharma, Mr Virendra	Yasin, Mohammad
Sheerman, Mr Barry	Zeichner, Daniel

Question accordingly agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker: Four further items of business today are designated for remote Division. My provisional determination is that remote Divisions will take place on the Second Reading of the Trade Bill, a reasoned amendment, if selected, and an amendment selected to the motion on the Liaison Committee. The provisional determination is that the following will not be the subject of a remote Division: the programme and money motions for the Trade Bill and the main motion on the Liaison Committee.

BILLS PRESENTED

CORPORATE INSOLVENCY AND GOVERNANCE BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Secretary Alok Sharma, supported by The Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Elizabeth Truss, Secretary Thérèse Coffey, Secretary George Eustice, Secretary Robert Jenrick, Secretary Grant Shapps, Secretary Brandon Lewis, Secretary Alister Jack, Secretary Oliver Dowden and John Glen, presented a Bill to make provision about companies and other entities in financial difficulty; and to make temporary changes to the law relating to the governance and regulation of companies and other entities.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time 2 June 2020, and to be printed (Bill 128) with explanatory notes (Bill 128-EN).

COUNTER-TERRORISM AND SENTENCING BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Secretary Robert Buckland, supported by The Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Priti Patel, Secretary Ben Wallace, the Attorney General, James Brokenshire, Lucy Frazer, Kit Malthouse, Alex Chalk and Chris Philp, presented a Bill to make provision about the sentencing of offenders convicted of terrorism offences, of offences with a terrorist connection or of certain other offences; to make other provision in relation to terrorism; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time 2 June 2020, and to be printed (Bill 129) with explanatory notes (Bill 129-EN).

Trade Bill

Second Reading

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I must inform the House that Mr Speaker has selected the reasoned amendment in the name of Keir Starmer. I call Secretary Elizabeth Truss to move the Second Reading. The Secretary of State is asked to speak for no more than 15 minutes.

2.28 pm

The Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Coronavirus is the biggest threat this country has faced in decades. All over the world we see its devastating impact. We will do whatever it takes to support United Kingdom businesses to continue trading, with our network of 350 advisers across the country and trade commissioners across the world.

This crisis highlights just how important it is to keep trade flowing and supply chains open, so that we can all have the essential supplies we need. It is free and open trade that has ensured that we have food on our table and access to vital personal protective equipment and medication. At meetings with my fellow G20 Trade Ministers, I have continually called for a united global response, tariff cuts on key supplies and reform of the World Trade Organisation. Although it is unfortunate that some countries have resorted to protectionism, many have sought to liberalise in the face of this crisis. In particular, I have been working with colleagues such as Australia, New Zealand and Singapore to highlight the importance of keeping trade flowing.

Free trade and resilient supply chains will be crucial to the global economic recovery as the crisis passes. Time after time, history has shown us that free trade makes us more prosperous, while protectionism results only in poverty, especially for the worst off. Britain has a proud history as a global leader and advocate of free trade. The bold and principled decision of Sir Robert Peel to take on the power of the wealthy producers and repeal the corn laws in 1846 ushered in an unprecedented era of free trade that saw ordinary people in Britain benefit from more varied and cheaper food, helping to grow our cities and power forward the world's first industrial revolution.

I see a real opportunity again for industrial areas across Britain as we become an independent trading nation. By cutting tariffs and reducing export red tape, our great British businesses will be able to sell more goods around the world. British steel, ceramics and textiles are some of the world's best, but all too often they are subject to high tariffs and barriers. Those industries are already looking forward to the opportunities that future trade deals will bring.

The US imposes tariffs of 25% on steel; removing them would boost our domestic industries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Scunthorpe (Holly Mumby-Croft) knows, that will particularly benefit areas such as Yorkshire and the Humber, which account for more than a third of our iron and steel exports to the United States. Indeed, just this week UK Steel said:

"A new UK/US Free Trade Agreement would provide a significant boost to our trade to this high-value market, create a global-competitive advantage for UK steel producers, and open up valuable new market opportunities."

Our farmers and food producers stand to gain from a trade deal with the US. The US is the world's second largest importer of lamb, but current restrictions mean that British producers are kept out. We can also grow, for example, our malting barley exports from Scotland and the east of England.

The tech trade will benefit from a US free trade agreement through cutting-edge provisions on digital and data. Telecoms and tech have more than doubled in the past decade, and an ambitious FTA could see those exports grow further.

While free trade provides opportunities, protectionism would harm farmers, tech entrepreneurs and steel manufacturers. We have already seen this before: in 1930, the Smoot-Hawley Act raised US tariffs on more than 20,000 imported goods, resulting in retaliation from other nations and the deepening and prolonging of the depression. As President Reagan said in 1985:

"Protectionism almost always ends up making the protected industry weaker and less able to compete against foreign imports... Instead of protectionism, we should call it destructionism. It destroys jobs, weakens our industries, harms exports, costs billions of dollars to consumers, and damages our overall economy."

We have a golden opportunity to make sure that our recovery is export led and high value—a recovery that will see our industrial heartlands create more high-quality and high-paying jobs across all sectors. Free trade does not just benefit us here in Britain; it benefits the world. Since the end of the cold war, free trade has lifted a billion people out of extreme poverty. For want of a better word, free trade is good. It is those benefits that underpin our Government's approach: free and fair trade fit for the modern world.

Let me turn to the contents of the Bill. We can have fair trade only if it is free trade. The Bill will embed market access for British companies by enabling the UK to join the WTO's Government procurement agreement as an independent member. This will provide businesses with continued access to the extraordinary opportunities of the global procurement market, worth some £1.3 trillion a year. The GPA is an agreement between 20 parties that mutually opens up Government procurement. We have already seen in the UK the way that competition drives up quality while keeping prices low. The GPA keeps suppliers competitive and provides them with opportunities overseas. It is a driver of growth, not a threat to our economy. The idea that we can, or even should, do everything domestically is not desirable or practical in this increasingly interconnected world. Instead, we should be making sure that we have resilient supply chains through a more diverse range of partners. We will be an international champion for free and fair competition in the coming months and years through our discussions at the WTO, the G20 and bilaterally. We will urge other countries not to heed that false, but enticing, call for protectionism.

Let me be clear to the House: the GPA sets out rules for how public procurement covered by the agreement is carried out. As an independent member, we are free to decide what procurement is covered under the agreement. The UK's GPA coverage does not and will not apply to the procurement of UK health services. Our NHS is not on the table.

We are also committed to continuing our trade with existing partners that have agreements through the EU, such as South Korea and Chile. To date, we have signed

[Elizabeth Truss]

20 such trade agreements representing 48 countries, and others are still under negotiation. This accounts for £110 billion of UK trade in 2018, which represents 74% of continuity trade. People said that we would not be able to roll over these agreements—well, they were wrong, and we will be signing more in the coming months. This work is part of securing the Government's aim to have 80% of UK trade covered by free trade agreements in the next three years.

We are also looking to new partners. Negotiations with the US and Japan are kicking off. We are prioritising signing FTAs with Australia and New Zealand and accession to the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-Pacific partnership, otherwise known as the CPTPP. With the UK global tariff now published, there will be an increased incentive for other countries to come to the table to maintain or improve upon their preferential terms and conditions. Fundamentally, free trade is humanitarian and we will maintain preferential margins for developing countries, helping businesses lift millions out of poverty. As a Government, we have committed to going further than the EU has in terms of trade for development, and we are looking at reducing or removing tariffs where the UK does not produce goods and getting rid of cliff edges in current tariff schedules.

That brings me to the second part of our approach: fair trade. The Bill will help establish the independent trade remedies authority, which will help protect British businesses against injury caused by unfair trading practices such as dumping or subsidy, or unforeseen import surges. I tell the House that while free trade has no stauncher friend than this Government, unfair trading practices that hold back British businesses will have no worse enemy. We will fight against state-owned enterprises that use public money to subsidise their goods and Governments who support the lobbying of these under-priced products into the UK market.

Excellent UK industries such as ceramics and steel—represented ably by my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon), for Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis), for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton), for Redcar (Jacob Young) and for Scunthorpe—should not face unfair trade. The TRA will be responsible for investigating claims of unfair trading practices based on the evidence available. It will then make impartial representations to Ministers.

The TRA's impartiality is vital. Decisions on trade remedies cases can have a material impact on business and financial markets. This Bill will allow us to create an independent body to carry out objective investigations in which businesses can have full confidence. In developing our own trade policy for the first time in almost 50 years, we will use technology to ensure that our trade agreements are fit for the modern world. Therefore, this Bill will give the Government powers to collect and share the trade data that will help our independent trade policy. This will make it easier for our trade policy to reflect the interests of businesses across the UK.

Let me assure the House that this Bill is a continuity Bill. It cannot be used to implement any trade agreement between the UK and the EU itself, nor can it be used to

implement an agreement with a country that did not have a trade agreement with the EU before exit day, such as the United States of America. The Bill can be used only to transition the 40 free trade agreements that the EU had signed with third countries by exit day, and these powers are subject to a five-year sunset clause to ensure that we can maintain the operability of transitioned agreements beyond the end of the transition period. Any extension of this five-year period will require explicit consent of both this House and the other place.

We face a period of unprecedented economic challenge. It is vital that we do not just maintain the current global trading system, but make it better. That means diversifying our trade and supporting those businesses that export. Exports, be they software or steel, cars or ceramics, barley or beef, will underpin our recovery. This Bill will ensure continued access to existing markets by letting us implement trade agreements with partner countries that previously applied under the EU. It will secure continued access for UK businesses to the £1.3 trillion global public procurement market. It establishes the independent body in the Trade Remedies Authority to give our great British businesses the protection they need from unfair trade practices. Trade will be fair as well as free. By adopting a cutting-edge digital first approach, we will be able to give businesses the best possible support.

As we recover from the economic shock of the coronavirus crisis, providing certainty and predictability in our trading arrangements will be vital to securing the interests of businesses and consumers. We will unleash the potential and level up every region and nation of our United Kingdom. Now is the time for this House to speak out against protectionism. It is time for us to embrace the opportunities that free trade and an export-led recovery will bring. I commend this Bill to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I now call the shadow Secretary of State, Emily Thornberry, to move her reasoned amendment, and she has 10 minutes in which to speak.

2.42 pm

Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House recognises that upon leaving the European Union, the UK will need effective legislation to implement agreements with partner countries corresponding to international trade agreements of the European Union in place before the UK's exit, to implement procurement obligations arising from the UK becoming a member of the Government Procurement Agreement in its own right, to set out the basis of a Trade Remedies Authority to deliver the new UK trade remedies framework, and to establish the powers for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to collect and disclose data on goods and services exporters; but declines to give a Second Reading to the Trade Bill because it fails to set out proper procedures for Parliamentary consultation, scrutiny, debate and approval of future international trade agreements, fails to protect the principle of Parliamentary sovereignty in respect of the implementation of international trade agreements previously negotiated by the European Union and in respect of changes to existing government procurement regulations arising from the UK's or other countries' accession to the Government Procurement Agreement, fails to establish sufficient scrutiny procedures to replace those that have pertained while the UK has been a member of the European Union, fails to guarantee that the UK's current high standards and rights will be protected in future trade agreements, and fails to render the Trade Remedies Authority answerable to Parliament or representative of the full range of stakeholders who should be included in its membership.

In moving this amendment in the name of the Leader of the Opposition, I am conscious that, for many of us, there will be a strong sense of *déjà vu*: the personnel may have changed, but we have all been here before, with the same Bill, the same amendment, and the same arguments. For once, the Government are correct when they say that nothing has changed. The inescapable truth remains that this Trade Bill, as it currently stands, is a massive missed opportunity for the Government, for this Parliament and for our country.

For the past five decades, our trade policies have been set at European level. Indeed, there is not a single Member of this House who was in Parliament the last time the UK set its own trade policies, so, like it or not, this Bill carries an historic significance, and that is what I want to address today. Is this Bill, in its current form, fit to rise to its historic challenge? After five decades, in which we have seen tremendous upheaval in our global economy, does the Bill provide the legislative framework and the bold and far-reaching vision that we need to underpin Britain's trade policies for several years to come? After five decades, does the Bill ensure that issues such as climate change and human rights, which were barely a consideration the last time the UK set its own trade policies, are now at the heart of our decision-making and central to our relationships overseas? And after five decades, does the Bill give a proper voice to the devolved Administrations, who did not even exist back then, and to all other private, public and civic-sector bodies whose ideas and insights constantly improve our policy-making and remind us that Whitehall does not know best? Finally, after five decades, does this Bill restore full sovereignty to Parliament over Britain's trade policies, especially when it comes to the formulation, scrutiny and approval of new trade agreements? Those are the questions I asked myself. As I will explain, the answer that came back, on every front, was a resounding no—even worse, a warning cry that far from restoring the powers of Parliament when it comes to trade policy, this Bill erodes them to nothing.

Let me begin with the first question, namely whether this Bill gives us a legislative framework and a bold new vision for decades of trade policy to come. Here we find ourselves in the strange position of having Ministers themselves tell us that the answer is no. They say that there is nothing of significance in this legislation, and that it is simply a continuity Bill that is designed to maintain the status quo beyond 31 December. I will come back to whether that is right, especially in respect of new trade agreements, but one thing is for sure: there is no bold, long-term vision in this Bill. There is no great legislative framework for the future, and when it comes to the UK shaping its own trade policy after five long decades, this Bill certainly was not worth the wait.

That brings us to the second question, namely to what extent the Bill reflects the necessary and welcome widening of Britain's trade policy objectives over five decades, and the extent to which it puts at the heart of our future trade agreements the issues of climate change, environmental protection, human rights, workers' rights, sustainable development and gender equality. Again, we should all be ashamed to say that the answer is: not at all.

I will take just one of those issues, namely human rights. It is disappointing enough that the Government are failing to make it a key priority in negotiating new

trade agreements, but what is truly damaging is the Government's willingness to omit from their rolled-over trade agreements the human rights clauses that are now mandatory in all deals with the EU. If the Government want to refute that, the Minister of State has a simple task when he closes the debate later. He should guarantee that the rolled-over trade agreements that the Government are still trying to negotiate before 31 December with Cameroon and Egypt will both contain clauses enabling the UK to terminate the agreements if those countries continue their horrendous abuse of human rights. Will he ensure that the same policy applies to Turkey, Singapore, South Sudan and every other country with whom we are in negotiation?

The third question was whether the Bill marks a decisive break with the "Whitehall knows best" attitudes that dominated policy making five decades ago, and instead paves the way for Britain's new trade policies to be formed in a transparent and inclusive way, for example by consulting the elected representatives of our regions and devolved Administrations, benefiting from the expertise of our development and environmental non-governmental organisations, or listening to the concerns of British businesses and their employees. Again, the answer, sadly, is no.

We see that most starkly when it comes to the Bill's proposals for the membership of the trade remedies authority. That will be a vital body with a vital task, but it will have no guaranteed representation from the UK's industry bodies and trade unions—the representatives of the people most affected by the unfair practices that the TRA is supposed to prevent. No wonder there are such concerns and suspicions that the Government's true agenda for the TRA is not to defend Britain against underpriced imports, but somehow to balance the damage they do to domestic producers against the perceived benefits for domestic consumers. That is not the job of the trade remedies authority. That is why we instead need there to be proper representation on the board for the businesses and workers that it has been set up to defend, and why we need the TRA to be accountable to Parliament rather than Government.

That brings me to the final question, which is of the greatest immediate significance: whether, after five decades, this Bill succeeds in restoring parliamentary sovereignty over our country's trade policies or whether, in fact, the opposite is true, as Members here and in the other place—all formidably led by my predecessor, my hon. Friend the Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner)—have consistently said over the past two and a half years.

Let us take an example. The Secretary of State is a fan, it would seem, of the Government procurement agreement. As my colleagues have pointed out in the past, no matter how much we agree with the GPA, it is still incredible that the UK can accede to the GPA and MPs have no practical means to stop it; that the UK's coverage schedules can be sent to the WTO and MPs have no opportunity to approve them; and that changes can be made in the future to the UK's commitment under the GPA, and MPs will have less chance to scrutinise them than we did when Brussels was in charge and the European Scrutiny Committee was in place. So in an area such as Government procurement, the Bill does not advance parliamentary sovereignty—it does not even leave us standing still. The Bill takes us backwards.

[Emily Thornberry]

Let us look at a more contentious area: new trade agreements. The Government have tried to convince us that, because the Bill only seeks to provide the basis to roll over existing agreements, we do not have to worry about the almost complete absence of accompanying parliamentary scrutiny or approval. But the reality is that in many cases there are or will be major differences between the UK's third country agreement and the EU equivalent it is opposed to replicate.

Let us look at some of the examples we have seen. We have agreements with five countries in a trade bloc where the UK only covers three. We have EU agreements with mandatory clauses on human rights that the UK has agreed to drop. We have an EU agreement with Turkey based on a customs union, which the UK has explicitly rejected. We have an EU agreement with Japan, which both the Secretary of State and her Japanese counterpart have said our bilateral deal should go beyond, and that will doubtless be true of the Canada deal as well.

In short, we will end up with several major new trade deals all significantly different from their EU equivalents, but all subject to the same minimal amount of parliamentary scrutiny and approval, as proposed in the Trade Bill. That is not a restoration of parliamentary sovereignty. That is not anywhere near the gold standard of parliamentary consultation, scrutiny and approval of trade deals that we see in Australia or the United States. That is not therefore what I would call taking back control.

In conclusion, I believe that this Trade Bill offers a historic opportunity, but that opportunity has so far been missed. Instead of a bold, strategic vision for the future of our trade policy, we have a stopgap piece of legislation that even Ministers are trying to talk down. Instead of issues such as climate change and human rights being put at the heart of our trade policy, they have been ignored or consciously dropped. Instead of opening our trade policy to the expertise of others, the Government are denying them even a seat at the table. And instead of restoring Parliament's sovereignty over trade policy, this Bill leaves MPs even more powerless than before. That is why I urge colleagues on both sides of the House to support the Opposition's amendment. After five decades, let us spend the time and effort we need to get this historic Bill right.

2.53 pm

Dr Liam Fox (North Somerset) (Con): I will not go over the detailed points in relation to the Bill so eloquently made by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State—I have to say that I recognised some of the phraseology in her arguments—but I want to deal with the context in which it is being brought forward.

During the long gestation of the Bill, a lot has changed. Not only have we had the covid crisis, which will have a fundamental effect on the global economy, but in 2019 we saw the culmination of many of the predictions that were made by the Department for International Trade. We predicted that we would see first a slowdown in the growth of global trade and then potentially a contraction of global trade itself. We watched through 2019 the WTO make predictions on global trade growth, down

from 2.8% to 2.2% and 1.4%. It finally came in at 0.7%. The key element was that it contracted in Q4, which has generally in history presaged a downturn in the global economy.

That happened for a number of reasons. The US-China trade dispute had a general effect on global trade, and in particular we saw the shortening of global supply chains, as people sought to onshore and shorten global supply chains by minimising the import of intermediate goods. We saw the inevitable consequence of the trend over the decade of the G20 countries applying more and more non-tariff barriers to trade—quadrupling them in the first half of this decade—and they all matter. A bit of consumer protection here, a bit of environmental protection there and a bit of producer protection here are all justifiable in themselves, but they all add up. They have all resulted in a silting up of the global trading system, and the skies over the global trading system are now darkening with those chickens coming home to roost.

Why does it matter? It matters because a free and open trading system has been our route to the reduction in global poverty, with more than 1 billion people taken out of abject poverty in just one generation. There is another reason it matters, which is that access to prosperity, political stability and security are part of the same continuum. It is unthinkable that the wealthiest countries in the world should pull up the ladder behind us, stopping developing countries gaining access to the same levels of prosperity. It is absurd to believe that we can do that without seeing disruption in global security. If we deny people access to prosperity, do not be surprised if we see more mass migration and more radicalisation. We need to understand that we cannot separate the concepts. Those who wish to introduce protectionism into the global economy will have to bear the consequences of the actions they are currently embarked upon.

I want to see us, through this Bill and beyond, doing more on global trade liberalisation. Going back to where we were pre-covid will not be enough, because global trade was contracting. I was a proud Brexiteer, but I have never been a little Englander. My objection to the European Union in the era of globalisation was not the absurd notion that it was foreign, but that it was not foreign enough. It did not have global aspirations that were in tune with what we as a country wanted to see. Post covid, all the challenges we face together will be bigger, and we will have to work with all those who believe in free trade to put them right.

The UK exports 30% of our GDP. Germany exports 48% of its GDP, and OECD data shows that the trade slowdown has hit the European Union hardest of all in the global economy, with exports from the EU contracting by 1.8% in the third quarter of 2019, even before global trade itself contracted. That is the scale of the challenge that we face.

The Government's proposed tariff regime reform is to be hugely welcomed, although it could be even more liberal yet. The new FTAs and the roll-over agreements allowed through the Bill are also to be welcomed. Those who put obstacles, political and otherwise, in the way of both the roll-over agreements and the new FTAs through largely pointless and irrelevant arguments need to understand the consequences to the wider global economy, as well as to our domestic prosperity, of doing so.

My right hon. Friend was right when she talked about the bigger picture and how we must champion World Trade Organisation reform. Without it, we will be unable to maintain the rules-based system, which is already substantially under threat. The alternative to a rules-based system is the survival of the strongest, and that will have the biggest impact on the poorest countries. This is an area where we can give a lead as a country not only economically, but morally.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call Stewart Hosie, who has seven minutes.

2.58 pm

Stewart Hosie (Dundee East) (SNP) [V]: May I start by agreeing with the Secretary of State that it is absolutely vital that we keep trade open and recognise the importance of the supply chain, and that it is absolutely essential that we stand against protectionism? We need to do that, because right now there are three main threats to trade. The first is self-evidently from the covid crisis, which the World Trade Organisation has suggested might cause a fall in global trade of something in the order of 13% to 32%. That is a substantial reduction, no matter where on the scale one looks. The second is the impact of Brexit. Assessments suggest that the UK could lose a substantial chunk of its global trade. The third is the more systemic problem that the right hon. Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox), the ex-Trade Secretary, was speaking about, which is the continued implementation of new and the continuation of existing trade restriction measures, with tariffs valuing somewhere around \$1.6 trillion in force.

I am not confident that those problems will be resolved any time soon, not least because there is as yet no cure for coronavirus and restrictions of one sort or another may well remain in force for some considerable time, because of the highly publicised lack of progress on the Brexit negotiations, and also, sadly, because of the absence of a functioning World Trade Organisation appellate body. This Trade Bill does not address any of those matters, other than perhaps at the margins, by trying to roll over and maintain the trade the UK has with third countries via membership of the EU and thereby minimise the losses from Brexit.

The Bill does do a number of other things, as the Secretary of State set out. It creates procurement obligations arising from membership of the GPA—the agreement on Government procurement; it creates the Trade Remedies Authority; and it gives powers to Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to collect and share data. However, it is not without its problems. Let me deal with the powers relating to the devolved Administrations first. The previous Trade Bill, which was under consideration in the previous Parliament, contained provision for regulation-making powers to be available to the UK Government within areas of devolved competence. That Bill also contained a provision that prohibited devolved Administrations from using powers to modify retained direct EU legislation or anything that was retained EU law by virtue of section 4 of the European Union (Withdrawal) 2018 Act in ways that would be inconsistent with any modifications made by the UK Government, even in devolved areas. As a result, the Scottish Government could not consent to that, and that view was shared by the Scottish Parliament Finance and Constitution Committee.

That Trade Bill did not complete its passage and fell, and the good news is that those provisions have been removed from this reintroduced Trade Bill. However, there remains no statutory obligation for the UK Government to consult or seek the consent of Scottish Ministers before exercising the powers they have in devolved areas. However, during the partial passage of the previous Trade Bill, the UK Government made a commitment to avoid using the powers in the Bill in devolved areas without consulting and ideally obtaining the consent of Scottish Ministers. The then Minister of State at the Department for International Trade, the right hon. Member for Bournemouth West (Conor Burns), subsequently restated those commitments in his letter to Ivan McKee, the Scottish Trade Minister, on 18 March, and I hope that the Minister we hear from today will restate these non-legislative commitments.

The Bill is not without its problems, and they do not relate simply to the devolved Administrations. It allows the UK Government to modify retained direct principal EU law, and it appears to me that there are no legislative limits on such modifications. The second problem is the description of an “international trade agreement” in clause 2(2)(b), which states that it may be

“an international agreement that mainly relates to trade, other than a free trade agreement.”

As we know, modern agreements are as much about regulation, standards, conformance, dispute resolution or food safety as they are about quotas and tariffs. Many people will be uncomfortable that Ministers can modify existing agreements in the way in which this Bill permits, particularly without scrutiny and consent.

That leads me to the fundamental problem with the Bill. The absence of parliamentary scrutiny and a parliamentary vote on significant changes or modifications, or, indeed, in the future, on new trade deals as may be envisaged by the Government, is a huge problem. Modern democracies need to have full scrutiny of trade agreements, from the scope of the negotiating mandate right through to implementation. That is absent from this Bill, as is any provision for scrutiny other than through the voluntary scrutiny proposed by the Government in the Command Paper published in the previous Parliament, to which I will return briefly at the end of my speech.

These issues also highlight the absence of any formal input into trade deals or significant modification of existing ones by the devolved Administrations—a problem replicated in the membership of the Trade Remedies Authority, where no formal ability exists for the devolved Administrations to propose or nominate a member with expertise in regionally or nationally significant trade.

I shall turn briefly to the Command Paper that was published in 2019 and covered the previous Trade Bill. Does it still apply? Does the commitment to publishing our negotiating objectives and scoping assessments still exist? Even if it does, does the Minister recognise that that still does not give Parliament or the devolved Administrations any role in approving them? Is it still the intention of the UK Government to provide sensitive information to a scrutiny Committee? Would that be the Select Committee on International Trade, which is ably chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil)? If it is, will any papers provided be publishable, or will they be restricted?

[*Stewart Hosie*]

If they are restricted, that will still leave Members of Parliament, exporting businesses and other interested third parties none the wiser about the Government's real intentions. I am conscious of the limited time, Madam Deputy Speaker, so let me end simply by saying—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I ask the hon. Gentleman to bring his remarks to a close. I thank him for his contribution, but we must move on. I am now introducing a time limit of five minutes, and I advise hon. Members who are speaking virtually to have a timing device visible.

3.6 pm

Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con) [V]: Now that we have left the EU, it seems that 20 continuity agreements have been signed with some 48 countries and that a further 20 have been negotiated, so will the Minister confirm whether there are any countries that do not wish to deal with us at the current time? It seems that Canada and Japan are refusing to be rolled over, so to speak, and want to start negotiating from scratch, so should we not now treat these unsigned countries as new FTAs, rather than including them in this EU roll-over package? Does not clause 2 in effect represent a moment of time that has now passed? In that regard, I think we should take this opportunity to recognise the friendly and co-operative attitude of those countries, such as Switzerland, Israel and Georgia, that did sign up before Brexit.

I understand the need for statutory instruments to be used to effect these roll-overs, but will the Minister confirm that, for the most part, they will be transcribed into our laws by the withdrawal Act, and that these SIs are effectively intended to deal with deal variations? The problem that we debated on the Trade Bill two years ago was that the statutory instruments' scope could be so wide that they could be used as a Henry VIII provision for anything to do with the roll-over countries other than tariffs. Indeed, I cannot see how it is possible that they could not be used as part of a deal to issue visas, say, in return for trade access, or indeed to add on military or intelligence provisions. I believe that this could apply to amendments made to these deals for five years, even after they have been initially concluded. For instance, I do not see that there is any level of deviation from the EU deals with such countries that would necessitate a Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 process. This situation led to no little disquiet last time this Bill came around, and the Government eventually came up with amendments that have now only partly been readopted.

When the Bill was debated two years ago, the first change that was made was to make the SIs affirmative. That has been retained, which is welcome. The second change was to have a three-year sunset period, and that has now been changed to five years, which seems unnecessary. The third change was to have reports produced by the Minister before the first SI, setting out all the proposed changes. In practice, this is sensible in that it will assist scrutiny and also provide a framework if there are multiple SIs. The Minister advised me that he was supportive of using reports, but he did not think they needed to be legislated for. Parliament might like to look at that again.

The fourth change was to provide that these reports should be laid 10 sitting days in advance of the first SI. This would allow comment to be made before the SI was laid, which would be more effective from a scrutiny point of view. Ministers have suggested that this procedure will be used to tie up loose ends or legislate for trade-related variations, but they will appreciate that we as legislators need to scrutinise this legislation with an eye on what it could be used for.

When the Trade Bill was debated two years ago, Parliament was promised a new FTA scrutiny regime, yet we have not put that in place, despite trade talks with the US starting. Now that Brexit has happened, the Commons has lost its European standing Committee, which reviewed the EU's monitoring and negotiation of trade agreements. No equivalent Committee has been formed to replace it, and we have obviously lost the scrutiny previously provided by the EU itself. Keep in mind that the European Parliament's consent to a new treaty is needed, in a way that does not happen in the UK, where there is no obligation to inform or consult Parliament, no structures for reviewing treaties, and no debate or approval needed prior to signature. There is only the CRAG process to delay ratification, which, in its April 2019 report on scrutiny of treaties, the Lords Constitution Committee described as "anachronistic and inadequate".

I am not calling for an end to the prerogative power to agree treaties—although we need to appreciate that many pressure groups are—nor am I calling for Parliament to be able to amend draft treaties as the US Senate can, but I am calling for a proper process whereby policy objectives of treaty negotiations are published at the outset and treaty rounds are reported on. If Parliament is not to get a veto, at least CRAG should be reformed. I suggest that should include a new Commons treaty Committee and extending CRAG debates and presentation periods so that they are made more user-friendly. Brexit should involve more UK scrutiny of FTAs, not less.

3.11 pm

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP) [V]: As we all know, this is a reheated Trade Bill. Sometimes a meal can be all the better for the reheating—it can be better the following day—but sadly, despite all the advice and help that was given on the Trade Bill in the last Parliament, that has not come to be this time. It remains much a dog's breakfast, with great criticism attached to it and much under-delivery on what is required.

The Bill essentially has two strands to it: the roll-over of free trade agreements and the creation of the TRA. Before we go too far on the roll-over, we almost have to take a step back. If we are indeed looking to roll over EU trade agreements that currently affect us, are we not just admitting that the EU has done quite a good job of arranging trade agreements—so much so that we want to copy them to the letter?

In fact, when we go to copy some of the trade agreements, we find we cannot replicate them. I remember raising in Committee the trade agreement with South Korea, which states that, in the automotive sector, if motor vehicles have 55% local content, the tariff can be exported. Alas, the UK alone cannot do that. The EU can do that—it has a 500 million-odd population and consumers, and the parts come from all parts of its manufacturing base—but the UK cannot take advantage

of a rolled-over EU-Korea deal the way it is written at the moment. There are many things lacking at that stage.

On the Trade Remedies Authority, again, much advice has been given about what could happen and what is not happening, and it is a shame that the Government are not listening and refuse to listen to many people. There are many concerns, particularly in the ceramics trade. The TRA was set going on a wing and a prayer. We could have had Brexit long ago, and the reality is that the UK was not prepared. It still is not prepared.

We do not have the scrutiny in place. We do not have the scrutiny that my Committee called for in the last Parliament for the devolved Parliaments, but even if we take a Westminster-centric view of this, we do not have the scrutiny for parliamentarians at Westminster either. Again, the Government have missed the opportunity to get this right, and that is a huge pity. It could have been enshrined in the legislation. It is not enshrined. The opportunity has been missed.

There was an opportunity to avoid the pitfalls of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. The European Union and many others have learned that trade negotiations conducted in secret do not get very far and that the population will eventually rebel, as was seen with TTIP. People have learned, but sadly it seems that the UK Government have not learned from that or, indeed, from the passage of their own Bill, which fell at the last parliamentary election, back in December.

NHS procurement should be taken care of. Wearing my constituency hat, a lot of constituents have written to me with concerns about the NHS—about making sure that there are NHS-specific carve-outs, that there is no negative listing affecting the NHS, that there are no standstill clauses, that the NHS is immune from the investor-state dispute settlement possibilities, and that there is no Americanisation of our drug situation in the United Kingdom. Particularly at this point, when the NHS is fighting coronavirus, but at all times in fact, it is incumbent on Parliament and the Government to back the NHS and make sure it is safe and protected.

The Secretary of State mentioned the USA trade deal. We have to take a step back and look at exactly what has been achieved, or the Government have tried to achieve. The USA trade deal will add only about 0.2% to the UK's GDP, compared with the 6% that will probably be lost after Brexit—about one thirtieth of that. Given that America represents a quarter of the world's GDP, even a trade deal with every country in the world will not make up the huge gap left by Brexit.

Finally, the Secretary of State began by saying she would do whatever it took to keep Britain trading, as she put it. Surely, at this point, “doing whatever it takes” would include staying away from this disastrously ruinous Brexit, or, at the very least, having the humility to postpone it during the pandemic. This hell-for-leather approach of going for the cliff edge this December is not what business needs at this time, or what the population needs. It is not what any of us needs at this time. If the Government are still too proud to realise that Brexit is a mistake, they should at least delay it, perhaps for one or two centuries.

3.16 pm

Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con) [V]: It is my great privilege to follow my friend and Chair of the International Trade Committee in this incredibly important debate. The Leader of the House said earlier that these proceedings sometimes appear stilted and scripted when done remotely. It is my challenge over the next five minutes to prove him wrong.

In my part of Lancashire, international trade is critical for jobs and prosperity. I am host to fabulous, world-class companies, such as BAE Systems and Westinghouse, the nuclear fuels manufacturer, and smaller companies such as Tangerine Holdings. The Bill is very much about the whole nature of international trade—getting that right and building a framework that will stand the test of time—and that is one reason I support its Second Reading today.

It is also my privilege to serve as one of the Government's trade envoys. Indeed, the Secretary of State, in her opening remarks, referred to Chile as an example of one of the 48 countries with which a continuity agreement has been put in place. I would say to her that some of my other countries, through the Andean trade continuity agreements, such as Peru and Colombia, also have arrangements to ensure a smooth transition when the UK eventually leaves the EU at the end of this year.

That has not happened by chance. Those agreements are in place because of the dedication and hard work of people in the Department, not just in London, but especially in post. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the men and women, many of whom are nationals of the countries they represent, who work tirelessly and understand the nature of their countries in a way that is sometimes difficult to comprehend from London. Their dedication and hard work have got us to where we are today. That sometimes gets missed.

We also have to recognise that the Trade Bill is only part of the picture. Measures such as the many double taxation agreements—there is one in place with one of my countries, Colombia—are really important to ensuring a smooth transition and the financial flows that will come from trade. The Government have been working very hard on that in the last couple of years, but there is still more work to be done in other key markets across the globe.

There has been much fixation in recent years on trade deals, but they are only part of the picture; much of this is about a smooth transition from the EU arrangements to what comes next. If we are unable in this House to demonstrate to our key countries and partners across the globe that we can pass a piece of legislation, why on earth should we be asking our officials and trade envoys to make representations to senators and presidents to get agreements in place so that when we leave we can have that smooth transition? I therefore urge the House to get behind the Bill and to give it a Second Reading unamended.

I would like to take this opportunity, however, to challenge the Government on how we plan to use some of the data-collection powers in the Bill. For example, I would like to see some of the data sharing in HMRC to be used to reshape and rescope bodies such as UK Export Finance, because in all of my key markets we only ever reach a tiny percentage of the credit facilities that we say are available. Given that London is the global capital

[Mark Menzies]

of fancy credit mechanisms, I urge the Minister—it is great to see him in his rightful place—to use some of the expertise in the City and to challenge whether UK Export Finance needs to be given the opportunity to evolve in order to take advantage of some of the real opportunities that are out there.

Madam Deputy Speaker, I have followed your example and set a timer, so in my closing seconds let me just say that free trade is important, not just as a sign of national prestige, but because it creates jobs and generates the wealth to pay for public services at home and, more importantly, abroad. At a time of rising unemployment, my goodness, we need free trade more than ever, so I will be supporting this Bill in its passage through Parliament.

3.21 pm

Darren Jones (Bristol North West) (Lab) [V]: According to research from the Harvard Kennedy School's Growth Lab, British exports have been declining, concentrating into a smaller number of products and acting as a drag on our economic growth. Remarkably, in the past decade the UK has added only two new export products, and, perhaps embarrassingly, our main new export has been bovine, sheep and goat fat. I declare my interest as an amateur vegan, but I suggest that an economy that is as complex and capable as ours really ought to have done better.

We know that economic growth can be driven by export diversification, but to do that we need an active industrial strategy that works with the market to make clear what we actually want to achieve while investing in workers with the skills to do it. Some colleagues will say, "Ah, but it was the European Union's job, and now that we are taking back control, it will be much better and the Bill will help us do that." I would respectfully compare the UK's record to, for example, that of France, which is, of course, a member of the European Union. During the same timeframe in which the UK majored on bovine, sheep and goat fats, and added around \$2 per capita, with a total UK market of \$104 million, France has managed to add 10 new projects, creating a new \$1.9 billion market and growing GDP per capita by \$28. It has therefore been a question of intent and ability, not a question of power.

Based on current capacity, the UK has a pretty good spread of manufacturing capabilities, from chemicals and machinery to automotive, gas turbines and aerospace, but the bulk of our goods-based growth has come from aerospace and automotive, whose capacity relies on European supply chains. Based on current Brexit negotiations, those supply chains are at risk, as well as under added pressure from the pandemic. The Government have largely relied on services-based growth in our economy, which of course is an important part of what we do as a country, but they took their eye off the ball in respect of British manufacturing, resulting in a weaker and more exposed market for goods, exports and economic growth.

That is the context for this Bill, because the questions that we are considering today have been with us in one form or another for the past four years. Most of the provisions in front of us today first came before the House a few months after I was elected in 2017. By any measure, this legislation has taken too long. The priorities

given force in the Bill, and which even now run through all the arguments on trade made by those on the Treasury Bench, are the same arguments we have heard over the period of trading inadequacy that I have just set out. The economy is in recession and we are on the cusp of a once-in-a-century collapse in output. The key test is whether the Government are committed to bringing back British manufacturing as a core component of the British economy.

In closing, I would like to ask the Minister to answer a number of questions when summing up the debate. First, will he set out for the House whether Parliament will be given the right to full and transparent scrutiny of the trade negotiations, and confirm whether that will be by a new or existing Committee of this House? As a former member of the European Scrutiny Committee, I note that we had such a function when the European Union was negotiating trade deals, but that does not seem to be replicated in the Bill.

Secondly, local government leaders are in the process of setting out recovery plans post pandemic. What conversations is the Department having with city leaders to ensure that those leaders on the ground have input into decisions made in Whitehall?

Thirdly, Ministers have long said, whether in Brexit or trade debates, that the Government will stand by their commitment to human rights, workers' rights and environmental protections, but this Bill does not mention climate change or workers' rights at all. Britain has an opportunity to set the global expectation on these issues. I would like to understand why the Government have not included such provisions. There is a significant opportunity to couple climate diplomacy with export opportunities as we work to help other countries to transition to net zero. I hope the Minister will confirm that these opportunities are also being considered by the Department.

As an anti-modern slavery champion for the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, I have seen first hand the risks of global supply chains that do not have adequate protections and transparency built in. No work or business in the UK wants to be associated with illegal trafficking and exploitation of some of the most vulnerable people on the planet. I hope the Minister can set out how the Government intend to ensure that these protections are included in all future trade deals.

3.25 pm

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) [V]: You do not need to pay to trade: I welcome the policy behind this legislation and the Bill itself, which makes it very clear that the United Kingdom wishes to be a positive trade partner with as many countries around the world as would like a free trade agreement with us. This Bill ensures that we can carry across the FTAs that the EU has with a range of countries that naturally fall to transit to us as well as to it. Many of us were told that we were wrong when we argued that during the referendum and afterwards, but the Government have proved us right in that of course those countries wish to roll over those agreements. In one or two cases, they wish to go considerably further than the agreements we already have. I welcome the Government's positive response to that to see what more can be added so that we can have a better deal as we leave the European Union than we had when we were in it.

We must see the policy background to this Bill as including the most important letter written this week by our trade negotiator to Mr Barnier about the parallel negotiations for a possible UK-EU free trade agreement. It is an admirably lucid letter which makes it very clear that, just as in this Bill, we are not sacrificing our fish, offering special payments or agreeing to accept the laws of other countries in order to create a free trade agreement with them, and neither should we do so in the case of the European Union. We voted very clearly to leave the single market and to leave the customs union. Many of us who voted that way strongly believed then, and believe even more so today, that we want a free trade-based agreement with the European Union if that is also its wish, but we would rather trade with it under WTO rules and the excellent new tariff we have set out for external trade if it wishes instead to claim that we need to be some kind of surrogate member taking its laws, paying its bills and accepting many of its views on matters like our fish resources.

It is more likely that we will get a free trade agreement from a reluctant European Union just before the deadline at the end of the year if we have made great progress in negotiating free trade deals elsewhere. That is why the Government are absolutely right to respond very positively to the United States of America, to Japan, to Australia, to New Zealand and to the Trans-Pacific Partnership. In each of those cases, the counter-party is very willing. In each of those cases, there are precedents for good agreements between other parts of the world and those countries, and we can build on those and our own models for a positive free trade arrangement.

The EU will see how relatively easy it is to make such progress with those countries we have agreements with. When we were in the EU, the EU had not got round to having agreements with some of those countries—big countries such as the United States of America. When we are outside the EU, that will make the EU even keener to want to have a free trade agreement with us. Rather reluctantly, it will have to admit that it has been making a mistake over these past years in trying to make our exit so protracted and so difficult, and claiming that you do need to pay for trade.

I will vote for the Bill as vindication that, of course, many countries wish to trade with us on as free a basis as possible. I will vote for it as part of a much bigger package of a free trade loving United Kingdom driving a free trade agenda around the world. I will vote for it because it sends a clear message to the European Union that it is negotiating in the wrong way and running the danger of ending up without a free trade agreement that is rather more in its interests than ours, given the asymmetry of our trade.

Free trade is a good way to promote prosperity. It is even more vital now we need to recover our economies from the covid-19 crisis. I urge the EU to understand that and to co-operate sensibly, just as I give the Government full support to press ahead in negotiating deals with all those great countries and regions of the world that think Britain is a hugely important future partner, and where we see fast-growing trade that can enrich both sides.

3.30 pm

Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): Several of my hon. Friends have made the point that current parliamentary procedure is totally inadequate if we are

to scrutinise properly and have proper parliamentary oversight of trade deals negotiated by the Government. We are, of course, supportive of mechanisms that will enable the UK to transition from being a member of the EU so that we can enter into our own trade agreements and into international trade conventions through organisations such as the WTO. This Bill, however, does nothing to promote transparency or that proper scrutiny that this House and the country deserve. Therefore, I, and many of my right hon. and hon. Friends will not support the Bill.

The fact that the Bill is being pushed through in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic means that the importance that would normally be attached to such legislation is being overlooked. The current life-and-death crisis, which has been exacerbated by this Government's bad management, is totally overshadowing it. The crisis not only overshadows this Bill, but will overshadow much of the legislation that will pass through this House in the coming weeks and months. In addition, the inevitable negative economic impact of a Brexit cliff edge, following the end of the EU exit transition period, can easily be pinned on the coronavirus crisis.

The Bill will lead to trade deals that will have huge implications for our economy and our global alliances well into the future. At the moment, the current and planned continuity trade talks between the UK and the EU are taking place at the same time as preliminary discussions between the UK and United States. The crisis provides perfect cover from view, so those discussions can happen with little scrutiny by this House and little attention from the media to inform the public.

As much as I would like to see a good trade deal with the EU, I am not one of those arguing for an extension of the transitional period. If I thought that the Government wanted anything that looked like a good trade deal with the EU, an extension would probably be a good idea, but I do not think they do. Many Conservative Back Benchers and some of those on the Government Front Bench do not want a deal with the EU and would be quite happy to throw their lot in with any trade deal with the United States—the right hon. Member for Wokingham (John Redwood) is among them.

If the Conservative party wanted a good EU trade deal, it could have had an agreement with the Labour party last year when we were debating our EU exit, and the path would have been set—but the Government did not want that. Now, of course, in the Government's proposals for a comprehensive free trade agreement with the EU, they are asking for many of the benefits of EU membership without the costs that that membership brings. Having said that, there will still be a large divorce bill running into billions of euros for the UK to cough up, and the clock is still ticking. My bet is that any agreement on trade with the EU will be a fig leaf to hide the embarrassment of the years of discussion and negotiation.

The elephant in the room is, and always was, the United States and what the current President wants for the future. I ask myself, "Why are there two sets of trade discussions—UK-EU and UK-US—going on at the same time?" The Secretary of State for International Trade may claim that the fact that the discussions with the EU are already under way might give the UK some leverage to get better terms from the US in specific

[*Sir Mark Hendrick*]

areas but, in a likely no-deal outcome or the fig-leaf agreement that I mentioned earlier, any discussions seem extremely unlikely.

In addition, for the moment, the US under President Trump will probably seek only a preliminary agreement that he can wave around for re-election purposes in November. However, if Trump wins again, he will demand that the UK has minimal trading arrangements with the EU and that the UK conforms with US norms through mutual recognition agreements, replacing EU regulations on goods, services and agricultural products, for example. This Bill is leading the UK down the slippery slope of a Government who are becoming less accountable to Parliament and the people of this country, trade relations that are not in the best interests of the people of this country and an economic future over which we have less and less control.

3.35 pm

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con) [V]: I wish to speak in support of the Bill, but also to address the importance of scrutiny by Parliament of digital trade provisions in proposed future UK trading agreements. This is a vital and fast-moving sector that is very important to the British economy. Technology touches almost all aspects of our national life, as indeed these proceedings themselves make clear.

One of the most important new trade agreements being negotiated right now is the one with the United States, but we need to make sure that the digital trade provisions of a deal do not impact on other areas of domestic law, in particular our ability to legislate to create new responsibilities for large social media companies to act against harmful content online. The example of the recently negotiated trade deal between the USA, Canada and Mexico, which I understand is the basis for the start of the American approach to negotiations with the UK, shows how the danger can lie in the detail of these agreements.

The agreement states that the signatories shall not “adopt or maintain measures that treat a supplier or user of an interactive computer service as an information content provider in determining liability for harms related to information stored, processed, transmitted, distributed, or made available by the service, except to the extent the supplier or user has, in whole or in part, created, or developed the information.”

What that means, in short, is that while a social media platform can be used to disseminate harmful content, and indeed the algorithms of that platform could be used to promote it, the liability lies solely with the person who created that content, and it could be impossible to identify that person, except perhaps through data held by the social media platform they have used. In this context, the harmful content being shared on social media could include a wide range of dangerous material from content that promotes fraud, violent conduct, self-harm, cyber-bullying or unlawful interference in elections. This provision was included in the US-Canada-Mexico trade agreement, despite opposition from prominent members of the United States Congress, including the Speaker, Nancy Pelosi, and Senators Mark Warner and Ted Cruz.

The provision is based on the provisions in US law known as section 230 of the US Communications Decency Act. Section 230 provides broad unconditional immunity

to internet platforms from civil liability for unlawful third-party content they distribute. This sweeping immunity gives internet-based entities an unnecessary and unfair commercial advantage over various law-abiding bricks-and-mortar businesses and content creators. Section 230 immunity is unconditional. The platform can even be designed to attract illegal or harmful content, to know about that illegal or harmful content, have a role in generating and editing it, actively increase its reach and refuse to do anything about it, profit from it and help hide the identity of third-party lawbreakers, and still not be civilly liable.

The grant of immunity for online services under section 230 was supposed to be in exchange for the act of voluntary filtering in a proactive and effective way, yet we all know that there are constant complaints about the failure of major tech companies to act as swiftly as we would like to see against content that could cause harm to others. If such a provision were required in the UK-US trade agreement, it would severely limit our ability to tackle online harms, as we would be prevented from creating legal liabilities, or to tackle companies failing in their duty of care to act against harmful content.

This prompts the question whether international trade agreements should be used to fix such important matters of domestic policy. There is growing cross-party consensus on that point in the US Congress as well. In the UK, these should always be matters on which Parliament has the last word. Indeed, in America, those who have advocated the inclusion of section 230 provisions in trade agreements, do so knowing that they will make it harder for them to be removed in US law itself. The Secretary of State for International Trade has assured me that the Government will not accept trade agreements that would limit the scope of Parliament to legislate to create responsibilities to act against harmful content online. I agree with her that that should be our priority, but we need to understand that that will require a different approach to the negotiations on digital trade from that which was followed by Canada with America. We should not include the provisions based on section 230 in a UK-US trade agreement.

Having trade agreements for digital services, data and technology with other major markets around the world is greatly in our national interest, but we need to make sure that they give us the freedom to act against known harms and the freedom to enforce standards designed to protect the public interest, just as we would seek to do in any other industry.

3.40 pm

Craig Williams (Montgomeryshire) (Con): It is a great privilege to take part in this debate. This Bill and this policy area will be one of the most important for my rural constituency of Montgomeryshire. Trade with the outside world and continuing trade with the EU is incredibly important to my agricultural community, as it is to other services and to manufacturing goods.

At the outset, I would like to welcome the 20 continuity trade agreements we have already rolled over. I would very much welcome an update from the Minister on the remaining, with an honest assessment of trade treaties, perhaps with Canada and other countries. I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to David Frost, Sir Tim Barrow and the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology in Brussels for their continuing

work. People talk about a lack of scrutiny, but it took me less than 20 seconds to check the update on that particular treaty, check the draft legal texts that are published on the website and read the most recent correspondence from David Frost to his counterparts. I cannot see a treaty being dealt with in so much light as that one currently is.

I want to focus my contribution on agriculture under the scope of the Bill and on trade policy going forward. We have not done trade policy directly as a Parliament, as a Government or as a country for some 40 years. We devolved or evolved or passed that power over to the European Union. Any Member or person in the United Kingdom who wants to hold up the European Union as a body one would want to replicate in terms of scrutiny obviously has not been participating in public discourse over the past five years.

I welcome much of what is in the Bill, but I seek reassurances on agriculture in particular. We produce high quality produce in this country and we are proud of our exports. We are proud of what our farmers are doing in the current covid-19 crisis to supply our domestic suppliers. I think public discourse on food supply is changing. Public discourse is changing on the robustness and the resilience of our supply networks. We have seen first-hand, through the work of the International Trade Committee, what has happened to some trade deals when national Governments have looked at their domestic supplies of pharmaceuticals and food stuffs during this crisis. We need to be very mindful of that as we put new trade deals in place.

Trade is vital for carcase balancing, the ability to sell cuts that the UK market does not want, and for dealing with demand shocks and seasonal issues. Trade is hugely important to my farmers, but I feel that because this subject has been dealt with in the European Union over the past 40 years there is a lot of misinformation. There is not a great deal of clarity on trade policy or how trade deals are put together. I implore the Minister and the Government to put in place some kind of communication package to explain what it means now that we have these important powers and what it means to be negotiating with the world as UK plc.

Last week there was a conflation of import standards with domestic standards and tariffs. It was hugely complicated and hugely frustrating to deal with that conflation of information. In a domestic Bill dealing with import standards, and sanitary and phytosanitary issues on top of that, we need to be clear with our constituents and our businesses what standards we are talking about and what impact the deals will have on our agricultural communities. I implore the Minister not just to engage with the farming unions—the Farmers' Union of Wales and the NFU Cymru in my case; and I know the Minister has been on Zoom with them this week—but to build a relationship directly with farming communities, too. The unions of course conduct a great political campaign to promote their members' views, but we need to engage directly. The unions of course conduct a great political campaign to promote their members' views, but we need to engage directly.

We must maintain our import standards. I very much welcome the Minister's public commitments, made at the Dispatch Box, to maintain the bans on chlorine-washed chicken and hormone-injected beef. We must be clear that those import standards are staying and that we have the

back of the agricultural community in this country. While we look at the resilience of our supply chains and the great opportunities that new trade deals with the outside world present, we must reassure and earn trust. Minister, I have to report back that, in the agricultural community, mainly because of misinformation and miscommunication, we are looking to you to earn that trust and make us some great deals.

3.45 pm

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab): The Trade Bill is a bad Bill. It is bad because it fails to establish a proper framework whereby Parliament can scrutinise, ratify and implement all future international trade treaties; because it creates one of the weakest trade remedy authorities in the world, and because it pretends that it is necessary to roll over our existing agreements with third countries through the EU. So necessary is the measure that the Minister will have great difficulty when summing up in explaining how the Government have managed to roll over the majority of them before the Bill has passed into law. This is legislative prestidigitation of the highest order. The Government say that they need the Bill to do what they proudly boast they have already succeeded in doing without it. The truth is that the Bill is about the Government's abrogating to themselves all future power in relation to trade agreements, freed from the inconvenient scrutiny of Parliament.

The procedure for ratifying international agreements is set out in the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010—CRAGA. It stipulates that any treaty need only be laid before Parliament for 21 sitting days. If there is no vote against it during that period, it passes into law. But the Government decide Parliament's business and can simply arrange that no vote takes place. When CRAGA was introduced, a huge number of democratic scrutiny processes were in place through the European Union. There was the European Council's negotiation mandate and formal consultation procedures. The Committee on International Trade—the INTA Committee—scrutinised treaties before passing them to the European Parliament to vote on. Treaties then came to the European Scrutiny Committee in the Commons for further examination before the CRAGA process ratified them. Under the Bill, all that is left is the rubber stamp of CRAGA. All other layers are gone. The Bill should try to replace those layers. It cannot be right that there is no democratic oversight whatsoever of trade agreements.

Members of Parliament may disagree about whether an agreement will benefit jobs or adequately protect standards, but they should have at least the right to debate those matters and hold the Government to account. The Bill denies us that right. This is not Parliament taking back control, but Government snatching it from Parliament. That is why I believe the Bill is dangerous.

Let me remind Conservative Members of what they claimed to be fighting for at the last general election. They said that sovereignty meant not accepting the rulings of supranational courts such as the European Court of Justice. Do they therefore agree with us that the use of investor-state dispute settlement mechanisms in future trade agreements should be ruled out in any form? They give higher rights to foreign investors than to our own domestic companies, allowing them to sue our Government in private courts for policy decisions that have an impact on their potential profits. So much for gaining freedom from a supranational court.

[Barry Gardiner]

Conservative Members said that Britain had to be free to chart its own future in the world. Do they therefore agree that negative lists of services should be banned? It is impossible to specify in a list a service that has not yet been invented. The negative list process would stop the UK Government making a decision about how such services should be provided in future. So much for making our own way in the world.

Conservative Members said that they would safeguard our domestic environmental protections, food safety regulations and animal welfare laws, but simply keeping our regulations for our farmers here does not protect them in a free trade agreement. Allowing the importation of goods produced elsewhere to lower standards will undermine our producers and lead to a race to the bottom—so much for safeguarding our food and welfare standards.

The Government said they would not sell off the NHS, and of course they cannot. The NHS is not an entity that can be sold, but free trade agreements can contain an innocuous-sounding provision about the restructuring of pharmaceutical pricing models. That is the way to undermine the health service—by downgrading our bulk purchasing power against big pharma companies. So much for the NHS being “safe” in their hands.

Finally, does it follow that if this Bill is enacted, by necessity we will end up with all these measures? No, it does not. It does mean, however, that if they exist in any proposed FDA, Parliament will have no means of stopping that. This debate is about more than trade; it is about the balance of power between Parliament and the Executive. It is about the sovereignty of Parliament—something that every Tory who will vote for this obnoxious Bill swore in their manifesto to defend.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I am afraid I cannot hear Richard Graham at the moment, so I will now call Robert Courts.

3.50 pm

Robert Courts (Witney) (Con) [V]: It is an honour to speak in this debate and to participate in the detail of the Bill with my colleagues from the International Trade Committee. I am pleased that so many of them are taking part in this debate. Free and open trade has created the world in which we live—a world that is open, prosperous, and inventive. One of the greatest prizes to be seized by any Government is the ability to carry out an independent trade policy, which is what we are doing today.

Why does trade matter in the first place? It is pretty straightforward. Exporters and their supply chains are responsible for millions of jobs in the UK. Countries whose economies are open have higher productivity, because of competitive pressures and greater specialisation. Analysis by the Department for International Trade suggests that businesses that export goods are around 21% more productive than their non-exporting counterparts. Those exporters provide a larger proportion of UK manufacturing and labour productivity growth.

However, we can do so much better that we currently do. That same survey data suggests that 250,000 to 350,000 UK businesses have tradeable goods and services, but do not currently trade internationally. When we couple that with the undoubted, unquestionable benefit of the UK brand, which has fans from North America

to China and everywhere in between, this is an opportunity for each and every one of us throughout the country. When we consider the potential benefits of a US trade deal alone, and the possibility of bilateral trade increasing by more than £15 billion, increasing wages by £1.8 billion and benefiting every area of the country, we see the extraordinary prize that lies before us. All that is before we even start to consider the exponential growth that is likely to come from the developing world in the next 10 to 20 years.

It is foolish to see trade as some game of numbers that is reduced to statistics. People have traded together since one cave dweller traded food for tools in the dim and distant past, and what trade starts, friendships continue. Whether it was Bastiat, or someone else, who said that when goods do not trek across borders, soldiers will, the essence of that remains true, as is its flipside. Trade helps people to understand each other and get to know something of the way that other societies work. That must be delivered through an independent trade policy—one that applies our priorities to our country, and does not let somebody else’s priorities be applied for us.

Those who say that the Bill does not make provision for high standards must know that this is not the place for that; this Bill sets the framework for the conversations that are to come. In any event, the Government have been crystal clear about our ambitions for the future. As the Prime Minister said in his speech on 3 February, “we will not accept any diminution in food hygiene or animal welfare standards... We are not leaving the EU to undermine European standards. We will not engage in any kind of dumping, whether commercial, social or environmental.”

However, having high standards is not the same thing as letting others set them for us, or seeking to control the way that others regulate their industries. If, in any event, we want to set trade defences, barriers or tariffs, we will need the Trade Remedies Authority that is set out in the Bill.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that those who object to the Bill as it stands are those who object to free trade in general and wish to cling to the old-fashioned protectionist agenda that was defeated in this country more than 100 years ago. Protectionism will always have an appeal for those who wish to protect vested interests, but we should be clear: history makes it clear that protectionism leaves everybody the poorer, and the poorest worse of all. That is all the clearer when we look at the impact of the current crisis. Exporters and their supply chains are responsible for millions of jobs in the UK. With unemployment rising during the crisis, job creation with exporters afterwards will be more important than ever, and we must have the flexibility to make our own measures for our own markets. Only by having that flexibility can we ensure that Britain’s economy is successfully refreshed.

As we look to ensure that we have what we need to protect us for the future—PPE, medicines and other things—it is natural to wish to turn inwards, to protect we have and to keep more for ourselves, and to ensure that we in our island can look after ourselves. In some ways, that is an understandable impulse, but not in the area of trade. Not only is it morally wrong to retreat behind a protectionist barrier wall by which the developing world is excluded—we would pay the consequences for that behaviour in any event—but it is against our own interests.

We cannot make everything ourselves and we cannot make everything well. We should concentrate on what we are good at—high-tech industries, for example—and look elsewhere at where others can better help us and we can help them, too.

It is keeping open global trade routes that has enabled us to be fed, to buy PPE and to secure essential medication from all across the globe. Free trade is not just an economic opportunity, but the openness of the system itself provides a vital defence. We must seek to diversify our supply chains, because in that way we can improve our resilience to withstand future challenges and ensure that we reduce our reliance on countries—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his speech, but we have to move on now to Paul Girvan—[*Interruption.*] We will come back to Paul Girvan, and will move on to Marco Longhi.

3.56 pm

Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con) [V]: The Trade Bill we are discussing today is a framework that allows us to continue to trade as a nation state with those countries who already have a trade agreement with the EU. It enables UK service providers to seek out business in Government procurement markets worth £1.3 trillion, and reshores from the EU those protections available under WTO rules to support British business against unfair trading activities under the new trade remedies authority.

Why is that important? It means that we will harpoon yet again the ill cited arguments that we will crash out and fall off a cliff edge through Brexit. It means that we can seek out new business, and it means that we can finally take effective action ourselves against rogue nations who do not respect international trading conventions. Let us remind ourselves of the EU's impotence when China dumped its excess steel on our markets, and the jobs it cost us here in the UK.

It is an undisputed fact that open markets and free trade generate wealth and our new-found and hard-won ability to seek out new markets will grow our economy. Covid-19 has brought about a global tendency towards protectionism, which we know has the opposite effect. We must not be drawn into this trap at any cost, as we shall be poorer for it. However, what covid-19 has shown is that for all their rhetoric, the EU's institutions fail to respond effectively, if at all, and its constituent members immediately behaved as a collection of nation states. They offered a shallow apology to the Italian people for leaving them to their own devices while protecting their own. I must ask, was that not entirely predictable? That begs the question of how, as a nation at this historic junction, we consider the strategic implications of a future crisis. Should we be more self-reliant in key areas such as energy, food and medicines? Many large corporates are now reshoring as they understand the total cost of outsourced activities, including problems with quality control, the cost of unreliable supply chains and the carbon footprint of products, just to name a few. That is why I was delighted to hear about our investment to produce 70 million masks in the UK and create around 450 jobs at the same time. It is about taking a risk-based approach and understanding the total cost-benefit arguments of decisions that we take in the key areas that affect our national resilience.

Globalisation is here to stay. As we harness the great opportunities presented to us by Brexit and FTAs, our biggest challenge is how we do so. The area that I represent in Dudley and the many areas that my new colleagues represent have not always benefited. Globalisation has seen benefits, but also a race to the bottom with a low-wage economy in traditional manufacturing and the loss of jobs in the sector. Buying a pair of boots for a few pounds less is not a huge benefit if there is not a job to go to.

Analysis shows that there are between 250,000 and 350,000 businesses that currently do not export but could. My plea is that we target those businesses, with a special focus on those in the midlands, with determination, enthusiasm and strategic focus, and at real pace, so that we can add value and bring new jobs to these areas while we also minimise the devastating impact of covid-19 on local economies and people's lives.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): We now go back to Paul Girvan.

4.1 pm

Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP) [V]: It is a privilege to follow the hon. Member for Dudley North (Marco Longhi) and to have an opportunity to talk about the Bill, which is a road map to the UK and Northern Ireland's future trading relationship with the rest of the world. It is important that we uphold and protect the good standards that we have set.

The Bill is focused on five main areas: procurement and the GPA; trade agreements; the formation of a trade remedies authority; information collecting, mainly in respect of HMRC; and data sharing. I want to focus mainly on what will affect Northern Ireland, which has a large proportion of exports, with 17% of all Northern Ireland sales going out of the country—sales worth £6.2 billion in 2018-19.

Two of our main sectors are machinery and transport: machinery makes up £3.2 billion of our total, and food, agriculture and the export of live animals make up £1.5 billion. I agree with the comments by the hon. Member for Montgomeryshire (Craig Williams) about agri-food, which we have to protect. We must ensure that we maintain the standards that have been fought for and achieved, and that we implement them as much as we can in any future agreements. We have a fantastic farming and agri-food industry in Northern Ireland. We have fought hard to ensure that our industry is sustainable, and we want to ensure that it is there for the future.

The pharmaceutical industry plays a big role in Northern Ireland. In my constituency we have Randox, and elsewhere in Northern Ireland we have Almac and Norbrook Laboratories. All are working hard during this covid-19 crisis. They have an offer to the rest of the world that we have to maintain.

We have a great wealth of talent in our tech industry. It was recently announced that 65 jobs are to be created in Northern Ireland at the American firm Cygilant. We have to ensure that we have opportunities to uphold. I am a free marketer, but I do believe that we have to protect those industries that are currently struggling and make sure that they have every opportunity to be included in trade deals.

The previous Bill fell in 2019 as a result of the Westminster election. As we did not have a Northern Ireland Assembly in place at that stage, we had no input

[Paul Girvan]

from the Northern Ireland Executive in relation to what should or should not be included in that Bill. We have an opportunity to ensure that all areas of the United Kingdom are represented on the new body, the TRA, that will be set up. All regions of the United Kingdom and the devolved areas should be represented on it. I am asking for an assurance that when deals are put forward, they apply in full to Northern Ireland, are fully accessible to businesses and trade from Northern Ireland and will be for the benefit of all. This Bill is an opportunity for us to take back trade certainty and to take back control within our own Parliament and we will support it. I thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak in this debate this afternoon.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): We can now go back to Richard Graham.

4.5 pm

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con) [V]: I hope you can hear me better this time, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am grateful for the opportunity to join this debate.

As our debate across the country widens gradually from how to protect our citizens' health to how to protect their jobs, this Trade Bill is important. Some 30% of our GDP comes directly from our exports, and they in turn generate many of the jobs of all of our constituents. This is especially true in high-value manufacturing and engineering, cyber and services, in all of which there are some great examples clustered around my constituency of Gloucester.

This Bill, which provides the infrastructure for our own trading agreements with the Government procurement and the Trade Remedies Agency, is part of our plan to put our exporters in a position not just to recover but to grow again. Alongside the talks with the EU being handled through the Cabinet Office, and those by the Department of International Trade with the US, Australasia and the Trans-Pacific Partnership, this Bill highlights some of the Government's strategy to take this forward.

I support all the goals mentioned in the Bill, but at the same time we should be honest about the risks. Global trade is currently in decline. Nationalism and protectionism are on the rise. The backdrop is not as benign as it was for an overall expansion of our trade, growth of exports and expansion of jobs in exporting businesses. We clearly do need to finish the agreements with our allies, such as Singapore, Canada and Japan, with which agreements did already exist. Trying to negotiate separate agreements with separate teams simultaneously with both the US and the EU is high-wire trade diplomacy. I wish our ministerial teams and all the negotiators all good fortune in taking these forward successfully. I believe that many of these things will go down to the wire, and our teams should play tough. They should stick with the game, and we need their success.

It is also worth highlighting the opportunities from the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is an important accession opportunity rather than an FTA. Even though there is some overlap, we should not forget the importance of the 10 members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. TPP is not a complete substitute for continuing

to grow our business with ASEAN in terms both of exports and bilateral investment. The way in which investment from the Philippines, to pick one small example, has turned around the fortunes of the Glaswegian Scottish whisky blender Whyte and Mackay is a strong case in point when it comes to the advantages of inward investment.

May I encourage the Secretary of State, the Minister who in his place and their teams to focus strongly, as we go forward, on the Continent of Asia both for greater market access through economic dialogues, as well as on FTAs and the TPP, recognising that most of its agricultural commodities and handicrafts are completely complementary to rather than competitive with our own output. Our services, for example those providing health insurance for millions across south-east Asia, are hugely beneficial for those countries as well as for our businesses. Ultimately, that is why this Bill is so important: it is an opportunity not only for us but for our trading partners, and we are right to strongly make the case as to why free trade does matter across the world.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I shall now suspend the House until 4.24 pm.

4.9 pm

Sitting suspended.

4.24 pm

On resuming—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): We go now to Belfast South and Claire Hanna.

Claire Hanna (Belfast South) (SDLP) [V]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. We in the Social Democratic and Labour party have put on record our concerns about the concept of upending the trade environment for businesses, particularly while many are in the fight of their lives against covid, as well as our scepticism about the possibility of negotiating this deal in just seven months, given the social distancing and travel restrictions on us all.

We have another few objections to the content of this Bill. The first concerns democratic oversight and the Bill's failure to uphold basic principles of scrutiny and oversight, including around delegated powers. When Brexit was fought for on the basis of powers for this Parliament, it seems bizarre that MPs would vote to hand those powers to the Government unchecked to allow them to negotiate and sign, with incomplete scrutiny, trade deals that could have a massive effect on many aspects of our lives. Trade is a reserved matter, and this has particular implications for those of us in devolved regions where the powers may very well cut across devolved matters.

Our second objection relates to the protection of the national health service. The Bill fails to provide cover for that, despite numerous invitations to the Government to do so. The Government may say that the national health service is not for sale, but many people feel that actions in the medium and recent past make that unlikely to be true. Many have pointed out that we had applause for the national health service just last Thursday, but on Monday of this week a Bill was introduced that will seriously hamper the ability to provide health and social care services. Leaked papers from last year make very clear—if they were not already—the US's interests in a

trade deal, namely further access to NHS contracts and data. If the Government want people to believe that that will be off limits, they need to legislate specifically for that.

We also have serious concerns about the environmental ramifications of the approach set out in the Bill, which we do not think is compatible with an acknowledgment of our obligations to address climate change and improve resilience. The Bill should be underpinned by binding high environmental standards and non-regression provisions, but it is not. If done badly, these trade deals risk a race to the bottom on environmental protections and standards, as well as labour protections and standards. The fact that the Government rebuffed attempts to introduce standards via the Agriculture Bill will convince many people that the Government are not serious about such protections.

That leads me on to farming. Farmers in Northern Ireland and, I would imagine, elsewhere were dismayed by the Government's failure to accept reasonable amendments to the Agriculture Bill. That leaves farming and many other sectors facing an uncertain future. That is particularly true for farmers in Northern Ireland—I am sure it is the same in many other regions—who trade and market on the basis of exceptionally high standards. They now fear that they will face competition from products of low and, indeed, unknown standards.

I want to finish with some questions that I hope the Secretary of State will address in her wind-up. One is about the trade arrangements that we currently enjoy with other territories—I think there are 74. How many of those arrangements have been rolled over to date, given that we require them all to be so within a matter of months? Does she anticipate that any countries that have rolled over, or that have indicated a willingness to do so, will seek to renegotiate in the light of the tariff schedule that was published yesterday? Does she acknowledge that every differential between the UK and the EU tariff schedules adds to the list of goods at risk in the Northern Ireland protocol and offers incentives for smuggling? Does she believe that that is yet another unfortunate consequence that people in Northern Ireland have to deal with, despite having rejected Brexit at every turn?

Finally, the Secretary of State has pointed out in the past that Northern Ireland will have UK tariffs applied—and lower, if that is negotiated with partners—but if any future arrangements require changes to regulatory practices and areas that are covered by the Northern Ireland protocol, will those arrangements have a carve-out for Northern Ireland?

4.30 pm

Cherilyn Mackrory (Truro and Falmouth) (Con) [V]: It has been almost four years since the United Kingdom voted to leave the European Union. For the majority of that time, my constituents have been wondering what this would mean for them, their families and their businesses. Much has been made of the negatives in the last few years. What might go wrong? What markets are being lost? What standards are being lowered, and so on?

Today, of course, we find ourselves in a state of flux. The year 2020 has taken an unexpected turn and has altered the world in such a way that we are currently not sure what our normal is. Our coastal and rural communities

are understandably nervous about what their future will look like. I understand those concerns completely, but the Bill offers a glimpse of life in the future, and for this we must be optimistic. With this Bill, global markets are a step closer to being opened up to Truro and Falmouth, the whole of Cornwall and the entire United Kingdom.

Figures suggest that a free trade agreement with the US, for example, could potentially boost the economy in the south-west by £284 million in the long term. One business in my constituency that might benefit from this is a copywriting agency based in Penrhyn. It works for tech companies around the world, including the likes of Microsoft, Amazon, Oracle and Salesforce, and around 35% of its business is from overseas. Two of the biggest clients are now based in the US, and it received funding last year from the Department for International Trade to travel to Boston to develop stronger relationships with one of its clients, a global software firm. Another company, also based in Penrhyn, uses precision 3D laser scanners to offer a safe and highly efficient surveying service to a wide range of industries. Founded 10 years ago as a 3D mining surveying company, it has branched out and offers surveying for yachts, vessels and other architectural design, with work being explored in the Balkans and on the African continent. These are just two examples of businesses in my constituency where I hope future open markets will be of greater advantage. There are many such businesses in Cornwall that can springboard once tariffs and red tape are reduced.

To support the dairy industry, food and drink and small businesses, the FTA could allow changes to tariffs for key exports such as dairy, which are currently as high as 25%. It could also see protection and growth for the region's famous local exports. The south-west already exports £3.7 million-worth of drinks to the US, and a deal could help to build those exports and maintain effective protection for food and drink names to reflect their geographical origins, such as Cornish cider and, of course, Cornish pasties.

Last week, we voted to ensure that the Agriculture Bill moved to the next stage of its progress through Parliament. The House will remember that there were two amendments regarding the protection of food standards. I voted with the Government because I felt that this was not a discussion that should disrupt an otherwise fantastic piece of legislation. However, it is an important issue and one that Cornish farmers and I feel very strongly about.

Many farmers in my constituency are concerned that opening up the markets to imports from the US, in particular, could unfairly disadvantage them. However, managed correctly, I strongly believe that the UK agricultural sector will greatly benefit from a UK-US trade deal. There are clear opportunities for agricultural exports, of course. Currently, the average tariff on Cornish cheese, for example, is around 17%, which means that US consumers must pay more, so our quality produce is often priced out of the market.

However, on the tricky subject of food imports, I believe that the Government need to consider open, clear and obvious labelling—I am a big labelling fan and I am becoming a labelling nerd. I really want to see the Government working with food and agricultural industries to ensure that consumers can really see what they are buying. In my heady days as a new MP, all the way back at the beginning of the year, the Secretary of State made

[Cherilyn Mackrory]

encouraging noises about better labelling, and that, for me, is key. When purchasing fresh meat, we see that our labelling has got much better. I, for one, always look to see that a chicken is free range and British. I am reassured by that, as I know that our free range chickens are, on the whole, happy chickens. However, someone buying a chicken korma ready meal, for example, will see no indication of where that chicken started its life or of whether it was content with its lot.

In closing, we must trust the British people to do the right thing, and we must give them all the information they need to make the correct decisions. Most people want to support British farmers, and reward their hard work and high animal welfare standards. The Government have a responsibility to make that as easy as possible; it is not protectionism—it is trust. It is about trusting our farmers and farming industry to carry on being the best—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. The hon. Lady has exceeded her five minutes.

4.35 pm

Antony Higginbotham (Burnley) (Con) [V]: I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate, as it represents a major step forward in the UK's journey to reclaim its role as the independent, global trading nation we all want it to be, delivering on a pledge I made to my constituents and the Government made to the country. Burnley has been a beneficiary of free trade: our largest employers include Safran Nacelles, of France, and Paradigm Precision, of the United States, and only a few weeks ago, Ultimate Visual Solutions, a local business, worked with the Department for International Trade to secure its first order in Vietnam—I am sure it will be the first of many.

Sadly, however, our area has lost jobs in recent weeks. Lancashire is the fourth largest manufacturing cluster for aerospace in the world, and that is one of the most global of sectors, in terms of both the supply chain and the customers it serves. The sector has been hit hard, and our challenge is to make sure that free and fair trade helps to spur our recovery on, getting the hundreds of thousands of businesses that do not currently export exporting, and generating economic growth and the jobs that go with it. I am committed to doing everything I can to make sure that is the case in Burnley. I was particularly pleased to hear the Secretary of State mention the textiles industry, as anyone who knows Burnley well will know that it was once the centre of global textiles and continues to have a thriving industry, which I know can reclaim that title once again.

For international trade to work, we need to ensure we have a safety mechanism—a way of dealing with those countries that say they trade freely but seek advantage through anti-competitive means. The proposal in this Bill for a Trade Remedies Authority is therefore welcome. That body will need to have the teeth required to deal with subsidies, dumping and any other measures used to distort the market.

As we take this step again towards being an independent, global trading nation, it is right that we also consider why trade is important, and not just why we are supporting it. The simple truth remains that free trade creates free people; it has done more to lift people out of poverty

than any other measure, and it continues to drive global economic growth. That is why the UK initially joined what was then the European Economic Community; we saw, and continue to see, the benefits of striking trade relationships with like-minded countries. Having left the EU, it is important for us to look at the agreements struck on our behalf over the past 40 years to identify whether to carry them over. This Bill allows us to do that. I congratulate the Secretary of State and the whole departmental team for the way in which they have done this; 48 of these agreements are ready to be rolled over, securing more than £110 billion-worth of trade.

I have heard some people criticise the way in which the Government are planning to roll over some of the agreements, including the one with Japan, as though trying to be more ambitious, liberalising more trade and securing thousands more jobs in the UK were, in some way, a bad thing. The message from the House in this debate should be clear: the Government have our full support in trying to strike the best trade deals. We should roll them over where we can, where it is in our interests, but we should also build on them where we can, getting the best for Britain, because as we emerge on to the world stage of trade, we should be the leading light. I welcome the Government's transparency as to where they seek to do that. Last week, we got full sight of the negotiation objectives for the UK-Japanese negotiations, just as we have done in respect of the US ones. The Secretary of State has made herself available to all colleagues on many occasions to discuss the UK-US free trade agreement, and I am sure that similar time will be made available to discuss the Japanese negotiations. Committing to using the affirmative procedure for any secondary legislation required to implement these continuity agreements ensures that there is ample time for debate in both Houses.

We also need to ensure that our trade agreements—those that are getting rolled over and those we negotiate in the future—are fit for the 21st century. Where we can negotiate new deals that allow UK technology companies to operate globally, including through innovative regulatory mechanisms such as the FinTech bridge, we should do so. Chapters on that, along with those on SMEs, will allow our businesses not just in Burnley but beyond to scale up rapidly in the global market, delivering the economy of the future.

I warmly welcome the Bill. It puts the UK back on the global trading map with an independent trade remedies body, and it provides the mechanism needed to roll over and expand existing trade agreements. For that reason, I look forward to voting for the Bill later.

4.40 pm

Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD) [V]: The Liberal Democrats will be voting against the Second Reading of the Trade Bill. It denies the British people the same rights that they enjoyed as members of the European Union, including the right to scrutinise and properly debate the terms on which we will trade with the rest of the world. When we were represented by Members of the European Parliament, we enjoyed that right. Our representatives were required to vote on all draft trade deals before they could be ratified. There is not enough time today to go over the old debate on whether or not the UK is better off as part of a single trading bloc—Members will surely be in no doubt about my own

views on that issue—but it is inconsistent to have secured the right for the UK to negotiate its own trade deals, only to promptly shut the British people out of all discussions about them.

What would our constituents wish us to prioritise if they were allowed a say? They would want to know that goods coming into our country were produced to the same quality standards as the domestically produced goods they will compete with; that any food coming from abroad was farmed with sufficient regard to animal welfare; and that consumers were protected from shoddy or unsafe goods. They would want to know that the workers producing those goods in other countries had the same rights as UK workers, and to know that cheaper prices for imported goods were not achieved at the cost of employee welfare. They would also want to resist a race to the bottom by business owners who argue that maintaining employment standards in this country makes them uncompetitive. They would want to know that the UK and our international trade partners were pushing forward towards the goal of achieving net zero carbon, and that we could not accept goods into our domestic market that were produced with environmental standards that were any lower than those of goods produced here.

The Government wish to preserve the Union, but we know that they are happy for part of the United Kingdom to trade under different terms from the other nations to meet their political objectives. What else will this Government trade away if they are left unscrutinised? Our counterparts in trade negotiations will have to have their deals endorsed by their legislatures. The US deal will need to be ratified by Congress. Its negotiators will know what will and will not get through Congress, and they will use that as a negotiating position. We will not have the same negotiating strength, as our counterparts will know that we do not have to defer to Parliament. It will be much easier for the UK to yield than it will be for the US, and how tempting will that be, if the Government prize a quick political win over uninteresting detail that nobody can scrutinise?

The International Trade Secretary is surely aware that the significance of tariff barriers is declining as the significance of non-tariff barriers increases. Those non-tariff barriers can be complex and shifting and require difficult choices. Do we prioritise cheaper goods over the fight against climate change? Do we open up foreign markets to our exports at the risk of bolstering a regime that does not respect human rights? These questions should be debated on the Floor of the House so that the public have a full understanding of the decisions that are being made on their behalf.

This country is a very different place from the one that last negotiated its own trade agreements. We have a far wider range of consumer goods available to us, and many of us have sufficient income to be able to make discerning choices about which ones we will purchase. We are better informed than we ever were, and we use that information to guide our buying choices. Consumers are using their buying power to demand and achieve significant improvements in the ethical and environmental production of the goods they purchase. Why should the British people not be able to influence how that same power is exercised on their behalf on a national basis in the global marketplace?

To oppose the Bill is not to endorse protectionism, as some Members on the Government Benches have implied. It is simply to state that the Bill does not seek to realise fully all the opportunities that building our own trade policy represents. It robs the British people of rights they have enjoyed for 50 years and it weakens our negotiating position on future trade deals.

4.44 pm

Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con): I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this debate. Over the past three months, our primary focus has been coronavirus and the challenge we face on a national and local level. It is right that we have spent a huge amount of time, effort and focus on coronavirus. At the same time, if we do not prepare as parliamentarians for the future beyond coronavirus, whenever that terrible disease eventually moves on, and if we do not spend time thinking through how we reshape the world and take advantage of the opportunities that will come, we are not doing our jobs adequately.

One of the big jobs is ensuring that we have the right foreign policy, trade policy and international trade policy. That is why I welcome the opportunity to debate this Bill. I do not share the criticisms from Members that we are not giving the Bill adequate scrutiny or that now is not the time to make these decisions. I do not claim to be an expert in international trade, but in some ways, we do not need to be experts in international trade to welcome a Bill that, at its heart, perpetuates the principle that I hope most people in this place stand for: free trade.

Free trade is one of those principles and ideologies that is not much talked about other than as a negative, but actually, it has significantly improved our lot domestically over many centuries. Vitality, it has also improved the lot of so many people across the world, ensuring that so many people are lifted out of poverty and giving us so many opportunities. Yet Members on the Opposition Benches focus on the challenges or disadvantages of it.

We as parliamentarians suffer the quagmire—the fog—of special interest groups, who are perpetually rent-seeking when it comes to these Bills. We suffer the white noise of groups such as 38 Degrees who seek to spam us in ways that misinterpret and offer misinformation about the reality of what we are trying to do.

It is free trade that has partly been responsible for the reduction in absolute poverty by more than half since 1990. It is free trade that contributed to the magnificent growth of economies around the world, such as those in South Korea and Germany, out of the ruins of war 50 or 60 years ago. We should stand up for the opportunities that free trade offers.

This is not a paean to free trade on just a principled or conceptual basis. Free trade presents demonstrable opportunities for people in my constituency and constituencies across the country. It supports jobs in places like Clay Cross, where people go to work every day in highly skilled factories to export goods across the world. It supports entrepreneurs who see new opportunities and new markets around the world for their ideas, so that they can grow their businesses in places like Dronfield and Eckington. Bluntly, it supports us all in our old age, because we put money into pensions that grow by

[*Lee Rowley*]

investing in companies that use free trade to satisfy demand, move goods around the world and ensure that, ultimately, people get the things they need. I do not just support free trade from a principled perspective; I support it because it helps North East Derbyshire and every single other constituency in this country.

We also need to support free trade and Bills such as this because of the opportunities that will come in the next few decades. We will have to get over the challenges caused by coronavirus in the next few years. Opening up markets, seeking to obtain deals across the world and seeking to roll over, as the Bill does, existing deals and enhance them where possible are exactly the kind of opportunities we need to take as we rebuild our country after the grave difficulties that were so unexpected in the last three months or so.

Free trade does not mean a free-for-all. It means the opportunity to build fair and equitable trade for all of us. Ultimately, free trade and the legislative framework that supports it give us and our constituents the opportunity to build better lives and to offer that to people across the world. It is something I celebrate, and I hope that the majority of people in this House do the same.

4.49 pm

Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab) [V]: There is a great deal of public concern about the Bill before us today, because it fails to provide for effective parliamentary scrutiny in future trade agreements. In effect, the Government will have free rein to do what they like in signing trade agreements with countries around the world, including countries that do not have the same level of environmental protections, food safety and animal welfare regulations that we currently have. Free trade agreements can have an impact on our labour standards, and on the ability of our public services to operate in the public sector. That has profound implications for the quality of all our lives, and for our democracy.

Before the current covid-19 crisis, large sections of the public had become aware of the privatisation of the national health service which has been going on under this and previous Conservative Governments. The Bill fails to protect the future of the NHS, since it does nothing to prevent trade deals from being done behind closed doors without proper parliamentary scrutiny.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012, introduced by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat Government, brought in complex changes, undermining our national health service as a public service delivered by public sector employees. The abolition of the student nurse bursary seemed designed to erode further the public sector ethos of our NHS. Yet, despite this onslaught from the Government, today we see doctors, nurses and other NHS workers putting their all into serving all of us as our country goes through the most terrible of public health emergencies. It is humbling and we owe them an immense debt of gratitude for their outstanding dedication. In this context, it is all the more important that those of us in Parliament and in this place stand up for the NHS and fight to protect it. I believe that the Bill fails to protect the future of our national health service.

The British Medical Association has been quite clear that the Bill should stipulate that the health and social care sectors are excluded from the scope of all future

trade agreements to ensure that the NHS can be publicly funded, publicly provided and publicly accountable. It is also quite clear that the Bill should rule out investor protection and dispute resolution mechanisms, to ensure that foreign private companies cannot sue the UK Government for legitimate public procurement and regulatory decisions, and that protections should be included in the Bill to ensure that NHS price control mechanisms are maintained so that patients have access to essential and life-changing medicines.

I am very concerned that, while our fantastic NHS workers are doing everything they can to tackle covid-19 and provide care and support to anyone who needs it, the Government are seeking to pass a Bill that does nothing to enable elected representatives meaningfully to scrutinise trade deals to protect the NHS. The Trade Justice Movement has said:

“The current processes are fundamentally undemocratic: Parliament has no guaranteed say on trade deals, and the government is not required to be transparent before or during trade negotiations.”

At the last general election, the Conservative party manifesto promised:

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

Yet, the National Farmers Union has highlighted the absence of any provisions to safeguard the high farming production standards in the context of the international trade negotiations. Compassion in World Farming has quite rightly said that any new trade agreements must not undermine UK standards for animal welfare, food safety or environmental protections, and that they must protect UK farmers from imports produced to standards lower than those in the UK.

During the transition period following the UK's exit from the European Union, trade remedies are dealt with by the EU. At the end of the transition period, we need our own trade remedies authority to investigate alleged unfair practices. However, the new trade remedies authority provided for in the Bill lacks the independence, parliamentary oversight and accountability needed to ensure that it will operate transparently and fairly when investigating and challenging practices that distort competition against UK producers in breach of international trade rules. There is no provision for ensuring a voice on the trade remedies authority for industry bodies or trade unions, and there is no proposed mechanism for their ongoing consultation on trade practices affecting the competitiveness of UK industries or the employment of workers therein.

To conclude, the Bill fails to make provision for meaningful and effective parliamentary scrutiny of trade deals and gives the Government immense powers to turn back the clock on safety standards in the food we eat, the products we buy, our employment rights and the way in which public services are delivered. It threatens the future of the NHS by leaving it exposed to greatly increased privatisation—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. The hon. Lady has exceeded her five-minute limit.

4.54 pm

Jo Gideon (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Con) [V]: This is an important Bill for global Britain, and important too for our local manufacturers, not least in Stoke-on-Trent. As a passionate supporter of free trade, I am grateful

for the opportunity to speak in this debate, not only as the Member of Parliament for Stoke-on-Trent Central—an urban constituency with many excellent exporting businesses—but as a former small business owner who traded with many nations and sold products internationally for UK markets.

Covid-19 is having a profound effect on world trade. We will not know the full impact for some time, but we do know that free and fair trade—the global movement of goods and materials—has been key to fighting this terrible virus. We all expect a vaccine, regardless of where it is first successfully developed, to be shared with the global community. Crucially, flexibility, wherever possible, is being demonstrated in the most extraordinarily creative ways by our domestic producers. After the pandemic, we will be able to embrace in full the exciting opportunity of free and fair trade.

Fair trade means rules-based trade. I welcome and am encouraged by the willingness of the Department to retain trade remedies against the outrageous practice of dumping, particularly of ceramic wares and especially by China. It is precisely because our manufacturers are not competing on a level, rules-based playing field that we need to keep tariffs on many ceramic goods. Our producers do not expect special favours, but they do expect safeguards against special favours being granted elsewhere.

Free trade can lead to fierce competition, but this should not necessarily be regarded as negative. Under normal circumstances, world-class firms like Portmeirion, Wade Ceramics and Emma Bridgewater in my constituency are more than up to the challenge of producing the very best products in the global market, leading consumer trends, creating sales opportunities, and attracting investment. Indeed, in much of the quality ceramics markets globally, we are the fierce competition. The prospect of a trade deal with America that feeds the huge US demand for British ceramics is a real and positive one. I know that both my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the US ambassador are particularly keen to seize the opportunity of feeding the US appetite for British ceramics.

But we are not currently in normal circumstances. The return to work is slow, and the new practices will take time to adjust to. The Trade Remedies Authority needs to be alert to the problems of rule-breaking and watch rogue actors, as we will be in Stoke-on-Trent. We hope that the Government take the lead by ensuring that “Made in Stoke-on-Trent” is emblazoned as a back-stamp on every piece of tableware they procure and that Potteries pottery is in use in our embassies and high commissions across the globe. Indeed, I hope that the Department will seriously look at housing a trade adviser in Stoke-on-Trent, hopefully at a purpose-built ceramics park and centre for international research into advanced ceramics manufacture. We are determined to keep Stoke-on-Trent as the world capital of ceramics, at the cutting edge of advanced manufacturing and traditional table and ornamental ware.

I welcome the clarity on the global tariff and support this Bill as a key step in realising the opportunities for global Britain.

4.58 pm

Theo Clarke (Stafford) (Con) [V]: Free trade is vital for Britain to have a robust economy, so I welcome the fact that this new Trade Bill gives Britain the opportunity

to write a new chapter in our trading history. Free trade provides an environment that encourages fair competition, leading to greater specialisation and increased innovation.

Over 250,000 UK businesses have tradeable goods and services but do not currently trade internationally. This represents millions of pounds and thousands of jobs that the British economy is missing out on. I have been speaking to Staffordshire County Council and the Department for International Trade to encourage more Stafford-based businesses, both big and small, to explore further exporting opportunities. I welcome this Bill because it sets out a framework for a truly global Britain.

We are all aware of the devastating impact that coronavirus is having across our communities, from the tragic loss of life to the long-term impact that it is having on our economy and my constituents’ quality of life. I fully support the wide range of measures that the Government have introduced to tackle coronavirus and the unprecedented lengths that the Chancellor has gone to in protecting the economy and supporting people’s jobs.

In my roundtable with members of the Staffordshire chamber of commerce last week, I was therefore disappointed to hear that jobs across Staffordshire may be at risk. Trade provides a beacon of hope for the future of our economy, and it is imperative that every link in the supply chain is encouraged to grow. Just as coronavirus has demonstrated in such a devastating way how closely we are all connected, it is global co-operation that will be vital to defeating this deadly virus, so we must use the lessons learned from this pandemic to foster more collaboration between nations.

I welcome the fact that the Government have been working with the World Trade Organisation and the Commonwealth to champion a liberal free trading agenda across the world and to support developing countries in maintaining the benefits of trade for their economies and populations, which is all the more important now that the Commonwealth Heads of Government summit in Kigali, which was scheduled for June—I had planned to attend—has now been postponed.

If I may focus for a moment on Africa, our two-way trade has enormous value—a total of £35.1 billion of goods and services in 2018, according to the Office for National Statistics—creating sustainable jobs both at home and abroad. I was pleased that our Prime Minister seized this opportunity by hosting the inaugural Africa investment summit in London earlier this year, where he promised to renew our economic partnership with Africa, which contains some of the fastest growing economies in the world.

Let me explain how trade with Africa directly affects my constituency in the west midlands. Last summer, I visited a Fairtrade co-operative cocoa farm in central Ghana. I saw for myself the jobs that the farm provides, especially for women and the families they support. Not only is it a great Fairtrade initiative, but the beans are used to produce chocolate that is transported throughout the world, including chocolate found in my supermarkets here in Stafford and across the UK. It was concerning to hear that Ghana’s cocoa industry is now facing a \$1 billion shortfall in revenue, with devastating consequences for the farmers I met last summer.

African countries are facing a dual crisis with the impact of coronavirus on their populations and the global economic slowdown, which threatens to undo

[*Theo Clarke*]

the hard-fought economic gains of the past 25 years. It is vital that Britain has the opportunity to create its own trade policy that strikes the right balance between encouraging imports of goods that we need and incentivising manufacturing and production on home soil to sell in Britain and export around the world.

I welcome the fact that the Trade Bill will work hand in hand with a number of other measures, such as the UK global tariff, to usher in a new era of trade. The UK is removing tariffs from goods that it does not produce and that come from developing countries—cotton yarn, for example, is going from 4% to 0%—and at the same time backing British agriculture by applying tariffs on other goods. The Prime Minister has pledged that the UK will be the foremost champion of free trade in the world. I hope that the Trade Bill will boost British goods and ensure that we can encourage others to trade out of poverty.

5.3 pm

Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab) [V]: I wish to focus my remarks on what the Bill and the Government's trade policy means for human rights around the world in terms of our existing obligations and our commitment as a country to stand up against human rights abuses wherever they take place.

When striking trade deals across the world, many nations use trade to influence human rights policy, yet there is concern that, faced with the need to strike quick deals to demonstrate success in the aftermath of Brexit, the Government will water down human rights protections, particularly when China, India and Russia—all countries with a poor record on human rights—rank within the UK's top 25 export and import markets.

China's deliberate evasion of human rights is well known, with the mass detention, torture and mistreatment of the Uyghur Muslims in particular, along with controls on their daily lives. Russia is also notorious for its weak human rights record, lack of accountability for those in public office and widespread torture and persecution.

While any abuse of human rights is abhorrent and must be challenged, the Indian Government's human rights abuses in Indian-occupied Kashmir—well-documented by several human rights organisations, including the United Nations—is particularly important for my constituents in relation to any trade deals with India. As we speak, the region is now almost 10 months into a brutal lockdown that has seen cities, towns and villages placed under what is in effect a siege, with food, water and medicines restricted from entering and civilians restricted from leaving. This lockdown has also seen communications cut on an unprecedented scale, which has prevented any spread of information and left security forces even more unaccountable. With a need for reliable information to restrict the spread of coronavirus, this electronic curfew causes yet more harm.

Sadly, this experience is nothing new for the sons and daughters of Kashmir. They are routinely subjected to persecution, discrimination and heavy-handed tactics by Indian security forces, with a disproportionate use of force, including the indiscriminate firing of live ammunition and the routine use of pellet guns that have left hundreds of Kashmiris, including children, blind for life. That is

to say nothing of the repressive control measures, rapes, tortures and indiscriminate detentions that take place across the region at the hands of the security forces. What is scandalous is that those committing these human rights abuses are immune from prosecution under the Indian Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, rendering them in effect untouchable, despite their crimes.

The Indian Government also continue to deny the Kashmiris their right to self-determination, as was mandated by a United Nations Security Council resolution that is now well over 70 years old. There is no prospect any time soon of the vote that will allow them to shape their own destiny, particularly following the illegal decision to revoke articles 370 and 35A. In effect, that decision repeals what little autonomy Kashmir held in its position as a disputed territory at the heart of an unresolved conflict. What the Indian Government are doing in Indian-occupied Kashmir is vile and abhorrent, and it must be called out and challenged.

We cannot let our desire for trade allow us to ignore this. The Government must not be afraid to put human rights and high standards before trade, especially when it concerns those nations, such as India, with whom we share strong historical, cultural and social ties. In this region in particular, we have both a historical and moral duty, and as is the case with all human rights abuses, it is an international issue, not a domestic one or a bilateral one, that we cannot and must not ignore.

With time not permitting me to speak longer, let me say in conclusion that while this Bill allows the UK to pursue new trade deals, it must not pursue a new approach on human rights or overturn years of hard work in pursuit of a quick deal that turns a blind eye to human rights abuses, human suffering, the abuse of workers or the watering down of environmental protections. Instead, it must commit to strengthening our human rights commitments and to ensuring that any future trade deal incorporates the highest standards on human rights. At the very least, this means an end to the detention camps in China and to the persecution, discrimination and injustice in Kashmir, with the repeal of the special powers Act and a free, fair and independent plebiscite for Kashmiris to decide their own future, in line with the United Nations resolutions that this House has an absolute duty to uphold.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): The last speaker from the Back Benches is Fay Jones.

5.8 pm

Fay Jones (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con) [V]: Thank you very much, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is an honour to have been called to speak in this debate, and to be called last.

The Bill before us today is one of continuity, which during these uncertain times will provide reassurance to many of the hard-working rural businesses in my constituency of Brecon and Radnorshire. The Bill builds on two manifesto commitments on which I was elected: to protect the national health service and to protect our farmers from substandard imports. Trade is the cornerstone of our economy, and ensuring that stability is maintained as we leave the transition period is paramount. With our exit from the European Union, there has never been a better time to broaden our horizons and to seek opportunities as an independent trading nation.

Constituents have contacted me recently to voice their concerns about the Bill and the fact that the national health service could be vulnerable to privatisation when the UK joins the Government procurement agreement in its own right. I am certain that it will come as great reassurance that the Bill makes it clear that the UK's GPA coverage does not and will not apply to the procurement of UK healthcare services.

Every day we are reminded of the overwhelming importance of our national health service and the services that it provides, and I want to take this opportunity to thank all those working on the frontline, particularly in Brecon and Radnorshire. I am glad that no part of the Bill will change the way in which we deliver our healthcare provision in the UK. It is clear that the NHS will remain a public service that is free at the point of use, paid for by taxation and fundamentally working for the benefit of the public.

Brecon and Radnorshire is home to some of the greatest farmers in the country—arguably some of the best in Europe. This morning I had the pleasure of talking to the young farmers clubs of Brecknock and Radnor—or rather, they did most of the talking. Representing a constituency that revolves around farming, I want to ensure that those young farmers have a bright and prosperous future. Their high-quality produce is more than a tradeable commodity; it is a source of deep pride, to them and to me. Their commitment to the highest standards of animal welfare and food production is very inspiring and should be championed at every opportunity, especially as we deliver on signing new and ambitious trading agreements around the world.

I firmly welcome the Government's commitment to ensuring that we will not compromise on our standards when pursuing future trade deals, as that would inevitably lead to a decline in our prized agriculture sector—something that I cannot accept. I wholeheartedly echo the comments of my neighbour and hon. Friend the Member for Montgomeryshire (Craig Williams), who called for greater engagement with the farming community on the Bill. I know that the Minister will give consideration to that. I am grateful that the Secretary of State confirmed yesterday that she is happy to visit one of the seven livestock markets in my constituency, and I look forward to welcoming her as soon as possible.

With the creation of a new independent body, the trade remedies authority, businesses and producers in the UK can have confidence that as we secure the benefits of global free trade, we can simultaneously provide a safety net for our domestic industries. As our trade remedies are currently maintained by the European Union, it is imperative that the authority has the necessary powers to protect UK producers against unfair trading practices such as unfair subsidies and dumping, and I wholeheartedly support those aims.

The Bill will ensure that we are able to roll over our current trading arrangements. Now, as an independent nation, we have the chance to reaffirm and expand our agreements. We are limited only by our ambition. Rural mid-Wales needs every opportunity to trade our produce and services around the world. Driving jobs and economic growth through international trade is crucial and a priority of this Government, but I urge Ministers to give rural entrepreneurs as much of a fighting chance as their urban counterparts. Our message is clear: an

independent Britain will be open for business, and across Brecon and Radnorshire we are willing and eager to play our part.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): We now go to Bill Esterson to wind up the debate for the Opposition.

5.13 pm

Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab) [V]: Labour believes in free and fair trade. International trade will play a vital role in how we recover from the biggest economic shock since the second world war, but we cannot return to a system of unscrutinised trade deals that open the door to lower living standards and higher carbon emissions. The Bill should provide a framework for trade policy, create a trade remedies regime that works for the whole country and give people the confidence that trade deals will be properly scrutinised by MPs and civil society, but it does very few, if any, of those things.

International trade agreements have the potential to undermine our public services, favouring foreign multinationals eyeing up our NHS, for example. They can be used to undermine workers' rights here and abroad, and to damage food safety and animal welfare. They can prevent action to tackle the climate emergency. That is why there is so much concern about the Bill and why the lack of scrutiny envisaged under it is wrong—wrong for the agreements covered by the Bill and wrong because of the precedent it sets for future trade agreements, such as that with the United States. My hon. Friend the Member for Wirral West (Margaret Greenwood) was one of a number of Members who expressed similar concerns. My hon. Friend the Member for Bradford East (Imran Hussain) called for human rights to be strengthened, and not ignored, as part of trade negotiations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones) gave an excellent analysis of the case for investment in our manufacturing base, which of course requires a trade remedy system that acts in the long-term interest of manufacturers and does not give equivalent importance to temporary consumer gains from unfairly subsidised imports. In fact, the hon. Members for Dudley North (Marco Longhi) and for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon) gave perfect examples of what can go wrong when low prices for consumers are put first, only to see workers in domestic manufacturing lose their jobs.

The hon. Member for Dundee East (Stewart Hosie) was right when he said that trade agreements are about much more than trade. He also highlighted the lack of engagement with the devolved Administrations.

My hon. Friend the Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner) did an excellent job of scrutinising the Bill last time around, as the then shadow Secretary of State. His description today of the weakness of the trade remedies system and what he called the Government's view of Parliament as “an inconvenience” was again an excellent analysis of all that is wrong with what he called “this disastrous Bill”.

In last week's Agriculture Bill, the Government blocked attempts to lock in food standards, and environmental and animal welfare protections. In a framework for international trade, rights and standards should include those proposed last week—not just food safety standards,

[*Bill Esterson*]

but standards that do not deliver an unfair advantage from the cheaper production that results from insanitary conditions for livestock and often the use of GM foods to boost yields. The hon. Member for Tiverton and Honiton (Neil Parish) said that he was told last week that those were matters for the Trade Bill—perhaps the Minister will tell us whether that is true.

On continuity agreements, we told the Government what would happen when they tabled a similar Trade Bill to that in the last Parliament. We said then, and we say again now, that the new agreements need to be properly scrutinised by Parliament, by the devolved nations and by civil society. Twenty of the existing deals remain to be signed. Why? Because the third countries want better deals—deals that need proper scrutiny, the scrutiny so far absent from the 20 deals that have been signed already.

What is proposed is undemocratic. While we were part of the EU, the European Parliament carried out scrutiny and voted on new trade agreements. That scrutiny process has been deleted with nothing in its place. I hope that the Minister for Trade Policy, the right hon. Member for Chelsea and Fulham (Greg Hands), will take note that his hon. Friend the hon. Member for Huntingdon (Mr Djanogly) quoted promises of a new scrutiny regime made by this Government. He called for more scrutiny, not less.

My hon. Friend the Member for Preston (Sir Mark Hendrick) made similar comments, and my hon. Friend the Member for Belfast South (Claire Hanna) made the same point in the context of the way in which trade is a reserved matter with the potential to cut across delegated powers in the nations of the UK.

Labour believes that MPs should have unrestricted access to negotiating texts as they are formulated, with the power to analyse those texts with the technical experts of their choice. As the House of Lords European Union Committee has warned mere “accountability after the fact” for Government negotiators does not represent “a sufficient basis for” meaningful “parliamentary scrutiny”. The devolved Governments, employers and unions should also be fully engaged.

When the Minister responds in a moment, will he tell me whether he has considered how the proposed parliamentary scrutiny and approval of trade deals in the UK compares with that in Australia, which the Secretary of State in her speech said was a model of free trade? While he is about it, will he tell us about the systems in the United States, in New Zealand and in other similar democracies? Finally, I ask him what the Government have to fear about emulating the level of consultation, evaluation and affirmation of trade deals that we see in those countries.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I call the Minister, whom I ask to take no more than seven minutes, please.

5.19 pm

The Minister for Trade Policy (Greg Hands): It is a pleasure to respond to what has proved to be a spirited and well-informed debate. The Bill provides us with the opportunity to come together to shape a piece of legislation that will underpin and enable our country’s prosperity

in the years to come up. Members from all significant parties and parts of the UK made valuable and considered contributions this afternoon.

The House will be aware that I was the Minister responsible for taking the Trade Bill through Committee during the previous Parliament—as alluded to by the hon. Member for Brent North (Barry Gardiner)—in my previous role in the Department for International Trade, so I stress that I am a continuity Minister for a continuity Bill. Nevertheless, my involvement in this latest Bill has been limited until relatively recently, so I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Bournemouth West (Conor Burns), who has done great service in engaging in constructive dialogue with colleagues from across the UK, as well as with key Opposition figures in both this Chamber and the other place, to bring the Bill back to Parliament.

Members have raised a number of important issues; I will try to answer as many of their questions as possible in the short time available. I am happy to write to Members to follow up on any further points, if any Members feel that to be necessary. I will also be holding a virtual “open door” session for all MPs on 4 June, when I can answer any further questions that they may have.

Before I turn to the issues, let me remind the House of the purpose of the Bill: it will enable the UK to implement our obligations in the trade agreements that we have signed and will sign with countries that already had trade agreements with the EU at the point at which the UK left the EU, on 31 January 2020. It will also enable us to implement our obligations under the WTO agreement on Government procurement, create the Trade Remedies Authority, and enable us to have data-sharing powers to assist in trade.

Let me respond to some of the individual points made. We welcome the right hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry) back to the Dispatch Box. Most extraordinarily, she said that the Bill was “not worth the wait”. She should try telling that to UK companies that are already participating in the \$1.3 trillion global procurement market as a result of the GPA. She should try saying “not worth the wait” about the £207 billion-worth of UK trade with those countries with which we are signing continuity agreements. She should try telling that to those companies and jobs that depend on a strong trade-defence regime in this country to protect against unfair trading practices. The Bill is well worth the wait.

The right hon. Lady asked about human rights; none of the 20 agreements signed so far contains any weakening of human rights commitments. There was no termination clause in underlying EU agreements, which is all we are seeking to replicate in the Bill. All the continuity agreements that the UK has signed so far have been laid before Parliament under the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 process—a process that the right hon. Lady voted for, when she was a Labour Member of Parliament, supporting her Government of the time.

Let me turn to some of the other points raised. It was fantastic to hear my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) talking about trade, welcoming the UK global tariff and discussing WTO reform, the rules-based system and his continuing interest in the WTO.

My hon. Friend the Member for Huntingdon (Mr Djanogly) asked whether any countries did not want a deal with us; the answer to that is no. I am happy to meet him again, as I did during the progress of the previous Trade Bill, to discuss his other points.

My hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) made an important point about the US section 230 and how it is dealt with in the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement. I know he has had repeated assurances from the Secretary of State but, again, I am happy to meet him to discuss these issues. We heard an excellent speech from my hon. Friend the Member for Montgomeryshire (Craig Williams), talking about high-quality produce in rural Wales. It is worth pointing out that, although it is not covered in this Bill, the prospective US free trade agreement is a great opportunity for farmers in his constituency to be able to sell Welsh lamb into the US for the first time, and a great opportunity for Welsh cheese.

We also heard excellent speeches in support of free and global trade from my hon. Friends the Members for Witney (Robert Courts), for Stafford (Theo Clarke), for North East Derbyshire (Lee Rowley), for Burnley (Antony Higginbotham), for Dudley North (Marco Longhi) and for Truro and Falmouth (Cherilyn Mackrory). We heard from the hon. Member for South Antrim (Paul Girvan), who wants Northern Ireland to benefit from all UK trade deals. That is absolutely clear in the withdrawal agreement and it is one of our commitments. The hon. Member for Belfast South (Claire Hanna) asked how many have already been rolled over. The answer is 20.

We heard from two of our brilliant trade envoys. My hon. Friends the Members for Gloucester (Richard Graham) and for Fylde (Mark Menzies) asked about trade with Latin America, CPTPP and ASEAN. Those are all vital. We heard important points from my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon) and for Brecon and Radnorshire (Fay Jones) about important industries in their constituencies. The hon. Members for Brent North (Barry Gardiner) and for Sefton Central (Bill Esterson) gave continuity speeches for a continuity Bill.

Finally, this Bill is a pragmatic first step in the Government's independent trade policy, ensuring stability now while building a bridge to the outward-looking, internationalist, truly global Britain that we envisage for our future. I urge hon. Members to reject the amendment and I commend the Bill to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. I must now conclude the debate and put the questions in accordance with the order of today. Before I put the question, I confirm that Mr Speaker's final determination is that remote Divisions will take place on the reasoned amendment and on Second Reading. There is therefore no need for me to collect the voices or for Members present in the Chamber to shout aye or no. I remind the House that the first vote is on the reasoned amendment, in the name of Keir Starmer. The question is that the amendment be made, and it falls to be decided by a remote Division. The Clerk will now initiate the Division on MemberHub.

5.26 pm

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 shortly. As the next question is contingent on the outcome of this Division, I will suspend the House for five minutes.

5.41 pm

Sitting suspended.

5.46 pm

On resuming—

Madam Deputy Speaker: I can now announce the result of the remote Division.

Question, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 352.

Division No. 48]

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Coyle, Neil
Abrahams, Debbie	Crawley, Angela
Ali, Rushanara	Creasy, Stella
Ali, Tahir	Cruddas, Jon
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Cryer, John
Amesbury, Mike	Cummins, Judith
Anderson, Fleur	Cunningham, Alex
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Daby, Janet
Ashworth, Jonathan	Davey, rh Sir Edward
Bardell, Hannah	David, Wayne
Barker, Paula	Davies, Geraint
Beckett, rh Margaret	Davies-Jones, Alex
Begum, Apsana	Davis, rh Mr David
Benn, rh Hilary	Day, Martyn
Betts, Mr Clive	De Cordova, Marsha
Black, Mhairi	Debbonaire, Thangam
Blackford, rh Ian	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Blackman, Kirsty	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Blake, Olivia	Dodds, Anneliese
Blomfield, Paul	Doogan, Dave
Bonnar, Steven	Dorans, Allan
Brabin, Tracy	Doughty, Stephen
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Dowd, Peter
Brennan, Kevin	Dromey, Jack
Brock, Deidre	Duffield, Rosie
Brown, Alan	Eagle, Ms Angela
Brown, Ms Lyn	Eagle, Maria
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Eastwood, Colum
Bryant, Chris	Efford, Clive
Buck, Ms Karen	Elliott, Julie
Burgon, Richard	Elmore, Chris
Butler, Dawn	Eshalomi, Florence
Byrne, rh Liam	Esterson, Bill
Cadbury, Ruth	Evans, Chris
Callaghan, Amy	Farron, Tim
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Farry, Stephen
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Fellows, Marion
Carden, Dan	Ferrier, Margaret
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Fletcher, Colleen
Chamberlain, Wendy	Flynn, Stephen
Champion, Sarah	Fovargue, Yvonne
Chapman, Douglas	Foxcroft, Vicky
Charalambous, Bambos	Foy, Mary Kelly
Cherry, Joanna	Furniss, Gill
Clark, Feryal	Gardiner, Barry
Cooper, Daisy	Gibson, Patricia
Cooper, Rosie	Gill, Preet Kaur
Cooper, rh Yvette	Glindon, Mary
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Grady, Patrick
Cowan, Ronnie	Grant, Peter

Gray, Neil
 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
 Hendry, Drew
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 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
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahan, Jim

McMorrin, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Mr Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Nicolson, John
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 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
 Pritchard, Mark
 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
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard

Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan

Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

NOES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Ahmad Khan, Imran
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan (*Proxy vote cast by Eddie Hughes*)

Baker, Duncan
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 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
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 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
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 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
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davison, Dehenna
 Dinenage, Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 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
 Girvan, Paul
 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
 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
 Hoare, Simon
 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
 Lockhart, Carla
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherilyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Mann, Scott
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 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, 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
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 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
 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
 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
 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
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Question accordingly negated.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We now come to the Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time. The Question falls to be decided by a remote Division. The Clerk will now initiate the Division on MemberHub.

Question put.

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 shortly. As the next Question is contingent on the outcome of that Division, I suspend the House for three minutes.

6.2 pm

Sitting suspended.

6.5 pm

On resuming—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I can now announce the result of the remote Division that has just taken place.

Question, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The House divided: Ayes 355, Noes 254.

Division No. 49]

AYES

Adams, Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Ahmad Khan, Imran
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Amess, Sir David
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 (*Proxy vote cast by Eddie Hughes*)
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Baldwin, Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Baron, Mr John
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bone, Mr Peter
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, Ben
Bradley, rh Karen
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
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, 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
Crouch, Tracey
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
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Donelan, Michelle
Double, Steve
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
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
Foy, Mary Kelly
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, Lucy
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
Girvan, Paul
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
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
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
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
Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
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
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
Philip, 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
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 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
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 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
 Doogan, Dave
 Dorans, Allan
 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
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glendon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan

Johnson, Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Linden, David
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Mr Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Nicolson, John
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah (*Proxy vote cast by Kate Osamor*)
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bonnar, Steven
 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
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Callaghan, Amy
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 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
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela

Phillipson, Bridget	Streeting, Wes
Pollard, Luke	Sultana, Zarah
Powell, Lucy	Tami, rh Mark
Qureshi, Yasmin	Tarry, Sam
Rayner, Angela	Thewliss, Alison
Reed, Steve	Thomas, Gareth
Rees, Christina	Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Reeves, Ellie	Thompson, Owen
Reeves, Rachel	Thomson, Richard
Reynolds, Jonathan	Thornberry, rh Emily
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell	Timms, rh Stephen
Rimmer, Ms Marie	Trickett, Jon
Rodda, Matt	Turner, Karl
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd	Twigg, Derek
Saville Roberts, rh Liz	Twist, Liz
Shah, Naz	Vaz, rh Valerie
Sharma, Mr Virendra	Watling, Giles
Sheerman, Mr Barry	Webbe, Claudia
Sheppard, Tommy	West, Catherine
Siddiq, Tulip	Western, Matt
Slaughter, Andy	Whitehead, Dr Alan
Smith, Alyn	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Smith, Cat	Whitley, Mick
Smith, Jeff	Whittome, Nadia
Smith, Nick	Williams, Hywel
Smyth, Karin	Wilson, Munira
Sobel, Alex	Winter, Beth
Stephens, Chris	Wishart, Pete
Stevens, Jo	Yasin, Mohammad
Stone, Jamie	

Question accordingly agreed to.

Bill read a Second time.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The announcement was made to the House earlier this afternoon regarding the provisional determination that a remote Division would not take place on the following questions relating to the programme motion and money resolution. That is also the final determination.

TRADE BILL (PROGRAMME)

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83A(7)),

That the following provisions shall apply to the Trade Bill:

Committal

The Bill shall be committed to a Public Bill Committee.

Proceedings in Public Bill Committee

(2) Proceedings in the Public Bill Committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion on Thursday 25 June 2020.

(3) The Public Bill Committee shall have leave to sit twice on the first day on which it meets.

Proceedings on Consideration and up to and including third Reading

(4) Proceedings on Consideration and any proceedings in legislative grand committee shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour before the moment of interruption on the day on which proceedings on Consideration are commenced.

(5) Proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at the moment of interruption on that day.

(6) Standing Order No. 83B (Programming committees) shall not apply to proceedings on Consideration and up to and including Third Reading.

Other proceedings

(7) Any other proceedings on the Bill may be programmed.—(*Iain Stewart.*)

Question agreed to.

TRADE BILL (MONEY)

Queen's recommendation signified.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83A(7)),

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the Trade Bill, it is expedient to authorise the payment out of money provided by Parliament of any expenditure incurred by a Minister of the Crown, government department or other public authority under or by virtue of the Act.—(*Iain Stewart.*)

Question agreed to.

Liaison (Membership)

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): We now come to the motion on the membership of the Liaison Committee. Mr Speaker has selected amendment (a) in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman). The provisional determination is that a remote Division will take place on the amendment if it is moved. The provisional determination is that a remote Division will not take place on the main motion, as amended or not, as the case may be. I call the Leader of the House, Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg, to move the motion, and I ask that he speak for no more than four minutes.

6.7 pm

The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg): I beg to move,

That –

(1) With effect for the current Parliament, notwithstanding Standing Order No. 121 (Nomination of select committees), the Members elected by the House or otherwise chosen to be chairs of each of the select committees listed in paragraph (2) shall be a member of the Liaison Committee;

(2) The committees to which paragraph (1) applies are:

Administration;
 Backbench Business;
 Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy;
 Defence;
 Digital, Culture, Media and Sport;
 Education;
 Environmental Audit;
 Environment, Food and Rural Affairs;
 European Scrutiny;
 European Statutory Instruments;
 Finance;
 Foreign Affairs;
 Future Relationship with the European Union;
 Health and Social Care;
 Home Affairs;
 Housing, Communities and Local Government;
 Joint Committee on Human Rights (the chair being a Member of this House);
 International Development;
 International Trade;
 Justice;
 Northern Ireland Affairs;
 Petitions;
 Procedure;
 Privileges (the chair not being the chair of the Committee on Standards);
 Public Accounts;
 Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs;
 Regulatory Reform;
 Science and Technology;
 Scottish Affairs;
 Selection;
 Standards;
 Statutory Instruments;
 Transport;
 Treasury;
 Welsh Affairs;
 Women and Equalities, and
 Work and Pensions;

(3) Sir Bernard Jenkin shall also be a member, and the chair, of the Liaison Committee.

I thought you were going to say, “Without hesitation, deviation or repetition,” in honour of the late and much-lamented Nicholas Parsons, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am sure that the whole House will welcome this debate. There has been an unfortunate delay in setting up the Liaison Committee, a situation that I seek to resolve so that the Committee can start its work this Session.

The House will be aware that this motion was objected to, and that we have since needed to delay bringing the motion back until such time as we could consider it properly, including having the ability to divide on the matter if needed. This motion establishes the Liaison Committee, a long-standing Committee of this House. The Committee brings together the Chairmen of Select Committees to an important forum, which takes evidence from the Prime Minister on matters of public policy and supports the House to scrutinise legislation and other policy proposals. The Government look forward to continuing their constructive working relationship with the Committee, particularly on issues such as pre-legislative scrutiny of Government Bills.

The motion specifies the membership of the Liaison Committee, and that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) should chair the Committee. As he is an experienced and respected former Select Committee Chairman, I would hope that he carries the support of the whole House to take on this role. It is my opinion that my hon. Friend has significant relevant experience in this area, in view of his previous experience chairing the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee and his long career as a Member of this House. Since his election in 1992, he has never viewed himself as a vassal of the Whips, and I am sure that Ministers who appeared before my hon. Friend in his previous role as a Committee Chairman can attest to his independence and thoroughness in robustly holding the Government to account.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): Why not have an election for the job?

Mr Rees-Mogg: We are having an election; there may be a Division—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. The right hon. Gentleman will not interrupt.

Mr Rees-Mogg: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I turn to the amendment in the name of the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) and others. It seeks to limit the eligibility of those who can chair the Committee to existing Select Committee Chairs. The Government have chosen to put forward a distinguished Member to chair the Liaison Committee. It is for the House to decide—extending the degree of democracy—whether it agrees the Government’s motion and thereby approves my hon. Friend’s appointment. In this way, the motion is the most democratic way of providing a mandate for the Chairman of the Liaison Committee.

It is worth noting that it has not always been the case that the Committee has elected its own Chairman from among the ranks of Select Committee Chairs. In fact, as recently as 2010, when the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham was Leader of

[Mr Rees-Mogg]

the House, a Member who was not a pre-existing Select Committee Chairman was the Liaison Committee Chairman, in accordance with an earlier, similar motion agreed by the House.

The Government respect the work of the Select Committees of this House and their independence in holding the Government to account. Today's motion will allow the Liaison Committee to begin its work. As is right, the House can now decide whether the motion is agreeable, including whether the chairmanship be taken up by my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex. I hope we can achieve a resolution today and allow the Liaison Committee to begin its important work in scrutinising the Government and supporting other Committees in this House. I commend this motion to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Thank you. We have a very short time left for this debate, so I must ask that every speaker now takes no more than three minutes. I call Valerie Vaz, who is asked to speak for no more than three minutes.

6.10 pm

Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab): I thank the Leader of the House for putting forward the motion. We support the setting up of the Select Committee but we do not support paragraph (3), and I will speak in favour of amendment (a) standing in the name of my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) and others. There are three reasons. First, on composition, "Erskine May" says:

"The Liaison Committee...comprises the Chairs of all the principal select committees."

In their helpful book, "How Parliament Works", Rogers and Walters confirm that on various pages. There are references to the Liaison Committee being made up of the Chairs of all the Select Committees. Page 216 of our Standing Orders, on rules and procedures of the House, states what is in order in the membership of the Select Committee, and it does not mention a spare person. Does the Leader of the House really think that we should abide by all the other rules but not that one?

That brings me to my second point, which is Standing Order No. 145 on the work of the Liaison Committee, which says that it considers general matters in relation to the work of the Select Committees, chooses the reports on estimates days, and considers other work of Select Committees and how they function. Can the Leader of the House say how a person who is not currently a Chair of a Select Committee can carry out that work?

Most importantly, being the Chair of a Select Committee carries great responsibilities. There are duties, responsibilities, and most of all, accountability to other members of the Committee. The proposed nominee has none of that. This also says to Chairs of Select Committees: "You were elected by the House but you are not good enough, so the Government will appoint a Chair. Your say does not matter, and, by the way, we will tell you who it is. No one else need apply—the Government have picked their man." Previously, there has been cross-party support for Chairs of Select Committees. I think that the £16,000, approximately, that is going to be paid to this Chair could be put to better use: perhaps it could go towards hiring an apprentice.

The Leader of the House talked about democracy. This is not democracy; it is autocracy. It offends against precedent, it offends against what is the right thing to do, and it offends against everything this House stands for. I support the amendment.

6.12 pm

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): The Liaison Committee is the only Committee that directly holds the Prime Minister to account, and accountability is all the more critical during the current crisis. If the House appoints me as Chair this evening, my first priority will be securing a date to take evidence from the Prime Minister as soon as possible—and Parliament is entitled to insist on this.

The Liaison Committee exists only to support and strengthen the other Committees, particularly when they are the only means of full scrutiny of the Government at this time. Individual Committees can only scrutinise their Departments, but in this crisis I have been giving thought to how the Liaison Committee can strengthen whole-of-Government scrutiny. It is in areas requiring cross-departmental co-operation where failures have been causing most public concern. Policy on care homes spans Health and Local Government. The reopening of schools is Education-led but it must work with the Treasury, Health and Local Government. Quarantining of international travellers is a Transport lead, but working alongside Home Office, Health, Business and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Health is relying on other Departments for the recruiting of trackers and tracers. Most importantly, the strategy for leaving the lockdown covers every Department. Scrutinising cross-cutting programmes is now vital, and the Liaison Committee could take a pivotal and unique role in this.

I appreciate others' concerns in this debate, but if the House so decides I will serve as Chair independently and impartially. I am grateful to many in all parts of the House, including my right hon. Friend the Leader of the House, for not doubting me in that. I have no wish except to serve this House and the Committee. Committees require Ministers and officials to be open, to bring out truth and to increase understanding within Government, as well as more widely. This is the only way to promote learning and improvement, and this principle will be my guide.

6.14 pm

Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP) [V]: I also wish to support the amendment. It is a fundamental tenet of democratic systems that the legislature should be separate from the Executive. Our role as an elected Chamber should be to make laws and scrutinise how the Government implement them. Our ability to do that depends upon having people who will speak out with independent mind and be prepared to criticise the Government, even when they might be in the same party.

Our Select Committee system is not perfect, but time and again, Committee reports have held the Government to account and even led to a change in policy. To their credit, these reports have often been fronted by Chairs who belong to the same party as the Government. This process is built upon Committees and their Chairs being appointed by Parliament—by elected Members—

rather than by the Government. Put bluntly, if someone owes their position to an appointment by the Government of the day, they will be unlikely to be as forthright in their criticism of that Government. Few people bite the hand that feeds them.

The Leader of the House's proposal will fundamentally change the relationship between Parliament and Government. This has nothing to do with the individual concerned, but everything to do with how he is appointed. If this goes through and the Committee is led by a Government placement, it effectively means that they will be marking their own homework.

Many Parliaments have an Executive—in mainland Europe, it is commonly called a bureau—that can act when Parliament is in recess or otherwise unable to meet. We do not, and I wonder whether our experience of the current emergency should lead us to conclude that we might have been better prepared if we had. Some will feel that the Liaison Committee might fulfil that role, but if anyone hopes that the Committee might act as some sort of interlocutor between Parliament and Government, this proposal will fatally compromise that ambition. A body led by a Government appointee who relies upon not distressing the Government in order to keep that job cannot and will not speak up for a critical or inquisitive Parliament.

Earlier today, we considered the Government's proposals to abandon any facility for Members to take part in parliamentary proceedings remotely during the current health emergency. Agreeing to that was a mistake that we will come to regret. Preventing MPs from working from home will reduce, not enhance, their ability to scrutinise the Government. It will effectively dispar and discriminate against those who are sick or vulnerable, and it will force others to choose between representing their constituents or putting their health and the health of others at risk.

There is a pattern emerging here. It shows a Government trying to mute criticism by procedural means, a Government running scared of accountability, and it is not a good look. This proposal should be rejected and the Liaison Committee should be allowed to get to work and elect a Chair from among its members, all of whom have been elected by and are accountable to this Chamber. To do otherwise—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Thank you.

6.17 pm

Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con): I am afraid that I cannot agree with the hon. Member for Edinburgh East (Tommy Sheppard). I think he has missed the point. What the Leader of the House has done has created a very powerful figure, who will scrutinise the Government. He will be on the "Today" programme, Adam Boulton, and he will be listed as Chairman of the Liaison Committee.

I would have preferred the Chairman to have been elected by the whole House, but the idea that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) is some patsy—well, as the Leader of the House said in his opening remarks, he is no vassal of the Whips, so that sold it to me immediately. I doubt there is anyone in this Chamber who does not think that my hon. Friend should be in the Cabinet, and that the reason he has not been in this or any other

Cabinet is that he has stood up for Parliament. We can go back to him being a Maastricht rebel, House of Lords reform or him trying to do something with the civil service, and, of course, he was one of the very first MPs to support Vote Leave.

I absolutely think he is the right man for the job—*[Interruption.]* They scoff on the Opposition Benches—*[Interruption.]* You cannot believe that. Anyone knows that he will do a great job and I am looking forward to him developing the position. I will not support the amendment because it would maintain the status quo, and of course the Leader of the House is trying to increase scrutiny. As we have started to talk about this, the Chief Whip has wandered into the Chamber. He may be saying to the Leader of the House, "What on earth have you let loose?" Well, I think that he has let loose parliamentary democracy.

This Leader of the House is a very good one, but he has all the problems of a Leader of the House; he sits in the Government and has to support the Government line, even when it is nonsense—that is obviously very rare, Chief Whip, but on occasion. My hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex, as Chair of the Liaison Committee, will be able to put Parliament first. As he develops the role, I hope that he will start to support the Back Benchers. *[Interruption.]* The shadow Leader of the House says from a sedentary position, "What about an election?" We are having the election. Nobody on the Opposition Benches proposed a different name, which they could have done; and they did not do so because they knew that they would have lost.

I really hope that this motion is carried tonight, and I congratulate the Leader of the House on stepping up scrutiny in the House.

6.21 pm

Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab) [V]: I beg to move amendment (a), leave out paragraph (3) and insert—

"(3) The chair of the Liaison Committee shall be a current chair of a Select Committee."

This amendment stands in my name and the names of many other Members of this House.

It would have been best if today we could have been agreeing to set up the Liaison Committee to take scrutiny into the heart of Government. As the Government make thousands of decisions that are literally a matter of life and death, the challenge and transparency afforded by scrutiny is important as never before. Better scrutiny means better decisions, and we all need the Government to be the best they can be right now. But instead of agreeing, we have the Government undermining the Liaison Committee at the very time they are setting it up, by imposing the Chair.

It should not be for the Government to decide the terms by which they are accountable; that should be for Parliament. Why are the Government doing this? A confident Government would have nothing to fear from robust, independent scrutiny. This move will weaken Parliament, but, even more, it is a sign of weakness from the Government. When Labour was in government and I was Leader of the House, we brought in secret ballots for Select Committee Chairs precisely in order to liberate them from control by the Whips and the dead hand of patronage. This Government imposition turns the clock back to the bad old days.

[Ms Harriet Harman]

The Leader of the House is supposed to be the Leader of the House as a whole, but he can spare us the pretence that this is somehow the will of the House—that this is somehow extending democracy. There is only one name to vote for today, chosen by the Government, and there is no secret ballot. For the first time, we could end up having a Chair of the Liaison Committee who has the support of only one party in the House—the governing party. Although it is House business, Government Whips have been at work to such an extent that many on their own Back Benches do not even realise that it is actually a free vote. I hope that Members will vote for my amendment. If the Government succeed in defeating it, it will be a bad day for the House for sure, but it will be a shameful day for the Government.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): The right hon. and learned Lady has moved her amendment, so the question is that the amendment be made, and because of the shortage of time, I have to ask the Leader of the House to conclude the debate.

6.23 pm

Mr Rees-Mogg: Within this House, one always knows that it is a weak argument when it is overstated, and I have to say that I have never heard a more overstated argument than that which we have received from the Opposition Benches.

The idea that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) is not one of most independent-minded Members of this House is patently absurd. He has stood up for this House, as my hon. Friend the Member for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) has pointed out, throughout his parliamentary career. One of the threads running through the career of my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex is that he has stood up for the interests of the House of Commons, be that in ensuring that the sovereignty of the House of Commons and of Parliament generally is maintained, or ensuring that the House of Commons was not overwhelmed by a shift of power to the House of Lords. He has held Ministers to account, and I am glad that the Chief Whip has come into the Chamber because my hon. Friend has been the bane of the life of Chief Whips since he was elected in 1992. It is therefore well known that he will be independent minded.

I also think it is peculiar to suggest that a vote of the whole House is less democratic than a vote of the clique within the House. That obviously cannot be true. Allowing the whole House to vote is the most democratic form we have. In this House, we boldly express our opinion publicly so that our voters know precisely what we think. We do not need to hide away in the shadows. We are happy to say that my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex is the right person for this job and that is why he has support.

I would say to the hon. Member for Edinburgh East (Tommy Sheppard) that constitutionally he does not fully appreciate how the system works. The Executive and the legislature have a symbiotic relationship. The Executive is drawn from the legislature. We are not like the United States, where there is no interconnection. Therefore, we always have in this House, and always have done going back into the mists of time, a relationship

between the Executive and legislature, but that does not mean that the votes of the legislature are not democratic votes. They clearly and self-evidently are.

Moving on to the amendment and why I oppose it on behalf of Her Majesty's Government, it is very straightforward. We are widening democracy, widening scrutiny and allowing the whole House to come to a decision on who should chair the Liaison Committee. We are taking away that decision, admittedly, from a smaller group to give it to a larger group, which is the proper thing to be doing.

Nobody, not one person who has spoken today, has suggested that my hon. Friend is anything other than impartial—[*Interruption.*] I hear various chunterings from the Opposition Benches. The principle of the House deciding is the most ancient principle of the House of Commons. That is the right way for us to do it. We decide by our vote. That is the art of democracy and this is the right procedure to be using to ensure that happens. [*Interruption.*] Oh, we have a chunter, "There's only one candidate." Did anybody else decide to amend the motion to suggest another candidate? Perhaps Opposition Members do not know how the procedures of Parliament work. May I give them a little bit of advice? If they are ever in any doubt as to how the procedures of the House work, there are many able, hard-working and thoughtful Clerks who will give them advice and they can work out how to put down amendments, but no other name came forward. Nobody else had any confidence in any other Member to do this job, which I know will be done extraordinarily well by my hon. Friend.

I happen to know that actually the Government have appointed someone who will be so independent-minded that if anyone thinks that he will be an easy ride, that person is mistaken. I commend the motion unamended to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I must now conclude the debate and put the question in accordance with the Order of today. Before I put the question, I confirm that Mr Speaker's final determination is that the question on the amendment 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. The question is that the amendment be made. The question falls to be decided by a remote Division and the Clerk will know initiate the Division on MemberHub.

6.28 pm

The House proceeded to a remote Division.

Madam Deputy Speaker: The remote voting period has now finished. I will announce the result of the Division shortly. I will suspend the House for five minutes until the result can be announced.

6.43 pm

Sitting suspended.

6.48 pm

On resuming—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I can now announce the result of the remote Division.

Question, That the amendment be made.

The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 323.

Division No. 50]

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Afriyie, Adam
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bonnar, Steven
 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
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clark, Feryal
 Collins, Damian
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Davey, rh Sir Edward
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Debbonaire, Thangam

Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doogan, Dave
 Dorans, Allan
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Ms Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farron, Tim
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, James
 Gray, Neil
 Green, rh Damian
 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
 Hendry, Drew
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hoare, Simon
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 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
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Law, Chris
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Merriman, Huw
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Mr Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Nicolson, John
 Norris, Alex
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten

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
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stevenson, John
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 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
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Wilson, Munira
 Wishart, Pete

NOES

Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, Stuart
 Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Ahmad Khan, Imran
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter

Ansell, Caroline	Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Hudson, Dr Neil	Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Argar, Edward	Donelan, Michelle	Hughes, Eddie	Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Atherton, Sarah	Dorries, Ms Nadine	Hunt, Jane	Nici, Lia
Atkins, Victoria	Double, Steve	Hunt, Tom	Norman, rh Jesse
Bacon, Gareth	Dowden, rh Oliver	Jack, rh Mr Alister	O'Brien, Neil
Bacon, Mr Richard	Drax, Richard	Javid, rh Sajid	Opperman, Guy
Badenoch, Kemi	Drummond, Mrs Flick	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Parish, Neil
Baillie, Siobhan (<i>Proxy vote cast by Eddie Hughes</i>)	Duddridge, James	Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Patel, rh Priti
Baker, Duncan	Duguid, David	Jenkinson, Mark	Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Baker, Mr Steve	Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Jenkyns, Andrea	Pawsey, Mark
Barclay, rh Steve	Dunne, rh Philip	Jenrick, rh Robert	Penning, rh Sir Mike
Baynes, Simon	Eastwood, Mark	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Penrose, John
Bell, Aaron	Edwards, Ruth	Johnson, Gareth	Percy, Andrew
Benton, Scott	Ellis, rh Michael	Johnston, David	Philp, Chris
Beresford, Sir Paul	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jones, Andrew	Pincher, rh Christopher
Bhatti, Saqib	Eustice, rh George	Jones, rh Mr David	Poulter, Dr Dan
Blackman, Bob	Evans, Dr Luke	Jones, Fay	Pow, Rebecca
Blunt, Crispin	Evennett, rh Sir David	Jones, Mr Marcus	Prentis, Victoria
Bone, Mr Peter	Everitt, Ben	Jupp, Simon	Pritchard, Mark
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Farris, Laura	Kawczynski, Daniel	Pursglove, Tom
Bowie, Andrew	Fell, Simon	Kearns, Alicia	Quin, Jeremy
Bradley, Ben	Fletcher, Katherine	Keegan, Gillian	Quince, Will
Braverman, rh Suella	Fletcher, Mark	Knight, rh Sir Greg	Raab, rh Dominic
Brereton, Jack	Fletcher, Nick	Kruger, Danny	Randall, Tom
Bridgen, Andrew	Foster, Kevin	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi	Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Bristow, Paul	Fox, rh Dr Liam	Lamont, John	Richards, Nicola
Britcliffe, Sara	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Largan, Robert	Richardson, Angela
Brokenshire, rh James	Frazer, Lucy	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Roberts, Rob
Browne, Anthony	Freer, Mike	Leigh, rh Sir Edward	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Bruce, Fiona	Fuller, Richard	Levy, Ian	Robinson, Gavin
Buchan, Felicity	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Lewer, Andrew	Robinson, Mary
Buckland, rh Robert	Gale, rh Sir Roger	Lewis, rh Brandon	Rosindell, Andrew
Burghart, Alex	Gibb, rh Nick	Lewis, rh Dr Julian	Ross, Douglas
Butler, Rob	Gibson, Peter	Lockhart, Carla	Rowley, Lee
Cairns, rh Alun	Gideon, Jo	Loder, Chris	Russell, Dean
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl	Logan, Mark	Rutley, David
Carter, Andy	Girvan, Paul	Longhi, Marco	Sambrook, Gary
Cartlidge, James	Glen, John	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Saxby, Selaine
Cash, Sir William	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Loughton, Tim	Scully, Paul
Cates, Miriam	Gove, rh Michael	Mackinlay, Craig	Seely, Bob
Caulfield, Maria	Grant, Mrs Helen	Mackrory, Cherylyn	Selous, Andrew
Chalk, Alex	Grayling, rh Chris	Maclean, Rachel	Shannon, Jim
Chishti, Rehman	Green, Chris	Mak, Alan	Sharma, rh Alok
Chope, Sir Christopher	Griffith, Andrew	Malthouse, Kit	Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Churchill, Jo	Griffiths, Kate	Mangnall, Anthony	Simmonds, David
Clark, rh Greg	Grundy, James	Mann, Scott	Skidmore, rh Chris
Clarke, Mr Simon	Gullis, Jonathan	Marson, Julie	Smith, Chloe
Clarke, Theo	Hall, Luke	Mayhew, Jerome	Smith, Greg
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Hammond, Stephen	Maynard, Paul	Smith, Henry
Clarkson, Chris	Hancock, rh Matt	McCartney, Jason	Smith, rh Julian
Cleverly, rh James	Hands, rh Greg	McCartney, Karl	Smith, Royston
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Harper, rh Mr Mark	McPartland, Stephen	Solloway, Amanda
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Harris, Rebecca	McVey, rh Esther	Spencer, Dr Ben
Colburn, Elliot	Harrison, Trudy	Menzies, Mark	Spencer, rh Mark
Costa, Alberto	Hart, Sally-Ann	Metcalfe, Stephen	Stafford, Alexander
Courts, Robert	Hart, rh Simon	Millar, Robin	Stephenson, Andrew
Coutinho, Claire	Hayes, rh Sir John	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Stevenson, Jane
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Milling, rh Amanda	Stewart, Bob
Crabb, rh Stephen	Heappey, James	Mills, Nigel	Stewart, Iain
Crosbie, Virginia	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew	Streeter, Sir Gary
Daly, James	Henderson, Gordon	Mohindra, Mr Gagan	Stride, rh Mel
Davies, David T. C.	Henry, Darren	Moore, Damien	Stuart, Graham
Davies, Gareth	Higginbotham, Antony	Moore, Robbie	Sturdy, Julian
Davies, Dr James	Hinds, rh Damian	Mordaunt, rh Penny	Sunak, rh Rishi
Davies, Mims	Holden, Mr Richard	Morris, Anne Marie	Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Davies, Philip	Hollinrake, Kevin	Morris, David	Syms, Sir Robert
Davison, Dehenna	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Morris, James	Thomas, Derek
Dinenage, Caroline	Holloway, Adam	Morrissey, Joy	Throup, Maggie
Dines, Miss Sarah	Holmes, Paul	Morton, Wendy	Timpson, Edward
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Howell, John	Mullan, Dr Kieran	Tolhurst, Kelly
Docherty, Leo	Howell, Paul	Mumby-Croft, Holly	Tomlinson, Justin
	Huddlestone, Nigel	Mundell, rh David	Tomlinson, Michael

Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Vara, Mr Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt

Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Question accordingly negated.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Before I put the question on the motion on Liaison Committee membership, as on the Order Paper, I remind Members that Mr Speaker's provisional determination was that the question will not be decided by a remote Division. That is also the final determination.

Main Question put and agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT

6.49 pm

House adjourned without Question put (Order A(5), 22 April).

Written Statements

Wednesday 20 May 2020

CABINET OFFICE

European (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks

The Minister of State, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith): I am today laying before Parliament a report, “The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 December 2019 to 25 March 2020”. I am laying this report because it is a legal requirement under the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018 for quarterly reports to be made to Parliament on the progress of the work to develop common frameworks. The report is available on www.gov.uk and details the progress made between the UK Government and devolved Administrations regarding the development of common frameworks. This report details progress made during the seventh three-month reporting period, and sets out that no ‘freezing’ regulations have been brought forward under section 12 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act. A copy of the “The European Union (Withdrawal) Act and Common Frameworks: 26 December 2019 to 25 March 2020” report has been placed in the Libraries of both Houses. The publication of the report reflects the Government’s continued commitment to transparency.

Attachments can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-05-20/HCWS250/> .

[HCWS250]

DEFENCE

Chemical Weapons Convention: Declaration of Protective Programme for 2019

The Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heapey): My noble Friend the Minister in the House of Lords (the right hon. Baroness Goldie DL) has made the following written statement:

The UK’s chemical protection programme is designed to protect against the use of chemical weapons. Such a programme is permitted by the Chemical Weapons Convention, with which the United Kingdom is fully compliant. Under the terms of the convention, we are required to provide information annually to the organisation for the prohibition of chemical weapons. In accordance with the Government’s commitment to openness, I am placing in the Library of the House a copy of the summary that has been provided to the organisation outlining the UK’s chemical protection programme in 2019.

Attachments can be viewed at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statements/Commons/2020-05-20/HCWS248>

[HCWS248]

In-orbit Research Satellites: Contingent Liability

The Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin): I am today laying a Departmental Minute to advise that the Ministry of Defence has received approval from Her Majesty’s Treasury to recognise a new contingent liability associated with the operation of satellites conducting in-orbit research by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl).

The departmental minute describes the contingent liability that the Ministry of Defence (MOD) will hold as part of its space science and technology programme.

Dstl has installed a ground station at its Portsdown West site, which will contribute to supporting space research activities, upskilling civilian and military personnel in satellite mission operations, and task its first research satellites for the Ministry of Defence. Through this programme, MOD will develop the skills and capability to achieve its strategic objectives in the space domain.

The contingent liability will last the duration of Dstl’s operation of the satellites and will come into effect if a satellite collision was caused via Dstl operation. Mitigations are in place against risks to minimise likelihood and impact which are deemed to be 0.001-0.01%. Her Majesty’s Treasury has approved a value of up to £500 million for the contingent liability to cover the maximum estimated damage cost resulting from a collision. The MOD will note the liability in its accounts May 2020.

Attachments can be viewed online at:

<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-05-20/HCWS249/> .

[HCWS249]

Rebalancing of Covid Support Force

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace): In late March, as the Government stepped up their response to the global pandemic, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) established the covid support force (CSF), in anticipation of a sharp increase in requests for military assistance to the civilian authorities (MACA).

Approximately 20,000 personnel, with appropriate planning, logistical, and medical expertise, were grouped within the CSF and held at higher readiness, alongside forward-based aviation assets, to ensure Defence could respond wherever and whenever needed across the United Kingdom.

Since then the CSF has played a key role throughout the national response. On any given day approximately 4,000 are “deployed” supporting other Departments and organisations. Many thousands more service personnel and civil servants are contributing to the response through their routine employment within defence medical services, defence science and technology laboratories, defence equipment and support, and various military headquarters. Together they have answered 162 MACA requests, from patient recovery in the Orkney Islands to logistical support in the Channel Islands.

Some of this has been highly visible, such as helping to build Nightingale hospitals, delivering PPE to hospitals and local resilience forums, and operating

mobile testing units. However, much of it has been out of sight from the public: whether supporting national-level strategy formation in DHSC and MHCLG; countering disinformation with the Cabinet Office, procuring PPE and medical equipment; or mentoring and liaising within local resilience forums, and their devolved equivalents, as they react to the complex and varied situations in their local communities.

Those situations are currently improving, due to the public's adherence to lockdown measures and the ability of other Government Departments to maintain essential services. As a result, the demand for CSF support has stabilised and it has not been necessary to deploy most of those personnel currently held at higher readiness.

It is appropriate that the MOD'S contribution and force posture are tailored to the evolving situation, so it can both respond to covid-19 and continue fulfilling other critical defence outputs.

This rebalancing is conditions-based and conducted in consultation with other Government Departments; assessing how many personnel are required to fulfil current CSF tasks and respond to all future requests, including those requiring uplifts in personnel.

That total is currently determined to be 7,500 personnel and it is now prudent to release the remainder of the CSF—otherwise held indefinitely at higher readiness—so they can return to other tasks and preparations for future operations.

Additionally, 2,000 of the reservists who volunteered for mobilisation but are no longer required to fulfil MACA tasks, are now being engaged about the processes for demobilisation with a view to mitigating the impact both to them and their employers. They are testament to the nation's resolve in this crisis and we are grateful for their enduring commitment.

The crisis is not over, so the CSF will continue assisting civilian authorities wherever required and no personnel—regular or reserve—will be withdrawn from tasks while the demand remains. Likewise, Defence's wider contributions to the covid-19 response, to the routine functioning of Government, and to the prosperity and wellbeing of society, all remain unaltered.

Defence is much more than its equipment and uniformed personnel. It is a community of public servants committing brains, brawn, and heart to ensure the nation's defence and resilience. That community will continue to support our colleagues in health and social care, providing however many people are required, for as long it takes, to help them defeat this virus.

[HCWS251]

PRIME MINISTER

Queens' Birthday Honours List

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): I would like to update Parliament on the Government's plans for recognising the extraordinary contributions being made by so many in response to coronavirus (covid-19)—and the forthcoming publication of Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday Honours List.

There is, understandably, huge appetite across the country to say thank you to all those on the frontline, within our communities and in our public services, who are supporting the nation through these unprecedented times.

The Government are clear that there will be a range of opportunities to mark the contributions of so many—but this must come at the appropriate time. Our current priority—and that of the front line services—remains tackling the current public health emergency.

I want to provide assurance today, however, that the moment to mark so many extraordinary actions will not be lost.

The honours system recognises exceptional contributions made across every part of the UK and will play a key role in demonstrating the nation's gratitude to all those involved in the response. In this context, The Queen has graciously agreed that the birthday honours list, due to be published in June, should be postponed until the autumn. This step will allow us to ensure that the list, agreed before this public health emergency developed, reflects the covid-19 effort, and comes at a time when we can properly celebrate the achievements of all those included.

We anticipate that covid-19 recognition will happen across future honours lists, reflecting the on-going work being done by so many. To ensure we are capturing contributions from across the country I would encourage the public to put forward nominations for those they know are going above and beyond, which they can do through www.gov.uk. These cases will be considered by the independent honours committees across a range of future honours lists.

Colonel Tom Moore, recently celebrating his 100th birthday, has become synonymous with the spirit of the current collective national effort. I have, exceptionally, recommended to The Queen that he be awarded a knighthood, in recognition of his extraordinary fundraising achievements, and as a signal of the kind of contributions we will want to mark in the months to come.

Further work is underway to identify the most appropriate ways and opportunities for the nation to express its gratitude and respect. The Government will make a further statement to the House in due course.

[HCWS246]

TRANSPORT

Manston Airport: Reopening and Development

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Andrew Stephenson): I have been asked by my right hon. Friend, the Secretary of State (Grant Shapps, MP), to make this written statement. This statement concerns the application of 17 July 2018 made by RiverOak Strategic Partners Ltd (“the Applicant”) under the Planning Act 2008 for the proposed reopening and development of Manston Airport in Kent.

Under sub-section 107(1) of the Planning Act 2008, the Secretary of State must make his decision within three months of receipt of the examining authority's

report unless exercising the power under sub-section 107(3) to extend the deadline and make a statement to the House of Parliament announcing the new deadline.

The Secretary of State received the examining authority's report on the Manston Airport development consent order application on 18 October 2019 and, following an earlier extension of four months, the current deadline for a decision is 18 May 2020.

The deadline for the decision is now to be extended to 10 July 2020 to enable further work to be carried out before determination of the application.

The decision to set a new deadline is without prejudice to the decision on whether to grant development consent.

[HCWS247]

Ministerial Correction

Wednesday 20 May 2020

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Coronavirus and Care Homes

The following is an extract from my response to an urgent question on Coronavirus and Care Homes on Tuesday 19 May 2020.

Matt Hancock: Fifthly, we have increased the social care workforce during this crisis and provided more support. Altogether, this is an unprecedented level of

support for the social care system. I thank colleagues across social care for their hard work.

[Official Report, 19 May 2020, Vol. 676, c. 492.]

Letter of correction from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the right hon. Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock):

An error has been identified in my response. The correct wording should have been:

Matt Hancock: Fifthly, we **are increasing** the social care workforce during this crisis and **have** provided more support. Altogether, this is an unprecedented level of support for the social care system. I thank colleagues across social care for their hard work.

ORAL ANSWERS

Wednesday 20 May 2020

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WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Wednesday 20 May 2020

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MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

Wednesday 20 May 2020

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