

**Wednesday  
30 December 2020**

**Volume 686  
No. 155**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Wednesday 30 December 2020**

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# House of Commons

*Wednesday 30 December 2020*

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

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Speaker's Statement

**Mr Speaker:** Before I start, can I just mention the sad loss of a friend of all of us, Brian Binley? Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

Before we come to the first item of business, could I thank all the staff of the House service and the joint departments who have worked hard to make this recall possible? Like many public servants, many of those staff have worked with hardly a break at a time when one would normally be expected. In my own office, we were working very late Christmas eve, Boxing day and all the way through. There are staff in this House who have not had a break. Please bear that in mind. I hope that any consideration of timings of the House proposed in the new year is considered in the context of the additional burden that has been placed on staff.

Due to the current severe public health situation, every effort has been made to enable today's proceedings to take place with the bare minimum level of travel to and attendance at Westminster. I will shortly call a Minister to move the motion that will allow a welcome return to virtual participation in debate for today and for the new year. I should inform hon. Members that when a speaking limit is in effect for Back Benchers, a countdown clock will be visible on the screens of hon. Members participating virtually and on the screens in the Chamber. For hon. Members participating physically in the Chamber, the usual clock in the Chamber will operate.

## BILL PRESENTED

EUROPEAN UNION (FUTURE RELATIONSHIP)

*Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)*

Michael Gove, supported by the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Secretary Dominic Raab, Secretary Priti Patel, Secretary Alok Sharma, the Attorney General, Penny Mordaunt and Julia Lopez, presented a Bill to implement, and make other provision in connection with, the Trade and Cooperation Agreement; to make further provision in connection with the United Kingdom's future relationship with the EU and its member States; to make related provision about passenger name record data, customs and privileges and immunities; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time today, and to be printed (Bill 236) with explanatory notes (Bill 236-EN).*

## Virtual Participation in Proceedings during the Pandemic (Temporary Orders) (No. 2)

*Motion made, and Question proposed,*

That the Order of 4 June, as amended on 22 October, be further amended as follows:

(1) leave out paragraph (1) and insert:

“( ) Members may participate in proceedings in the Chamber by electronic means approved by the Speaker and in accordance with any scheme drawn up and published by the Speaker;

( ) for the purposes of paragraph (1) “proceedings” includes proceedings on Questions, Urgent Questions and Statements, participation in debate (including moving a motion) and presentation of petitions but does not include divisions, challenging the decision of Chair as to the decision of a Question, or proceedings for which no notice is required, with the exception of any motion made in accordance with Standing Order No. 44 (Order in debate).”

(2) Leave out paragraph (2).—(*Mr Rees-Mogg.*)

9.36 am

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): Can I thank the Leader of the House for bringing forward this motion? It is a really important motion. I am slightly disappointed—it just shows the Government's desperate incompetence—that the Leader of the House chose to announce on social media that he was bringing forward this motion, and did not cc Opposition Members into the letter to the Procedure Committee. I want to thank the Chair of the Procedure Committee, the right hon. Member for Staffordshire Moorlands (Karen Bradley), and the whole Committee for all their hard work in listening to Members' concerns and bringing forward their voice on this. May I say, though, that it was wrong for the Leader of the House to pitch out hon. Members who were doing their duty by public health—those who, for example, had to stay at home looking after people with covid-19, which is sweeping our nations—and who did the right thing? Now every single voice of every single hon. Member can be heard ring out, subject to your call list, Mr Speaker, so Her Majesty's Opposition wholeheartedly support this motion.

9.37 am

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):** I am very grateful for the support of the right hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) for this motion. As London has gone into tier 4, it is obviously important that we move with the country at large. However, I do not want to eat further into the time available for today's important debate.

9.37 am

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): I just want to say that we also welcome the return of full virtual participation. I think it is regrettable that the Government have not given us remote voting. That means there are twice as many SNP MPs here today as there otherwise might have been, so I want to thank my hon. Friends the Members for Glasgow East (David Linden) and for Midlothian (Owen Thompson), who will act as Tellers for us later today. They would not have had to be here if we had had electronic voting.

**Mr Speaker:** Leader of the House, any further comments? No.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Virtual participation in proceedings commenced (Order, 4 June and this day).*

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

## **European Union (Future Relationship) Bill: Business of the House**

**Mr Speaker:** Before I call the Leader of the House to move the motion, I should inform the House that I have selected the amendment to the motion in the name of Ian Blackford.

9.38 am

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

That the following provisions shall apply to the proceedings on the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill:

### *Timetable*

(1) (a) Proceedings on Second Reading and in Committee of the whole House, any proceedings on Consideration and proceedings on Third Reading shall be taken at today's sitting in accordance with this Order.

(b) Notices of Amendments, new Clauses or new Schedules to be moved in Committee of the whole House may be accepted by the Clerks at the Table before the Bill has been read a second time.

(c) Proceedings on Second Reading, proceedings in Committee of the whole House, any proceedings on Consideration and proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion at 2.30pm

### *Timing of proceedings and Questions to be put*

(2) As soon as the proceedings on the Motion for this Order have been concluded, the Order for the Second Reading of the Bill shall be read.

(3) When the Bill has been read a second time:

(a) it shall, despite Standing Order No. 63 (Committal of bills not subject to a programme order), stand committed to a Committee of the whole House without any Question being put;

(b) proceedings on the Bill shall stand postponed while the Question is put, in accordance with Standing Order No. 52(1) (Money resolutions and ways and means resolutions in connection with bills), on any financial resolution relating to the Bill;

(c) on the conclusion of proceedings on any financial resolution relating to the Bill, proceedings on the Bill shall be resumed and the Speaker shall leave the chair whether or not notice of an Instruction has been given.

(4) (a) On the conclusion of proceedings in Committee of the whole House, the Chair shall report the Bill to the House without putting any Question.

(b) If the Bill is reported with amendments, the House shall proceed to consider the Bill as amended without any Question being put.

(5) For the purpose of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph (1), the Chair or Speaker shall forthwith put the following Questions in the same order as they would fall to be put if this Order did not apply:

(a) any Question already proposed from the chair;

(b) any Question necessary to bring to a decision a Question so proposed;

(c) the Question on any amendment, new Clause or new Schedule selected by the Chair or Speaker for separate decision;

(d) the Question on any amendment moved or Motion made by a Minister of the Crown;

(e) any other Question necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded; and shall not put any other questions, other than the question on any motion described in paragraph (16)(a) of this Order.

(6) On a Motion so made for a new Clause or a new Schedule, the Chair or Speaker shall put only the Question that the Clause or Schedule be added to the Bill.

(7) If two or more Questions would fall to be put under paragraph (5)(d) on successive amendments moved or Motions made by a Minister of the Crown, the Chair or Speaker shall instead put a single Question in relation to those amendments or Motions.

(8) If two or more Questions would fall to be put under paragraph (5)(e) in relation to successive provisions of the Bill, the Chair shall instead put a single Question in relation to those provisions, except that the Question shall be put separately on any Clause of or Schedule to the Bill which a Minister of the Crown has signified an intention to leave out.

#### *Consideration of Lords Amendments*

(9) (a) Any Lords Amendments to the Bill may be considered forthwith without any Question being put; and any proceedings interrupted for that purpose shall be suspended accordingly.

(b) Proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement; and any proceedings suspended under sub-paragraph (a) shall thereupon be resumed.

(10) Paragraphs (2) to (7) of Standing Order No. 83F (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments) apply for the purposes of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph (9) of this Order.

#### *Subsequent stages*

(11) (a) Any further Message from the Lords on the Bill may be considered forthwith without any Question being put; and any proceedings interrupted for that purpose shall be suspended accordingly.

(b) Proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement; and any proceedings suspended under sub-paragraph (a) shall thereupon be resumed.

(12) Paragraphs (2) to (5) of Standing Order No. 83G (Programme orders: conclusion of proceedings on further messages from the Lords) apply for the purposes of bringing any proceedings to a conclusion in accordance with paragraph (11) of this Order.

#### *Reasons Committee*

(13) Paragraphs (2) to (6) of Standing Order No. 83H (Programme orders: reasons committee) apply in relation to any committee to be appointed to draw up reasons after proceedings have been brought to a conclusion in accordance with this Order.

#### *Miscellaneous*

(14) Standing Order No. 15(1) (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings on the Bill.

(15) Standing Order No. 82 (Business Committee) shall not apply in relation to any proceedings to which this Order applies.

(16) (a) No Motion shall be made, except by a Minister of the Crown, to alter the order in which any proceedings on the Bill are taken, to recommit the Bill or to vary or supplement the provisions of this Order.

(b) No notice shall be required of such a Motion.

(c) Such a Motion may be considered forthwith without any Question being put; and any proceedings interrupted for that purpose shall be suspended accordingly.

(d) The Question on such a Motion shall be put forthwith; and any proceedings suspended under sub-paragraph (c) shall thereupon be resumed.

(e) Standing Order No. 15(1) (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings on such a Motion.

(17) (a) No dilatory Motion shall be made in relation to proceedings to which this Order applies except by a Minister of the Crown.

(b) The Question on any such Motion shall be put forthwith.

(18) No debate may be held under Standing Order No. 24 (Emergency debates) until proceedings on Third Reading of the Bill have been disposed of; and Standing Order No. 15(1) (Exempted business) shall apply to proceedings in respect of any such debate.

(19) Proceedings to which this Order applies shall not be interrupted under any Standing Order relating to the sittings of the House.

(20) At today's sitting the Speaker shall not adjourn the House until—

(a) any Message from the Lords on the Bill has been received and any Committee to draw up Reasons which has been appointed at that sitting has reported;

(b) the Speaker has reported the Royal Assent to any Act agreed upon by both Houses.

The motion allows time for this important debate to take place today until 2.30 pm. There is always a balance to be struck when we have to do things urgently with ensuring that the House is able to scrutinise them properly. Going to 2.30 seems to be the right balance. It ensures that the Bill can be passed today, that the statutory instruments can be laid tomorrow and that we can therefore be compliant with our responsibility in terms of our international agreements by the end of the year. That seems to be the right thing to do and the right approach, and I hope that the Scottish National party will not move to a Division on its amendment. Although I understand the reason for the amendment, and I do not think it is unreasonable for SNP Members to put the amendment forward, I hope that they would not want to use the time for a Division, will given that it will eat into the time available for the debate.

9.39 am

**Valerie Vaz** (Walsall South) (Lab): Clearly the Opposition are desperately disappointed that there was not enough time to debate this deal properly. This is unacceptable. It puts a great deal of pressure on House staff and everybody else, but I am pleased that the virtual Parliament will enable our colleagues to take part in it.

The Opposition have facilitated this. We facilitated the time because we want to say that this is not our deal, but we will vote for legislation that will enact it to prevent no deal. That is the key point about why we are here today: we want to prevent no deal, which would have a great effect on our economy and our constituents. We support the motion to enable this legislation to come forward because we are up against a deadline of 31 December. After that, there would be no deal, and we must stop it, so the Opposition agree with the programme motion.

9.40 am

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): I beg to move amendment (a), in line 10, paragraph 1, leave out sub-paragraph (c) and insert —

“(c) Proceedings on Second Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion five hours after the beginning of those proceedings; and proceedings in Committee of the whole House, any proceedings on Consideration and proceedings on Third Reading shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion no later than seven hours after the beginning of proceedings on Second Reading.”

[Patrick Grady]

Brexit is diminishing the UK's role in the world, and this programme motion diminishes the role of Parliament in the UK. Today was supposed to be about taking back control and reclaiming parliamentary sovereignty. Well, this is not the kind of parliamentary sovereignty that is acceptable. The Leader of the House is wrong to say that if we force a Division, it will eat up time, because if he accepted our amendment, it would create more time—it would give five full protected hours for Second Reading and then two hours for Committee. We have lodged amendments, and if we do not get a Committee stage, those amendments will never even see the light of day. That is not the primacy of Parliament. If that is the control that the Brexiteers in the ERG fought for, good luck to them, because it sets a very dangerous precedent. We will divide the House on this amendment.

9.41 am

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz) for the support of the Opposition. In all this talk of time, it is worth bearing in mind that we have now been discussing this subject for four, five, six or perhaps nearly 50 years. Having five hours today or just under, until 2.30 pm, is about the right amount, to ensure that the legislation is passed. Once again, we see our friends in the SNP not liking the referendum result and therefore trying to stop it. We have had a referendum—leave won. This is merely the final little bit of icing being put on the Christmas cake that the Prime Minister so efficiently delivered for the nation.

*Question put, That the amendment be made.*

*The House divided: Ayes 60, Noes 362.*

**Division No. 189]**

**[9.42 am**

**AYES**

Bardell, Hannah	Grady, Patrick
Black, Mhairi	Grant, Peter
Blackford, rh Ian	Gray, Neil
Blackman, Kirsty	Hanvey, Neale
Bonnar, Steven	Hobhouse, Wera
Brock, Deidre	Hosie, Stewart
Brown, Alan	Jardine, Christine
Callaghan, Amy	Law, Chris
Cameron, Dr Lisa	MacAskill, Kenny
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Chamberlain, Wendy	Mc Nally, John
Chapman, Douglas	McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
Cherry, Joanna	McDonald, Stuart 4C.
Cooper, Daisy	McLaughlin, Anne
Cowan, Ronnie	Monaghan, Carol
Crawley, Angela	Moran, Layla
Davey, rh Ed	Newlands, Gavin
Day, Martyn	Nicolson, John
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	O'Hara, Brendan
Doogan, Dave	Olney, Sarah
Dorans, Allan	Oswald, Kirsten
Eastwood, Colum	Sheppard, Tommy
Edwards, Jonathan	Smith, Alyn
Farron, Tim	Stephens, Chris
Farry, Stephen	Stone, Jamie
Fellows, Marion	Thewliss, Alison
Ferrier, Margaret	Thomson, Richard
Flynn, Stephen	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Gibson, Patricia	Wilson, Munira

Wishart, Pete  
Wragg, Mr William

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Owen Thompson and**  
**David Linden**

**NOES**

Adams, Nigel	Cleverly, rh James
Afolami, Bim	Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Afriyie, Adam	Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Colburn, Elliot
Aiken, Nickie	Collins, Damian
Aldous, Peter	Costa, Alberto
Allan, Lucy	Courts, Robert
Amess, Sir David	Coutinho, Claire
Anderson, Stuart	Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey
Andrew, Stuart	Crabb, rh Stephen
Ansell, Caroline	Crosbie, Virginia
Argar, Edward	Crouch, Tracey
Atherton, Sarah	Daly, James
Atkins, Victoria	Davies, David T. C.
Bacon, Gareth	Davies, Gareth
Bacon, Mr Richard	Davies, Dr James
Badenoch, Kemi	Davies, Mims
Bailey, Shaun	Davies, Philip
Baillie, Siobhan	Davis, rh Mr David
Baker, Duncan	Davison, Dehenna
Baker, Mr Steve	Dinenage, Caroline
Barclay, rh Steve	Dines, Miss Sarah
Baron, Mr John	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Baynes, Simon	Docherty, Leo
Bell, Aaron	Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
Benton, Scott	Donelan, Michelle
Beresford, Sir Paul	Dorries, Ms Nadine
Berry, rh Jake	Double, Steve
Bhatti, Saqib	Dowden, rh Oliver
Blackman, Bob	Doyle-Price, Jackie
Blunt, Crispin	Drax, Richard
Bone, Mr Peter	Drummond, Mrs Flick
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Duddridge, James
Bowie, Andrew	Duguid, David
Bradley, Ben	Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Bradley, rh Karen	Dunne, rh Philip
Brady, Sir Graham	Eastwood, Mark
Braverman, rh Suella	Edwards, Ruth
Brereton, Jack	Ellis, rh Michael
Bridgen, Andrew	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Brine, Steve	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Bristow, Paul	Eustice, rh George
Britcliffe, Sara	Evans, Dr Luke
Brokenshire, rh James	Evennett, rh Sir David
Browne, Anthony	Everitt, Ben
Bruce, Fiona	Fabricant, Michael
Buchan, Felicity	Farris, Laura
Buckland, rh Robert	Fell, Simon
Burghart, Alex	Fletcher, Katherine
Burns, rh Conor	Fletcher, Mark
Butler, Rob	Fletcher, Nick
Cairns, rh Alun	Ford, Vicky
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Foster, Kevin
Carter, Andy	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Cartlidge, James	Francois, rh Mr Mark
Cash, Sir William	Frazer, Lucy
Cates, Miriam	Freeman, George
Caulfield, Maria	Freer, Mike
Chalk, Alex	Fuller, Richard
Chishti, Rehman	Fysh, Mr Marcus
Churchill, Jo	Gale, rh Sir Roger
Clark, rh Greg	Garnier, Mark
Clarke, Mr Simon	Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Clarke, Theo	Gibb, rh Nick
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Gibson, Peter
Clarkson, Chris	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  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, Sally-Ann  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Hayes, rh Sir John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 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  
 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  
 Langan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherilyn  
 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  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Sir Robert

Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Parish, Neil  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Raab, rh Dominic  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Robinson, Mary  
 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  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie  
 Trott, Laura  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr  
 John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim  
**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Tom Pursglove and**  
**James Morris**

*Question accordingly negated.*

*Main Question put and agreed to.*

*The list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy, is published at the end of today's debates.*

## European Union (Future Relationship) Bill

[Relevant document: Fourth Report of the Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union, The UK-EU future relationship: the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, HC 1094.]

Second Reading

**Mr Speaker:** Given the length of the Second Reading call list, Members will understand that there will be no time left before 2.30 pm to debate the Bill in Committee. Nevertheless, I should inform Members that under the order of the House of today, notices of amendments, new clauses and new schedules to be moved in Committee of the whole House may be accepted until 10.30 am. To maintain social distancing, Members are asked not to bring amendments to the Table in the Chamber but to send them by email to the Public Bill Office. The Public Bill Office will aim to circulate early this afternoon a notice paper of the amendments received by 10.30 am.

I inform the House that I have not selected any of the reasoned amendments.

9.53 am

**The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

May I begin by thanking you, Mr Speaker, and the House authorities and all your staff for their hard work in allowing us to meet today? I also welcome the outstanding news that AstraZeneca is now rolling out a new UK-made vaccine, approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, that offers hope to millions in this country and around the world.

Having taken back control of our money, our borders, our laws and our waters by leaving the European Union on 31 January, we now seize this moment to forge a fantastic new relationship with our European neighbours based on free trade and friendly co-operation.

**Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP):** Will the Prime Minister give way?

**The Prime Minister:** In a minute. At the heart of this Bill is one of the biggest free trade agreements in the world: a comprehensive—

**Ian Blackford:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I seek your clarification. I am just wondering how on earth the Prime Minister can talk about taking back control of waters when Scottish fishermen are going to have less access and less fish to catch as a consequence of his con deal.

**Mr Speaker:** May I just say, first of all, that that is not a point of order? We are very limited on time. Can we please try to keep to a tight agenda to allow everybody the time to contribute?

**The Prime Minister:** Although that was not a valid point of order, I must none the less correct the right hon. Gentleman. In fact, under this deal we have taken back control of our borders. Indeed, Scottish fishermen from the get-go will have access to bigger quotas of all the relevant stocks. From the end of the transition period, as he knows full well—

**Ian Blackford** *rose*—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I understand that this is an important day and it is important that we all get on the record. It is also important that I get to the leader of the SNP. What I would not like to do is run out of time because of the number of times he stands for interventions. If the Prime Minister gives way, he will give way straight away, but please let us try to get the debate under way. At least give yourself time to hear what the Prime Minister has to say before you disagree.

**The Prime Minister:** With great respect to the right hon. Gentleman, I feel I must correct him. Not only will we take back control of our waters; we will increase Scottish fishermen's share of all the relevant stocks, with cod, for instance, going up by 47% to 57%, and North sea haddock going up by 70% to 84%. That is just next year, Mr Speaker. In five and a half years' time, we take control of the entire spectacular marine wealth of Scotland. It is only the Scottish nationalist party that would, with spectacular hypocrisy, hand back control of the waters of this country to the UK.

**Ian Blackford:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Could you point out to the Prime Minister that the name of my party is the Scottish National party?

**Mr Speaker:** In fairness, I have pointed that out in the past. It is the Scottish National party.

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, I wish the right hon. Gentleman to know that I am using the word "nationalist" with a small "n". I do not think he would disagree with that, which is semantically justifiable under the circumstances. Yet in spite of that nomenclature, they would hand back control of Scotland's waters and go back into the common fisheries policy. What the Bill does is take back control—

**Ian Blackford:** Will the Prime Minister give way?

**The Prime Minister:** Absolutely not.

What the Bill does is take back control of the spectacular marine wealth of Scotland and the rest of the UK.

**Anthony Mangnall (Totnes) (Con):** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**The Prime Minister:** In a moment.

At the heart of the Bill is, as we have discussed in this Chamber many times, Mr Speaker, one of the biggest free trade agreements in the world: a comprehensive Canada-style deal worth over £660 billion, which, if anything, should allow companies to do even more business with our European friends, safeguarding millions of jobs and livelihoods in our UK and across the continent. In less than 48 hours we will leave the EU single market and the customs union as we promised. British exporters will not face a sudden thicket of trade barriers, but rather, for the first time in the history of EU agreements, zero tariffs and zero quotas. Just as we have avoided trade barriers—

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, I think that plenty of Members want to speak. I have already taken plenty of interventions and points of order. I am going to make some progress.



Just as we have avoided trade barriers, so we have also ensured the UK's full control of our laws and our regulations. There is a vital symmetry between those two achievements. The central purpose of the Bill is to accomplish something that the British people always knew in their hearts could be done, yet which we were continually told was impossible—we were told that we could not have our cake and eat it; do you remember how often we were told that, Mr Speaker?—namely, that we could trade and co-operate as we will with our European neighbours on the closest terms of friendship and good will, while retaining sovereign control of our laws and our national destiny. That unifying thread runs through every clause of the Bill, which embodies our vision, shared with our European neighbours, of a new relationship between Britain and the EU as sovereign equals, joined by friendship, commerce, history, interests and values, while respecting one another's freedom of action and recognising that we have nothing to fear if we sometimes choose to do things differently.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The devil is in the detail in anything that is before us today. Can the Prime Minister confirm—I hope that this is the case—that we see the end of discrimination and that the Hague preference is away, in the bin? The Killybegs Fishermen's Organisation is expressing dismay from the Republic of Ireland. Will UK quotas be shared with Northern Ireland? Will there be tariffs for our ports of Portavogie, Ardglass and Kilkeel landing the fish that they catch in Northern Ireland, and will the £100 million for fishing organisations be shared equally across the whole United Kingdom? Those are real, practical issues for us in Northern Ireland.

**The Prime Minister:** I can assure the hon. Gentleman that the entire UK will share in the programme of investment in our fishing industry. To get ourselves ready across the whole UK for the colossal uplift in fish that we will obtain, and even before the end of the transition period, the hon. Gentleman should know that we will fish about 130,000 tonnes more fish in the UK a year than we do at present. Currently, that is an opportunity that we must work to seize. *[Interruption.]* No.

We have much to gain from the healthy stimulus of competition, and the Bill therefore demonstrates how Britain can be at once European and sovereign. You will agree, Mr Speaker, that our negotiators published their feat at astonishing speed. It took nearly eight years for the Uruguay round of world trade talks to produce a deal; five years for the EU to reach a trade agreement with Canada; and six for Japan. We have done this in less than a year, in the teeth of a pandemic, and we have pressed ahead with this task, resisting all the calls for delay, precisely because creating certainty about our future provides the best chance of beating covid and bouncing back even more strongly next year. That was our objective.

I hope that the House joins me in commending my noble Friend Lord Frost and every member of his team for their skill, mastery and perseverance in translating our vision into a practical agreement. Let me also pay tribute to President Ursula von der Leyen, Michel Barnier and all our European friends for their pragmatism and foresight, and their understanding that it is profoundly in the interests of the EU to live alongside a prosperous,

contented and sovereign United Kingdom. The House understands the significance of the fact that this agreement is not EU law, but international law, so there is no direct effect—EU law will no longer have any special status in the UK.

**Ian Blackford:** Will the Prime Minister give way?

**The Prime Minister:** I have already given way quite a few times to the right hon. Gentleman.

There is no jurisdiction for the European Court of Justice.

**Ian Blackford:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I feel that I have to point out to the House the historic principle in Scotland, as established by law, is that it is the people of Scotland who are sovereign, and it is the people of Scotland who will determine to take them back into the European Union with independence.

**Mr Speaker:** As the leader of the SNP knows, that is not a point of order. I am desperate to hear what he has to say in his contribution. Rather than use it up now, why does he not save it so that others can get in? Prime Minister.

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful, Mr Speaker. Of course, it was the people of Scotland who took the sovereign decision, quite rightly, to remain in the UK—a once-in-a-generation decision. I think it highly unlikely that the people of Scotland will take a decision to cast away their new-found freedoms and new-found opportunities, not least over the marine wealth of Scotland.

We will be able to design our own standards and regulations, and the laws that the House of Commons passes will be interpreted—I know that this is a keen interest of hon. and right hon. Members—solely by British judges sitting in British courts. We will have the opportunity to devise new ways to spur and encourage flourishing sectors in which this country leads the world, from green energy and life sciences to synthetic biology.

**Greg Clark** (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): Some of us had different views on Brexit, but those debates are now for the history books. Everyone in the House and the country should recognise the benefits of an agreement that goes beyond free trade, from science to energy to security. However, will the Prime Minister capitalise on the excellent news that we have had today on the vaccine by pursuing an industrial strategy that puts science and technology at its heart, so that we can grasp the opportunities that come as the world bounces back from covid during the year ahead?

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Can I just help people and say that those who are high up on the speaking list will understandably get moved down if they make continual interventions? I want to get as many people in as possible, so please—

**Sir Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): Including the Prime Minister.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you, Sir Bernard. Prime Minister.

**The Prime Minister:** I am grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark). I remember well working with him on his industrial strategy and his ideas for championing green technology and

[The Prime Minister]

biosciences, and I can tell him that those ideas remain at the heart of this Government's agenda. We will certainly be using our new-found legislative freedom to drive progress in those sciences and those investments across the whole UK. We will be free of EU state aid rules; we will be able to decide where and how we level up across our country, with new jobs and new hope, including freeports and new green industrial zones of a kind I am sure my right hon. Friend would approve of.

I must make an important point. If, in using our new freedoms, either Britain or the EU believes it is somehow being unfairly undercut, then, subject to independent third-party arbitration, and provided the measures are proportionate, either of us can decide, as sovereign equals, to protect our consumers, but this treaty explicitly envisages that any such action should be infrequent.

**Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi** (Slough) (Lab) *rose*—

**The Prime Minister:** However, the treaty banishes the old concepts of uniformity and harmonisation, in favour of the right to make our own regulatory choices and deal with the consequences. Every modern free trade agreement includes reciprocal commitments designed to prevent distortions of trade. The true significance of the agreement embodied in the Bill is that there is no role for the European Court of Justice, no ratchet clause on labour or environmental standards, and no dynamic alignment with the EU state aid regime or, indeed, any other aspect of EU law. In every respect, we have recovered our freedom of action.

**Mr Dhesi** *rose*—

**The Prime Minister:** I give way with pleasure to the hon. Gentleman, who has been up and down many times.

**Mr Dhesi:** Many hon. Members will face a dire dilemma because they will feel that our country has been sold short. On the one hand, we have the Prime Minister's thin, terrible, burnt oven-ready deal. On the other hand, we face the prospect of an even more damaging and destructive no-deal Brexit. Can the Prime Minister advise us why, given that services account for almost 80% of our economy, there is so little for that sector in this deal? In particular, why could he not negotiate equivalence and passporting rights for the all-important financial services sector?

**The Prime Minister:** It was not quite clear from that intervention which way the Labour party is going to go on this—whether the hon. Gentleman is going to go with the leader of the Labour party and vote for the deal, or whether he is going to join other members of the Labour party and continue to dither and delay. We on the Government Benches are going to get on; we will be free of the strictures of the common agricultural policy, and we will be able to conserve our landscapes and support our farmers exactly as we choose.

On Friday—I am coming to a point that has been raised several times, but I will repeat it because it is a wonderful point—for the first time in 50 years, the UK will once again be recognised as an independent coastal state, regaining control of our waters and righting the

wrong that was done by the common fisheries policy throughout our EU membership. Of course I have always recognised—

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**The Prime Minister:** I have answered the point from Opposition Members quite a lot. I will give way to my hon. Friend the Member for Totnes (Anthony Mangnall).

**Anthony Mangnall:** The Prime Minister will know that Brixham, the most valuable fishing port in England, wants to see our waters regained, with access and control, and a rebuilding of the fishing industry in the UK. This deal delivers that. Can he assure my fishermen, and fishermen around the country, that that is what this Government are delivering on?

**The Prime Minister:** That is absolutely right, and the voice of Brixham should be heard up and down the country, because that point is entirely correct and might be registered with advantage by the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford).

I have always recognised that this was going to be a difficult period for our European friends and partners, because they have been fishing in these waters for decades, if not centuries. At first, as the House will know, they sought an adjustment period of 14 years, but our negotiators whittled that down to five and a half years, during which the UK's share—[*Interruption.*] In that five and a half years, the UK's share of our fish in our waters will rise from over half today to around two-thirds. Of course we would like to have done that more quickly, but it is also true that once the adjustment period comes to an end there will be no limit, other than limits that are placed by the needs of science and conservation, on our ability to make use of our marine wealth.

Fifteen per cent. of the EU's historic catch from our waters will be returned to this country next year alone. To prepare our fishing communities for that moment, we will invest £100 million in a programme to modernise their fleets and the fish processing industry—[*Interruption.*] The hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) should listen to this, because we will be restoring a great British industry to the eminence that it deserves, levelling up communities across the UK, particularly Scotland, where, in my view, those interests have been neglected for too long.

I find it extraordinary that on the eve of this great opportunity, the declared position of the Scottish National national/nationalist party—with a small “n”—is to hand control of the very waters we have just reclaimed straight back to the EU. That is its policy. It plans to ensnare Scotland's fishing fleet in the dragnets of the common fisheries policy all over again. In the meantime, guess what SNP Members will do today, Mr Speaker. They are going to vote today for a no-deal Brexit! [*Interruption.*] Perhaps the hon. Member for Glasgow East will tell me that he is going to vote for the deal.

**David Linden** (Glasgow East) (SNP): I am immensely grateful to the Prime Minister for briefly pausing that monologue that was designed for the European Research Group. On fish, he is waxing lyrical about how amazing this deal is, but I would like to read him a quote from Andrew Locker, chair of the National Federation of Fishermen's Organisations, who says:

“I am angry, disappointed and betrayed. Boris Johnson promised us the rights to all the fish that swim in our exclusive economic zone and we have got a fraction of that.”

Is he wrong?

**The Prime Minister:** I am afraid that yes, he is. Not only will we take back control by becoming an independent coastal state from 1 January, but in five and a half years’ time, we will be able to fish every single fish in our waters, if we so choose. That is the reality. In the meantime, as I say, and the hon. Gentleman did not deny it—I do not think I heard him deny it—the Scottish National party is going to vote against the deal. It is effectively going to vote for no deal, which it campaigned against and denounced, proving once and for all, that the interests of Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland are best served by a one-nation party serving one United Kingdom.

This deal was negotiated—the hon. Gentleman should know this—by a big team from every part of our United Kingdom, and it serves the whole of the UK, not least by protecting the integrity of the United Kingdom single internal market, and Northern Ireland’s place within it. Our points-based immigration system will end free movement and give us full control over who enters the country. By the way, on that point I want to thank my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster for all he did to protect the interests of Northern Ireland.

At the same time, the deal provides certainty for airlines and hauliers who have suffered grievously during this pandemic. It guarantees the freedom of British citizens to travel to and from the EU and retain access to healthcare. It provides certainty for our police, our border forces, and our security agencies to work alongside our European friends to keep our people safe, and the SNP are going to vote against that, Mr Speaker. The deal provides certainty for our partnerships on scientific research, because we want our country to be a science superpower, but also a collaborative science superpower. It provides certainty for business, from financial services to our world-leading manufacturers, including our car industry, safeguarding highly skilled jobs and investment across our country. As for the Leader of the Opposition, I am delighted that he has found yet another position on Brexit, and, having plunged down every blind alley and exhausted every possible alternative, he has come to the right conclusion—namely, to vote for this agreement, which this Government have secured.

**Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab) rose—**

**The Prime Minister:** I hope very much that the hon. Gentleman is going to tell us that he, too, is going to join his right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) and vote for this agreement. Is that the case?

**Peter Kyle:** I am very happy to confirm for the Prime Minister that I will be voting for this agreement. He mentioned several times his levelling-up agenda, but financial services and those working in the sector have been left entirely out of it, so does he not agree that every city and every town that is dependent on financial services, from Leeds to Manchester to Edinburgh, and many in between, have been levelled down and left out of this deal?

**The Prime Minister:** It is great to hear a member of the Labour party not only backing the bankers and backing financial services—a fantastic development—but also backing this deal. The hon. Gentleman is quite right because, actually, this deal does a great deal for services, for financial services, for the legal profession and for many other professions. But, alas, the good news about the Labour party stops there, because I am told that the right hon. and learned Gentleman intends to ask the British people for a mandate to rewrite the deal in 2024—that is what he wants to do. I think, frankly, we got Brexit done; let us keep Brexit done. And let us press ahead with this Government’s mission to unite and level up across our whole country and grasp the opportunities before us, because I have always said—

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**The Prime Minister:** I am going to make some progress because many Members want to speak. I have always said that Brexit is not an end but a beginning, and the responsibility now rests with all of us to make the best use of the powers that we have regained and the tools that we have taken back into our hands. We are going to begin by fulfilling our manifesto promise to maintain the highest standards of labour and environmental regulation, because no caricature can be more inaccurate than the idea of some bargain-basement Dickensian Britain, as if enlightened EU regulation had been our only salvation from Dickensian squalor. Our national standards have always been among the very best in the world, and this House can be trusted to use its new freedom to keep them that way without any outside invigilation.

We are going to open a new chapter in our national story, striking free trade deals around the world, adding to the agreements with 63 countries we have already achieved and reasserting global Britain as a liberal, outward-looking force for good. Detaching ourselves from the EU is only a prelude to the greater task of establishing our new role, and this country is contributing more than any other to vaccinate people across the world against covid, leading the way in preventing future pandemics. We will continue to campaign for 12 years of quality education for every girl in the world, and I thank my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary for what he is doing on that. We will continue to lead the drive towards global net zero as we host COP26 in Glasgow next year.

I hope and believe—and I think, actually, the tone this morning has given me encouragement in this belief; the mood in the House this morning seems on the whole to be positive—[*Interruption.*] In spite of the, as usual, synthetic and confected indignation that we hear from some on the Benches opposite, I hope and believe that this agreement will also serve to end some of the rancour and recrimination that we have had in recent years and allow us to come together as a country to leave old arguments—old, desiccated, tired, super-masticated arguments—behind, move on and build a new and great future for our country, because those of us who campaigned for Britain to leave the EU never sought a rupture with our closest neighbours. We never wanted to sever ourselves from our fellow democracies, beneath whose soil lie British war graves in tranquil cemeteries, often tended by local schoolchildren, testament to our shared struggle for freedom and everything we cherish in common.

[The Prime Minister]

What we wanted was not a rupture but a resolution—a resolution of the old, tired, vexed question of Britain's political relations with Europe, which has bedevilled our post-war history. First we stood aloof, then we became a half-hearted, sometimes obstructive member of the EU. Now, with this Bill, we are going to become a friendly neighbour—the best friend and ally the EU could have, working hand in glove whenever our values and interests coincide, while fulfilling the sovereign wish of the British people to live under their own laws, made by their own elected Parliament. That is the historic resolution delivered by this Bill. I commend it to the House.

**Mr Speaker:** Before I call the Leader of the Opposition, the House will want to be aware that I have accepted a request from the Government for an additional statement from the Secretary of State for Education on education return in January. This will be the second statement after the covid-19 update and before the business statement. The ballot is already open in Member Hub.

10.21 am

**Keir Starmer** (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): It is often said that there is nothing simple about Brexit, but the choice before the House today is perfectly simple: do we implement the treaty that has been agreed with the EU or do we not? That is the choice. If we choose not to, the outcome is clear: we leave the transition period without a deal—without a deal on security, trade or fisheries, without protection for our manufacturing sector, farming or countless British businesses, and without a foothold to build a future relationship with the EU. Anyone choosing that option today knows there is no time to renegotiate, no better deal coming in the next 24 hours, no extensions, no Humble Addresses and no SO 24s—Standing Order No. 24 debates—so choosing that option leads to one place: no deal. Or we can take the only other option that is available and implement the treaty that has been negotiated. This is a thin deal. It has many flaws—I will come to that in a moment.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Keir Starmer:** I will in just a minute.

But a thin deal is better than no deal, and not implementing this deal would mean immediate tariffs and quotas with the EU, which would push up prices and drive businesses to the wall. It would mean huge gaps in security, a free-for-all on workers' rights and environmental protections, and less stability for the Northern Ireland protocol. Leaving without a deal would also show that the UK is not capable of agreeing the legal basis for our future relationship with our EU friends and partners. That matters, because I want Britain to be an outward-looking, optimistic and rules-based country—one that does deals, signs treaties and abides by them.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Keir Starmer:** I will in just one moment.

It matters that Britain has negotiated a treaty with the EU Commission and the 27 member states; and it matters, ultimately, that the UK has not gone down the blind alley of no deal. It means that our future relationship starts on the basis of agreement, not acrimony.

**Jonathan Edwards:** I am grateful to the right hon. and learned Gentleman for setting out the position of the Labour party, but he used to have six tests for any Brexit deal that he would be willing to support. How many of those tests does he believe the agreement actually meets?

**Keir Starmer:** There is only one choice today, which is to vote for implementing this deal or to vote for no deal, and those who vote no are voting for no deal. I will give way again to the hon. Gentleman. If he is voting no, does he want no to succeed at 2.30 this afternoon when the House divides?

**Jonathan Edwards:** I am afraid the leader of the Labour party has accepted the spin of the Government that this is a binary choice between deal and no deal. It says a lot about the way his position has changed over recent weeks.

**Keir Starmer:** This is the nub of it. Those voting no today want yes. They want others to save them from their own vote. Voting no, wanting yes. That is the truth of the situation, and that is why my party has taken a different path.

**Sir Edward Leigh:** I congratulate the right hon. and learned Gentleman on doing the patriotic and right thing today, but there is quite a lot of interest in the country in what deal he would have negotiated if he had been responsible for the negotiations.

**Keir Starmer:** A better one than this, for the reasons that I am about to lay out. [Interruption.] I will go into some of the detail—not too much—but if anyone believes what the Prime Minister has just said about financial services, they have not read the deal. With no further time for negotiation, when the default is no deal, it is not a mark of how pro-European you are to reject implementing this treaty. It is not in the national interest to duck a question or to hide in the knowledge that others will save you from the consequences of your own vote. This is a simple vote, with a simple choice—do we leave the transition period with a treaty that has been negotiated with the EU, or do we leave with no deal? So Labour will vote to implement this treaty today to avoid no deal and to put in place a floor from which we can build a strong future relationship with the EU.

**David Linden:** I am grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for outlining how clear this is for him. His party has two parliamentarians in Edinburgh South—one in the Scottish Parliament and one in Westminster. At 4 o'clock this afternoon, the Member of the Scottish Parliament will vote against the deal and the Member of the Westminster Parliament here will vote for the deal. How does he square that circle?

**Keir Starmer:** The hon. Gentleman knows very well that it is a different vote. [Interruption.] It is a completely different vote, on a different issue.

**David Linden** *rose*—

**Keir Starmer:** I give way to the hon. Gentleman with my question. When he votes no, against this treaty, this afternoon, does he want the Bill to fail and thus we leave tomorrow night without a deal? Is that the intention? Does he want the result to go the way he is voting?

**David Linden:** I think the right hon. Gentleman will understand that there will be members of his own party in the Lobby with me this afternoon. If he can point out to me in the Order Paper where I am voting for no deal, I will be very happy. Will he tell me what page that is on?

**Keir Starmer:** That absolutely identifies the point. He is going to vote in the hope that others will vote the other way and save him from the consequences of his own vote. That is the truth of the situation of the SNP. He is hoping that others will do the right thing and vote in favour of implementing the treaty. We fought against no deal together for months and years, and now those voting no are going to vote for no deal. Nothing is going to happen in the next 24 hours to save this country from no deal. So he wants to vote for something, but he does not want that vote to succeed; he wants others to have the burden of voting for it to save us from no deal.

**Mr Steve Baker** (Wycombe) (Con) *rose*—

**Keir Starmer:** I will give way in a minute. I am going to make some progress.

It is, of course, completely unacceptable that this debate is happening now—one day before the end of the transition period. The Prime Minister said he had a deal that was oven-ready.

**Adam Holloway** (Gravesham) (Con): Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Keir Starmer:** That was about a year ago. Then it was supposed to be ready in July, then September, then November, and finally it arrived on Christmas eve. That matters, because businesses have had no chance to prepare for the new regulations. Talk to businesses about their concerns. They have real difficulties now. Many of them have already taken decisions about jobs and investment because of the uncertainty, and of course that is made worse by the pandemic.

Let me now turn to the deal itself and analyse some of the flaws in it. Let us start with the Prime Minister and what he said on Christmas eve in his press conference. He said:

“there will be no non-tariff barriers to trade.”

Those were his words. He was not being straight with the British public. That is plain wrong. It is worse than that. It was not an aside, or an interview or an off-the-record remark. It was a scripted speech. He said that there would be no non-tariff barriers to trade. The Prime Minister knows that it is not true. Every Member of this House knows it is not true. I will give way to the Prime Minister to correct the record. Let him either stand up and say that what he said was true, or take this opportunity to correct the record. I give way.

**The Prime Minister:** The right hon. and learned Gentleman knows perfectly well that this is a zero-tariff, zero-quota deal. He says that he would have negotiated

a different and better deal. Perhaps he can tell us whether he would have remained within the customs union and within the single market. Perhaps he will also say a little bit about how he proposes to renegotiate the deal, build on it and take the UK back into the EU, because that remains his agenda.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Let us get on with the debate.

**Keir Starmer:** This is typical deflection. The Prime Minister, at a press conference, told the British public that there would be

“no non-tariff barriers to trade”.

The answer he gave just now is not an answer to that point. It is not true, and the Prime Minister knows what he said was not true. He simply will not stand up and acknowledge it today. That speaks volumes about the sort of Prime Minister we have.

**Adam Holloway:** Will the right hon. and learned Gentleman give way?

**Keir Starmer:** I will in just a minute. The truth is this: there will be an avalanche of checks, bureaucracy and red tape for British businesses. Every business I have spoken to knows this; every business any Member has spoken to knows this. That is what they are talking about. It is there in black and white in the treaty.

**Jonathan Gullis** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): Will the Leader of the Opposition give way?

**Keir Starmer:** I will in one minute. There will be checks for farmers, for our manufacturers, for customs, on rules of origin, VAT, safety and security, plant and animal health, and much more. Many British exporters will have to go through two regulatory processes to sell to existing clients in the EU. To keep tariff-free trade, businesses will have to prove that enough of their parts come from the EU or the UK. So there will be significant and permanent burdens on British businesses. It is somewhat ironic that for years the Conservative party has railed against EU bureaucracy, but this treaty imposes far more red tape on British businesses than there is at the moment.

**Mr Dhesi:** The lead-up to this Brexit deal has seen a litany of broken promises. Earlier this year, the Prime Minister stood at the Dispatch Box and said that there was

“no threat to the Erasmus scheme”.—[*Official Report*, 15 January 2020; Vol. 669, c. 1021.]

Among other things, he made grand statements about taking back full control of our fishing waters. Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, despite all the promises, it is not only British fishermen who are accusing the Prime Minister of betrayal and of having caved in to arrive at this insufficient deal?

**Keir Starmer:** These are examples of the Prime Minister making promises that he does not keep. That is the hallmark of this Prime Minister.

**Adam Holloway:** Can the Leader of the Opposition not in some way join the millions of people in this country, including many millions of patriotic Labour voters, in recognising the remarkable achievement of the Prime Minister?

**Keir Starmer:** I am glad that there is a deal and I will vote for the Bill to implement it, because a deal is far better than no deal. That is the right thing to do. But to pretend that the deal is not what it is is not being honest, and nor is it a base from which we can go forward. To pretend that there are no non-tariff barriers when there are is just not true. The Prime Minister will not just get up and say, “I got it wrong. I didn’t tell the truth when I was addressing the public.” [Interruption.] The Prime Minister says I do not know what I am talking about. His words were that there will be no non-tariff barriers to trade. Will there be no non-tariff barriers to trade, Prime Minister? Yes or no? The ox is now on his tongue, I see.

Whatever the Prime Minister says, there is very little protection for our services. That is a gaping hole in this deal. Ours is primarily a services economy. Services account for 80% of our economic output, and we have a trade surplus with the EU in services, but what we have in this text does not go beyond what was agreed with Canada or Japan. The lack of ambition is striking, and the result is no mutual recognition of professional qualifications. Talk to doctors, nurses, dentists, accountants, pharmacists, vets, engineers and architects about how they will practise now in other EU states, where they will have to have their qualifications agreed with each state separately with different terms and conditions. Anybody who thinks that that is an improvement really does need to look again at the deal.

**Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): Will my right hon. and learned Friend give way?

**Keir Starmer:** In just one minute.

The deal will make it harder to sell services into the EU and will create a huge disincentive for businesses to invest.

The very thin agreement on short business travel will make things much harder for artists and musicians, for example. Prime Minister, they want to hear what the answers to these questions are, not just comments from the Front Bench.

On financial services, even the Prime Minister himself has accepted—I do not know whether he will stick to this, or if it is one that he will not own now—that the deal does not go as far as we would have liked, so pretending that it is a brilliant deal just is not on. We have to rely on the bare bones of equivalence arrangements, many of which are not even in place, that could be unilaterally withdrawn at short notice. That is the reality of the situation. We are left to wonder: either the Prime Minister did not try to get a strong deal to protect our service economy, or he tried and failed. Which is it?

Let me turn to security. The treaty offers important protections when compared with the utter chaos of no deal, such as on DNA and fingerprints. There are third-party arrangements to continue working with Europol and Eurojust. I worked with Europol and Eurojust, so I know how important that is, but the treaty does not provide what was promised: a security partnership of unprecedented breadth and depth. It does not, and anybody today who thinks that it does has not read the deal. We will no longer have access to EU databases that allow for the sharing of real-time data, such as the Schengen information system for missing persons and objects. Anybody who thinks that that is not important needs to bear in mind that it is used on a daily basis.

In 2019, it was accessed and consulted 600 million times by the UK police—600 million times. That is how vital it is to them. That is a massive gap in the deal, and the Prime Minister needs to explain how it will be plugged.

Let me turn to tariffs and quotas. The Prime Minister has made much of the deal delivering zero tariffs and zero quotas. It does—

**The Prime Minister:** Aha!

**Keir Starmer:** Thank you, Prime Minister. It does, or rather it does for as long as British businesses meet the rules of origin requirements. It does as long as the UK does not step away from a level playing field on workers’ rights and environment—

**The Prime Minister:** Rubbish!

**Keir Starmer:** The Prime Minister says rubbish— [Interruption.] I have read it. I have studied it. I have been looking at nothing else than this for four years. The Prime Minister pretends that he has got sovereignty, and zero tariffs and zero quotas. He has not: the moment he exercises the sovereignty to depart from the level playing field, the tariffs kick in. This is not a negotiating triumph. It sets out the fundamental dilemma that has always been at the heart—

**The Prime Minister:** Well, vote against it then!

**Keir Starmer:** The Prime Minister says vote against it—vote for no deal. As my wife says to our children, “If you haven’t got anything sensible to say, it’s probably better to say nothing.”

The situation sets out the fundamental dilemma that has always been at the heart of the negotiations. If we stick to the level playing field, there are no tariffs and quotas, but if we do not, British businesses, British workers and British consumers will bear the cost. The Prime Minister has not escaped that dilemma; he has negotiated a treaty that bakes it in. This poses the central question for future Governments and Parliaments: do we build up from this agreement to ensure that the UK has high standards and that our businesses are able to trade as freely as possible in the EU market with minimal disruption; or do we choose to lower standards and slash protections, and in that way put up more barriers for our businesses to trade with our nearest and most important partners?

For Labour, this is clear: we believe in high standards. We see this treaty as a basis to build from, and we want to retain a close economic relationship with the EU that protects jobs and rights, because that is where our national interest lies today and tomorrow. However, I fear that the Prime Minister will take the other route, because he has used up so much time and negotiating capital in doing so. He has put the right to step away from common standards at the heart of the negotiation, so I assume that he wants to make use of that right as soon as possible. If he does, he has to be honest with the British people about the costs and consequences of that choice for businesses, jobs and our economy. If he does not want to exercise that right, he has to explain why he wasted so much time and sacrificed so many priorities for a right that he is not going to exercise.

After four and a half years of debate and division, we finally have a trade deal with the EU. It is imperfect, it is thin and it is the consequence of the Prime Minister’s

political choices, but we have only one day before the end of the transition period, and it is the only deal that we have. It is a basis to build on in the years to come. Ultimately, voting to implement the treaty is the only way to ensure that we avoid no deal, so we will vote for the Bill today.

But I do hope that this will be a moment when our country can come together and look to a better future. The UK has left the EU. The leave/remain argument is over—whichever side we were on, the divisions are over. We now have an opportunity to forge a new future: one outside the EU, but working closely with our great partners, friends and allies. We will always be European. We will always have shared values, experiences and history, and we can now also have a shared future. Today's vote provides the basis for that.

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I am now introducing a four-minute limit for Back Benchers.

10.41 am

**Mrs Theresa May** (Maidenhead) (Con): I welcome the deal and I will be supporting it today. I welcome the fact that the official Opposition will be supporting this deal, but I did listen with some incredulity to what the Leader of the Opposition said. He said he wanted a better deal. In early 2019, there was the opportunity of a better deal on the table, and he voted against it, so I will take no lectures from the Leader of the Opposition on this deal.

The Prime Minister has said that central to this deal are the tariff-free and quota-free trade arrangements, subject to rules of origin requirements. It would have been unforgivable for the European Union not to have allowed tariff-free and quota-free access, given that it signed up to that in the political declaration signed with my Government in November 2018.

One of the reasons for supporting this deal is the security arrangements that have been put in place, which are very important. Access to passenger name records and Prüm are important, but there is an issue of timeliness of access to those and other databases such as the European criminal records information system. I hope, that, in operational terms and in practice, we will see little change to the ability to investigate as a result of the good relationships that have been built up.

I think that the EU has made a mistake in not allowing us access to SIS II. I understand that it set as a principle that we could not have that access, but we should aim to try to find some resolution to that in the future, because it is an important database. It helps us in our fight against modern slavery and child abduction, and in identifying criminals across our borders.

One area in which I am disappointed by the deal is services. It is no longer the case that UK service providers will have an automatic right of access to provide services across the EU; they will have to abide by the individual rules of a state. I understand that a lawyer advising on UK law in the Czech Republic will have to be resident, but in Austria will have not to be resident. That is just an example of the difference in the rules.

The key area is financial services. In 2018, at Mansion House, I said that we wanted to work to get a financial services deal in the future treaty arrangement, and that that would be truly groundbreaking. It would have been, but, sadly, it has not been achieved. We have a

deal in trade that benefits the EU, but not a deal in services that would have benefited the UK. The treaty is clear that future negotiation on these points is possible, and I hope that the Government will go to that negotiation with alacrity and vigour, particularly on financial services.

Of course, a whole structure is set up under the treaty. One thing it does not do is excise the EU from our lives, because a whole structure of committees is set up, some of which, like the partnership council, will be able to amend the arrangement and make determinations on its operation and interpretation without, as far as I can see, any formal reference to this Parliament. Sovereignty has underpinned the negotiations since article 50 was triggered. Sovereignty does not mean isolationism; it does not mean that we never accept somebody else's rules; it does not mean exceptionalism. It is important as we go forward that we recognise that we live in an interconnected world and that if the United Kingdom is going to play the role that I believe it should play in not just upholding but encouraging and promoting the rules-based international order, and in ensuring that we promote these interests and values and strengthen multilateral institutions such as the World Trade Organisation, we must never allow ourselves to think, as I fear that some in this House do, that sovereignty means isolationism.

I say to all Members across the House that today is the time, as I have said before, to put aside personal and party political interests, which sadly too many have followed in the past, to vote in the interests of the whole UK and to support this Bill.

10.45 am

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): It is a pleasure—[*Interruption.*]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. If the hon. Member for Lincoln (Karl McCartney) wants to remain up there in the Gallery, I am certainly not going to take interventions from there. I think it is better if he remains quiet.

**Ian Blackford:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. It is a pleasure to follow the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). I wish you, Mr Speaker, all staff and Members a good new year when it comes tomorrow evening. May I quickly reflect on the sadness of the events that took place on 2 January 1971 in Glasgow, when 66 predominantly young people lost their lives in the Ibrox disaster, including five from one village in Fife, Markinch? I am sure that the whole House will want to remember those who sadly lost their lives at that moment.

When this bad Brexit deal was published, one of the very first public images that were released showed the Prime Minister raising his arms aloft in celebration. When I saw that image, my thoughts immediately turned to the European nationals who have made their home here. They are certainly not celebrating. During the four years and more of this Brexit mess, the main emotion they have felt is worry: worry about staying here, about their jobs and for their families. In Scotland, these citizens are our friends. They are our family. They are our neighbours. Before this Tory Government force through a deal that rips us out of the European Union, the single market and the customs union, let us get this message out to Scotland's 234,000 EU citizens: Scotland is your home, you are welcome.

[*Ian Blackford*]

The value we place on European citizenship—that real sense of belonging to the European Union—cuts to the very core of this debate. Scotland is at heart a European nation. It always has been. Forcing our nation out of the EU means losing a precious part of who we are. Scotland did not become European when the United Kingdom joined the EEC 40 years ago. Our relationship with Europe predates the United Kingdom by some way. An independent Scotland has enjoyed centuries of engagement with European nations. Scottish merchants travelled, traded and settled on the continent. We shared citizenship with France and we appealed to Rome for our nationhood. Scotland was European before it was British. That European history and heritage goes back to our nation's place in the Hanseatic League in the 15th century. Scotland was central to a trading alliance that forged connections and commerce with the north Atlantic, the Netherlands, Germany Scandinavia and the Baltic. We were a European trading nation right up until many of our privileges were ended by the Treaty of Union. That was three centuries ago, and here we go again, with Westminster seeking to end our access to those European relationships by removing us from today's union of nations across our continent; Westminster ending free movement of people and the access to labour that is so crucial to our economic success; and Westminster seeking to end our automatic right to live, work and get an education in 27 member states of the EU—rights that our generation had, which will be taken away from our children and grandchildren. And for what?

It was way back on 11 July 2016 that the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead, first spoke the infamous words, “Brexit means Brexit.” We all know what followed the use of that foolish phrase: nearly four years of constant chaos and confusion. Today, at least we have some clarity. We now finally know what Brexit means. We have it in black and white. It means a disaster of a deal. It means broken promises. It means economic vandalism. It means an isolated United Kingdom in the middle of a global pandemic. It means the worst of all worlds for Scotland.

This morning's proceedings are so critical precisely because of that clarity, because with that clarity comes a choice, and it is a fundamental choice for Scotland. It is a choice between a future defined by this disaster of a deal and the future that the SNP is offering to the Scottish people: an independent nation at the heart of the European Union. Today, the contrast between the two futures is clearer than ever, and that choice will not go away.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I wonder if I could put to the right hon. Gentleman the same question that was put to a colleague of his by the Leader of the Opposition and by the Prime Minister. Today, when the Scottish National party votes against this deal, it is therefore voting for no deal. Is it his determination that, the day after tomorrow, the UK would have no deal and would be in a worse situation? Is that his position now? Could he answer yes or no?

**Ian Blackford:** I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for the question, because it is very simple. This is a piece of legislation that has been put forward today. No deal is not on the Order Paper. The deal that we currently have—the deal that exists today—where we are in the

single market and customs union is the best deal for us. We have argued many times in this House, as the right hon. Gentleman knows, that we should have extended the transition, and that offer to extend the transition was there from the European Union. It is not our choice to accept a shoddy deal. What we should be doing—

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith** *rose*—

**Ian Blackford:** I will give way one more time.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** I am grateful for this—

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Sir Iain, you are very early on the call list, and I am sure that you do not want to go down the list.

**Ian Blackford:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. We will accept your guidance on these things, although I was looking forward to continuing the debate that we were having.

Now that we see the scale of the bad Brexit deal, the question before the Scottish people is clear: which Union does Scotland wish to be part of? Which future will we choose: this broken Brexit Britain or the European Union? If this whole Brexit saga was truly about sovereignty, the Scottish people cannot and will not be denied our sovereign right to that self-determination. No democrat and nobody in this House should stand in the way of that—even Boris with a small b. The Tory denial of democracy is a position that cannot and will not hold. Scotland will have the right to choose its own future.

Now that the detail of this deal is finally in front of us, people hope that Brexit fictions are swiftly replaced with Brexit facts. Judging by the Prime Minister's performance today, his Government are still drowning in delusion or simply just putting on an act, but for those of us who have lived in the real world these past four years, it is long past time that reality finally burst the Brexit bubble. In recent days we have heard wild celebrations and claims from leading Brexit cheerleaders that this is the largest free trade deal in history. I am sorry to inform them that it is not. The biggest and best free trading bloc in the world is the one that this Tory Government are dragging Scotland out of. It is made up of 27 nations and 500 million citizens. It is called the European Union.

In the middle of a pandemic and an economic recession, Scotland has been removed from a market worth £16 billion in exports to Scottish companies and a market which, by population, is seven times the size of the United Kingdom. Leaving the European single market and customs union would be damaging at any time, but in the middle of the current crisis, Prime Minister, it is unforgivable. It is an act of economic vandalism, pure and simple.

As usual with the Tories, it is people who will pay the price. Initial Scottish Government modelling estimates that the deal could cut Scotland's GDP by around 6.1%—that is £9 billion in 2016 cash terms by 2030. That will leave people in Scotland—the same people who have always opposed Brexit—£1,600 poorer. That is the cost of the Prime Minister's Brexit.

**Dr Liam Fox** (North Somerset) (Con): I am extremely grateful to the right hon. Gentleman for giving way. Perhaps he could tell us what estimate he has made of the cost to the Scottish economy of losing access to the UK single market through independence.



**Ian Blackford:** Really? I am amazed that the right hon. Gentleman, who of course comes from Scotland, seems to be threatening the people of Scotland with lack of access. Is that really the message the Conservatives want to deliver to the people of Scotland? Shame on him, shame on him, shame on him.

For all the Tory talk of levelling up, the deal is blatantly preparing the ground to level down on standards. Only in the last few days, the Institute for Public Policy Research has warned of what many of us have suspected all along: that the deal leaves workers' rights and environmental protections at

“serious risk of being eroded.”

Another Brexit bubble that badly needs bursting is the myth that leaving the EU will somehow make it easier for businesses to trade. This is literally the first trade deal in history that puts up barriers to business instead of removing them. In 2016, the leave campaign's assortment of lies included the claim that Brexit would remove red tape for business. Huh—since then, plenty of Brexit red lines have disappeared, but none of the red tape. This bad Brexit deal means that businesses will be burdened with mountains more bureaucracy and more costs. If the Prime Minister wants to disagree with that, I will certainly give way to him.

Presumably the Brexiteers think that that is okay, because the tape will now be coloured red, white and blue. *[Interruption.]* I hear the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster say, “It's how they tell them.” He should tell that to the fishing businesses that all of a sudden will have to fill in customs declarations. He should tell them why, at his behest and based on his narrow ideology, that is the answer. The deal means more delay, paperwork and checks—*[Interruption.]* If he wants to deny that, he should rise to his feet. He knows that fishing businesses will face additional costs as a consequence of what his Government have done.

The deal means more delay, paperwork and checks, all of which will burden business, slow trade and cost jobs. This deal not only inflicts economic self-harm; it ignores economic reality. There is barely a reference in the deal to the service sector, which is 80% of the entire UK economy. Services have been left in complete limbo. Where there is any mention, it is not good news. The deal confirms an end to the financial passporting rights that have been relied upon by financial services firms across the United Kingdom.

Let me turn to the biggest betrayal of all: the broken promises to Scotland's fishing communities. There are no Scottish Tory MPs in the Chamber. If there were, they would now be squirming. We know that the Brexit deal means a drop in key fishing stocks. For cod, haddock, whiting and saithe, the deal means less access to fish than under the existing arrangements. Let me say that again: less access to those fish than under the common fisheries policy.

One thing that is missing from the deal—I would have thought better of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—is the special privileges, the so-called Hague arrangements, that gave additional fishing rights to Scotland. They were not even negotiated as part of this deal. We have lost them, one can only assume, through the incompetence of the UK negotiators.

The Scottish Tories said that  
“tying fishing to a trade deal”

was a red line that must not be crossed, yet here we are: it is exactly what has been done. Every single Tory promise—every red line—has been blown out of the water. Countless broken promises, but not even one resignation—yet. Not even one apology; not a hint of humility, or of regret.

I take no comfort in saying that this was predicted because this deal represents a history of bitter betrayal. Our fishing industry—our Scottish fishing industry—was sold out by the Conservatives on the way into Europe in 1973, and as the United Kingdom leaves, it has been sold out all over again. The Scottish Fishermen's Federation knows that it has been conned, stating that the deal

“does not restore sovereign UK control over fisheries, and does not permit us to determine who can catch what, where and when in our own waters.”

*[Interruption.]* I hear the Prime Minister muttering, “Rubbish.” This is fishing organisation after fishing organisation in Scotland, Prime Minister, that knows exactly what you have done to them. For Scotland's fishing communities, lightning might not strike twice, but the Tories definitely do.

The latest Scottish Tory leader, the hon. Member for Moray (Douglas Ross), gave one of the more graphic promises: he said that he would drink a pint of cold sick rather than vote for a deal that gave EU vessels access for two years. Well, this deal gives them five years' access, and potentially much more. Let us just say that there will be plenty of Scottish voters in the north-east who will be very interested in what he is drinking after he and his colleagues break every single promise and walk through the Lobby with the Prime Minister.

In later speeches, my colleagues will attempt to cover and scrutinise as much as we possibly can, in the limited time, of the effect of this Bill in Scotland. It has to be said, though, that this lack of scrutiny is not helped by the stance taken by the Labour party. I am sad to say that the official Opposition have been missing in action. There was a time when Labour had six tests that it said needed to be passed in order for it to support any deal. Labour's Brexit tests have disappeared as quickly as Tory promises. I can understand that this might be politically pragmatic for Labour, but it definitely is not politically principled. But I suppose political principle is hard to manage when you cannot even get a coherent position between Scottish Labour and its UK bosses. Unfortunately, when it comes to a position on this Brexit deal, Labour is literally all over the place. Today in the Scottish Parliament, Labour will join the Scottish National party in refusing to grant a consent motion to this Bill. I am grateful for that. Labour will join not only us but the Greens and the Liberal Democrats standing with us: our Scottish Parliament united against the Tories, united against this Bill.

It is ultimately for others to explain their own actions and the litany of broken promises that will stay with them at the next election, because, in the end, this is not so much about the Brexit promises of political parties as about its impact on people. It is about respecting the democratic decisions that voters make. Both England and Wales voted to leave the European Union. They have decided that their future lies elsewhere. Let me make this clear: I may not agree with that decision, but I, and my party, respect it. This legislation respects it, and it forms a pathway to the future. The people of Northern Ireland voted to remain in the European

[*Ian Blackford*]

Union. Due to the efforts of both Michel Barnier and the Irish Government, the protocol protects the peace process. It means that Northern Ireland avoids a hard border and stays in the European single market. I support that protocol and its protection of a hard-won peace. This deal respects that. That being said, the Scottish Tories, including Baroness Davidson and the former Scottish Secretary, the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell), threatened to resign if Scotland was not offered the same deal as Northern Ireland. I say to both of them now that there is still time—we are still waiting.

The only democratic decision that has been ignored is the voice and vote of the Scottish people. None of this deal respects the choice that we made. I genuinely ask Members to reflect on that reality. Imposing this Brexit, imposing this deal means imposing a future that Scotland's people did not vote for and do not want. Let us not forget that one of the central claims of the Better Together campaign in 2014 was that if we stayed in the UK, we would stay in the European Union. That is the promise that was made.

We were also told that if we stayed in the United Kingdom, we were to lead the United Kingdom. On the day after the referendum, that all changed: Scotland was told to get back in its box. Throughout the Brexit process, Scotland's voice has been ignored by Westminster, our attempts at finding compromise rebuffed at every opportunity, tossed aside on the premise that Westminster is supreme, locking Scotland out of the key decisions affecting our future and ignoring our desire to retain our European citizenship.

**Sir Charles Walker** (Broxbourne) (Con): Despite the right hon. Gentleman's gloom, he knows that I adore and love his country. Does he not believe that Scotland has the character to succeed? Despite his misgivings, Scotland is a great country. Why is his speech so full of gloom and misery when Scotland has the character to prosper and succeed now?

**Ian Blackford**: I thank the hon. Gentleman. May I reciprocate and say that I love England and its people? I want us to maximise our opportunity, but this deal limits our opportunity. I want to unleash Scotland's potential. That potential will be unleashed with an independent Scotland at the heart of Europe.

The Prime Minister's broken promise on Erasmus has been a totemic issue in the last few days. He will remember standing in this House and promising us that we would stay in the Erasmus programme. That betrayal denies our young people the opportunities that European citizenship has given us. It denies them the European freedoms that we cherish—living, working and studying abroad. Around 200,000 people have taken part in Erasmus, including around 15,000 UK university students each year. It is also important to say that Erasmus is not solely about university students but about supporting youth workers, adult education, sport, culture and vocational training. That is why the Scottish Government are so committed to exploring every opportunity to keep Erasmus in place for our people.

Even the very name Erasmus signals our long-established European links. That long tradition of connection comes right into the modern day with our own Winnie Ewing,

Madame Écosse herself. Winnie, a former mother of the European Parliament, was Chair of the EU Education Committee that brought in the Erasmus scheme. [*Interruption.*] People at home will be watching this, and we have the Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster laughing about the success of the Erasmus scheme. Utterly, utterly, utterly pathetic—utterly pathetic.

All that history between Europe and Scotland, all those links and all these opportunities are now at stake. Scotland's story is European, and that story does not end today. Our past is European, and our future must be European. As a nation, that is a choice that we made in 2016, and I am confident that it is a choice we make now. We cannot support this legislation because it does not respect that choice and it does not provide for our future. Scotland's course is now set, and it is a very different course from the decisions being taken in the Westminster Parliament. We know that the only way to regain the huge benefits of EU membership is to become an independent state at the heart of Europe once more. That is the decision that the Scottish people will make. We begin that journey today. There is now an empty seat at the top table in Europe. It will not be empty for long.

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

11.9 am

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): The House will know that the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford) is a more cheerful person than his speech suggested. He gave us a 25-minute lesson in humility, for which we are grateful, and talked about ignoring popular votes. In the 2019 election, the SNP received 1,200,000 votes, and in 2014 the vote against independence was 2 million. That is a gap of 800,000—two thirds of the vote that the right hon. Gentleman leads in this House. He should be cautious both in predicting the future and in interpreting the past.

As Father of the House, I ought to recognise that the only significant speech ever made by a Father of the House was in the Narvik-Norway debate in May 1940, when in about his 11th year as Father of the House, David Lloyd George probably gave people the confidence to withhold their votes from the Government. I do not argue that today. We need to say, as many have said—except for the leader of the SNP—that this debate and vote is about whether we go for this deal or for no deal. In that, I agree with the right hon. and learned Gentleman the Leader of the Opposition. I give my vote, although in the referendum I argued that, on balance, it was better to stay in. We lost, and, unlike the SNP, one has to accept the result of a referendum.

**Jonathan Edwards**: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Sir Peter Bottomley**: No, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind.

When my father, who survived serious personal injury during the war, was involved in the first negotiations about joining the European Union, I asked him for his views on the economic impact. He said that, on balance, it did not make much difference. We joined in 1973—

two years before I was elected to the House of Commons—but it did not make a big difference to our economy until after 1979, when the change in Britain resulted in us going from being the sick man of Europe to being people who were looked on with respect, with many asking, “How did you do it?” The answer was in part by chance and in part by freedom and a cautious approach to a free market economy, led by Margaret Thatcher, who also led the significant debates to stay in the European Union in 1975. That was one of the best speeches she ever made and it can be read via the Margaret Thatcher Foundation.

I was nominated, or vouched for, as a candidate by Sir Robin Turton, a leading anti-marketeer. Margaret Thatcher and I—and, I argue, the country—won the June 1975 by-election after Neil Martin, a leading campaigner against staying in the European Common Market, asked Conservatives to vote for me, even though he and I disagreed, in the same way that Sir Robin Turton and I disagreed when he supported me.

We are often taken down paths we do not expect—the Prime Minister can probably vouch for that himself. I believe that we have to make a success of our present situation, and we have to make sure, as one of my friends kindly said, that we open a new chapter in a vibrant relationship with our continental cousins. We can, some of us, look with affection on the past, with admiration at what has been achieved in this past year, and with confidence to the future.

We ought to stop using this as an argument for Scottish independence. We ought to accept that the Labour party has, in many of its proud traditions, put the national interest before party interest. I say to the Prime Minister, as I said to him in reasonable privacy one day, that we want a leader we can trust and a cause that is just, so will he please lead us in the right direction in future?

11.13 am

**Margaret Beckett** (Derby South) (Lab) [V]: Today is the day on which the Prime Minister promised us that he would get Brexit done, in one of the many sermons and catchphrases that have not illuminated but rather obscured this debate. At the weekend we had a good example of that obscurity—the Prime Minister mentioned it today—with the £660 billion deal that enables us to trade with the European Union with zero tariffs and zero quotas. I am sure that many fairly casual observers get the impression that this is some kind of negotiating triumph that we have wrung from the European Union. The fact is, however, that these are privileges and rights that we already had. The £660 billion is what we have salvaged—it is what we have left from what was a much greater package of rights and freedoms. I am not knocking it—it is a good thing—but it is important to recognise that it is not a net gain.

That is not all that is obscure and misleading. The Prime Minister spoke today about fishing rights—I think his phrase was that we would be able to catch whatever we like. If we look at this agreement, we see that that is not the case. He said that there were no non-tariff barriers, as well as the tariff agreements on trade, but that is not true either. The agreement makes it clear that there is much more bureaucracy and many more rules and regulations—the very things that the Prime Minister claimed we would be escaping. Littered

throughout the agreement are working parties, specialist committees and the partnership council, to negotiate when there are differences.

Even for the stuff that has been agreed, a great deal of bureaucracy and negotiation surrounds it, and there is much that is left out, including the protection of designated products such as Stilton so that quality can be maintained and we can be assured that our producers have their rights in the market—that is all put on one side. It has already been mentioned in the debate that the huge issue of financial services has been left on one side and will have to be addressed in the future. This weekend, a blogger described the provisions in the treaty as “negotiations without end”.

Today, we have a Hobson’s choice: we are for or we accept this deal, or we have no deal. That is why my vote will be cast to accept the passage of this legislation to the statute book. I do not accept that that means we cannot criticise it in future; I certainly intend to do so.

11.17 am

**Sir William Cash** (Stone) (Con): In these historic days, as we regain our freedom and independence, I pay a profound tribute to our democracy and to the sovereignty of the mother of Parliaments, but above all to the voters in the referendum and the general election last December and, of course, to our Prime Minister, who, against all the odds, led us out of parliamentary paralysis last year to victory, delivering us from 48 years of subjugation to EU laws and European Court jurisdiction and regaining our sovereignty. Our Prime Minister—a great classicist—is, like his hero Pericles, the first citizen of his country and, like him, has saved our democracy. Like Alexander the Great, Boris has cut the Gordian knot. Churchill and Margaret Thatcher would have been deeply proud of his achievements, and so are we.

This Bill on our future relationship with the EU provides for a new exciting era for our trade with Europe and the rest of the world on sovereign terms—not on those of the EU, as with the Chequers deal. We must pay tribute to David Frost, Oliver Lewis and the Attorney General and her advisers for the successful outcome of the negotiations. There remain challenges on fishing and in relation to Northern Ireland; we must use our new and renewed sovereignty to exercise the political muscle that it gives us to resolve those challenges. We can, and I believe we will.

Regaining our right to govern ourselves is a true turning point in our great history. In peacetime, it compares only with the restoration by Monck in 1660, on the absolute condition of parliamentary consent, then followed by the Hanoverian succession after 1689 and the evolution of our modern parliamentary democracy, which has been the bedrock of our freedom and which enabled us, with the leadership of Churchill, to repel the danger of conquest in May 1940.

In April 1990, I was asked by Margaret Thatcher to lunch at No. 10 with members of the Cabinet. Margaret Thatcher asked me what I felt about Europe. I replied, “Prime Minister, your task is more difficult than Churchill’s. He was faced with bombs and aircraft. You are faced with pieces of paper.” Our Prime Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson), has achieved what all those years ago I was told was impossible. I refused to believe that. So did the Maastricht rebels and, last year, the 28 Tory Spartans.

[*Sir William Cash*]

That opened the way to where we are today. We have now won back our sovereignty, despite those European pieces of paper, and we in this country owe our Prime Minister our deepest congratulations on his achievement.

11.20 am

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): I am glad that in two days' time we will be finally leaving the EU. That is something that my party and I personally campaigned for, and it is something that would probably not have happened had it not been for the votes and crucial debates in this House when remainers tried to undermine the result of the referendum.

I have to say that today that euphoria is tinged with sadness, because the deal that the Prime Minister has struck will not apply equally to all parts of the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland will not enjoy all the benefits of this deal. Indeed, we will still find ourselves tied to some of the restrictions of EU membership that the rest of the United Kingdom has been freed from. We welcome the limitations that have been placed on the withdrawal agreement and the mitigations that have been made to it, but unfortunately the withdrawal agreement is still an integral part of the Government's policy and an integral part of this deal. This deal commits the Government to implementing not only this agreement but supplementary agreements, and they have to do it in good faith.

We therefore find that the detrimental impacts of the withdrawal agreement—that Northern Ireland will still be subject to some EU laws made in Brussels; that those laws will be adjudicated by the European Court of Justice; and that there will be barriers to internal trade within the United Kingdom between Northern Ireland and GB, and GB and Northern Ireland—are already being manifested. GB companies are indicating that they will no longer supply to Northern Ireland. VAT on cars will increase in Northern Ireland. From 1 January 2021, second-hand cars in Northern Ireland will be 20% dearer as a result of VAT rules applying, and a whole range of other things.

**Jim Shannon:** Does my right hon. Friend agree that there seems to be no protection for the single market regulations, in particular for banking and investment firms? There is not even the option for firms in Northern Ireland to apply for authorisation to the equivalent of the Financial Conduct Authority. Does he feel that that is an anomaly that needs to be addressed?

**Sammy Wilson:** Of course, it is not only in those areas. The Prime Minister talked about the way in which, because there was no longer any need for regulatory conformity, the UK could free itself to develop FinTech, biosciences and agricultural practices. Because Northern Ireland will still remain under some of the EU regulations, we will, in many ways, not be able to benefit from those new and exciting opportunities.

Having said that, Northern Ireland will still be part of the United Kingdom. I know that people have said that this deal will drive a wedge into the Union. A wedge can only be driven into the Union when the people of Northern Ireland decide that they no longer wish to remain part of the UK. When it comes to a choice between joining the Irish Republic—a small nation which will bob about in the future storms of

economic chaos—and being anchored to the fifth-largest economy in the world, which will prosper under Brexit, I believe that that choice will be an easy one for the people of Northern Ireland.

What I would say to the Prime Minister, though, is that there will be economic damage as a result of our exclusion from this agreement, but there are opportunities. There is a Joint Committee, there is a review of the agreement, there is the fact that we now have parliamentary sovereignty, and there is the fact that the Government can act unilaterally to undo economic damage. We will continue to press you and your Government, Prime Minister, to live up to your promises that Northern Ireland will not be disadvantaged as a result of the deals you have done.

Let me finally say that we will not be voting for this deal today, and I think the reasons are obvious. We are excluded from many of its benefits. That does not mean we have any common cause with the petulant remainers in this Parliament who want to undo the referendum; it is because we are disappointed Brexiteers. It is because we are people who believed that the United Kingdom should leave and should leave as a whole, and that is not happening, and for that reason we will not be voting for this deal today.

11.25 am

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith** (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): It is a privilege to be able to speak in this debate and to follow the right hon. Gentleman, whom I consider a friend. I was going to start by congratulating my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, but perhaps I should call him my right hon. Friend the Member for Athens, as our hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) described him as a modern Pericles.

The Prime Minister deserves the full plaudits for the delivery of this trade deal. He is entitled, I think, to a moment of satisfaction. Despite what all those doomsayers have said—perpetually during his progress through this, they have said there was no chance he would achieve a deal, and therefore we would have to leave with no deal—he has defied that and he has shown us that consistency, determination and optimism are key drivers in any negotiation, and I thank him for that. I also thank the negotiators, Lord Frost and others of his team, who have delivered this in the face of quite a lot of difficulty.

For me, it brings to an end a 29-year period. Back at the time of the Maastricht treaty, I had just entered Parliament, and I was faced with the choice of whether to vote for what I saw as a huge extension of powers for what became the European Union. I made the mistake of entering the Smoking Room, where my hon. Friend the Member for Stone laid his arm upon my shoulder, and my career was ruined thereafter. I chose directly as a result of those blandishments to vote against Maastricht. I do not regret it, but I do say that from that moment onwards I was certain that the United Kingdom would leave the European Union, because it was getting more and more centralised, and it was not what we had joined. I voted to join. I am pleased that we have delivered on this deal, and it is my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister who has done that.

I say to those who are going to vote against the deal today that they cannot escape reality. To be fair to the Leader of the Opposition, he made it very clear that

those who vote against the deal today are voting for no deal. We do not have to have that written on a piece of paper, because that would defy any of the logic that this place is about.

**Jonathan Edwards:** I do not believe that what the right hon. Gentleman says is the case. We are voting on the merit of the agreement, and the reality is that the agreement introduces a whole layer of extra bureaucracy for citizens and businesses in the UK. It is a charter for red tape.

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** I always love colleagues in this place trying to explain their actions, but it comes down to one simple point: we all know in this House that if we defeat an objective, we are left with what was there before. What is there before in this case is no deal, and I am sorry for the hon. Gentleman if he believes he is just voting against something that he thinks is wrong, because he is voting at the same time therefore for the status quo. The status quo is that we leave the day after tomorrow with no deal, and there is no escaping that, I am afraid, no matter what some wish for.

I welcome this deal. It is not perfect, and nobody here is going to say we can get a perfect deal, because there are two sides in this discussion, but it is a huge advance on where we might have been. We take back control of our sovereignty. We are a sovereign nation again, and with that power we can set our own direction in international as well as domestic relations. I simply say to those who do not see this: being able to regain that control is a huge step forward. Bringing back the power to this House and this Parliament is what the Prime Minister has achieved. Yes, there are things in this that will need time to develop—I accept that fishing is one; we have a better deal now, but five years from now we will have the key opportunity to decide how those waters will be run, to our benefit, and I congratulate the Prime Minister on that. Importantly, we also have the power to reset the environmental running of those waters. For far too long, too many large trawlers have destroyed many of our fishing areas, and I urge my Government to start the process, literally tomorrow, of making sure we bring environmentalism and control of this back to our area.

**Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD):** Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Sir Iain Duncan Smith:** No, I cannot give way—I beg the right hon. Gentleman's pardon.

I wish to conclude by simply saying that Brexit was never about being anti-European. Brexit is about restoring power to the UK. I love Europe—half my family have worked in Europe all their working lives, and I studied out there and love its idiosyncrasies, language differences, arts, culture and people—but I am British and I am a member of the United Kingdom. I want to respect these countries and be their friend, but for too long we moved into the same house with them and we did not get on. We are now just going to move next door and be good neighbours, friends and allies. I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister on bringing this to a conclusion—he deserves the plaudits he is going to get.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. In order to assist Members further down the list in preparing their speeches, I ought to give notice that

after the hon. Member for Bromley and Chislehurst (Sir Robert Neill), who is No. 19 on the list, the time limit will be reduced to three minutes—I see the hon. Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) already tearing up part of his speech. I call Hilary Benn.

11.31 am

**Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab):** May I draw attention to the fourth report of the Brexit Committee, on the agreement, which was published this morning? The Committee's wonderful staff worked really hard over Christmas, but we have not had the opportunity, in three days, to produce a fuller report, and I did write to the Leader of the House about giving the Committee a bit more time to complete the task that was given to us just under a year ago.

I will be voting for this Bill to implement the agreement today, because, quite simply, the alternative is no deal. I recognise that others in the House will abstain or vote against, but if we were in the position where every one of their votes was required in order to get this Bill, and therefore this agreement, through, I cannot believe that any of those colleagues would actually choose no deal, with all the damaging economic consequences it would bring, over a deal. That is why, in the end, the Prime Minister realised that he had no alternative but to get an agreement. This is not a vote about whether we support Brexit—I do not, but it has happened. This is a vote about making a bit better of a bad job.

There are aspects of the agreement that will be welcomed: the absence of tariffs, which has been referred to; the agreement on healthcare; the level playing provisions, which seem pretty reasonable to me; and our having access to some of the information that we require for our security. But we must also be honest about what is missing from this agreement and what that will mean. It does not deliver frictionless trade. It will impose checks, costs and red tape on British businesses that export to Europe. Frankly, I was astonished to hear the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on the radio the other morning apparently praising red tape as a benefit because it will make British businesses get “match fit” to trade. That is certainly a novel economic theory and it does not reflect the Conservative party as we previously understood it. The agreement offers no certainty yet on data transfer or financial services, which are so important to our economy. We did not get what was sought on conformity assessments, rules of origin, mutual recognition of qualifications, or reduced sanitary and phytosanitary checks. There is, as of this moment, no agreement yet on Gibraltar.

Why has this happened? It has happened because from the start the Government were faced with having to choose between sovereignty, on the one hand, and the economic interests of the country, on the other, and however hard they tried to pretend that they could have the best of both, that was never possible—a trade-off would always have to be made. We see that in the agreement before us, which is long and complex, rather like Brexit itself, and the full implications of both have yet to be revealed.

Today this Bill will pass, and tomorrow the process of leaving the EU will be complete, but the day after we will need to look forward, because a new question will confront us as a nation: what kind of relationship do we now wish to have with our biggest, nearest and most

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important trading partners and friends? The other reason why I will be voting for this Bill today is that, for all it has failed to secure, it at least provides a foundation on which, in the years ahead, we can build what I hope will be a strong economic and political relationship with our European friends. I hope, as we move beyond leave and remain, we will now be able, as a country, to come together to do exactly that.

11.35 am

**Dame Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn). I do not always agree with him, but I recognise the detailed and sterling work he has done on the Brexit Committee and am glad that he is voting for the Bill today.

I also welcome the fantastic news on the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, which along with the Bill gives us a double reason for celebration. I add my congratulations and plaudits to the Prime Minister and all our negotiators on their steadfastness in bringing home this deal.

Make no mistake, it took guts and determination both to leave the EU and, finally, to deliver this result. It may not be perfect. I, too, for example, share the reservations expressed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) about the position of our services industry, which needs urgent resolution on, for example, what the equivalence rules will look like.

The deal has been hard won and delivers zero tariffs and zero quotas, which brings a huge sigh of relief from many businesses and industries across the country. At the same time, it allows the UK once again to control its destiny through its own elected representatives and its own courts—the independence and control over our affairs that I and many others voted for in the referendum.

This is not a precipitate end to our relationship, but the controlled departure that we were all hoping for. Our participation in programmes such as Horizon Europe and EU Space Surveillance and Tracking indicates our recognition that there are things we can do better together across Europe, but now without having to be subject to a regime that we could not change or, at the very least, even influence.

There will be many other things that we can do better, such as the Turing scheme, which is going to offer 35,000 UK students worldwide opportunities and will replace Erasmus. When we pass this legislation today, we will be in a golden position to create a great future for the United Kingdom—a future that the people of Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and England will grasp with both hands. The trade deals and continuity agreements that we have already signed with 62 countries are testament to that, and we must make a great deal of fuss about the work that has gone into those signings, which will mean so much for our country in the future.

To those who continue to wage a war of attrition against this reborn independence and look backwards towards membership of the EU, I hope they, too, will now move on and develop the guts and determination of our Prime Minister to back our own Union and contribute positively to its future success. I believe that the UK's future is bright, working alongside Europe, but finally, after today, not subjugated by it.

It is with great pleasure that I support this Bill.

11.39 am

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab) [V]: I understand completely the exasperation of people that, four and a half years after the Brexit referendum, we are still debating this subject, and I understand the desire to move on. I also accept the proposition that a thin deal is better than no deal, but this is not only a thin deal; it is a bad deal. A far better deal could and should have been negotiated by the Government and still could be.

In the nearly 20 years that I have spent in this House—15 of them on the Front Bench—there have been many occasions when I have voted for a proposition with reservations; that is the nature of parliamentary and party politics. But there are occasions when that proposition is too damaging to support. I accept that there is a valid argument at this stage, as laid out by my right hon. and learned Friend the Leader of the Opposition, to move on and for the Opposition to build on this bad deal. I also accept that in politics, many decisions—perhaps most—are not between what is right and what is clearly identifiable as wrong but are on a continuum between what is unpalatable and what is unacceptable. Clearly, no deal is unacceptable. This bad deal is certainly unpalatable and, in places, unacceptable because of the ideological approach taken to negotiations by this awful right-wing shambles of a Tory Government who are determined to set Britain on a path that will damage it culturally and economically.

While I understand the desire to move on, I simply do not understand why it is necessary for those who believe that this is a bad deal to vote for it and dip their fingertips in the indelible ink of this abject failure of national ambition. The deadline we are up against today is an entirely artificial one, sustained only so that the Prime Minister can say that he has met his own political timetable. The truth is that the transition period could have been extended or the deal could have been introduced on a provisional basis to allow the House to thoroughly scrutinise it line by line, rather than follow the “take it or leave it by lunchtime” timetable that the Government have artificially manufactured today.

My right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) was right to talk about the red tape for manufacturing in this deal, checks for farmers, burdensome regulation on businesses and the fact that the consequences of the deal will be economically damaging. In addition, the Government have chosen to end the Erasmus educational programme for young people, there is no proper recognition of professional qualifications, and they will remove work permit-free access across the EU for touring musicians, who have already been unable to work for the last year due to covid. In the last few days, that issue alone has triggered a petition to Parliament with more than 200,000 signatures. Less than a year ago, the hon. Member for Selby and Ainsty (Nigel Adams), who was at the time the Minister for Sport, Media and Creative Industries, said in Westminster Hall:

“It is essential that free movement is protected for artists post 2020.”—[*Official Report*, 21 January 2020; Vol. 670, c. 56WH.]

That is just one example of the failure of the Government to deliver even on their own woefully inadequate promises in relation to this deal. This is a thin deal. It is a failure, even on the Government's own terms. In short, it is a bad deal, and I will not be voting for it.

11.42 am

**Dr Liam Fox** (North Somerset) (Con): Those of us who voted and campaigned to leave the European Union did so for a number of reasons. I was always a constitutional leaver. For me, the test of this Bill is: does it return the sovereignty that we sought? The answer is yes. Why? Because there is no subjugation to EU law or EU jurisprudence, no direct effect and no direct application. Retention of any of those would have been incompatible with a sovereign state. In fact, from our accession to the European Community through various EU treaties, all those elements were incompatible with the concept that those who live under the law should be able to determine those who make the law. That is what we have regained in this process.

The second test for me is: does this allow us to have a genuinely independent trade policy? Let us remember that we were told that it would take more than 10 years to reach a free trade agreement with the European Union and that it would be impossible to roll over all the EU agreements that we had. I stood at the Dispatch Box and listened to the Opposition incessantly telling us that. I congratulate Ministers and officials under Crawford Falconer at the Department for International Trade for all they have achieved, and I especially congratulate David Frost on landing one of the world's biggest trade agreements, if not the biggest, in 11 months—a world record—which, again, we were told was not possible.

When we voted to leave the European Union, we also voted to leave the single market, although for some of us the single market is also the single anti-market, with many of the restrictions and protectionisms that it encompasses. If we want to access the single market, there has to be a price to be paid. If we want to diverge from the rules of the single market, there has to be a price to be paid. Does this agreement provide effective mechanisms for us to do those things? My answer, again, is yes.

**Mr David Davis** (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that the mechanisms that this treaty has found are every bit as good as the mechanisms in the Canada treaty, for example, and all other treaties that reflect these tensions in free trade agreements?

**Dr Fox:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right, and not only are they effective mechanisms, but they keep us in line with the best international practice that exists, which of course enables us to move forward with greater predictability. On that point, there are a number of specific elements to welcome. The first is the acceptance of the concept—

**Jonathan Edwards:** Will the right hon. Member give way?

**Dr Fox:** I will not, I am afraid.

The first element is the concept of non-regression as a means of ensuring minimum standards. We accept that the maintenance of those high standards has fixed costs in international commerce, which is why we will always need to compete at the high end of the quality market globally in goods and services. As the Prime Minister rightly pointed out, we cannot ever become a bargain basement economy because the fixed costs we have are simply too high and, quite rightly, the British people would not allow us to abandon the standards we have. It means that we will have to move forward with

the natural innovation and creativity of the British people expanding our export culture, because the bottom line is that without more exports and without more actual trade, any trade agreement is simply a piece of paper. It is upon the natural innovation of the British people that our prosperity will be built in the future.

The second element, to which my right hon. Friend the Member for Haltemprice and Howden (Mr Davis) alluded, is the concept in dispute resolution of international arbitration without the European Court of Justice, which brings us in line with international trends and practices. That takes us to the third element: the mechanism of determining divergence. If there is no ability to determine to diverge, we are not sovereign. If there were not a price to be paid for divergence, the EU would never have reached the agreement with us. What would have been unacceptable is the concept of dynamic alignment—automatically taking EU rules over which we had no control into our law—but what is acceptable is penalties for divergence, which are clearly set out. They are proportionate, and there is a requirement to show harm, rather than their simply being put into law. The most important element of all is that it is we who will weigh up the costs and benefits of any potential disalignment. It is our choice—that is one of the key elements that we have for the future.

Today opens up a new chapter in our politics. It is the choice of maintaining and strengthening an independent United Kingdom; or of the new ranks of the rejoinders, who would have us thrust back into European accession politics all over again, consuming all our political time and energy, which is a future that I believe the British public will reject. There are things that we still have to sort out—the future of Gibraltar is one of the important ones, as is seeing further details on services, including financial services—but this is a historic day in our democracy. We have delivered on the referendum and our election promises. If, for the Opposition, those are not reasons to be cheerful, they are at least reasons of which we should all be proud.

11.48 am

**Ed Davey** (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): Our country is gripped by two crises: Britain's hospitals are overwhelmed and Britain's economy is in the worst recession for 300 years. A responsible Government, faced with those crises for people's health and jobs, would not pass this bad deal, for it will make British people poorer and British people less safe.

This is not really a trade deal at all; it is a loss of trade deal. It is the first trade deal in history to put up barriers to trade. Is that really the Government's answer to British businesses fearing for their futures and British workers fearing for their jobs? We were told that leaving the EU would cut red tape, but the deal represents the biggest increase in red tape in British history, with 23 new committees to oversee this new trade bureaucracy, 50,000 new customs officials and 400 million new forms. Some analysts estimate the cost of this new red-tape burden for British business at over £20 billion every year. This is not the frictionless trade that the Prime Minister promised.

**Jonathan Edwards:** I fully agree with the points that the right hon. Member is making. Is he concerned at reports that the lack of equivalence for sanitary and

[Jonathan Edwards]

phytosanitary measures means that Welsh farmers will face more red tape exporting to the EU than New Zealand farmers?

**Ed Davey:** I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman; he is absolutely right. The more businesses see this, the more disappointed they will be. These reels of red tape will put more jobs at risk at a time when so many are already being lost to covid, and all these new trade barriers will raise prices in the shops at a time when so many families are already struggling to make ends meet. From the failure to agree a good deal for Britain's services sector—80% of our economy—to the failure to agree a stable deal that investors will trust, this is a lousy deal for Britain's economic future.

The Conservatives can no longer claim to be the party of business, and with this deal they can no longer claim to be the party of law and order, for our police will no longer have real-time, immediate access to critical European crime-fighting databases such as SIS II. Such sources of key information about criminals and crimes are used every single day by our police; in one year alone, they are used over 600 million times, often in the heat of an investigation. Thanks to the Prime Minister's deal, British police will lose that privileged access and criminals will escape.

There are so many things wrong with this deal, from its failings on the environment to the broken promises for our young people on Erasmus, yet the irony is that, for a deal that is supposed to restore parliamentary sovereignty, our Parliament has been given only hours to scrutinise it while the European Parliament has days. And business has just days to adjust to this deal. The Liberal Democrats called on the Prime Minister to negotiate a grace period to help businesses adjust, forgetting, of course, that this Government no longer care about business.

The Government leave us no choice but to vote against this deal today. Perhaps that will not surprise too many people—the Liberal Democrats are, after all, a proud pro-European party who fought hard against Brexit—but we have genuinely looked at this post-Brexit trade deal to assess whether it is a good basis for the future relationship between the UK and the EU, and it is not. To those who argue that a vote against this deal is a vote for no deal, I say this: the Liberal Democrats led the charge against no deal when this Prime Minister was selling the virtues of no deal.

Today, the question is simple: is this a good deal for the British people? It is a deal that costs jobs, increases red tape, hits our service-based economy, undermines our police and damages our young people's future. It is a bad deal, and the Liberal Democrats will vote against it.

11.53 am

**Neil Parish** (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con) [V]: I start by congratulating the Prime Minister and his negotiating team on getting a deal that preserves tariff-free and quota-free trade with the EU worth over £660 billion. I also welcome the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, which will help to deliver our health in the future, and all the great work that all our health workers are doing in our communities across the country to fight covid.

I hope that all Opposition Members will join us in voting for the Bill today to support our farmers, our fishermen and our car industry, and to finally deliver on the referendum result. The public have consistently voted to leave the EU over the last four and a half years, including in Tiverton and Honiton, but farmers in my constituency and across the whole United Kingdom will be pleased that we are leaving with a deal. Sheep farmers across the whole United Kingdom who were facing tariffs of almost 50% will breathe a huge sigh of relief this Christmas. Our fishing industry can also be assured that the agreement recognises UK sovereignty over our waters, putting us in a position to rebuild our fishing fleet and coastal communities, and to process more of our fish in future. We are gaining 25% more fish, worth £146 million for our fleet, over the next five years. And we can go further, with the right to exclude EU boats should we want to. However, the Prime Minister and the Government were right to be reasonable on this issue, because we export about 80% of the fish we catch to the EU, and we need a market for that fish.

We need to co-operate on the agreement so that we are not constantly fighting with the EU and ending up in arbitration. There are incentives on both sides in the deal to keep promises and to be proportionate. Clearly there will be some practical challenges for our businesses over the next few weeks and months. The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has heard evidence on technical barriers to trade and on the additional paper and non-tariff barriers that exporters and importers will have to deal with. I want to take this opportunity to urge the Government to be on standby to assist businesses as they adjust to the new processes, whether that is through the Marine Management Organisation, the Food Standards Agency, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs or the Department for Transport. We have seen over the past few weeks the importance of the Dover-Calais crossing for trade, including for getting fresh food on our shelves at this time of year. We need to ensure that our businesses and hauliers are prepared for new rules of origin requirements, as well as for plant and animal health regulations at the border.

Leaving the EU's customs union and single market will be a big change. We now need to work hard as a country to overcome any challenges and seize the opportunities that being an independent sovereign state can bring. Let us raise our standards on animal welfare. Let us challenge public procurement and eat more food that we produce in this country. Let us lead the world on clean environmental cars and environmental protection. Let us catch more fish and regenerate our coastal communities. Let us roll up our sleeves, export more, and attract more investment from all corners of the globe.

11.57 am

**Ellie Reeves** (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab) [V]: Negotiations over Brexit and a deal with the EU have gone on for nearly four years in a process that was initially described as the "easiest in human history". The decision to leave has led to a significant devaluation of the pound, along with reduced business certainty and investment in the UK. Now that a deal has finally been reached, it is time to move on with our new relationship with the EU. However, this thin final-hour deal was not the deal that I wanted. It was not the deal



that we were promised. It was not the deal that my constituents, the vast majority of whom voted to remain, had hoped for. I do not believe that this is a good deal. Indeed, it will never compare with the deal we had before, which allowed for free movement, studying abroad, access to healthcare, and access to the single market and the customs union.

In the last Parliament, I consistently called for a second referendum and voted to remain in both the single market and the customs union. However, the debate has moved on. Things that seemed possible in 2018 and 2019 were no longer a reality after the general election. Today, the choice is stark: this deal—a bad deal and a bad outcome—or no deal, which would be disastrous for the country and my constituents. Given the choice that this country faces, I cannot in good conscience sit on my hands and abstain on the biggest vote I have faced since my election in 2017—in effect, saying that I do not mind either way if we leave with a deal or not. I also do not think it would be credible for the Opposition to sit on the sidelines on an issue of such fundamental importance. Nor can I vote against the deal when the alternative of no deal is a complete disaster.

The responsibility for this bad deal lies squarely with the Conservatives, but it is the deal that Labour will inherit if elected in 2024. It will be our responsibility to build on it and to make it succeed in the future. As a starting point, I call on the Government today to restore the UK's participation in Erasmus. Opting out will deprive thousands of young people of opportunities, and sever countless potential links between UK nationals and our European neighbours. I lived and worked in Italy under an EU scheme as a teenager, and it fills me with sadness that the same opportunities will no longer be afforded to my children and my constituents. As an MP proud to have a large number of constituents who work in the creative industries, I urge the Government to do everything possible to secure a cultural work permit that provides visa-free travel throughout the 27 EU states so that creative professionals can perform shows and events, along with customs exemptions for their touring equipment.

Finally, the level-playing-field commitments on labour and environmental standards are limited. They are not dynamic, and do not require the UK to uphold current levels of protection in all instances. In 2017, I tabled an amendment to the European Union (Withdrawal Agreement) Bill which sought to ensure that sex discrimination protections and maternity rights, along with rights for workers with caring responsibilities, would be no worse after Brexit than had Britain remained a member of the EU. This deal is nowhere close to achieving that.

It is clear that this is a bad deal, but it is better than the disaster of no deal. That is why, with great sorrow that we left the European Union last January, I will vote for the Government's deal.

12.1 pm

**Sir Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): Following the hon. Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves), I feel that we are having a debate about the glass being half full or half empty. It is worth reminding ourselves that we will be able to do things such as abolishing the tampon tax, which many hon. Ladies on the Opposition Benches railed against, because we are leaving the EU and getting out of its jurisdiction.

This extraordinary recall of Parliament, the day before new year's eve, in the midst of a raging pandemic, is a pivotal moment in our history. Since 31 January, we have been in limbo, outside the EU but subject to its laws and institutions. Tomorrow marks the real departure, when we take back control of our destiny. Denial by some of the importance of sovereignty is based on confusion. Sovereignty is not the same as power. Sovereignty is the ultimate source of authority to exercise power. EU member states have given that ultimate authority to the EU. Demanding its return was a revolutionary act by the majority who voted leave in the referendum, which they then confirmed in the 2019 general election.

**Mr Mark Francois** (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): Briefly, is my hon. Friend aware that in a national opinion poll that was undertaken yesterday, 55% of the British public wanted MPs to vote for the deal, whereas only 15% did not?

**Sir Bernard Jenkin:** That revolution continues. It recalls our Glorious Revolution of 1688, when the nation broke with an attempt to align the then three kingdoms of the British Isles under James II with an existing European hegemony to create a new arrangement with the modern, free-trading Dutch, when Parliament reasserted the right of the people through the Bill of Rights to consent to its system of government. It is that right that was increasingly compromised in the EU, which attaches more importance to integration and central control than to democratic choice.

Some said that the EU would never allow the UK to leave EU control and to prosper. What the EU negotiators called “governance” became the fundamental difference of principle in the EU negotiations. The agreement may be less than many would have liked in many respects—let us remind ourselves that many of those extra barriers and checks have been imposed by the EU through its choice, not because we chose to accept them—but I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, who held absolutely firm on governance, insisting that the EU could only have free trade with the UK if it gave up its control over the UK. As the ERG legal advisory committee has confirmed, the agreement treats the EU and the UK as sovereign equals. I have no doubt that the EU will continue to do everything it can to assert what it intends the provisions of the agreement to mean. This is the new challenge. For two generations, our system became institutionalised by the EU, but we now have the reciprocal right to insist on our view of fair interpretation with equal vigour. We must do that, because only then can we seize the great opportunities that exist for our reborn nation.

I have a final word about Scotland. It is striking that although the Government have agreed an institutional framework for relations between Whitehall and Brussels, and even between this Parliament and the European Parliament, no such formal frameworks exist in our own country between the four Parliaments and the four Governments. Those who want to strengthen the Union, and to strengthen trust within our own Union of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, must address that issue with urgency. I hope, as Chair of the Liaison Committee, to help the Government do precisely that.

12.5 pm

**Liz Saville Roberts** (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC) [V]: Diolch yn fawr, Madam Ddirprwy Lefarydd. This deal is a bad deal for Wales. The Government dragged out negotiations until Christmas, and it is now being rammed through Parliament just to avoid proper scrutiny. Who would have thought that “taking back control” would prove so false, so soon? With the Tories and Labour now committed to working hand in hand to enable the deal, it is a done deal, a stitch up—it will pass. The dominant Westminster parties have worked together to make all other options impossible. Our vote today is therefore reduced to a symbolic rubber-stamping exercise that makes a mockery of sovereignty.

Let us get one thing on record: we are brought here to implement this legislation, not to ratify it, and to rubber-stamp a virtually unseen document that is the Government’s creation. In law, the Tory Executive hold the power to wave this through, but they need the cover and the pretence of democracy. Let us be clear-eyed. The Tories have choreographed this delusion by dither and delay at every stage of negotiation, and they own every spin and twist of this danse macabre. Labour is their willing partner.

There is no question but that this is a bad deal for Wales. In less than 48 hours, people and businesses will face significant new barriers to trade, when our economy is already in crisis due to covid-19. Welsh farmers who sell their lamb to the EU will now face complex paperwork and new produce checks. One hundred and forty thousand jobs in Wales’s manufacturing sectors, including automotive and aviation, will be hampered by disruption to complex cross-border just-in-time supply chains.

This deal will also lock out our young people from opportunities granted as a right to other parts of the UK. The Erasmus programme opened doors to education, training and work for many young people in Wales, but those doors are now shut in their faces. Although many people in Wales did indeed vote for Brexit, nobody voted for the immense damage that this Tory deal will cause, or for Wales to lose its voice in shaping our future. As has been the case throughout the negotiations, Wales will likely be excluded from the mechanisms included in this deal that will govern our future relationship with the EU.

This is a Government who scorn checks and balances, disrespect devolution, and centralise power where their political interests lie. This is a betrayal of working people, who were promised greater prosperity and control over their own lives by this Government. What Wales now needs is a new deal—a relationship with Westminster that would enable us to be a good neighbour, rather than a tenant tied into a bad contract. That means control over our economy, our justice system, our welfare arrangements and our natural resources, and a political system where decisions are made with true and direct accountability in the best interests of everyone who lives here—a truly independent Wales. Plaid Cymru will stand up for the interests of the people in Wales, and vote against this bad deal.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. I remind hon. Members that after the next speaker, the time limit will be reduced to three minutes. With four minutes, I call Sir Robert Neill.

12.9 pm

**Sir Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con) [V]: At the last two elections, I promised my constituents that I would do all I could to ensure that we left the European Union with a deal, rather than without one, and I shall therefore vote for the Bill today. Even though it does not go as far as I would have liked in some areas, it is none the less a basis on which we can build a constructive relationship for the future. That is in our interests as a nation, and in the interests of our friends and neighbours in the European Union.

There has understandably been much talk of sovereignty and control. I recognise the force of that, but we also have to be frank and honest, and say that sovereignty itself never put any food upon any family’s table nor paid any family’s wages, or mortgage or rent. It is how we use that sovereignty and control that matters, and sometimes that is best done with restraint, and often in collaboration with others. I hope that in that spirit that we will build on the arrangements in the Bill, particularly in key areas of our economy such as financial services. I welcome the fact that there is some reference to financial services in the Bill, but there is much more to do there. I hope that as a matter of urgency the Government will do more work on data adequacy arrangements, ensuring that we swiftly obtain equivalence arrangements for that sector and also deal with the growing financial technology sector, in which we are world leaders. There is work to do, but this is something on which we can build, and I know that for that reason the City of London Corporation and the financial services sector welcome the Bill.

I also welcome the legal services chapter, but again there is more that we can do to extend the definition of mutual recognition of professional qualifications beyond lawyers, as it currently stands, as very often accountants and others work in multidisciplinary teams now.

I am pleased with the work done on justice and security co-operation, although I hope that we will be able to find a better means to deal with access to SIS II, because we have had compelling evidence on the Justice Committee of the importance of that. Again, that is something that we can build upon. I hope also that there will be a spirit of co-operation in which we can deal with other matters of critical importance that are not directly covered by the Bill, such as agreeing early accession to the Lugano convention on civil justice co-operation and enforcement of judgments. There is no reason now why that should not be pursued with the utmost speed, so that we can ratify as soon as possible.

Finally, there is the matter of an obligation that we have to the people of Gibraltar. I refer to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests, as chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on Gibraltar. We gave a clear undertaking to the people of Gibraltar—who, although they voted overwhelmingly to remain in Europe, are equally determined to remain part of the British family—that we would not leave them behind and would not leave the European Union without securing a deal for them, too. I hope that when he responds to the debate, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster will confirm our Government’s and our nation’s continuing commitment to use every endeavour in the coming days to get a deal for the people of Gibraltar that protects their interests and respects their British sovereignty. We gave our word. Our future reputation in a global world will depend on our ability to keep our word; here

is a swift and immediate instance where we can be seen to do so. That is a matter of political and moral obligation.

Against that basis, there are constructive things that we can do—set aside, perhaps, divisions of the past and work together collaboratively as a nation with our friends and neighbours, and those who we have given our word to support and assist. I will support the Bill today.

12.13 pm

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP) [V]: Despite the Government doing their best to limit parliamentary scrutiny, we now see how the promises of the 2016 leave campaign, led by the Prime Minister, compare with reality.

Despite all the promises to the fishing industry, the vast increase in quota has not been delivered. Even after six years, half the 87 fish stocks listed in the deal produce no gain or less than a 1% shift of allowable catch from EU to UK fishermen. Only 13 stocks will produce more than a 5% shift. Indeed, the removal of the ability of EU and UK fishermen to swap quota means that landings of many species, such as cod and haddock, will actually be less than now. The Prime Minister's claim of no non-tariff barriers is patently laughable. The costs of customs bureaucracy and seafood devaluing in lorry queues mean that many fishermen will be worse off after Brexit. In exchange for this poor deal, we will pay a high price as individuals: the loss of EU citizenship; the loss of the right to study, work, love and live anywhere in 31 other countries—a right that we have all enjoyed but that we are taking away from the next generation; the loss of recognition for professional qualifications; and over 4 million EU and UK citizens, such as my husband, having to apply for the right to remain in their homes.

In this year of all years, we have cause to be grateful to those immigrants who have been working in our health and care services or as key workers, keeping us safe, maintaining food and energy supplies, and keeping our public services working. We value those who choose to make Scotland their home, whether they come from Europe or further afield, and who contribute their knowledge, skills and energy to our public services, our communities and, in my case, our families. The people of Scotland are outward looking and reject the isolationism and small-minded pettiness that have led the Government even to remove the opportunities of Erasmus+ for young people. So much for the 2014 promises of “Vote no to stay in the EU” and “Scotland is an equal partner in a family of nations”.

Scots have the democratic right to choose their own path and to take their future into their own hands. I believe they will choose for Scotland to become a modern, independent European country in its own right.

12.16 pm

**Tom Tugendhat** (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con): After sharing many conversations with friends around the House and on various Benches, I am sorry to say that I disagree with the hon. Member for Central Ayrshire (Dr Whitford) and many on the Opposition Benches. I am going to vote, alongside Members of the Dáil and Parliaments around Europe, to back this treaty. I am going to recognise that the European Union has made

an offer and we have accepted it, and that we have made one and the EU has accepted it, and I am going to respect that. That is why I am going to vote with the Government today.

After the last four years, nobody can claim that breaking up is easy, so I am delighted that I was here to hear my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) speak, because what he said, he said with his usual candour. He respects our interdependence, and he respects the fact that that interdependence comes at a cost when we assert independence from it. I respect that; he is right. He also made it clear that sovereignty is deeper than deals: it is in the Government's robustness and preparedness and in their willingness to defend our interests with vigour. Great Britain, as he rightly said, has guarded its sovereignty in this agreement.

After years of acrimony and anger, it is time to end the constitutional Kama Sutra that has left us all bruised, exhausted and distracted from our families, our friends and our communities. It is time to move on.

**Dean Russell** (Watford) (Con): In constituencies such as mine there was great division over Brexit and the referendum. Does my hon. Friend agree that when the Division bell rings today and the deal goes through, it is time to heal those divisions and to move forward together as one Union?

**Tom Tugendhat**: I absolutely agree. We have been in the EU for only 47 years—that is the lifespan of a Hohenzollern empire. We are leaving the EU, just as Germany left that empire, and we will find a new way of working together. This deal is but the first step on that journey; it is just the concordat that bridges the channel and looks to future co-operation.

Many areas are overlooked; many people have mentioned them, and I know will build into them. Building on the rule of law, our close partnership with like-minded democracies, our new alliances with European countries and other countries around the world, and our global ambition—in many ways that was the building block for the Union of our four nations, which still lives in the hearts of our people today—we can see our people prosper in security and peace for years to come. Indeed, we have achieved that as an island nation for longer than almost any other nation.

The history of that stability is one reason why the Foreign Affairs Committee has heard from people such as the King of Jordan and the former President of Liberia, Nobel peace prize winners, former Foreign Ministers, business leaders and diplomats that British leadership has been missed for too long. They recognise that what we offer is worth having. We need now to invest in our foreign services and co-ordinate our Departments to deliver abroad, and we need to do more than roll over trade deals.

Wars are not won by defence but, as NATO doctrine puts it, by offensive action. We need to be bold if we are to chart a different future, and we need to build on the Prime Minister's coming visit to India and the wider alliance that is coming together in the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-pacific partnership. We would be welcomed hugely, and I have been told clearly by many, particularly the Pacific democracies. We have a chance to renew international co-operation and commit ourselves to the environmental revolution

[Tom Tugendhat]

that is so essential as we chair the G7 and COP26. This Government have the chance to set the agenda that the world needs to protect democracy at a time of autocracy and to defend the rule of law. We can make Glasgow the next milestone after Paris in the path to a greener world. Britain will succeed if we remember our friends in Europe, the Commonwealth and the world, if we renew our alliances and build new partnerships, and if we develop new, greener markets and industries, innovate and invest in ourselves. This is a new beginning and we alone are responsible for seizing it.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. Just a gentle reminder that, if there are interventions, it does take time away from others who have been put on the list and drawn.

12.20 pm

**Cat Smith** (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): Today, we are faced with a choice between this flawed deal or no deal. I do not welcome this deal, and there is plenty in it that I do not like, but I accept it. I accept that it is better than no deal. It is the least worst option on offer today. It is the least worst option for business. It is the least worst option for supply chains, for the economy and for jobs. Local businesses in Lancaster and Fleetwood tell me that they are relieved that this deal will provide some certainty, finally, after four and a half years of uncertainty. Although everything in it might not be what they want, at least they have something to work with other than those Government adverts that say, “Get ready for Brexit.”

Let us face it: this deal falls far short of what the Government promised. I will confine most of my remarks to fishing. Vote leave, led by the Prime Minister, promised to secure “an even better deal” than the one that was tariff-free for fishers and that offered full control over access and quota—as well as frictionless trade of course. That is important because we export 80% of what we catch, mostly into the EU, and import 70% of what we eat. The industry has called for free unimpeded trade in fish and fisheries products to ensure that supply chain continuity. As we leave the common fisheries policy, it is clear that the Government’s demands in negotiations have been severely watered down in the final agreement that we see today. When it comes to over-promising and under-delivering, this Prime Minister certainly has form. The reality is that the communities, such as my own in Fleetwood, who voted to leave the EU on bold promises about the regeneration of fishing will be left very disappointed.

As for the £100 million promise that has come from the Government in recent days, I say this: it had better be more real than the promise of £350 million a week for the NHS that was plastered on the side of a bus. That £100 million will not be enough to truly transform coastal communities up and down these islands who desperately need that investment, which is why many of them chose to vote to leave the European Union.

I will vote for this Bill today, because the old divisions between leave and remain are over and the two options before us today are leaving with a flawed deal and leaving with no deal tomorrow. I shall cast my vote in

the national interest. I do so not because I think that this is a good deal—and I reserve the right to criticise it, which I certainly will be doing in this House—but because I want to put the national interest first, unlike those who play politics by voting down this Bill today.

12.23 pm

**Mr Mark Francois** (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for allowing me to participate in this historic debate today. Thanks to this agreement, we will finally be leaving the European Union forever on new year’s eve, so perhaps Big Ben will bong for Brexit after all. Nigel Farage memorably said last week that “the war is over”. Well, sometimes, as you will well remember, Madam Deputy Speaker, it has felt like a war in this place. Perhaps we should now take on board the advice of the prophet Isaiah, who said:

“They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

In that case, my Spartan friends and I should now lower our spears too, but perhaps keep them to hand just in case one day, someone—perhaps the Leader of the Opposition—should try and take us back in.

My colleagues in the European Research Group have fought long and hard for this day and we have sometimes been lampooned or even vilified by the remain-dominated electronic media for our trouble, when all we have ever wanted is one thing: to live in a free country that elects its own Government and makes its own laws here in Parliament, and then lives under them in peace. Now, thanks to the Prime Minister, who kept his word to the country and got Brexit done, who did exactly what it said on the tin, as our star chamber has verified, we can do that. What I call the battle for Brexit is now over. We won, but I suspect the battle for the Union is now about to begin.

We are about to write a new chapter in what Sir Winston Churchill called our “island story”, but now, after a truly epic struggle, we will do it as a free people. Despite all the brickbats we have endured for years—I think particularly of my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash)—it was always worth the fight. Mel Gibson once made a very entertaining film but this is cry freedom for real, and now, finally, it is true.

12.26 pm

**Colum Eastwood** (Foyle) (SDLP) [V]: At the outset, I thank the Irish Government and Michel Barnier for standing up for the Good Friday agreement and the people of Northern Ireland when others refused to do it. The majority of people in Northern Ireland, of course, voted to reject leaving the European Union and they still reject it today. This Boris Johnson deal does not address the core problem with Brexit for us. We have chosen a different path from the one driven by English nationalism. While we welcome the fact that a no-deal outcome has been avoided, we have absolutely no intention of giving our consent or endorsement to an outcome that will make people poorer. This is the first example of a trade deal in modern history that actually puts up barriers to trade. The protocol protects us from a hard border in Ireland—yes it does—but this deal will still damage our economy, our society and our public services in a range of areas. Whether it is on services, roaming or policing and justice, this deal puts

us in a far worse place than we are in right now, and I, for one, refuse to apologise for voting against it. Our position has remained consistent throughout.

My firm view now is that the United Kingdom is coming to an end. I say this in the full understanding that many in my community will see the break-up of the Union as a tragedy, and I fully respect that position. Just because I believe that the Union is ending does not mean I say it in a tone of thoughtless triumphalism. It instead places a solemn responsibility on us to manage the relationships across these islands. Our scarred history places a moral duty upon us. We need to conduct the coming conversation with patience, care and compassion. The prize is to build a shared home for all our people, but a new Ireland will not be built upon the rubble of our past, and I want to appeal to some of my fellow nationalists: there is no future in glorifying the ugliness of our past. Stop pretending that murdering unarmed farmers up country lanes was somehow heroic. There is no future worth having to be built upon that narrative.

To my Unionist neighbours, I want to say this: look where the DUP has led you and look where London has left you. It is my firm conviction that we can build a new society together—one built on mutual respect, which recognises and celebrates all our rich traditions. We in the SDLP will remain true to that proud heritage. We will be patient and generous, but we will also be honest about our view of the unfolding constitutional realities. Young people everywhere rejected Brexit. Thankfully, in Northern Ireland, young people will have a choice again. They will be able to choose a European future again. They will be able to choose an open, liberal and modern future, which is a prize worth fighting for. As John Hume said—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. I am afraid the hon. Gentleman has well overrun his time, so I thank him for his speech, but we now move on to David Davis.

12.30 pm

**Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con):** In normal times, this House would have been packed to the rafters with people listening to the Prime Minister's speech, because this is a new beginning for our country. There is no doubt about that. There is no doubt that, in two days, our freedom and our sovereignty will be much greater than they were as a result of the treaty.

In terms, the treaty is better—much better—than would have been achieved under the previous strategy. The Prime Minister and Lord Frost have done a fantastic job in delivering it. They delivered it by standing up to the European Union and calling its bluff successfully, time and time again. They have delivered an outcome that we can make the most of.

**Peter Kyle:** I was in this place when the right hon. Gentleman was at the Dispatch Box and he promised the House that we would have the “exact same benefits” from Brexit. When he was challenged to put that in law, he said that we did not need to put it in law, because he had given his word. How does he reflect on that period and the failure to deliver the exact same benefits he promised?

**Mr Davis:** That is the point. First, it was a negotiating aim, as the hon. Gentleman's leader said at the time, but secondly, that is why I resigned. The strategy that we were pursuing then did not, and would not, deliver that. The only honourable thing I could do was stand down.

This treaty is a new beginning, which is not to say that it is perfect—I agree with the hon. Gentleman on that. On Northern Ireland, we have issues to deal with. On fishing, we have issues to deal with, which I will come back to. On Gibraltar, we have issues to deal with. It is not over. All will lead to uncomfortable decisions in the near future.

Freedom is only as good as what we do with it; it is only as good as how we exploit it. One day, frankly, is not enough for us to deal with a 1,200-page treaty in that respect. Some may say, “Well, surely it's a day to celebrate—to vote yes and move on,” but not at all, because the European Union will, of course, use the treaty to its own advantage. We can look at the past and see how it has done that.

For example, Switzerland struck a whole load of trade treaties, primarily in the '90s, but subsequently as well, with the European Union. About four or five years ago, the Swiss people voted to restrict their migration and cut back on the free movement of people. The European Union bullied the Swiss Government into giving in by saying, “We will withdraw all the free trade arrangements we currently have.” That is important, because we have not been through the whole 1,200 pages here to make sure that we do not have any such issues in there. We do have one in the fishing arrangements. In five years' time, the EU can trigger an end to the trade and transport elements. That is not impossible—we can deal with it—but we will have to devise a strategy for that.

My point to the House is that we have to come back to this treaty and look at it in detail—all 1,200 pages—to devise a strategy, so that we do not get into conflicts with the European Union, fall into traps or get into acrimonious disputes with the member states. They are our neighbours and friends, and we have to devise a strategy that will keep them as neighbours and friends and maximise our joint benefits. If the House does that, we will have a bright future. To come back to the point made by the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle), we will have better than the exact same benefits, because we will have bigger opportunities in the rest of the world, as the Department for International Trade has already demonstrated, and as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said. On that basis, I will vote for this treaty.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. I very much hope that if hon. Members who are down to speak intervene on others, they will shorten their own speeches accordingly. If people want to take interventions, it is probably a good idea to run a little short, as the right hon. Gentleman just did.

12.34 pm

**Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op) [V]:** In my brief contribution, I wish to say that I feel very strongly about Europe. We are leaving the European Union; we are not leaving Europe.

I am a war baby. I was born in London on the worst day of the blitz for London. After the war—that terrible period in European history—the move to start a Europe

[Mr Barry Sheerman]

with the watchword to “make war unthinkable” was inspirational. It was to be a Europe that was wealthy, powerful and a great influence on the democracies of the world. We still need that spirit.

I sit on the Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union, so I have been privileged to hear a great deal of evidence. Although I am sure this is not the best deal we could possibly have had, it is a much better deal than I expected, so I will support it in the Division Lobbies tonight. This is the time for the renewal of the European spirit. We are still in Europe. This agreement is a building block. We can build on it, and we must build on it if we are to make this world a safer and more secure place, if we are to stand up to the global threats from China and Russia, and if we are to stand up to the threats of covid, global warming and climate change. Europe must work together.

Given all the evidence, we ought to thank Michel Barnier, who has been tough but is a true European, and Ursula von der Leyen, who is an inspired leader. We should also recognise the support behind them from Angela Merkel and President Macron. It was, in part, inspired leadership across Europe that gave us this deal; it was not just the true Brits fighting for a good deal. It was a good piece of statesmanship and I applaud it.

12.37 pm

**Mrs Sheryll Murray** (South East Cornwall) (Con) [V]: I was really pleased that the Prime Minister secured this deal. It will mean so much to so many, and I support it.

I was, however, disappointed that the deal was linked to our fishing waters. To say that fishermen are disappointed is an understatement, and I share their disappointment. I do understand that the EU originally demanded access to our six to 12-mile limit for 40 years and that the negotiators managed to reduce it to five and a half years. In order to give the industry certainty, I hope that we will see July 2026 as an end date enshrined in legislation and that the Government will compensate for this to happen.

I ask that we take advantage of our new-found freedom from the European Court of Justice to restore the principles enshrined in Margaret Thatcher’s Merchant Shipping Act 1988. We must make sure that all UK quota is available for UK-owned boats. The disastrous Factortame ruling must be reversed.

I ask that licences issued to foreign-owned vessels fishing in our six to 12-mile limit are stringently enforced. The right of arrest given to the Royal Navy police must be extended beyond the six-month period, with any breach of our rules resulting in the impounding of the vessel and gear. Canada showed the way with the arrests on the Estai in 1995.

Minimum landing requirements in UK ports should be introduced, with the limits set after consultation with industry representatives, in order to ensure no obstruction for UK vessels that land in ports in other countries.

We must take advantage of the five and a half year window to rebuild our fishing infrastructure, including new vessels, using the generous £100 million from the Treasury. I hope that the Chancellor will look to provide a little more, but I do understand the economic times

we are in. Any grant aid must be distributed throughout the whole United Kingdom and benefit fishing vessel owners, as well as port infrastructure and processes.

We must prepare ourselves for 2026. With the UK an independent coastal state, the Minister can take decisions to free us from a fisheries management regime that has been hampered by the constraints of the CFP. We can honour our obligations under the United Nations convention on the law of the sea, but be flexible to ensure all UK fishermen can benefit from this partial freedom and take the necessary steps to ready ourselves when we—as we must—really take back complete control of our waters in 2026. I will support this deal this evening.

12.40 pm

**Ms Diane Abbott** (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab) [V]: In over 30 years in this House, this is the most important and consequential piece of legislation on British-EU relations that I have taken part in. Let me say at the beginning that I will not be voting for this Tory Brexit deal today, but that is not because I do not respect the result of the 2016 referendum.

I think I have rather good Eurosceptic credentials. I voted against the Maastricht treaty in 1992, and I have voted against most other pieces of further EU unification that have come in front of this House. However, I voted against the Maastricht treaty not because I was opposed to freedom of movement or because I had fears and concerns about EU migrants or because I had the notion that migrants drove down wages; I voted against the Maastricht treaty and other aspects of EU integration because of a concern about fundamental issues of democracy and accountability. By driving this historic deal through Parliament in one day, with no time for proper scrutiny, this Government are trashing democracy.

This deal falls short in many policy areas, but I want to talk about security. The Government claimed that they were going to get

“a security partnership of unprecedented breadth and depth”.

On the contrary, our access to Europol and to Eurojust has been compromised, and we will no longer have access to the European arrest warrant and to EU databases that allow for realtime data sharing, such as the Schengen Information System, and are valuable to our police and the National Crime Agency. The database was consulted over 600 million times by UK police forces in 2019.

In closing, I have the greatest respect for the result of the 2016 referendum, but this shoddy deal falls short. It fails the British people and fails my constituents, and I have to meet my responsibilities as a Member of the British Parliament and vote against it today.

12.43 pm

**Damian Green** (Ashford) (Con) [V]: There are huge complexities in this deal, but there is a simple choice before us today: this deal or no deal. As someone who campaigned hard for remain in 2016, I have held two views very strongly since then: not only would it be wrong to try to overturn the result, as many of my hon. Friends believed, but leaving with no deal would be a terrible option for this country. Today, therefore, I will vote enthusiastically for this deal.

I congratulate the negotiating teams on both sides for showing, on the final stretch, the kind of practical pragmatism which, ironically, has always been held up

as a positive British contribution to EU proceedings. I am also very grateful that the British negotiators went to the trouble of making some time to share and discuss matters with the One Nation Conservatives caucus in recent weeks.

There is no time today to go into the details. Although today is a triumph for the Government and for the Prime Minister, it is not a triumph for Parliament because this degree of scrutiny is clearly pretty laughable. However, it is worth registering two specific points, both of which are things that need to be built on. The first are the security arrangements. It is hugely regrettable that the UK has had to leave the SIS II regime for exchanging information about criminals. I hope that we can negotiate some equivalent in the future. The second is obviously the need to improve matters for the financial services industry. The arguments have been well rehearsed already. I hope that the necessary rules can be agreed in the coming months to allow the industry to flourish, not just in the City of London but around the UK. That strong likelihood of further talks in the committee structure that the deal sets up is one of the reasons why the deal is worth supporting enthusiastically. With no deal, there would have been no chance of such sectoral deals. There would have been bad blood instead of what I hope will become the habit of close co-operation. I hope that fervently, because in recent days my constituents have seen the effects of blockages and delays at the ports, and if this goes on too long they and I will be very unhappy.

What is needed now is a spirit of generosity both in our internal debates—too much of the Brexit debate has been full of bile, hatred and personal attacks—and, even more important, in our attitude to countries that are our neighbours, our allies in democracy and our friends. We can make today the start of a new relationship of good neighbours rather than surly housemates, so let us take the opportunity, support the deal and move on.

12.46 pm

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab) [V]: I am glad that the Government and the EU have agreed a deal. As the transition ends tomorrow night, our country should start the process of building new relationships and a future outside the EU, based on an agreement and a plan, not on the acrimony or chaos that no deal would have heralded. This is not the deal that the Prime Minister promised everyone—on services, which are left out; on red tape, which will increase; and on security co-operation, which will go down. He should level with people about those problems, not make impossible promises.

There are further urgent things we need the Government to do now to support jobs and security, but we need an agreement as a starting point. We left the EU in January; the transition ends tomorrow. Everyone needs to get on with things and no one deserves the chaos of no deal. Britain's counter-terror chief told us that that would make us less safe, and employers in my constituency such as Tereos, Burberry, Haribo and Teva would be badly hit under no deal by tariffs and delays.

So it is in the national interest and in our local interest for this Brexit agreement to pass through Parliament now, and I shall vote for it today, but we need urgent action to improve the deal for this country. I am glad that it includes continued security co-operation on criminal

records—DNA, Europol and extradition—although arrangements will be more bureaucratic, but there is a huge gap for us. Tomorrow night the police and Border Force will have to remove access to the details of 38,000 wanted suspects and criminals from the EU on the SIS II criminal database, which they check hundreds of millions of times a year. The replacement Interpol information system database is much slower and weaker. That makes our security response weaker too. There is not a proper trade deal on services, and there will be a massive increase in red tape for businesses—11 million customs forms that have to be filled in. Those costs will hit jobs and investment.

We need to look forward to the things that the Government need to do now, once the Brexit agreement is in place, to support security and jobs—resources for the police to operate the new arrangements; look again at SIS II and work to improve Interpol; a new trade plan for services to reduce customs red tape; a proper industrial policy to support communities; and higher, not lower, environmental and labour standards.

We also need urgent action to heal the divides. The ultimate test of the Prime Minister's deal and future plan is what he uses it for—whether to strengthen the United Kingdom or to divide and destroy it; whether he pushes Scotland away and deepens the divide between north and south. So far in the north this year we have not seen any of the levelling up that the Government promised. We have seen power and control centralised. Our communities still want a fair deal. That is what we should unite around now.

12.49 pm

**Steve Brine** (Winchester) (Con): It is a matter of public record that I have had my points of difference with this Government and this Prime Minister since the Brexit referendum, but unlike many, I never questioned the fact that we had a clear result from a free and fair referendum, and I always hated the rather unkind view that people who voted leave were somehow hoodwinked or too daft to know what they were doing.

There were just two red lines on which I and my constituents insisted. One was the transition period—a key ask of business, if we remember—and the other was that we leave with a deal in place between the UK and its closest neighbours, our largest trading partner, which does not seem like a radical thought to me. As I said to the Prime Minister on Christmas eve, I pay huge tribute to him for his statecraft and for sticking to the word that he gave me both publicly and privately that he wanted a deal with the EU and would do everything in his power to secure one.

I will support the deal today, and not just because it avoids the no deal that many feared and that so many of our opponents spent an election campaign just 12 months ago warning would herald some form of national apocalypse. How ironic that they will vote today for the hardest Brexit of all—I listened with interest to the Leader of the Liberal Democrats confirming that. I will support the deal because it is a good deal for Britain. It does what we promised at the election last year. The Prime Minister said that he would get Brexit done, and last year's European Union withdrawal agreement was passed within days of his securing a majority in this place to allow that. That was the oven-ready deal, and we should not allow others to rewrite history.

[Steve Brine]

The future relationship in the Bill before us today did not go anywhere near the oven until the eleventh hour, but it has come out very nicely and I welcome it. Ultimately, however, it is just the framework—wide enough to do all the things the Prime Minister set out this morning, giving businesses, citizens and law enforcement what they need, notwithstanding the SIS II concerns, which I share, but nimble enough to let this country forge its own way in the world. For me, the success or otherwise of this new chapter, as many have said, is not in the 1,200 pages and various appendices before us today. That is all still to be written.

Given the time, let me touch on just one area, that of services—financial services in particular. I understand that there is a lot of noise about what is not included, but that rather misses the point. To summarise, the title, under services and investment, seems to have extracted an agreement not to put unreasonable or unnecessary impediments in the way of UK financial services businesses seeking to operate in the EU. That is welcome. May I ask the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, through the Ministers who are now on the Front Bench, what this means in practice given that the agreement does not protect UK passporting rights, as many have said today? What work needs to take place now so that financial service firms can be clear?

**Ben Everitt** (Milton Keynes North) (Con): On passporting, I am sure that my hon. Friend would agree that the ball is in the EU's court to get this done, not least because if the deals we are working on with our friends in the US, Australia and New Zealand work out as we intend them to, we will be in a much stronger position than we are now.

**Steve Brine:** I agree with my hon. Friend, who has experience of working in the sector. The deal is in many ways a basis on which we can build. There is always a way to structure services, as he well knows, and of course many businesses put measures in place long ago, through EU brokers, for instance. I want those on the Front Bench to answer that point when they respond to the debate today.

Although we have left the political structures of the EU, this country will remain culturally, emotionally, historically and strategically attached to Europe, not least through the 4 million EU nationals who are our friends and neighbours and who include many of my constituents. We have a new future to look forward to. It will not be the same, and we should not pretend that it will—we should never have pretended that it would—and that is okay. It is time to come together and to move on.

12.53 pm

**Peter Kyle** (Hove) (Lab): I was walking down New Church Road in my constituency yesterday when I was stopped by a man who was out for walk with his young daughter. He explained to me that he was a real remainer. He had voted and campaigned for remain, and supported remain all the way through, and he had supported the idea that I co-championed with Phil Wilson for a confirmatory referendum. He had really felt in his heart that he wanted our country to remain, yet he told me that when the Prime Minister came back with a deal on

Christmas eve, he rushed to the fridge with his wife and opened a bottle of champagne that he was saving for the next day. He did so because he knew the impact that no deal would have had on his business. It was hard to hear somebody say that they were celebrating this deal, but I understand why and it really impacts on the way that I am voting today.

The man I met is lucky because his business, which exports products to EU countries and other European countries, is in the 20% of the economy covered by this deal. He is now preparing himself for the additional paperwork and bureaucracy, and having to take on extra staff to do it, but he is covered by some of the deal. But 80% of the economy is not. A person in the financial services sector working in Chester, Manchester or Edinburgh is left behind. Someone with a professional qualification who seeks to use it in another country is left behind. People in the creative or performing arts sector are left behind. A young person in education who is looking to explore their full potential across Europe and beyond is left behind.

None the less, I am in no doubt that supporting any deal is better than the chaos of no deal. Nor am I in any doubt that if we inflicted defeat on the Government today, they would not extend or renegotiate. This is a Government who would drive us out with no deal tomorrow. That is a price that we cannot afford. I did not go into politics and become a member of Parliament to be a politician who votes one way and secretly hopes for another outcome. I am not a member of a party that wants to let other parties do the heavy lifting. That is why I will step up and take responsibility for what is in the best interests of our country, support the deal and fight for it to be a starting point, not the end.

12.56 pm

**Douglas Ross** (Moray) (Con) [V]: This is a deal that many felt could not be done, but it is a deal that the Prime Minister and the negotiators on both sides have secured that ensures that there are zero tariffs and zero quotas. It is a deal that has been welcomed by the Federation of Small Businesses, NFU Scotland, the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation, the CBI and many, many more. But while some thought it could not be done, it now seems clear that some hoped it could not be done, because despite spending months suggesting the dire consequences of a no-deal Brexit, Nicola Sturgeon and the SNP will vote for precisely that today.

That same politician, Nicola Sturgeon, said just a couple weeks ago:

“A deal, any deal, is better than a No Deal.”

The SNP's Westminster leader, the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), said in the House of Commons:

“No deal will result in unprecedented harm”.—[*Official Report*, 13 March 2019; Vol. 656, c. 337.]

He even tabled an amendment last year pledging

“not to leave the European Union without a withdrawal agreement and future framework under any circumstances”.

Yet by their votes tonight, SNP Members are voting for the United Kingdom to leave the European Union in just over 24 hours' time with no deal at all. That is dangerous and reckless, and clear for everyone to see.



On fishing, I agree with the Prime Minister. I would have preferred by far a shorter adaptation period, but over the next five and a half years, we will see a 25% transfer of quota from the European Union to UK fishermen—15% in the first year. We will see £100 million invested in the sector by the UK Government, and great opportunities for fishermen and communities up and down the country in the years ahead.

Earlier, a remark was made about something I might be drinking, as a result of comments I had made previously. What I was speaking about then was staying in the common fisheries policy—the policy the United Kingdom will be coming out of from 1 January. So the only thing I will be drinking on Hogmanay this year is a glass of fine Scotch whisky from one of my many Moray distilleries that has its geographical indication secured by this deal and recognised by the European Union in the future, toasting the fact that we are coming out of the CFP. The only betrayal of our fishermen that we can see in the future is by the Scottish National party, which would take us straight back into the CFP.

As we leave 2020 behind, with a deal and renewed hope in our fight against covid-19 as a result of this morning's great news about the second vaccine being made available for use in the United Kingdom, here in Scotland we have to get the focus back on supporting jobs, individuals, families and communities, which for the past 13 years have been so badly let down by the SNP Scottish Government. That is where our focus has to be in the days, weeks and months ahead.

12.59 pm

**Clive Lewis** (Norwich South) (Lab): Members of this House have been recalled to vote on legislation of which we were given no sight until yesterday, to implement a trade deal that we have barely seen and had no input into whatsoever. Let us be clear about what is being asked of the House today: to issue a blank cheque to the Government to implement a deal that is devoid of democratic oversight.

Let us also put to bed the idea that today's vote is about deal versus no deal—that false framing is used to hold the House to ransom. Members are today tasked with the democratic oversight of how a done deal, which we cannot amend, will be implemented. Does the restoration of sovereignty not extend to democratic oversight by elected Members of this House, or is sovereignty to be restored only to the Executive? It is a great irony that Members are allowed less democratic oversight of the deal's implementation than our friends in the European Parliament, who have until the end of February to scrutinise and ratify the deal.

Change was what the public were promised: more control over lawmaking, more power for people in this country, and less done by bureaucrats behind closed doors. How are those promises fulfilled through less scrutiny, less accountability and less democracy? Where in the Bill is a clause restoring sovereignty to where it should rightfully be—with the people of this country? Change was demanded and more control was promised, yet what we are presented with today is, ironically, more of the same: unaccountability; power concentrated in the hands of a few; and an over-centralised Government evading scrutiny to act in favour of vested interests and to impose decisions from the top down.

With mere hours to debate the Bill, Members are being asked to act as a rubber stamp, and to forgo our obligation and responsibility for democratic oversight. For example, many of the regulatory bodies and mechanisms used to settle disputes between the EU and the UK will be set up without any further scrutiny or oversight by Parliament. Brexit has shone a light on the deep democratic deficits in our arcane political system. Making good this change demanded a new and codified constitution to give over sovereignty from this place to where it should rightfully lie—with the people of this country. We now urgently need to forge a modern democratic settlement to protect the hard-won rights and freedoms that are at risk of being run over roughshod by this Executive, who we know are champing at the bit to capitulate to the deregulatory demands of turbocharged capitalism.

I cannot in good conscience support a process that runs roughshod over checks and balances. I will not vote for more centralisation of power or comply with the erosion of an already weak democracy. I will play no part in giving this Government a blank cheque to bulldoze through democratic oversight. I will not be voting in support of this legislation.

1.2 pm

**Conor Burns** (Bournemouth West) (Con): This is a day that has been so long in the coming: from the inspiration of Margaret Thatcher's speech at Bruges; from when I was elected national chairman of the Federation of Conservative Students, but vetoed by the current Lord Speaker, who was then the chair of the Conservative party, because I was leading the student opposition to the Maastricht treaty; and from being a young research assistant, when an undergraduate at Southampton University, crafting amendments to the Maastricht treaty for my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash). Why were we doing that—why were we opposing that treaty? It was because we could see the destination: a flag, an anthem, a currency, a Parliament and citizenship. We passionately believed that we did not need to be citizens of a trading organisation. That is why leave won the referendum: because the European Union, given the journey it is now on, is not right for the character of Britain.

We would not have won that referendum were it not for the leadership of my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister—and, by the way, the intellectual heft of my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. When the Prime Minister resigned as Foreign Secretary—he spoke from somewhere around here on these Benches in his resignation statement—he said:

“It is not too late to save Brexit... We need to take one decision now before all others, and that is to believe in this country and in what it can do”.—[*Official Report*, 18 July 2018; Vol. 645, c. 450.]

I remember those words being met with deep scepticism—and that was from the generous ones—as well as outright hostility. Some of us believed then that we needed to make my right hon. Friend Prime Minister. The chances at that time seemed vanishingly small. He himself said that he had about as much chance of becoming Prime Minister as being “reincarnated as an olive”, “decapitated by a frisbee” or “blinded by a champagne cork”. There were moments when we thought the hat-trick of all three was more likely than him becoming Prime Minister, and he believed that himself. Today is, above all, a personal triumph for the Prime Minister.

**Jonathan Gullis:** The people of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke absolutely believe in this Prime Minister, which is why I am fortunate to be in my place on these Conservative Benches. Does my hon. Friend agree that this deal delivers on not only Vote Leave's pledges, but the pledges made in the 2019 Conservative manifesto?

**Conor Burns:** I absolutely agree. Knowing the Prime Minister as I do, I can say that he will not let down my hon. Friend's constituents. My hon. Friend will be rightly rewarded at the next general election for how the Prime Minister will deliver for him and his constituents.

**Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP):** Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

**Conor Burns:** I think that doing so would test the patience of the Chair, but perhaps my right hon. Friend the Member for Chipping Barnet (Theresa Villiers) would welcome an intervention when she speaks.

We are now talking about the future relationship, and today marks the day when the British dog finally leaves the federalist manger. Our European friends can now pursue their ambitions unencumbered by reluctant Brits. We are no longer a reluctant and truculent member, but a sovereign equal and close friend.

We would be deluding ourselves if we believed that leaving the European Union was, in and of itself, a panacea or solution to the challenges that the United Kingdom faces. The new freedom that we take up as an independent sovereign country will be daunting. It will test our institutions, which are not used to having to make decisions for themselves. It will take time to adjust. As a Trade Minister, when I was looking at international trade agreements, I sensed a profound interest around the world in doing business with the United Kingdom. Our businesses will have to step up and seize the opportunities that the new free trade agreements will create. We could be at the dawn of a new golden era for this country. I relish the reality that, today, we are at last again the masters of our own destiny.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. I emphasise again that I do not want to stop people taking interventions. However, if they do so, it would be helpful to colleagues if they shortened their speeches accordingly, because it is stopping others coming in—that is the point.

1.6 pm

**Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance) [V]:** When legislation has been rammed through Parliament inside a day, it has usually been to address some type of emergency, such as for the prevention of terrorism, but this is different. The Government did not have to run down the clock in negotiations, placing Parliament in this difficult position. We must not fall into the trap of an artificial choice between this bad deal and a no-deal situation.

The agreement was negotiated by this Conservative Government. No other party was asked for its input. The Conservative Government have a majority of 80. They own this deal, this outcome and all the consequences that flow from it. No one needs to run to the rescue of the Government. I am not prepared to be a rubber stamp. I am not prepared to legitimise or even acquiesce

in this monumental act of self-harm. We must have the ability to stand up for and represent our constituents, and to make it clear that this is not good enough.

The Government seem obsessed with some abstract and antiquated concept of sovereignty. However, we live in an interdependent world. We cannot maximise prosperity, achieve social inclusion, protect the environment, address climate change, defeat pandemics, fight terrorism and organised crime, and project influence around the world if we are in splendid isolation and without pooling sovereignty. The notion of a global Britain is a contradiction in terms. The UK is retreating from the international stage and erecting more, not fewer, barriers to trade.

The opportunities and benefits that our citizens have taken for granted for generations are being stripped away. For Northern Ireland, Brexit itself poses significant challenges to a society and economy that only works when based on sharing and interdependence. Brexit means new borders and new friction, which creates needless tension. I welcome the fact that the EU recognised this dilemma right from the outset. We are not fans of the protocol, but it is the product of the UK's decisions around Brexit and the consequent need to protect the Good Friday agreement. It gives us a degree of protection and at least preserves some access to the European Union, but it still brings us challenges.

I am grateful for the work on the flexibilities and mitigations that were agreed in recent weeks, yet how effective the protocol will be in managing the situation remains unclear. While Northern Ireland may have free access to both Great Britain and the EU, that applies only to goods, not to services or free movement. Brexit and the approach taken by this Government have recklessly shaken the foundations of the Good Friday agreement. We do not know whether or how things will settle in the future.

1.9 pm

**Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con):** We stand on the verge of once more becoming an independent country with control over our laws, money, trade and borders. There have been some difficult compromises, especially with the delay in securing a much greater share of our rich marine resources, and there is more to be done on services, but the deal stands up to scrutiny. It does not bind us into the EU's laws or its Court. It is a trade agreement between sovereign equals. It gets Brexit done.

The Prime Minister has delivered what many Members said would be impossible in just 11 months, and despite the covid emergency. The regaining of our freedom at 11 pm tomorrow will mark a historic turning point. Some disruption is inevitable when there is change on this scale, but we can get through that and seize the opportunities provided by our new-found independence. This should be a moment of national renewal in which we choose better, more adaptable, modern regulation to compete more effectively around the world, create jobs and raise living standards for everyone.

We must ensure that the Northern Ireland protocol does not divide our precious Union. The FTA helps us to do that, because it requires the EU to act proportionately on formalities for goods entering its single market, but we must also develop alternative arrangements to replace the protocol altogether.

The UK's relationship with the European Union has divided our politics since the 1950s. I was one of the 28 Eurosceptic Conservatives to vote three times against the former Prime Minister's withdrawal agreement—every time it came before the House. We were under immense pressure to accept that deal, but the backstop it contained would have left us as a client state, trapped in the European Union's regulatory orbit forever. With that hanging over us, there was no way an FTA on equal terms would have been possible.

For this country, belonging to the EU means vesting supreme lawmaking power in people we do not elect and cannot remove. We in this country pioneered the democratic system of government and exported it around the world; now, we are bringing democracy home.

1.12 pm

**Mrs Sharon Hodgson** (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab) [V]: I thank the House staff who have made today's proceedings possible. They have come at the eleventh hour, as the Prime Minister was desperate for a Christmas miracle, but this deal is better than no deal and gives us something to build on.

The Nissan plant in my constituency is the largest Nissan plant in Europe, proving the north-east's worth to the world's automotive industry. It must continue to be so in the post-Brexit world. I welcome the work of both negotiating teams to avoid immediate tariffs on vehicle exports in the new year. However, the deal states that all vehicles exported into the EU must be of at least 55% UK or EU content by 2027. As manufacturers such as Nissan work hard to adapt to those requirements, what support will be offered to the sector to meet that threshold?

To comply with the rules of origin, electric vehicle batteries and their components must be of UK or EU origin by 2024. I welcome Britishvolt's announcement of a battery gigafactory in Blyth in Northumberland that will be manufacturing by 2024. However, the battery manufacturer Envision AESC in my constituency, which serves Nissan, recently cut 100 new jobs because of coronavirus pressures. What will the Government do to support existing battery manufacturers in the UK and encourage further investment in the UK by battery manufacturers?

Brexit has always been about damage limitation for the automotive industry. However, if the Government act accordingly, the next three years offer an incredible opportunity to level up, especially in the north-east. The Government must commit now to ensuring that areas with large car manufacturing plants, such as the north-east, are the beneficiaries of the development of a domestic supply chain of components such as electrodes, which are at the moment predominantly imported from Asia. By 2024, they must be sourced within the rules of origin.

There is no Christmas eve miracle that can magic up an electrode factory overnight. The localisation of the supply chain is essential to the just-in-time supply model that is so important to Nissan's success and will minimise any delays. Will the Government commit to developing a localised supply chain in their upcoming refreshed industrial strategy, to ensure that our automotive giants such as Nissan can continue to trade tariff-free? We have got the deal, which I will vote for, but we are not at the end of the road for the UK automotive industry just yet, so I look forward to the Minister's response.

1.15 pm

**Mel Stride** (Central Devon) (Con) [V]: It has been quite a journey from the gridlock of the last Parliament to our consideration of this legislation on a new deal with the European Union today. I welcome it, and I join others in congratulating the Prime Minister on a quite extraordinary achievement.

Overall, this deal ticks all the boxes of zero tariffs on goods and zero quotas, and it brings back our sovereignty and control of our money and our borders. But as is always the case, it is in the detail that we will find the imperfections and the questions to be asked, and the Treasury Committee will be very active over the coming weeks and months in carrying out that scrutiny. We will look at questions around the level playing field and the issue of regulatory divergence. It remains to be seen how the mechanisms in this agreement will ultimately set the balance between fair competition and the pursuit of legitimate competitive advantage or allow for appropriate Government support for the sectors that we wish to develop further.

There are questions around the rules of origin. It has been pointed out that zero tariffs only apply provided the rules of origin are met. The fact that we have bilateral cumulation between the EU and the UK is welcome, but are these rules of origin too restrictive, and are the transitions around them—particularly, for example, for electric vehicles—adequate for the adjustments that will be required? There are questions around sanitary and phytosanitary regulations and around our access to services, which, on the face of it, looks pretty good in this agreement, but there are many annexes setting out exceptions.

There is also the critical issue of access for our financial services, which are such an important part of our economy. We await the memorandum of understanding with great interest and expectation. This is about not only the nature of how equivalence is set but whether the European Union has the ability to withdraw those arrangements and that equivalence at short notice, which could be so damaging to the sector. The Governor of the Bank of England will appear before the Treasury Committee before the recess is out to discuss those issues. Finally, there will be issues around trade frictions and how prepared or otherwise we are to deal with those over the coming weeks and months.

Today we move on. If we play it right, this will lead to better, not worse, relationships with our European neighbours. With that in mind, let us not lose hold of at least the vision of the EU's founding fathers: that a continent that had been the crucible of two world conflagrations should live together in peace, co-operation and friendship. Let us never forget that. It is still a vision for all of us to live by.

1.18 pm

**Angus Brendan MacNeil** (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP) [V]: Feasgar math agus tapadh leibh, Madam Deputy Speaker. I notice that the Prime Minister had some trouble earlier with “national” and “nationalist”, undoubtedly due to the better performance of the NHS in Scotland, which he probably calls the nationalist health service.

The hard Brexit deal that is about to be foisted on the UK economy will damage it by 4.9%. It is notable that the *New York Times* said that this trade deal is heavy on

[Angus Brendan MacNeil]

goods, where the EU has a surplus, and light on services, where the UK has a surplus—it is, as ever, the big guy winning, and the EU is winning this one.

This, in the UK context, is the Tories' deal. It is their hard Brexit. They have ended up with a trade bloc that is smaller than the UK. Northern Ireland is out, and Scotland is leaving, too. The fact is that the UK had the Rolls-Royce of deals, but the Brexiteers have bypassed this, gone past the second-hand car shop and do not even want a motorbike; they are now at the back of the bicycle shop telling us that the unicycle is the best possible thing to buy. They are extolling the virtues of the unicycle, but the people know better and can see through this Tory deal. They should be absolutely frank about what they mean by tariff-free access. Under this deal, tariff-free access means lots-more-paper access—the bureaucrat is king. The achievement of Brexiteers is to turn the unelected European Union bureaucrat into a king. UK businesses and exporters must now satisfy the new kings of the UK, EU bureaucrats, and my shellfish producers and many others on the west coast of Scotland are unfortunately ignored.

The trade deal damages the economy by 4.9%. The Brexiteers talk of shiny new trade deals but, if this trade deal is worth £4.90, a USA trade deal is worth only 20p, if it ever happens; an Australia trade deal is worth only 2p, if it ever happens; and a New Zealand trade deal is worth only a penny, if it ever happens. This all costs, and it is the Brexiteers who have foisted it upon the UK economy.

The British Poultry Council tells us that the price of UK-produced chicken in the UK is going to rise by 5% as a result. Gibraltar and the Falklands have been cast aside. The Brexiteers have effectively told the Falklands, "We have a deal, but you don't. Too bad." They talk about sovereignty, but France showed them last week that it has full, independent sovereignty. Dear Brexiteers, France is in the EU, as Scotland will be soon.

That takes me to the future. In 2014, 54% of Scotland voted for a UK in the EU, but 62% of Scotland voted to remain in the EU. With 17 or 18 polls showing that Scotland is going for independence, it is pretty clear that Scotland is not a Brexit nation; it is a nation heading for independence. Hopefully, 6 May next year should determine that for us. It is time for Scotland to become a proper nation, and not under the self-centred UK.

1.22 pm

**Nickie Aiken** (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con) [V]: On 23 June 2016, 72% of the electorate in the Cities of London and Westminster voted to remain in the European Union. I was one of them. Like so many, I felt unsure and worried by the referendum result, but the majority of the UK electorate had spoken with a clear message. They felt left behind, ignored and alienated by those in this House, but more so by the unelected EU bureaucrats who had so much influence over their daily lives.

I am a democrat and, although I did not welcome the Brexit referendum result, I accepted it. Last year's general election was viewed as a second referendum on our EU membership, and voters in places including Ashfield, Sedgfield, Burnley and West Bromwich gave their verdict

a second time. They have changed the look and feel of the Conservative party for the better. I am proud to call blue wall Conservatives my colleagues.

I am also proud of what this Government have achieved, securing the largest-ever trade deal with our closest partners within 12 months. To have achieved this while dealing with a global pandemic is frankly incredible. I pay tribute to all those involved on both sides, and I pay personal tribute to the Prime Minister, who never gave up and showed such personal determination to the very end.

Although financial services are not covered in this deal, I am pleased to report that the City of London Corporation welcomes the trade deal and the joint declaration on financial services regulatory co-operation. Let us hope that further progress can be secured between the EU and the UK on equivalence and in other areas, such as data sharing and mutual recognition of qualifications.

With the UK outside the EU, it is perhaps natural to feel like a competitor. However, being competitors does not need to mean that we are opponents. Successful UK financial markets will benefit the EU and vice versa. Both the EU and the UK can thrive and continue to work together on areas of mutual concern, including the green agenda, the digitisation of the economy and the response to covid-19.

I appreciate that some of my constituents will never come to terms with the fact that the UK has finally left the EU, but most do wish to unite this country and to live and trade on friendly terms with our partners across Europe. I say to everyone: it is now time to put these last torrid years behind us and work together to rebuild our economy following the pandemic. Today, as we ratify this extraordinary trade deal, we close a painful chapter in our nation's history. It is an ending, but also a beginning: a new dawn for this great country of ours. We are no longer remainers or Brexiteers; we are one nation. I support this Bill.

1.25 pm

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green) [V]: This hardest of Brexit deals, for which there is no mandate, is one that cuts British jobs, sidelines our services sector, undermines hard-won protections for the environment, workers' rights and consumers, and turns Kent into a diesel-stained monument to hubris and political myopia. It is a deal that condemns us to live in a poorer, more unequal and more isolated Britain, and it leaves us less equipped to rise to the greatest challenge we face—the nature and climate emergencies. This deal does not have the explicit informed consent of the British people, and I shall vote against it later today.

Some will say that those of us who voted down some less damaging forms of Brexit must take some responsibility. I can see that argument, but given such a narrow referendum result on the back of the most cynical, toxic and mendacious political campaign ever fought in this country and on an issue of such profound national importance, I believe it was right to campaign for a confirmatory referendum on the terms of any departure.

I want to tackle head-on the ludicrous accusation that to vote against this deal is to support no deal. That is clearly not the case. Whatever the Opposition parties do, sadly, the Government have a majority of 80 and

this deal will pass. That is why I regret the official Opposition's decision to vote for a deal that they themselves admit will make this country poorer and hit the most vulnerable hardest of all. Now more than ever people deserve principled leadership based on conviction, not party political calculation. While I understand why some would prefer to abstain, abstention is still acquiescence. It is standing aside and allowing something to be passed into law that is harmful for this country.

There are some things so serious and so damaging in which we should not acquiesce. I am not prepared to acquiesce in the infliction of even greater economic hardship on my constituents. At this time of climate and nature emergency, I am not prepared to acquiesce in lower environmental standards and less rigorous enforcement of them. I will not be complicit in the creation of a smaller United Kingdom, with diminished global influence.

I will not turn my back on a project that is imperfect—yes, of course it is; what project of such ambition would not be?—but is based on one of history's greatest and most noble experiments: bringing nations together to build peace out of the ruins of war. Now more than ever, in a world racked by insecurity and division, we should be cementing relationships with countries that share our values, not deliberately and knowingly cutting our ties with them.

I will not abandon what I believe, and I believe that leaving the EU is a profound mistake. Ironically, and too late, a majority of people in this country now agree. Voting against this deal is how we keep alive the belief in something better, and that is what I will do today.

1.28 pm

**Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger** (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con) [V]: I am sure that the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) will be delighted to hear that I am going to start with nuclear. I am delighted that part of this deal includes nuclear not only because it is right, but because it is vital for our future. If anybody wants to see a living example of EU co-operation, they should go down the road from where I am at the moment and find Hinkley Point nuclear power station. It is an absolutely burning example of what we have done with the co-operation of the French and others in making this an enormous success.

However, I would say to the Government that we should now upskill. We are going to do Sizewell, and rightly so, and I am hoping that we will get small and medium-sized reactors throughout the United Kingdom, and rightly so, but to do that we need to up our skills. Such skills were transferable around the world, and we now have the freedom to do that. EDF Energy has put an enormous amount of money into training facilities not just down here in Somerset, but across the United Kingdom. That is partly to do with decommissioning, partly to do with new build and partly to do with running the existing fleet of Magnox stations. We must embrace this because it is a future success. It is a success, so let us build on what we have got.

I also want to make a point about upland farming. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has been to Exmoor. He knows how tough it can be for any upland farmer up on those hills. We are now free and can do what we want—the Agriculture Act 2020 has gone through—but I urge the Government

to build on that. The use of the environmental land management scheme is fine, but I ask the Government to please not use our freedom within this Bill as an excuse to say that we will rewild at the drop of a hat or make farming more difficult across the United Kingdom.

My constituency also covers the lowest part of Somerset, which is the levels. The levels are beautiful and are unbelievably well managed. We went through hell in 2014; we have been through hell time and again. I urge the Government to not throw away what we have. It is a wonderful thing. I would like my right hon. Friend to confirm that the Government will not use this as an excuse to lower anything that gives farming the edge. I have absolute faith in this Government that they will fight for us.

My last point is this. The City of London is hugely important—as many colleagues have already said—but the devil is in the detail and I think we have to see what the Government are going to do next. When my right hon. Friend winds up the debate, I would like him not only to allow us time to discuss this but to say what we are going to do next to safeguard the City of London.

1.31 pm

**John Spellar** (Warley) (Lab): I will vote for the Bill, as the choice is stark and clear. The important question is: what do we do after Friday? That is when the real work will begin. Gaps have already been identified, including the situation with services, especially legal and financial services; the travel position of our huge cultural and arts sector, particularly our world-leading music industry; and the rules of origin for manufacturing, not least the motor industry, whose revival has driven the midlands engine.

I want to focus not on our relations with our neighbours but on how the British state will actually respond. The EU, imperfect as it is, has had to carry a considerable amount of the weight of our own errors. The fault is not in our stars but in ourselves. This applies both to doctrine, with the stubborn refusal of the civil service and Governments to behave as others do to benefit our industry and our people, and to chronic inefficiency and incompetency in implementation. The Prime Minister talked about freeports. Perhaps he should focus on getting his Transport Secretary to sort out the gridlock at our existing ports.

There has been a lot of talk today about fish, but as an MP whose constituency is probably as far as you can get from the sea, I want to focus on industry. The Prime Minister talked about state aid, regional policy and our great biomedical industry. It was not the EU but NHS bureaucracy that insisted on buying vaccines from abroad, which is why we have only limited capacity and have to import them. It is only now that we are belatedly recognising that and building a new plant. However, it will be not in the north-east, which was the alternative site for it, but in the overheated Oxfordshire area. Oxford scientists have performed magnificently, but we must break this obsession with the south and back the midlands, the north, the west, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

It was not the EU that forced us to produce only 1% of personal protective equipment in the UK before the covid crisis, which led to shortages, eye-watering costs and endless scandals. It was not the EU that forced the Government to build the new Navy ships

[John Spellar]

abroad or to use trains from Germany rather than Derby, buses from China rather than Ballymena or Falkirk, and police cars for the north-west from Korea rather than Ellesmere Port. It was our own misguided authorities.

From Monday, whether it is from ministerial offices, Whitehall, town halls or quangos, from boardroom to shop floor the message must be clear: “Back Britain or back off. Shape up or ship out.” Only that way can we make Britain great again.

1.34 pm

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con) [V]: The Government are right to take back control and to recreate our sovereignty in the United Kingdom. We do not just want legal sovereignty; we also want practical sovereignty, so I ask the Government today to spell out how they will be cutting our taxes, changing our laws and using our powers to grant aid and support businesses and individuals, free of the EU controls, to promote the prosperity of the British people. That is what Brexit was all about. We stand on the threshold of independence day, so bring on the measures.

I have a couple of worries about this agreement. The first is fishing. One of the great prizes of Brexit is to recapture control of our fishing stocks and to rebuild our coastal communities and our fishing industry. Will the Government today promise to legislate immediately to prevent pulse fishing and over-large trawlers, which are doing enormous damage to our marine environment and to our fish stocks? We could at least do that as proof that we intend to rebuild our marine environment and our own domestic fishing industry. Will the Government set out the details of plans to train new fishermen and fisherwomen ready for the extra capacity we will need? Will they provide grant in aid schemes, so that those individuals can acquire second-hand trawlers or commission new trawlers from British yards so that we are again expanding the capacity of our industry?

I am also worried about the position in Northern Ireland. To what extent is our sovereignty damaged or impaired by the special relationships and special provisions of the withdrawal Act? I thought they were going to be changed in this latest agreement with the EU. Will the Government spell out more detail on the limitations on our power to be one United Kingdom in Northern Ireland, setting our own tax rates, making our own agreements on trade internationally and setting our own standards for products? We need to know, because we have already heard in this debate from Northern Ireland Members saying that that is becoming a matter of division within Northern Ireland communities.

The issue also has read-across to Scotland. We know we have a battle to fight for the Union in Scotland. The SNP will clearly use the different arrangements in Northern Ireland as part of its battering ram against the Union, so I need some reassurance about the impact of the powers under this agreement and how we can start to settle those difficult issues.

The two things I most like about this agreement are the ability to withdraw unilaterally from it, should the EU be too aggressive in its handling of us and in its claims upon us, and the fact that the ECJ has no further power in the United Kingdom. That is absolutely vital, because otherwise it will assert extraterritoriality.

1.37 pm

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): Four and a half years after the referendum, here we are. I accept we have left the European Union, we are in the transition period and at 11 o'clock tomorrow the shutters will finally come down on that chapter of European-British relations, but we have more than a thousand pages in an agreement and a hastily drafted Bill that runs to 80 pages, but that has to be read alongside many other pieces of legislation to be fully understood. We have five hours of debate today and I have three minutes, of which I have already used up half a minute, to talk about how poorly the Government are using this place.

This is not parliamentary scrutiny; in keeping with the festive season, it is much more of a charade. It does not give us the chance to do properly the job that we should be doing. This place does not always make good legislation, and this is clearly rushed legislation.

I have many concerns about this Bill. I have big concerns about Northern Ireland. As someone married to a dual Irish-British citizen, I spend a lot of time on the island of Ireland, and I see the real challenges of what is being put in place, and I saw the lack of thought about that land border right from the get-go in the run-up to the 2016 vote.

The security matters concern me, including SIS II, the European arrest warrant, and Europol. Services are not included in this agreement, despite, as others have said repeatedly, their accounting for a trade surplus with the EU. Professional qualifications and issues affecting musicians and others in the creative industries affect my constituency particularly. As a constituency Member for the City fringe, I am very concerned we still have not bedded in arrangements for financial services.

It is security arrangements that concern me most. They have been massively weakened by this agreement. I spent three years in government negotiating over access to SIS II, Prüm, the European arrest warrant, Europol, Eurojust and mutual legal aid. Those were all things that I dealt with day in, day out with our European neighbours, and we have thrown that away. We have thrown away so much of what we have been fighting, even in the last decade, to get much more closely involved with. We are now attempting to patch together, with more bureaucracy, the same things that we are giving up with this Bill.

The lack of scrutiny and the impossibility of reading the Bill properly make me unable to support it today. I will not be voting against it, because I recognise that the votes in 2016 and 2019 give this Government licence to take us out of Europe, but I cannot be complicit in what is a wrecking ball in the name of sovereignty. We now need to drop the “remainer” and “leaver” labels. We need to unite to fill the gaps in the creative and performing arts, in the financial sector, in the recognition of professional qualifications and, above all, in security. It is because of those security measures, in particular, that I cannot be complicit with the Government and will abstain today.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans)**: We had hoped to go to North Shropshire to listen to Owen Paterson, but the line has gone down. We do hope, Owen, if you are watching and listening, to come to you before the wind-ups a bit later on. We will try our level best.

1.41 pm

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab) [V]: I shall be voting in favour of the deal today, but not with any enthusiasm. This is an awful deal—the first trade deal in history to make trade even harder. It removes freedoms and piles red tape and administrative burden on businesses. It is not no deal, however, and my real fear is that the Conservative party has been captured to such an extent by fanatics and maniacs of hard Brexit that no deal remains a possibility. Since the only choice on the table today is between this deal and no deal, I will vote to stop no deal, especially since trade unions and business groups are urging a vote in support to get past this hurdle.

I am clear that this is an extremist Brexit that breaks all the promises about having the exact same benefits as membership of the EU. It must be judged not only in juxtaposition to no deal, but in comparison to what we left as members of the EU. There is £200 billion in lost wealth, for starters, which rather puts the lies about £350 million a week for the NHS into perspective. Of course, the deal says nothing, as other hon. Members have said, about trade in services—a rather huge omission, especially for somewhere such as Chester with a large financial services sector.

I have read that the leaders of the fishing industry are unhappy with the deal. What did they expect? Surely they know that the current Prime Minister will say anything that is necessary to get him out of whatever situation he is in, with no sense of responsibility for promises made and no sense of commitment to anything except himself. It was the same with Gibraltar—I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests—whose Government were promised that any deal would include that territory, but this deal does not. It was the same with Airbus, which is so important to my constituency. A commitment was given on the US tariff dispute in late November but broken by mid-December. This will not stand us in good stead when we are negotiating future international agreements.

The Government are desperate to agree a deal—any deal—with the USA, however detrimental to long-term UK interests, in order to validate their Brexit policy. They have already alienated the Biden Administration, and that Administration are not even in office yet. Now they are alienating the EU. In global terms, there are only three shows in town: the USA, China and the EU. We have walked away from the EU, and now the Prime Minister announces that we will be in direct competition with it. The road he is leading us down will not end well for the UK, because we are now easy pickings for the much larger blocs, and soundbites such as “Global Britain” will not alter that.

The deal will make us poorer, it will make us weaker and less secure, and it will make us less relevant globally. It is not no deal, but barely so. I give notice that I consider it to be the barest of foundations on which to build back a better, more progressive relationship with our European neighbours and friends in the long-term interests of the whole United Kingdom and all who live here, and that is what I intend to do.

1.43 pm

**Mr William Wragg** (Hazel Grove) (Con): This is about sovereignty. Sovereignty is spoken of by some as a near-religious phenomenon, either through veneration

or rejection. It is either doctrinal truth or mumbo-jumbo, depending on the bent of the beholder. However, it is far more prosaic than that. It boils down to the question of who governs, and whether that exercise of government carries the broad consent of the people so governed. Admittedly, that is not quite as catchy as “take back control”, but it means the same thing. This agreement achieves that, which is why I shall support it.

Perhaps the greater question that emerges today is not whether the vote shall be won, but what we now do with our regained sovereignty. These brief minutes are insufficient to the task of answering that question, aside from recommending not some 1,200 pages for study, but 11 pages of the late Lord Chief Justice Bingham's excellent book “The Rule of Law”, namely chapter 12, on the sovereignty of Parliament. I always enjoy rereading that chapter, particularly its comment on the judiciary, which speaks to a wider point of parliamentary sovereignty. Bingham wrote:

“The British people have not repelled the extraneous power of the papacy in spiritual matters and the pretensions of royal power in temporal in order to subject themselves to the unchallengeable rulings of unelected judges.”

Quite so! Indeed, might I stretch those sentiments to the situation after 11 o'clock on new year's eve, and say that the British people did not vote to take back control in order to be ruled by ministerial diktat, via secondary legislation, using the negative procedure, as we have seen far too often this year? So 2021 will be a year for national renewal, and it will also be for us, as representatives, and for the Government, as the Executive, to live up to the rediscovered responsibilities that come with sovereignty.

1.46 pm

**Tracy Brabin** (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: Thank you for calling me to speak in this important debate, Mr Deputy Speaker. When the Division is called later, I will be supporting this legislation. With only one day until the end of the transition period, voting to implement this treaty is the only way to avoid no deal. No deal would be nothing short of catastrophic for the producers, manufacturers, exporters and businesses of Batley and Spen, and of the wider West Yorkshire area; the bed makers, biscuit manufacturers and paint companies would all suffer. Keeping no deal on the table for so long has already caused enormous stress, job losses and uncertainty, which has been especially cruel after such a challenging few months due to covid-19.

We have already heard today about how many glaring omissions there are in this deal, but I wish to focus on one that will cause long-lasting devastation to one of our most successful exports, the creative industries. Labour's amendment on that was not selected. Over the past few months, Home Office officials have made it simple for artists from all the EU to come to the UK in 2021 and beyond; they planned ahead, consulted and developed a single extension of the existing arrangements for artists from non-visa countries, such as the United States and Canada—a temporary worker creative and sporting visa, the T5. Issued by a sponsor, it does not cost a lot and is proven to work, giving musicians from the EU 90 days in which to work in the UK. They also upgraded a scheme called “permitted paid engagement”, which makes it simple for almost anyone—academics and individual artists—to visit for cultural reasons. Sadly, the Government's brilliant negotiators failed to negotiate reciprocity for our simple and generous measures.

[Tracy Brabin]

I hope the Minister will be able to tell us whether this is part of a cunning plan or just a mistake. We know that members of the Government's Front-Bench team support a creative passport, so why do we have this glaring omission?

This failure will have an impact on young artists trying to break through in the EU, and on musicians working in EU bands and orchestras, who will be subject to border delays. Then there is the perception of EU festival organisers, which could mean British artists being overlooked. In addition, the cabotage rule means that UK-based trucks can have only three drops at EU venues, which means EU companies becoming more cost-effective. Of course it is easy to focus on stars, but this is about haulage companies, producers, production crew, technicians, artists, professional musicians, dancers and actors, all of whom contribute to this £111 billion industry. It is no wonder that a petition calling for the Government to remedy this situation has been signed more than 195,000 times, and the number is rising. The Bill places bureaucracy, carnets, costs and delays where once there was frictionless trade, and I hope the Minister will lay out his plans to support this vital British sector.

1.49 pm

**Mr John Baron** (Basildon and Billericay) (Con) [V]: I commend the Prime Minister, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and the whole team for achieving this deal, which I will be supporting in the vote later today. Both sides were always going to have to compromise, but the UK has secured its sovereignty and this is a good deal. We have also secured a safeguard: an exit route, if chosen. The deal proves wrong those who thought that there was no alternative to the withdrawal agreement, and that it could not be struck in time. A good deal was always preferred—after all, that is the logic of Brexit—but being prepared to leave on WTO terms, under which we trade profitably with much of the world, was a deciding factor in the EU finally accepting the UK as its sovereign equal.

This is indeed a defining moment in our history. Many have participated and played an important role, but for me that role began when, with the support of my association, I entered Parliament with the hope of securing a referendum, then campaigning for our exit. Highs and lows followed. Leading the parliamentary campaign in 2012 and 2013 to persuade the party leadership to adopt a referendum in time for the next general election, and voting against the withdrawal agreement, together with all the speeches and amendments that that involved, were certainly my key contributions to the cause.

We always felt that we knew how the country would vote, if given the chance, as Parliament had been out of sync for far too long. The challenge was to get a sceptical leadership to promise a referendum at a time when every parliamentary party was against it, even if that meant nearly losing the Whip over my amendment to the 2013 Queen's Speech regretting the absence of a referendum Bill. The commitment helped to secure victory in the 2015 election, put the United Kingdom Independence party back its box, and made possible the 2016 referendum.

A bright future now awaits us, as we capitalise on our new-found freedoms. Our history and the ingenuity of our people suggest optimism, but I also look forward to

a better relationship with the EU. Our membership was always going to prove difficult, given the difference between us on trade and political integration. We can now focus instead on common agendas. The deal represents a fresh start, and I am hopeful that the opportunity will be grasped.

1.52 pm

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab) [V]: For the overwhelming majority of my constituents, this discussion brings no cheer. Confident, outward-looking Europeans, we genuinely struggle to understand why this country should want to turn away from our neighbours, and build barriers where there have been bridges. It is an inescapable fact that in every sphere we will be worse off next week. We ask the obvious questions of the Brexiters. They promised frictionless trade: failed. They promised the exact same benefits: failed. They promised it would be easy and simple: well, here we are at the very last, having to rush through legislation because it is far from easy, far from simple. Of course, that suits the Prime Minister, who always fears scrutiny. In prioritising notional sovereignty over practical utility, he has made a fundamental error. We have seen in recent weeks in Kent what the failure to achieve frictionless trade can lead to. In future, any disagreement with France can lead to the same chaos. Yes, we are notionally free, but it is a pretty empty freedom that leaves our streets lined with innocent victims, trapped in vehicles without food or sanitation.

We have a poor choice today: nothing, or take the scraps that are on offer. Incredibly, some gullible Government Members who told the country that “we hold all the cards” somehow think that their tests have been met. Let us take data, the lifeblood of modern economies. What is on offer? A reprieve for a few months, while the EU considers a data adequacy application. Does it have to grant it? No, it does not. What is our recourse if, as it is fully entitled to do, it says no? Let us hear from Government Members—I suspect that there will be a deafening silence, because answer is there none. The truth is that we do not hold all the cards. Yes, we hold some, and hopefully sense will prevail and further agreements will be made.

That is my hope for the future. Bit by bit, sector by sector, we will rebuild that relationship that has been so damaged, and this time we will do it by explaining carefully and convincing the British people that sharing and co-operating with our neighbours is not surrendering something, but gaining much more, and that the noble vision of a continent united in peace and prosperity is worth striving for. In no area is that more true than in science, research and innovation. One of the opportunities is a pathway back into the hugely important Horizon Europe programme—important to the country but particularly important to my constituency. Of course, we will cease to have influence over its future direction—we have no seat at the table and no vote, and the payment mechanisms may well lead to perverse outcomes; that is the cost that the Conservatives have inflicted on us—but we can participate, and that is worth having.

It is for that reason that I will unwillingly vote for this thin agreement today—only because it is better than nothing. That is a low bar, but it is a start, and with the prospect of new management for our country—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order.



1.55 pm

**Mr Owen Paterson** (North Shropshire) (Con) [V]: Thank you very much indeed for calling me, Mr Deputy Speaker. May I give my particular thanks to the technical staff who just reconnected me, having lost the connection?

Mr Deputy Speaker, this is the first time that I have spoken on any subject in the House since my wife's suicide at the end of June. I would like to thank you and particularly Mr Speaker, and so many other colleagues who have sent extremely kind messages of support. I would like to assure everybody listening that I will work really hard through the next few years to make sure that I can try to stop just one family going through the anguish that mine is currently suffering.

It is a great honour to be called in this incredibly important debate. As you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, I have been involved in this debate for a long time. This is a great day. We have established sovereignty, as my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) confirmed. One should pay tribute to him for the extraordinary manner in which he has fought this battle over the years; his indefatigable concentration and legal knowledge has been phenomenal. It is great to have sovereignty and it is great to have zero tariffs and zero quotas, which are very good for my constituency and very good for the economy of GB.

I would like to utter a word of caution. I am very pleased with this deal for GB, but I am concerned that we have partnership councils, specialised committees, trade specialised committees, working groups and so on. We are going to need a really determined Government to make sure that we use that sovereignty properly and really exploit it, nowhere more than on the issue of fish. I went around the north Atlantic in 2004-05 and wrote a paper on how we should run a sane fisheries policy. It will take real political determination to get fish back in five and a half years' time when we think that in the channel, for instance, the EU will be going down on cod only from 91% to 90.75%, when it should be on 25% according to zonal attachment. We will need real determination.

There is another area that concerns me. I am chairman of the think-tank the Centre for Brexit Policy—see the Register of Members' Financial Interests—and we put out a scorecard. According to the legal gurus led by my hon. Friend the Member for Stone, GB comes out of this well. The worry for me, as someone who was shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland for three years and the real Secretary of State for two years, is that Northern Ireland fails. We should remember the words of the noble Lord Trimble, whom I spoke to a couple of days ago. He reminds us that article 1(iii) of the Belfast agreement says that

“it would be wrong to make any change in the status of Northern Ireland save with the consent of a majority of its people”.

I will fight very hard on that.

I would love to vote for the Bill today, but I really cannot vote for a measure that divides the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland will have a different tax regime and, as part of the customs union, it will be under the ECJ, the single market and so on. I am very torn. I wish this deal well, and I hope that we can go to mutual enforcement, which is Lord Trimble's recommendation, but I will be abstaining.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans)**: Thank you, Owen. Love to you and your family from all your friends here at Westminster. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”]

1.59 pm

**Mr David Jones** (Clwyd West) (Con) [V]: The Bill that the House is considering this afternoon is crucial to the future of the United Kingdom and its relations with the European Union. It marks the end of a process that commenced just over five years ago when the European Union Referendum Act 2015 was passed.

Five years ago, this country was firmly embedded in the European Union, and it was there that our future seemed to lie, but now, with the conclusion of the trade and co-operation agreement on Christmas eve, we see a new future for our country as an independent nation in control of our laws, our own borders and our own destiny. This Bill will put that agreement into our domestic law, and it brings to an end one of the most politically turbulent periods in our recent history. The agreement is, by any standards, a remarkable achievement. It is a tribute to the clarity of purpose, political skill and tenacity of the Prime Minister, Lord Frost and the rest of the UK negotiating team. They have secured an expansive zero-tariff, zero-quota deal unprecedented in the history of the European Union—a deal that respects the sovereignty of the United Kingdom, that has no role for the European Court of Justice, and that the United Kingdom can unilaterally terminate should it wish to do so.

The economic benefits of the deal are huge. For example, as a consequence of the agreement, sheep farmers in my north Wales constituency will continue to export their premium product tariff-free to the European markets they have supplied for the past half century, but they can also look to developing new markets around the globe unconstrained by Brussels. Most important, they will do so as citizens of a free and independent country.

Across our nation, in these dying days of 2020, millions of our fellow citizens will be looking forward to the new future that begins on the stroke of 11 o'clock tomorrow night: a future in which our democracy reasserts itself through this ancient and honourable Parliament; a future in which our commercial undertakings can explore new global opportunities to increase prosperity for our people; and a future of hope for our young generation, as citizens of a great and outward-looking country that has had the confidence to stand, once again, on its own two feet.

The Bill is the catalyst for that future. It is the final step in that long, tortuous five-year process we have all lived through. It marks the start of the new independence that the people of this country so clearly voted for in 2016. As such, it is a Bill that keeps faith with the people. As such, it is a Bill that does honour to this House.

2.1 pm

**Mike Hill** (Hartlepool) (Lab) [V]: This deal is not perfect and I am voting for it out of duty to fulfil the promise I made to my constituents in two elections, which was that I would do everything possible to facilitate a Brexit with a deal. This deal is by no means good for Britain's future. It seems to encompass the worst elements of leaving the EU and the worst elements of membership

[Mike Hill]

of the EU. It is, however, better than the alternative on the table in this House today, which is of course to leave without a deal.

Promises were made to various industries and communities across the UK, promises that have not been kept. That is a pattern that this Government follow with persistent familiarity. Brexit means many things to many people, but some clear promises from the leave campaign to its supporters are now proven to be worthless promises. The Prime Minister's brinkmanship has left businesses with less than a week with two bank holidays to prepare for the new relationship with the EU. It is simply not fair to those businesses and simply not an adequate amount of time for many smaller businesses to prepare, on top of covid regulations.

As for fishing, the biggest sector sold out by this deal, the Government promised UK fishermen a better deal than the one they got. It is clear that the Government have not delivered on that. As the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on coastal communities, I have to emphasise that coastal communities are the poorest relations in our island nation, whether based on fishing, industrial regions or hospitality and leisure.

Hartlepool is of course part of the Tees Valley, and therefore central to the so-called green industrial revolution. On energy, I welcome the commitment to Horizon 2020 and scientific research funding, but the deal adversely affects our important chemicals industry. Barely mentioned in the deal, the industry is set to owe billions of pounds for scientific research if we do not get our connections with the EU correct on the REACH— registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals— programme.

There are many more things I would like to say about this deal and the grim prospects it brings for workers in particular, but, as I say, a deal is better than no deal and I will leave it at that.

2.4 pm

**Greg Clark** (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): It was such a pleasure to see my right hon. Friend the Member for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson) back contributing in the Chamber.

Given the time available, I want to make just one simple point in reflecting on an agreement whose ambition and scope, embracing everything from energy and science to security, is, I think, underappreciated. As it is considered, in time that will come out. During my time as Business Secretary, I came to appreciate and value the important contribution of many businesses based in Britain that relied on just-in-time production to be competitive with the rest of the world. They were very concerned that one of the consequences of Brexit might be to interrupt their ability to trade, including in components, and therefore make them unviable. In particular, trading terms that reflected sensible rules of origin were vital to companies such as Nissan in Sunderland, as we have heard, Toyota in Derbyshire and north Wales, and BMW in Oxford. I was therefore very pleased when the chief executive of Toyota in Europe called me on Christmas eve to say that the terms of the deal, when it came to rules of origin, met the requirements that that company had for its location in the UK. It has a good and

prosperous future in Derbyshire and north Wales, and in the entire supply chain, which employs many thousands of people across this country.

To respond to some comments that the hon. Member for Washington and Sunderland West (Mrs Hodgson) made, it is now important that we seize the opportunity that we have, as this country emerges from covid, having proved ourselves to be a place of agility and ingenuity when it comes to the pace of new discoveries. We must now apply that across all the industries that we have in this country. I hope that when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster responds, he will recommit to a reinvigorated industrial strategy that will position Britain, with all the strengths that we have in science and technology, and with the advantages that come from putting behind us this Brexit debate that has dominated the last few years—

**Stephen Timms** (East Ham) (Lab): Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

**Greg Clark:** I will not give way; I want to conclude.

To capitalise on those strengths, as we come into 2021 with covid behind us and this agreement under our belts, I hope that we can take a position leading the world on some of the technologies that will contribute to growth all around the world.

2.7 pm

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP) [V]: I want to take this opportunity to thank the Prime Minister. In recent years he has done more for the cause of Scottish independence than any other Unionist politician. Support for independence has been increasing. Seventeen polls in a row have shown majority support for independence.

Today's debate and today's propositions present a stark choice to the people of Scotland. The Prime Minister is offering this treaty and this Brexit. From the UK side, this treaty was negotiated on the basis of priorities decided by the Tories. At the beginning of this debacle, the UK Government had the opportunity to decide what their priorities would be. They chose sovereignty, and they chose to interpret sovereignty as isolation. It suits this elitist Tory Government to cement a future that keeps apart the haves and the have-nots. It suits this xenophobic Tory Government to cement a future that removes freedom of movement. It suits this well-off Tory Government to steal opportunities from young people whose parents are not rich.

Fishing has been done to death in this debate, but the reality is that the Tory Government did as they have ever done. They prioritised the needs and desires of those fishing in the English channel over the needs and desires of those in Scottish waters. They promised a sea of opportunity, yet are delivering a cut in access. They promised a reduction in unelected bureaucrats making decisions, but this deal creates a new joint partnership council, made up of unelected UK and EU officials, formed of over 30 sub-councils, each focusing on one specific area of the agreement. In fact, this Bill will be going across to the House of Lords this afternoon, where 850 unelected peers will have more say than the Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish Parliaments.

The SNP will always do what we have been elected to do. We will always put the people of Scotland first. The alternative we are offering is an independent Scotland in Europe, access to a market 10 times the size of

the UK, and the opportunity for young people to travel, live and work throughout Europe, and for our European friends to come to Scotland. We want to reduce inequality, putting wellbeing at the heart of our decision making, and dignity and respect at the heart of social security.

I refuse to vote for this dreadful deal. It is a bit like we had been drinking a lovely glass of water; the Brexiteers offered the UK a malt whisky, but they are now saying that we will all die of thirst if we do not choose to drink the steaming mug of excrement that the UK Government are offering us. There is no way that I will choose to drink that excrement, and neither will I be complicit in forcing my constituents to do so. Scotland's future must be in Scotland's hands, not those of the Prime Minister.

2.10 pm

**Mrs Heather Wheeler** (South Derbyshire) (Con)[V]: I am delighted that the Prime Minister has secured this trade deal with the EU. These negotiations have been followed intently by so many people in South Derbyshire, both individuals and businesses. I understand the strong feelings on both sides of the debate, but all that time ago, South Derbyshire and the country voted in the referendum to leave the EU, and as a democrat, I supported the Government in abiding by that vote, during the negotiations, and in securing a deal.

South Derbyshire is at the heart of our manufacturing midlands. As we have already heard, we have the Toyota factory that exports more than 80% of the cars made to Europe. My constituents also work in other great firms such as Bombardier and Rolls-Royce, and in their supply chains. Making things matters to us; exporting matters to us. A good trade deal was crucial, and that is what our Prime Minister, Lord Frost and the negotiating team brought home for us.

There had been lots of chatter that the deal needed not only to be about free trade, but to get into the deep detail of trade barriers, equivalence, rules of origin and transition periods, and this deal has done that. I am an optimist. I listen to my constituents and to the needs of local businesses, and I kept a steady stream of information, requests, updates and encouragement flowing to the negotiating team, so that South Derbyshire's needs were represented at the table and we got what we needed—for the automotive sector, no quotas; for rules of origin, a transition period of five and a half years, and no trade barriers. That is exactly what was needed. It keeps our factories competitive, and the cars flying off the production line. Even more important, the deal means that the South Derbyshire Toyota factory will be in the best position ever to bid for the next generation car in a few years' time, and to secure work for the next 20-plus years.

I am hugely grateful for the phone calls and messages from No. 10 and the negotiating team, and for their assurances on these issues as the process was taking place and on its conclusion. This is a good deal. It enables manufactured goods from South Derbyshire to be exported tariff-free and trade barrier-free. It allows our farmers to export, and managers of businesses to move freely around their European-based companies. It means that we can drive in the EU without needing an additional special driving licence, and for UK passport holders already living in the EU, it allows their residency to continue. It allows visa-free travel for holidaymakers,

and in the more niche areas of exporting, such as organic farming, it allows for equivalence and continued unfettered exports.

I thank the Prime Minister, my friends at No. 10, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Treasury, who all helped and listened to my views and those of South Derbyshire businesses and residents. Finally, to my constituents who had so many concerns that this deal has put to bed, I say, "Rejoice!"

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** For the wind-up I now call Rachel Reeves, who should finish no later than 2.22 pm.

2.14 pm

**Rachel Reeves** (Leeds West) (Lab) [V]: While I am pleased to be able to close this debate, I am sad not to be in the Chamber of the House of Commons. However, like so many, someone in my family has covid, so we are having to self-isolate. I know that compared with many, I am lucky.

After the year that we have had, a deal of any form provides a degree of stability, which is what businesses crave—it is what our whole country craves—so despite the limitations of this deal, and despite all the things that Labour would have done differently, and will do differently in the future, we will vote to implement this treaty today. The alternative—the chaos of no deal—is not something that any responsible Government could facilitate, and nor could a responsible Government in waiting.

I strongly believe that almost every hon. and right hon. Member wants this treaty to come into international law today. Let me say to all Members, including those of my own party, that we are not indifferent to the outcome of this vote, so we should vote accordingly. Here we are on 30 December; tomorrow, trading relationships that have served us well for decades will expire. This is not about whether we wanted to remain or leave, and it is not about whether we think the deal is good enough—we know that it is not. Voting for this deal now is the only way to avoid no deal.

Let me turn to what this deal does for our economic prosperity, because although we will vote for the Bill, we are fully aware of its limitations and we will hold the Government to account for them. Farmers, car makers and our chemicals industry all face extra delays, costs and bureaucracy when taking their goods to European markets. Few will thank the Government for the gift handed to them on Christmas eve, wrapped up in £7 billion-worth of bureaucracy and tied with the red tape of over 200 million customs declarations.

More than 80% of our economy is made up of services, yet not one of the 1,246 pages of the treaty gives any additional opportunities to those sectors. How has that come to be? The EU has a trade surplus in goods with us, and it fought to keep it. We have a trade surplus on services, and the Government have done nothing to protect it.

The failure of the Conservative Government to stand up for our cultural industries is as unforgivable as it is inexplicable. As Tim Burgess and many others have rightly said, many British performers will now face huge added costs and barriers if they want to tour and showcase their talents all across Europe.

[Rachel Reeves]

As I have been saying for months, the reality of poor preparations will bite hard. Our ports are underfunded and our hauliers go unheard. The 50,000 customs agents the Government promised they would deliver are not in place. The Tories have had four and a half years to get ready for this moment. Their incompetence must not be allowed to hold our great country back.

In recent days, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has claimed that the end of the transition period will mean that a Tory Government can now tackle inequality and injustices. Let me just say this: it was not the EU that created the bedroom tax or the need for food banks, or slashed funding for social care. The right hon. Gentleman need not look to Brussels for someone to blame, but need to only look to the Tory Governments he has served under for the last 10 and a half years.

In a few moments' time, the House will divide. Despite all our reservations, there are just two paths ahead for our country. Down one is the Prime Minister's limited and unimpressive deal with the European Union, but down the other is the chaos of ending the transition period with no deal at all, which would mean substantial tariffs and barriers to trade, and no agreement on security co-operation. There is no other option now, and to abstain is to fail to choose—to suggest somehow that we are indifferent to the two paths before us. I am not, and I do not believe that other Members are either.

This is Johnson's deal, where neither option is ideal, but a limited deal is better than no deal at all, and it is a foundation on which we can build. So Labour will choose the better of two paths—for businesses, workers, trade unions, jobs and our security. We are not this deal's cheerleaders—far from it. This is the Prime Minister's deal; he and his Government will own it, and we will hold them to account for it. That is why my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) and I have tabled seven amendments today to show how Labour would do things differently and build on the deal. They cover the economic impact of the agreement; our lack of access to the Schengen information system; protecting worker and environmental standards; the Erasmus programme; performers' and artists' permits; the duty of the trade and co-operation agreement partnership council to report to Parliament; and, crucially, support and information for businesses.

This is an important day, but Labour is thinking about tomorrow. We are firmly focused on making this the best country for all our citizens. Wherever you live, whatever your parents do, whatever school you went to, and whatever your talents and ambitions, we will back you all the way. This must be a country where people can look forward to starting their career, developing their skills, creating and growing their businesses, locating their jobs in our towns and cities, and trading around the world. That is our ambition for the talent of Britain and we want to share it with the world.

Throughout these negotiations and preparations, the Tories have brought chaos when the country has craved stability. They sought to break the law; Labour will uphold it. They seek to break alliances where we will forge them. That is the way to project our values and stand up for the UK's national interest. Ursula von der

Leyen found solace in the words of T.S. Eliot last week. As we look to bring our country together and write a new chapter in our story, I turn to the words of Franco-Polish scientist, Marie Curie, who said:

“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.”

It is important that the Bill passes today, limited as it is, because no deal is no solution for our country. We vote on the foundations of a deal that Labour will build on. Although we have left the EU, we remain a European nation with a shared geography, history, values and interests. The job of securing our economy, protecting our national health service, tackling climate breakdown and rebuilding our country has only just begun.

2.21 pm

**The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove):** It is a real pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves). While we disagree on much, she gave a characteristically thoughtful and punchy speech, and she is a great credit to her party. I wish her and her family well as they wrestle with covid.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, the staff of the House of Commons and everyone who has allowed us to come back for this debate today. I also thank the negotiators on both sides who concluded this historic agreement: Lord Frost and his team; and Michel Barnier and his. I thank the thousands of civil servants who have been working for years now to bring us to this moment.

I thank everyone who has spoken in this debate—some 59 Members. In particular, I want to pay tribute to those who have been arguing for our sovereign future outside the European Union for many years, in particular my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash), and my right hon. Friends the Members for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) and for North Shropshire (Mr Paterson). Again, our hearts go out to Owen and to his family.

I also want to thank those who argued in the referendum that we should remain in the European Union, but who, in this debate, gave considered and thoughtful speeches expressing their support for the deal in front of us and clear pointers for the way forward. My hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine), the hon. Member for Huddersfield (Mr Sheerman), my right hon. Friend the Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark), the right hon. Members for Warley (John Spellar) and for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) and my hon. Friend the Member for Tonbridge and Malling (Tom Tugendhat) all made impressive speeches, recognising the importance of democracy.

Democracy is why we are here. In the 2016 referendum, more people voted to leave the European Union than have ever voted for any proposition in our history. Now, four and a half years later, we can say that we have kept faith with the people. This deal takes back control of our laws, our borders and our waters, and also guarantees tariff-free and quota-free access to the European market as well as ensuring our security. It is a good deal for aviation, for haulage, for data, and for legal and financial services, and it leaves us as sovereign equals with the EU.

**Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP):** Will the Minister give way?

**Michael Gove:** No.

The deal also builds on the withdrawal agreement concluded by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. It is important to remember that there are now 4 million EU citizens who have chosen to make their home in this country—a vote of confidence in Britain. It is also the case that we have concluded the Northern Ireland protocol, an imperfect instrument certainly, but one that ensures that we leave as one UK, whole and entire, so that we can begin a new special relationship with our friends in the European Union.

I want to turn now to some of the arguments that were made in the debate, turning first of all to those made by the Leader of the Opposition.

**Conor Burns:** Will my right hon. Friend give way?

**Michael Gove:** Not quite yet.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke eloquently, as usual, but not perhaps with 100% conviction this time. That is no surprise: he argued that we should stay in the European Union; he argued for a second referendum; he argued that we should stay in the customs union; and he argues still for a level of ECJ jurisdiction. At every turn, over the course of the last four years, he has tried to find a way of keeping us as closely tied to EU structures as possible.

The Leader of the Opposition now says that he will not put opposition to Brexit on his leaflets at the next general election. Given the result at the last general election, when he did put opposition to Brexit on his leaflets, I can well understand that. His attitude to the European Union is rather like his attitude to his former leader, the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn)—he spent years trying to keep as close as possible, and now he wants us to forget all about it. His time in the shadow Cabinet, when he was arguing for the right hon. Member for Islington North to be Prime Minister and for the UK to be under EU structures, was presumably, in the words of the right hon. Member for Islington North, a period when the right hon. and learned Gentleman was “present but not involved”. But I know that, as a good former Director of Public Prosecutions, he does not want us to take account of any of his previous convictions. Indeed, I am grateful for his support today.

The Leader of the Opposition was also right in calling out the leader of the Scottish National party, because, of course, what SNP Members are doing today is voting for no deal—he is absolutely right. What have they said in the past? Nicola Sturgeon said that no deal would be a “catastrophic idea”, that the SNP could not “countenance in any way” no deal, and that SNP MPs would do “everything possible” to stop no deal—except, of course, by actually voting against it today.

Indeed, so opposed to no deal was the SNP that the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) went to court to ensure that if the Prime Minister took us out of the European Union without a deal, he would go to jail. Now the leader of the SNP is voting to take us out of the EU without a deal—something that his own party said should be an imprisonable offence. So what is he going to do now? Turn himself in? Submit to a citizen’s arrest at the hands of the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South

West? If his party follows through on its previous convictions, I, of course, will campaign for him. The cry will go out from these Benches: “Free the Lochaber one!”

After the 2014 referendum, the SNP became the party that just would not take no for an answer. Now that we have the deal that it asked for, it is the party that will not say yes for an answer. Inconsistent, incoherent, and even at risk of self-incarceration, SNP Members are indeed prisoners—prisoners of a separatist ideology that puts their narrow nationalism ahead of our national interest.

The leader of the SNP did, of course, touch on fish, but he did not give us the figures. I have them here. We can look at the increase in stocks: North sea hake up relatively by 198%; west of Scotland saithe up by 188%; west of Scotland cod up by 54%; and North sea sole up by 297%. That is all because we are out of the common fisheries policy, which he would take us back into.

The Bill opens a new chapter. The people of Britain voted for not just a new settlement with the EU, but a new settlement within the UK, with freeports and FinTech, genetic sequencing and investment in General Dynamics, a fair deal for farming and fish stocks for coastal communities. Of course, this deal also allows us to regulate more smartly and more effectively for the future. Whether it is artificial intelligence, quantum computing, or machine learning, our participation in Horizon 2020 and our investment in science will make us a science superpower. Of course, this deal also allows us to regulate more smartly and more effectively for the future. Whether it is artificial intelligence, quantum computing, or machine learning, our participation in Horizon 2020 and our investment in science will make us a science superpower.

It is appropriate that we should think of that today, the day on which the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine—a UK initiative as part of global Britain collaborating with others in the pursuit of knowledge and the relief of pain—is approved by the MHRA. Let us remember the difficulties and the challenges of this year. Let us also remember how important it is that we should all now come together and recognise that there are no such things any more as remainers or leavers. We are all Britons dedicated to a brighter future—stronger together, sovereign again—and dedicated to ensuring a future of sharing, solidarity and excellence. That is why I commend this Bill to the House.

2.30 pm

*The Speaker put the Question (Order, this day), That the Bill be now read a Second time.*

*The House divided: Ayes 521, Noes 73.*

**Division No. 190]**

**[2.30 pm**

**AYES**

Abrahams, Debbie	Amess, Sir David
Adams, Nigel	Anderson, Fleur
Afolami, Bim	Anderson, Lee
Afriyie, Adam	Anderson, Stuart
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Andrew, Stuart
Aiken, Nickie	Ansell, Caroline
Aldous, Peter	Argar, Edward
Ali, Rushanara	Ashworth, Jonathan
Ali, Tahir	Atherton, Sarah
Allan, Lucy	Atkins, Victoria
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Bacon, Gareth
Amesbury, Mike	Bacon, Mr Richard

Badenoch, Kemi	Colburn, Elliot	Foxcroft, Vicky	Howell, John
Bailey, Shaun	Collins, Damian	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Howell, Paul
Baillie, Siobhan	Cooper, Rosie	Frazer, Lucy	Huddleston, Nigel
Baker, Duncan	Cooper, rh Yvette	Freeman, George	Hudson, Dr Neil
Baker, Mr Steve	Costa, Alberto	Freer, Mike	Hughes, Eddie
Baldwin, Harriett	Courts, Robert	Fuller, Richard	Hunt, Jane
Barclay, rh Steve	Coutinho, Claire	Furniss, Gill	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Barker, Paula	Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Hunt, Tom
Baron, Mr John	Crabb, rh Stephen	Gale, rh Sir Roger	Hussain, Imran
Baynes, Simon	Crosbie, Virginia	Garnier, Mark	Jack, rh Mr Alister
Beckett, rh Margaret	Crouch, Tracey	Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Jarvis, Dan
Bell, Aaron	Cruddas, Jon	Gibb, rh Nick	Javid, rh Sajid
Benn, rh Hilary	Cryer, John	Gibson, Peter	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Benton, Scott	Cummins, Judith	Gideon, Jo	Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Beresford, Sir Paul	Cunningham, Alex	Gill, Preet Kaur	Jenkinson, Mark
Berry, rh Jake	Daly, James	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl	Jenkyns, Andrea
Betts, Mr Clive	David, Wayne	Glen, John	Jenrick, rh Robert
Bhatti, Saqib	Davies, David T. C.	Glendon, Mary	Johnson, rh Boris
Blackman, Bob	Davies, Gareth	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Johnson, Dr Caroline
Blomfield, Paul	Davies, Dr James	Gove, rh Michael	Johnson, Gareth
Blunt, Crispin	Davies, Mims	Graham, Richard	Johnson, Kim
Bone, Mr Peter	Davies, Philip	Grant, Mrs Helen	Johnston, David
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Davies-Jones, Alex	Gray, James	Jones, Andrew
Bowie, Andrew	Davis, rh Mr David	Grayling, rh Chris	Jones, rh Mr David
Brabin, Tracy	Davison, Dehenna	Green, Chris	Jones, Fay
Bradley, Ben	De Cordova, Marsha	Green, rh Damian	Jones, Gerald
Bradley, rh Karen	Debbonaire, Thangam	Green, Kate	Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Brady, Sir Graham	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh	Greenwood, Lilian	Jones, Mr Marcus
Braverman, rh Suella	Dinenage, Caroline	Greenwood, Margaret	Jones, Ruth
Brereton, Jack	Dines, Miss Sarah	Griffith, Andrew	Jones, Sarah
Bridgen, Andrew	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Griffith, Nia	Jupp, Simon
Brine, Steve	Docherty, Leo	Griffiths, Kate	Kane, Mike
Bristow, Paul	Dodds, Anneliese	Grundy, James	Kawczynski, Daniel
Britcliffe, Sara	Donelan, Michelle	Gullis, Jonathan	Kearns, Alicia
Brokenshire, rh James	Dorries, Ms Nadine	Gwynne, Andrew	Keegan, Gillian
Brown, Ms Lyn	Double, Steve	Haigh, Louise	Keeley, Barbara
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Doughty, Stephen	Halfon, rh Robert	Kendall, Liz
Browne, Anthony	Dowden, rh Oliver	Hall, Luke	Khan, Afzal
Bruce, Fiona	Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hamilton, Fabian	Kinnock, Stephen
Bryant, Chris	Drax, Richard	Hammond, Stephen	Knight, rh Sir Greg
Buchan, Felicity	Dromey, Jack	Hancock, rh Matt	Knight, Julian
Buck, Ms Karen	Drummond, Mrs Flick	Hands, rh Greg	Kruger, Danny
Buckland, rh Robert	Duddridge, James	Hardy, Emma	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Burghart, Alex	Duguid, David	Harman, rh Ms Harriet	Kyle, Peter
Burns, rh Conor	Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Harper, rh Mr Mark	Lammy, rh Mr David
Butler, Rob	Dunne, rh Philip	Harris, Carolyn	Lamont, John
Byrne, Ian	Eagle, Ms Angela	Harris, Rebecca	Largan, Robert
Byrne, rh Liam	Eagle, Maria	Harrison, Trudy	Latham, Mrs Pauline
Cadbury, Ruth	Eastwood, Mark	Hart, Sally-Ann	Lavery, Ian
Cairns, rh Alun	Edwards, Ruth	Hart, rh Simon	Leadsom, rh Andrea
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Elliott, Julie	Hayes, rh Sir John	Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Carden, Dan	Ellis, rh Michael	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Levy, Ian
Carter, Andy	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Healey, rh John	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Cartlidge, James	Elmore, Chris	Heapey, James	Lewer, Andrew
Cash, Sir William	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Lewis, rh Brandon
Cates, Miriam	Esterson, Bill	Henderson, Gordon	Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Caulfield, Maria	Eustice, rh George	Hendrick, Sir Mark	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Chalk, Alex	Evans, Chris	Henry, Darren	Lloyd, Tony
Champion, Sarah	Evans, Dr Luke	Higginbotham, Antony	Loder, Chris
Charalambous, Bambos	Evennett, rh Sir David	Hill, Mike	Logan, Mark
Chishti, Rehman	Everitt, Ben	Hinds, rh Damian	Longhi, Marco
Chope, Sir Christopher	Fabricant, Michael	Hoare, Simon	Lopez, Julia
Churchill, Jo	Farris, Laura	Hodge, rh Dame Margaret	Lopresti, Jack
Clark, Feryal	Fell, Simon	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon	Lord, Mr Jonathan
Clark, rh Greg	Fletcher, Colleen	Holden, Mr Richard	Loughton, Tim
Clarke, Mr Simon	Fletcher, Katherine	Hollern, Kate	Lynch, Holly
Clarke, Theo	Fletcher, Mark	Hollinrake, Kevin	Mackinlay, Craig
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Fletcher, Nick	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Mackrory, Cherylyn
Clarkson, Chris	Ford, Vicky	Holloway, Adam	Maclean, Rachel
Cleverly, rh James	Foster, Kevin	Holmes, Paul	Madders, Justin
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Fovargue, Yvonne	Hopkins, Rachel	Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Fox, rh Dr Liam	Howarth, rh Sir George	Mahmood, Shabana

Mak, Alan  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGinn, Conor  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Milling, rh Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Ian  
 Murray, James  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Parish, Neil  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike

Pennycook, Matthew  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Raab, rh Dominic  
 Randall, Tom  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Reeves, Ellie  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shah, Naz  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smith, Royston  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John

Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Streeter, Sir Gary  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Thomas, Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Trott, Laura  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh

Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Mark Spencer and**  
**James Wild**

#### NOES

Bardell, Hannah  
 Black, Mhairi  
 Blackford, rh Ian  
 Blackman, Kirsty  
 Bonnar, Steven  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Callaghan, Amy  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Campbell, Mr Gregory  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Chamberlain, Wendy  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Crawley, Angela  
 Davey, rh Ed  
 Day, Martyn  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
 Doogan, Dave  
 Dorans, Allan  
 Eastwood, Colum  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Farron, Tim  
 Farry, Stephen  
 Fellows, Marion  
 Ferrier, Margaret  
 Flynn, Stephen  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Girvan, Paul  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Gray, Neil

Hanna, Claire  
 Hanvey, Neale  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Lake, Ben  
 Law, Chris  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 MacAskill, Kenny  
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan  
 Mc Nally, John  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moran, Layla  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nicolson, John  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Paisley, Ian  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Robinson, Gavin  
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Smith, Alyn  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Williams, Hywel

Wilson, Munira  
Wilson, rh Sammy  
Wishart, Pete

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
David Linden and  
Owen Thompson

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*The list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy, is published at the end of today's debates.*

*Bill read a Second time; to stand committed to a Committee of the whole House (Order, this day).*

*Further proceedings on the Bill stood postponed (Order, this day).*

### EUROPEAN UNION (FUTURE RELATIONSHIP) (MONEY)

*Queen's recommendation signified.*

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith,*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill, it is expedient to authorise:

- (1) the payment out of money provided by Parliament of—
- (a) any expenditure incurred by a Minister of the Crown, government department or other public authority by virtue of any future relationship agreement,
- (b) any expenditure incurred by the Secretary of State in making payments to the EU or an EU entity to support the PEACE PLUS programme and any successor programmes,
- (c) any other expenditure incurred by a Minister of the Crown, government department or other public authority by virtue of the Act; and
- (d) any increase attributable to the Act in the sums payable by virtue of any other Act out of money so provided;
- (2) any charge on the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund, or any other charge on the public revenue, arising by virtue of the Act.—(Tom Pursglove.)

*Question agreed to.*

### EUROPEAN UNION (FUTURE RELATIONSHIP) (WAYS AND MEANS)

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith,*

That, for the purposes of any Act resulting from the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill, it is expedient to authorise:

- (1) any taxation, fees or charges, or any other charge on the people, arising by virtue of the Act;
- (2) the payment of sums into the Consolidated Fund or the National Loans Fund.—(Tom Pursglove.)

*Question agreed to.*

### European Union (Future Relationship) Bill

*Proceedings resumed (Order, this day).*

*Considered in Committee.*

[DAME ELEANOR LAING *in the Chair*]

**David Linden:** On a point of order, Dame Eleanor. We find ourselves in the rather bizarre situation today, when we are being told that Parliament has taken back control, that this charade of a Committee of the whole House will conclude without any Member being able to speak, or indeed to consider the 14 pages of amendments tabled by right hon. and hon. Members. Can I seek your clarity and your guidance? If Parliament is taking back control, why on earth is Parliament being forced to debate this charade of a Bill in five hours and being muted entirely during the Committee of the whole House?

**The Chairman of Ways and Means (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. It is a perfectly reasonable question to ask at this stage in the proceedings, but as Mr Speaker said just before he left the Chair, under the order of the House today we now move to a Committee of the whole House. The House decided this morning on the timetable motion under which we are operating. That is the answer to the hon. Gentleman's question. I am sure that the hon. Gentleman will also have noted that, unusually, we are in a position where the Bill being taken in these unusual circumstances at this time can be only rejected or passed in its entirety, so the opportunity for any change has long passed. The hon. Gentleman cannot possibly argue that these matters have not been discussed and argued at length and in depth for many years. Indeed, the hon. Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) might say for decades.

*The Chair put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Order, this day).*

*Clauses 1 to 40 ordered to stand part of the Bill.*

*Schedules 1 to 6 agreed to.*

*The Speaker resumed the Chair.*

*Bill reported, without amendment.*

**David Linden:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

**Mr Speaker:** Is it a real point of order?

**David Linden:** Mr Speaker, can you verify the last time that a Committee of the whole House sat for a mammoth four minutes?

**Mr Speaker:** Obviously, it is not a point of order.

*Third Reading*

*Queen's consent signified.*

*Question put forthwith (Order, this day), That the Bill be now read the Third time.*

*The House divided: Ayes 521, Noes 73.*

**Division No. 191]**

**[2.45 pm**

#### AYES

Abrahams, Debbie	Aiken, Nickie
Adams, Nigel	Aldous, Peter
Afolami, Bim	Ali, Rushanara
Afryjie, Adam	Ali, Tahir
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Allan, Lucy



Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Champion, Sarah	Evans, Dr Luke	Higginbotham, Antony
Amesbury, Mike	Charalambous, Bambos	Evennett, rh Sir David	Hill, Mike
Amess, Sir David	Chishtii, Rehman	Everitt, Ben	Hinds, rh Damian
Anderson, Fleur	Chope, Sir Christopher	Fabricant, Michael	Hoare, Simon
Anderson, Lee	Churchill, Jo	Farris, Laura	Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Anderson, Stuart	Clark, Feryal	Fell, Simon	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Andrew, Stuart	Clark, rh Greg	Fletcher, Colleen	Holden, Mr Richard
Ansell, Caroline	Clarke, Mr Simon	Fletcher, Katherine	Hollern, Kate
Argar, Edward	Clarke, Theo	Fletcher, Mark	Hollinrake, Kevin
Ashworth, Jonathan	Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Fletcher, Nick	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Atherton, Sarah	Clarkson, Chris	Ford, Vicky	Holloway, Adam
Atkins, Victoria	Cleverly, rh James	Foster, Kevin	Holmes, Paul
Bacon, Gareth	Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Fovargue, Yvonne	Hopkins, Rachel
Bacon, Mr Richard	Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Fox, rh Dr Liam	Howarth, rh Sir George
Badenoch, Kemi	Colburn, Elliot	Foxcroft, Vicky	Howell, John
Bailey, Shaun	Collins, Damian	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Howell, Paul
Baillie, Siobhan	Cooper, Rosie	Frazer, Lucy	Huddleston, Nigel
Baker, Duncan	Cooper, rh Yvette	Freeman, George	Hudson, Dr Neil
Baker, Mr Steve	Costa, Alberto	Freer, Mike	Hughes, Eddie
Baldwin, Harriett	Courts, Robert	Fuller, Richard	Hunt, Jane
Barclay, rh Steve	Coutinho, Claire	Furniss, Gill	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Barker, Paula	Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Hunt, Tom
Baron, Mr John	Crabb, rh Stephen	Gale, rh Sir Roger	Hussain, Imran
Baynes, Simon	Crosbie, Virginia	Garnier, Mark	Jack, rh Mr Alister
Beckett, rh Margaret	Crouch, Tracey	Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Jarvis, Dan
Bell, Aaron	Cruddas, Jon	Gibb, rh Nick	Javid, rh Sajid
Benn, rh Hilary	Cryer, John	Gibson, Peter	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Benton, Scott	Cummins, Judith	Gideon, Jo	Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Beresford, Sir Paul	Cunningham, Alex	Gill, Preet Kaur	Jenkinson, Mark
Berry, rh Jake	Daly, James	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl	Jenkyens, Andrea
Betts, Mr Clive	David, Wayne	Glen, John	Jenrick, rh Robert
Bhatti, Saqib	Davies, David T. C.	Glendon, Mary	Johnson, rh Boris
Blackman, Bob	Davies, Gareth	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Johnson, Dr Caroline
Blomfield, Paul	Davies, Dr James	Gove, rh Michael	Johnson, Gareth
Blunt, Crispin	Davies, Mims	Graham, Richard	Johnson, Kim
Bone, Mr Peter	Davies, Philip	Grant, Mrs Helen	Johnston, David
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Davies-Jones, Alex	Gray, James	Jones, Andrew
Bowie, Andrew	Davis, rh Mr David	Grayling, rh Chris	Jones, rh Mr David
Brabin, Tracy	Davison, Dehenna	Green, Chris	Jones, Fay
Bradley, Ben	De Cordova, Marsha	Green, rh Damian	Jones, Gerald
Bradley, rh Karen	Debbonaire, Thangam	Green, Kate	Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Brady, Sir Graham	Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh	Greenwood, Lilian	Jones, Mr Marcus
Braverman, rh Suella	Dinenage, Caroline	Greenwood, Margaret	Jones, Ruth
Brereton, Jack	Dines, Miss Sarah	Griffith, Andrew	Jones, Sarah
Bridgen, Andrew	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Griffith, Nia	Jupp, Simon
Brine, Steve	Docherty, Leo	Griffiths, Kate	Kane, Mike
Bristow, Paul	Dodds, Anneliese	Grundy, James	Kawczynski, Daniel
Britcliffe, Sara	Donelan, Michelle	Gullis, Jonathan	Kearns, Alicia
Brokenshire, rh James	Dorries, Ms Nadine	Gwynne, Andrew	Keegan, Gillian
Brown, Ms Lyn	Double, Steve	Haigh, Louise	Keeley, Barbara
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Doughty, Stephen	Halfon, rh Robert	Kendall, Liz
Browne, Anthony	Dowden, rh Oliver	Hall, Luke	Khan, Afzal
Bruce, Fiona	Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hamilton, Fabian	Kinnock, Stephen
Bryant, Chris	Drax, Richard	Hammond, Stephen	Knight, rh Sir Greg
Buchan, Felicity	Dromey, Jack	Hancock, rh Matt	Knight, Julian
Buck, Ms Karen	Drummond, Mrs Flick	Hands, rh Greg	Kruger, Danny
Buckland, rh Robert	Duddridge, James	Hardy, Emma	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Burghart, Alex	Duguid, David	Harman, rh Ms Harriet	Kyle, Peter
Burns, rh Conor	Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Harper, rh Mr Mark	Lammy, rh Mr David
Butler, Rob	Dunne, rh Philip	Harris, Carolyn	Lamont, John
Byrne, Ian	Eagle, Ms Angela	Harris, Rebecca	Largan, Robert
Byrne, rh Liam	Eagle, Maria	Harrison, Trudy	Latham, Mrs Pauline
Cadbury, Ruth	Eastwood, Mark	Hart, Sally-Ann	Lavery, Ian
Cairns, rh Alun	Edwards, Ruth	Hart, rh Simon	Leadsom, rh Andrea
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Elliott, Julie	Hayes, rh Sir John	Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Carden, Dan	Ellis, rh Michael	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Levy, Ian
Carter, Andy	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Healey, rh John	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Cartlidge, James	Elmore, Chris	Heappey, James	Lewer, Andrew
Cash, Sir William	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Lewis, rh Brandon
Cates, Miriam	Esterson, Bill	Henderson, Gordon	Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Caulfield, Maria	Eustice, rh George	Hendrick, Sir Mark	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
Chalk, Alex	Evans, Chris	Henry, Darren	Lloyd, Tony

Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Lynch, Holly  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cheryl  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 Matheson, Christian  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGinn, Conor  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Milling, rh Amanda  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Ian  
 Murray, James  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse

Norris, Alex  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Opperman, Guy  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Parish, Neil  
 Patel, rh Priti  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Philp, Chris  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pritchard, Mark  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Raab, rh Dominic  
 Randall, Tom  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Reeves, Ellie  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Richards, Nicola  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shah, Naz  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Jeff

Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smith, Royston  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Bob  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Streeter, Sir Gary  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Sunak, rh Rishi  
 Sunderland, James  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Thomas, Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Trott, Laura

Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warburton, David  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wragg, Mr William  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Mark Spencer and**  
**James Morris**

#### NOES

Bardell, Hannah  
 Black, Mhairi  
 Blackford, rh Ian  
 Blackman, Kirsty  
 Bonnar, Steven  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Callaghan, Amy  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Campbell, Mr Gregory  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Chamberlain, Wendy  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Crawley, Angela  
 Davey, rh Ed  
 Day, Martyn  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.  
 Doogan, Dave  
 Dorans, Allan  
 Eastwood, Colum  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Farron, Tim  
 Farry, Stephen  
 Fellows, Marion  
 Ferrier, Margaret  
 Flynn, Stephen  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Girvan, Paul  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Gray, Neil  
 Hanna, Claire  
 Harvey, Neale  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hosie, Stewart  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Lake, Ben  
 Law, Chris  
 Lockhart, Carla  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 MacAskill, Kenny  
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan  
 Mc Nally, John  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moran, Layla  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nicolson, John

O'Hara, Brendan  
Olney, Sarah  
Oswald, Kirsten  
Paisley, Ian  
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
Robinson, Gavin  
Saville Roberts, rh Liz  
Shannon, Jim  
Sheppard, Tommy  
Smith, Alyn  
Stephens, Chris

Stone, Jamie  
Thewliss, Alison  
Thomson, Richard  
Whitford, Dr Philippa  
Williams, Hywel  
Wilson, Munira  
Wilson, rh Sammy  
Wishart, Pete

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
Owen Thompson and  
David Linden

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Bill read the Third time and passed.*

*The list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy, is published at the end of today's debates.*

**Mr Speaker:** In order to allow the safe exit of Members participating in the last bit of business and the safe arrival of those participating in the next, I shall suspend the House for three minutes.

2.55 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

## Covid-19 Update

2.59 pm

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock):** Today marks a great stride forward in our plan to get us out of this pandemic and to return to normal life. Our strategy throughout has been to suppress the virus until a vaccine can make us safe.

Suppressing the virus has got a whole lot harder because of the new variant, and we must take more action today, but the vaccine is the route out of the crisis. The approval this morning of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is another world first for Britain and it is the single biggest stride that we have been able to take since this pandemic began.

It is almost exactly a year since we first heard about what we now know as covid-19 circulating in Wuhan in China. Within weeks, the scientists at Porton Down had sequenced the viral genome. Scientists at Oxford University's Jenner Institute received the genetic code for the new virus, and like the great British codebreakers before them, they set to work at lightning speed. We took the decision to back them from the start with funding and access to the NHS for clinical trials. Partnered with AstraZeneca, they have done a brilliant job to develop and manufacture a safe and effective vaccine at speed.

I am sure the whole House will join me in congratulating everyone involved in this huge British success story. Not only is it a triumph of science and ingenuity in cracking a modern-day Enigma code, but in truth it is a victory for all, because the Oxford vaccine is affordable, it can be stored at normal fridge temperatures, and it offers hope not just for this country but for the whole world. Like so much else in the pandemic response, there has been a big team effort, and although this is a great British success, it is also the British way. We are at our best when we collaborate with people from around the whole world, and this is another example. The vaccines programme has shown Britain as a life sciences superpower, and the Brexit deal that this House has just passed, with a very significant majority, will help us to strengthen that yet further. I thank the National Institute for Health Research, the UK Vaccine Network, the Vaccine Taskforce, AstraZeneca of course, and Oxford University, all the volunteers who stepped up for science and took part in the trials, as well as everyone else involved in making this happen.

From the beginning, we focused on the vaccine as a way out of this pandemic, and now it is a reality. We need to vaccinate as quickly as supply allows—following the necessary safety checks, of course—and the NHS stands ready to accelerate deployment at scale from Monday 4 January. We have a total of 100 million doses on order, which combined with the Pfizer vaccine is enough to vaccinate every adult in the UK with both doses. We will vaccinate according to the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation priority, but today's news means that everyone who wants one can get a vaccine. We already have 530,000 doses available to the UK from Monday, with millions due from AstraZeneca by the beginning of February.

The clinical advice is that the Oxford vaccine is best deployed as two doses up to 12 weeks apart. The great news is that people get protection after the first dose. This means we can increase the speed at which we vaccinate people for the first 12 weeks before we return

[Matt Hancock]

to deliver the second doses for longer-term protection. It brings forward the day on which we can lift the restrictions that no one in this House wants to see apply any longer than is absolutely necessary, but we must act to suppress the virus now, not least because the new variant makes the period between now and then even more difficult.

Although we have the good news of the vaccine today, we have to take some difficult decisions. The NHS is under very significant pressure. Right now, more than 21,000 people are in hospital with coronavirus, and we can see the impact that this is having. The threat to life from the virus is real, and the pressures on the NHS are real too. I want to put on the record my thanks to all those working in the NHS, in particular those—including our chief medical officer—who have been working selflessly on the wards over Christmas. They deserve our thanks, our gratitude and our support. We owe it to them to fulfil our responsibility to keep the virus under control.

Sharply rising cases and the hospitalisations that follow demonstrate the need to act where the virus is spreading. Yesterday alone, 53,135 new cases were registered, the majority of which are believed to be the new variant. Unfortunately, the new variant is now spreading across most of England, and cases are doubling fast. It is therefore necessary to apply tier 4 measures to a wider area, including the remaining parts of the south-east, as well as large parts of the midlands, the north-west, the north-east and the south-west. I have laid a comprehensive list in the Library of the House and published it on gov.uk. Even in most areas not moving into tier 4, cases are rising, and it is therefore necessary to apply tier 3 measures more broadly too, including in Liverpool and North Yorkshire. The rest of Yorkshire remains in tier 3. These changes will take effect at one minute past midnight tomorrow morning.

The new variant means that three quarters of the population will now be in tier 4 and almost all the country will be in tiers 3 and 4. I know that tier 3 and 4 measures place a significant burden on people and especially on businesses affected, but I am afraid that it is absolutely necessary because of the number of cases that we have seen. Where we are still able to give places greater freedoms, we will continue to do so.

Today is a day of mixed emotions—the joy that we have in the vaccine, giving us a route out of this pandemic; the pride that Britain is the first country in the world once again to approve this British vaccine; the sorrow at the deaths and the suffering that the virus has caused; and the determination that we must all stick at it during the difficult winter weeks ahead. We end 2020 still with great challenges but also with great hope and confidence that in 2021, we have a brighter future ahead. I commend this statement to the House.

3.6 pm

**Jonathan Ashworth** (Leicester South) (Lab/Co-op): As always, I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement. I totally understand why he has had to come to the House this afternoon to move further areas into tiers 3 and 4. As he says, almost the whole of England is now in a form of lockdown. My constituents in Leicester and, I am sure, constituents in

Greater Manchester will be deeply worried that our areas have now been in a form of restrictions for months and months. It is having a huge impact on families and small businesses in cities such as Leicester and, I am sure, areas in Greater Manchester. He has also moved Liverpool into tier 3. Liverpool was the great success story, so is it his view now that mass lateral flow testing is not enough to contain the spread of the virus? Our constituents will be asking how long he expects these lockdowns to be in place. We will vote for the regulations tonight, because the situation we are in is truly horrific. As he has outlined, the virus is out of control.

Yesterday, over 47,000 cases were reported in England. In the last two weeks, nearly half a million cases were reported in England. There are now more patients in hospital—over 20,000—than at any time in this pandemic, with admissions rising day by day, including almost 2,000 on Christmas day. Hospitals are close to or at surge capacity. We see ambulances queuing up outside hospitals because there are not enough beds for patients. We have London hospitals requesting to transfer patients in need of intensive care to Yorkshire. Frontline healthcare workers warn of oxygen supplies running low. Can the Secretary of State assure us that there will be no disruption to oxygen supplies through this second wave?

Our NHS staff are exhausted. Morale is low. Staff absence is said to be double its normal level. Leave for many is cancelled. And this time, there is no evening applause on our streets; just long, dark, hard nights for our NHS staff. The Nightingales were opened at great expense and with great fanfare, but now we hear that some of them, such as London's, have been emptied. Will they be used? If so, given the staff shortages across the NHS, how will they be staffed? There are reports today that only one in eight retired NHS staff—just 5,000 out of an eligible 30,000 who applied—have been brought back to help. Should we not be making full use of this resource, especially to help with vaccination?

Today's AstraZeneca news is indeed a tremendous boost, and I congratulate all involved, but can the Secretary of State confirm how many doses we currently have ready to go? We are in a crisis now. Mass vaccination needs to start straight away. We need to go hell for leather to get these jabs rolled out with no delay. We have already lost more than 600 healthcare workers to this horrific virus, including a disproportionate number of black, Asian and minority ethnic staff. Frontline NHS staff need the protection of the vaccine ASAP. Will the Secretary of State set a clear target for when all NHS frontline staff will receive the life-saving jab, and can he tell us when all care home residents and staff will be vaccinated? He will recall that I raised with him the situation facing those with terminal illnesses. Will he clarify the JCVI's guidance for that group today?

This is a race against time, because the more the virus circulates, the more opportunities there are for further variants to emerge. The new B.1.1.7 variant is 56% more transmissible and is the dominant strain in London and the south-east and east of England. The New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group minutes from 18 December suggest it could add at least 0.4 to the R. Given that the first lockdown brought R down to about 0.6, and the second down to about 0.8, it will surely be harder to bring infections under control, so harder measures will be needed. Will the Secretary of

State publish in realtime the advice he receives from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies on the restrictions needed?

This is a global crisis, but let us be clear: this is a national emergency. Our national health service is becoming overwhelmed. I hope that tier 4 restrictions are enough, but many believe that even tougher restrictions are now inevitable. Does the Secretary of State agree? We need not put more lives in jeopardy when vaccines are so near. Let us give the achievements of our scientists the best chance to save lives. The country sacrificed so much in 2020. Let us not repeat the same mistakes. We must start 2021 by, right now, doing everything it takes to save lives and support our NHS. Only then can we look forward with confidence and hope.

**Matt Hancock:** The hon. Gentleman is right that this virus has thrown up problems and challenges right around the world; we have seen the impact in other countries in some of the news from other parts of Europe today. He is also right that, thanks to the approval of this vaccine, alongside the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, the end is in sight. That should give us hope that, while we have difficult weeks ahead of us, we can see the route out of this pandemic and normal life returning, with all that that means and entails.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the pressures on the NHS, which are significant. One advantage of having a national health system is that when one area of the country faces particular challenges, others can come to its aid. That is in progress—it is happening—and means that people are sometimes taken across the country to receive care where there is spare capacity. That is necessary; it is how the system works when it is under significant pressure.

The hon. Gentleman asked about the vaccination of NHS staff. I can confirm that, thanks to the decision announced by the regulator today, we will be able to accelerate the vaccination of NHS staff already in priority group 2, as well as the over-80s and care home residents and staff. He asked about the number of vaccines we have available. I mentioned in the statement that we have 530,000 across the UK available for deployment in the first week of January. The NHS is doing a fantastic job of constantly increasing and expanding the scale of its operation.

Finally, the hon. Gentleman asked what more can be done in areas where rates are very high and continuing to rise. The true answer is that it is on all of us—it is about how everybody behaves. If we collectively decide to stop this by taking personal responsibility and not coming into contact with others unless absolutely necessary, we can slow the spread of this virus. The tiers restrictions are of course necessary, but ultimately it is about how we all behave. That is how we will get through the next few weeks together, and then the vaccine can come and save us.

**Mr Speaker:** Let us head to Surrey and the Chair of the Health Committee, Jeremy Hunt.

**Jeremy Hunt** (South West Surrey) (Con): The news from AstraZeneca is fantastic. The Secretary of State and British science in general deserve enormous credit.

The NHS is now busier than last April; in parts of London it looks like it may fall over. However, back in April schools were shut, but next week primary schools are due to reopen. In September, we came to regret

allowing university students to go back en masse, but some universities will start to go back from next week. Why, in the middle of winter, when the NHS is under such pressure, when we have a dangerous new strain of the virus, are we taking such huge risks? Should not our entire focus for the next eight to 12 weeks be on saving lives, getting the first dose of the vaccine out to every single vulnerable person, stopping the NHS collapsing and putting NHS frontline staff at the front of the queue for the vaccines so that we keep safe the people upon whom our safety depends?

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Before the Secretary of State replies, may I remind Members who are not in the Chamber that they should have the same dress code even though they are virtual? It is only fair that we treat each other with the same respect.

**Matt Hancock:** I share my right hon. Friend's desire and the strategy of keeping this virus suppressed while we get the vaccine rolled out as fast as possible. One of the other pieces of news good from this morning's announcement is that we can roll this vaccine out faster because we only need to give the second dose after 12 weeks; that means that we can get the first dose of the vaccine into more people. The data shows that that gives that immunity, so we can get through the protection of the nation faster than we previously could have done.

The points that my right hon. Friend raises about education are of course important. The Education Secretary will set out in a statement shortly the details of how we will manage the very difficult balance between needing to keep children in education as much as possible and ensuring that we do not add upward pressure on the R number and spread the virus any further. I commend to him the Education Secretary's statement.

**Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP) [V]: As chair of the all-party parliamentary group on vaccinations for all, I absolutely welcome the authorisation of the AstraZeneca vaccine. Storage in normal fridges will make it much easier to deliver here, and particularly so in low and middle-income countries, which would have struggled to maintain the cold chain at minus 70°, as required for the Pfizer vaccine.

Delivering the vaccine will still be a herculean task for all four UK health services, and they will struggle if they are also dealing with surging covid cases. Hospitals in London and the south-east are already reporting shortages of critical care beds and even oxygen, so there is an urgent need to get the new variant under control. Does the Secretary of State recognise that, when dealing with a spreading infection, getting ahead of it is critical? Taking action only once cases in an area are soaring is simply too late to bring it under control. All three devolved nations are already under level 4 restrictions to try to prevent the new variant from getting a grip and getting out of control. Given the greater levels of the new variant in England—as the Secretary of State just stated, cases are rising everywhere—does he not think it is time to put the whole of England under tightened tier 4 restrictions?

**Matt Hancock:** I have just announced the need to move a significant proportion of England into tier 4 restrictions, and I welcome the implicit support for that measure. Where it is possible to keep some of the freedoms that we all cherish, we should do so, and that is the basis for our tiered approach.

[*Matt Hancock*]

I of course welcome the hon. Lady's support for the roll-out of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, which will happen right across the UK from Monday. It has been a pleasure working with Jeane Freeman, the SNP Government's Cabinet Secretary for Health in Holyrood, to ensure that this vaccine, which has been bought, developed and supported effectively by UK science right across the country, can be deployed properly to everybody in the whole of the UK on a fair and equitable basis according to their clinical need. I look forward to working very hard to make sure that that happens.

**Siobhan Baillie** (Stroud) (Con) [V]: Many businesses in Gloucestershire are gutted to be placed in tier 4. This makes the roll-out of the vaccine even more important. However, there is a worrying increase in anti-vax information in Stroud that is causing a lot of distress and upset for local people. It is appalling that our Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust had to spend its precious time during this pandemic defending itself against films on social media that were wrongly claiming that the hospital is empty. Will the Secretary of State assist me to reassure Stroud about the vaccines and encourage people not to share covid information from unofficial sources to stop this dangerous, damaging and disrespectful behaviour?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, I strongly agree with my hon. Friend, who speaks very powerfully about the need for proper, authorised information about these vaccines, which save lives. We have been very careful to ensure that the independent regulator makes the decision on how these vaccines should be deployed, and indeed whether they should be deployed, and it is confident in their safety and their efficacy. It is that information, and all the information that is set out by the NHS, that people should look to if they have questions—if they want to know how and why the vaccine works, and who it should be used for. I pay tribute to all those who work in the hospitals of Gloucestershire. It is hard work at the moment in the NHS. Rates of coronavirus in Gloucestershire have shot up over just the past two or three weeks, and unfortunately that is why we have had to take the action that we have on restrictions. I want to thank all of the NHS for doing all the work that it has been doing over Christmas and will have to do over the weeks ahead.

**Munira Wilson** (Twickenham) (LD) [V]: I, too, welcome the fantastic news about the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and congratulate all those involved.

I found it frankly shocking that the Secretary of State's statement made barely any reference to the immense pressures our hospitals are facing on the ground and what the plan is to help them with this situation. Major incidents have been declared in Essex and London. Ambulances are queuing outside hospitals and intensive care unit patients are being transferred across the country. The Nightingale hospitals were meant to be the insurance policy, but we hear that only 28 covid patients are in the Nightingale hospitals across England. If now is not the time to use the Nightingales, when is? If there are insufficient staff, why on earth did the Secretary of State spend £220 million on building the Nightingales? What is the back-up plan?

**Matt Hancock:** I am not sure that the hon. Lady was listening when I said in my statement that the NHS is under very significant pressure. Of course we are working hard to ensure that that pressure is alleviated as much as possible. Over the summer, we built significant extra capacity into the critical care facilities of the NHS, including across London. The Nightingale hospitals are there, as she puts it, as an insurance policy—as back-up. The London Nightingale hospital is there on stand-by as back-up. I have seen some stories circulating saying that it has been decommissioned. Those stories are wrong. It is better for people if they are treated inside a hospital, but the Nightingales are there for extra support should it be needed. It will require changes to the working patterns of staff if we do need to have patients in the Nightingales once more, but it is crucial, in my view, that we have those Nightingales there ready in case we need them.

**Sir Bernard Jenkin** (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I can confirm to my right hon. Friend that Essex has declared a major incident. It is also, at this very moment, submitting a MACA—military aid to the civil authorities—request to assist with the construction of community hospitals for additional hospital capacity, supported and partly staffed by the armed forces. It would also like armed forces to help with the roll-out of the vaccine to accelerate that in Essex and to assist with testing in schools. Will he look into the German BioNTech test as an alternative to the lateral flow test, as it is as reliable as the PCR—polymerase chain reaction test—and turns around in one hour?

**Matt Hancock:** I will absolutely look into, and get back to my hon. Friend about, the BioNTech test. Of course, BioNTech is an absolutely fabulous pharmaceutical company, as the whole House knows. What he says about the pressures in Essex is very significant, and it is important. Of course, I will look favourably on any request for military assistance, working closely with my right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary, who has been incredibly supportive, as have the whole armed forces, during this whole year. They have done so much. They are already involved in the roll-out of testing, as my hon. Friend knows, and we draw on the ingenuity, reserve and sheer manpower of the armed forces when we need them. I am very grateful for my hon. Friend's support for the work that we all need to do in Essex to support the NHS there and to try to get the number of cases down.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): May I first thank the Secretary of State, as always, for his good news on the TV this morning? At this time of the year, I think it has given every one of us a skip in our step to know that the vaccine can be delivered.

Can the Secretary of State confirm what discussions have taken place with devolved UK Administrations about the roll-out of the vaccine, the timescale for the completion of that and the approach to education and business production to ensure that a UK-wide lens with regional approaches is possible, while still ensuring that the message remains that we can save lives and the economies if we simply do the right thing?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, absolutely. This is a UK vaccine that is being deployed across the UK fairly, according to clinical need. I spoke to my opposite number in

Northern Ireland this morning, and I can confirm that, across Northern Ireland, the roll-out of the Oxford vaccine will start on Monday 4 January, as with the rest of the United Kingdom of course. We cannot give timelines on when any roll-out will be completed, because it does depend on the delivery schedule and the manufacturing schedule of the vaccine, but the good news is that we have on order enough approved vaccines now to ensure that every adult who wants one can have the vaccine, and that is true right across Northern Ireland and the whole of Great Britain.

**Ruth Edwards** (Rushcliffe) (Con) [V]: This is a bittersweet day for us here in Rushcliffe: we have the great news of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine approval, on which I congratulate my right hon. Friend and everyone involved, but we are confronted with the depressing reality of going into tier 4. Could my right hon. Friend tell me when the new vaccine will start to be administered to my constituents in Rushcliffe, and will the easier handling requirements enable the roll-out to be sped up so that we can start to get back to normal as quickly as possible?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes. My hon. Friend catches my emotions as well, and I am sure the emotions of most of the House, in that we have this extra and new hope of a vaccine, but we also have some very difficult weeks between now and when it is rolled out to protect the most vulnerable. The extension of the time interval needed between the two doses from about three or four weeks to 12 weeks means that we will be able to inoculate more people with the first dose. The news that the first dose is effective in protecting people is very good news, because it means that we can speed up the roll-out and we can all get out of this situation faster than we otherwise would have been able to, and we can save more lives along the way. So that is good news, but I absolutely appreciate my hon. Friend's emotional turmoil because it is also tough, especially across Nottinghamshire and the other places that have had to go into tier 4. The message is really clear, which is that help is on its way—it is here in the form of the vaccine—but we have to get through the next few months with the minimum pressure on the NHS and keeping the virus under control until then.

**Tulip Siddiq** (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab) [V]: Yesterday, the Government announced that 1,500 armed forces personnel are being deployed to help secondary schools and colleges roll out mass testing. I am sure the Secretary of State is aware that there are over 3,000 secondary schools and colleges in England. This means that schools will get the support of less than half a soldier each. Could I ask the Secretary of State what specific tasks those armed forces will be carrying out, and if the Government will commit to giving overstretched headteachers and school staff more resources for the huge operation that they are expected to carry out?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, there is of course support for the testing of schoolchildren, and I am sure that my right hon. Friend the Education Secretary will be happy to set out more details in his statement shortly. The support of the armed forces, especially from those who have experience of the mass testing roll-out so far, will be incredibly helpful, but it is not the only thing that will help the roll-out of mass testing in schools. I am really grateful to the schools that have been involved so far for the

enthusiasm that they have shown and for the extra effort they have put into making this work. I look forward to seeing that happen across much more of the country.

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): The Secretary of State, with his announcement, has effectively locked down most of England. In a previous interview with Andrew Marr, he said we will effectively be staying in that place until the vaccines are rolled out.

On this morning's excellent news about the AstraZeneca vaccine, the chief executive of that company said that it could produce up to 2 million doses a week if the Government's ambitious schedule for rolling it out could match that. Will the Secretary of State match it so we can get everyone over 65, which is nearly 90% of those at risk of death and hospitalisation, done in seven weeks, by the third week of February, and we can then remove these restrictions? Every focus of the Government now has to be on that task. It is the central, overriding task of government. Are the Government up to doing it?

**Matt Hancock:** I am absolutely delighted to be able to agree with every single word that my right hon. Friend says. He and I have not always agreed on every dot and cross of the policy on how to handle this pandemic but, regarding how we get out of it from here, it sounds like we are aligned on needing to roll out this vaccine as fast as possible.

The NHS can deliver at the pace my right hon. Friend mentions if we can get the manufacturing up to that speed. Of course, we are working with AstraZeneca to make that happen. I was on the radio at the same time as the chief executive this morning, and I was delighted to hear his commitments. AstraZeneca has worked so hard to make this happen and, crucially, we have to protect the most vulnerable. The fact that only one dose is needed to give protection is incredibly helpful, and that way we can get rid of these blasted restrictions as soon as possible.

**Mr Kevan Jones** (North Durham) (Lab) [V]: It is very welcome news that the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved, but many of my elderly constituents, such as 94-year-old Joyce Ridley from Tanfield who contacted me yesterday, are still waiting for the vaccine. The Government promised before Christmas that they would prioritise those aged 80-plus to get the vaccine. Can I ask the Secretary of State, as I did when he made his statement before Christmas, when my elderly residents in North Durham will receive the vaccine? I do not want spin or flannel; a straight answer will do. If he does not know the answer, could he at least write to me so that I can reassure those who are worried that they have not been forgotten?

**Matt Hancock:** I will absolutely arrange a meeting between the vaccine roll-out Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), and the right hon. Gentleman to look into that case in particular. Around seven in 10 of the vaccines deployed so far have gone to those over 80. The rest have gone to NHS and care home staff, and to some residents in older persons' care homes who are under the age of 80. We are deploying the Pfizer jab to older people right

[*Matt Hancock*]

now, and we have to do that as fast as possible to make sure that, when there are cases such as the one he raises, we get it sorted.

**Mark Menzies** (Fylde) (Con) [V]: I begin by joining the Secretary of State in thanking those in the NHS for the work they are doing at this incredible time. I also recognise that he has never shirked from taking really tough decisions, and that has no doubt saved lives.

I have many care homes in Fylde, including lots of small care homes, family-run care homes and assisted-living homes. Can the Secretary of State assure me that work is being done to ensure that we can get the vaccine into those small care homes very speedily in the coming weeks?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, absolutely. My hon. Friend is kind in what he says, and I am grateful for his support for the approach that we have taken throughout the pandemic—I really appreciate it. As he says, it is precisely in order to save lives that we have taken the actions that we have. It has been harder to get the Pfizer jab to the smaller care homes because of the minus 70° storage requirements. That is much easier with the AstraZeneca vaccine, and today the NHS has written to GPs who are running the vaccines programme to stress the importance of getting the vaccine to care home residents and staff as soon as possible.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab) [V]: The news of the Oxford vaccine is welcome, but from tomorrow my constituents will face further difficult tier 4 restrictions. We cannot allow a choice between saving lives and saving livelihoods, so will the Government act to close the gaps in support that have left two in five people who rely on self-employment income excluded from the current support schemes?

**Matt Hancock:** The hon. Lady's question is one for my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who has done more than almost any Finance Minister in the world to support people—whether in employment or self-employed—with some of the most generous schemes that have ever been put together. We appreciate that it is not possible to save every job, but we have done the most that we possibly can. I will make sure that someone from the Treasury gets back to the hon. Lady with a clear answer.

**Steve Brine** (Winchester) (Con): The Secretary of State knows that the vaccine roll-out programme in Hampshire is in a very, very strong position. What he will not know is that, by the close of play today, just over 40,000 people in the county will have had their first dose, which is impressive work by Nigel Waterson, who is leading that—sorry, I meant Dr Nigel Watson; Nigel Waterson is a former colleague. The only thing holding us back, I am told, is supplies, so does today's decision mean that the county's endeavour can match its ambition? How many doses exactly will be in the country by the turn of the year?

**Matt Hancock:** I want to thank Nigel Watson and all his colleagues who have delivered this fantastic effort across Hampshire. It is true that the current rate-limiting factor on the roll-out of the vaccine is the supply of the

approved vaccine. Not only do we need to have it manufactured and in the country, but each batch needs to be checked, because it has to be in pristine condition. The worst thing we could do is inject someone with something that we think is vaccine, but does not work because it has not been stored properly. That takes time.

We have 530,000 doses of the AstraZeneca jab ready to go, and they will be deployed from Monday. In addition, we have over 3 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine that are ready, because we needed to hold one dose back. Once we move to the 12-week window for dosage—for the Pfizer vaccine, too—which has been recommended today by the regulator and by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, we will be able to roll those out. That will happen through January, rather than immediately. The end result of all that is that we can significantly accelerate the roll-out of the vaccine programme.

**Vicky Foxcroft** (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab) [V]: I have asked the Secretary of State on several occasions for a timetable for the roll-out of the vaccination programme. Now that, thankfully, the AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved, can he provide some certainty and a timetable that prioritises unpaid carers, given that many of them care for extremely vulnerable people? He has been asked for that several times today, and people really need hope to carry on in these difficult times.

**Matt Hancock:** I totally understand why people want the answer to that question, because of the hope that the vaccine gives us. What I can tell the hon. Lady is that the speed of the roll-out will be determined by the speed of manufacture. While we have 530,000 doses ready to go from Monday, we also need to make sure that we receive more approved doses. We are working closely with AstraZeneca on that, as we have with Pfizer. That is what will determine the speed of the roll-out. The NHS has a plan, and it is ready to go.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con) [V]: I have nothing but praise for the NHS workers who have been rolling out the vaccination programme thus far, but many of my elderly and vulnerable constituents have had to queue for more than an hour after their appointed hour for vaccination. Will my right hon. Friend confirm what those many people who have already had the first dose of the vaccine should do about the second dose? Should they attend at their appointed hour, or should they wait for a new appointment in several weeks' time?

**Matt Hancock:** Those with appointments before 4 January should attend their appointment, and those with appointments from 4 January onwards will have them rescheduled. I understand that that will, obviously, require effort, especially in primary care, and that some people are looking forward to their second dose. However, the overriding health priority and all the clinical advice is that, because we can get protection after the first dose of the vaccine, in order to save lives we need to move to the 12-week window rather than the three-week window that we had with the Pfizer jab.

On people queuing and the need to make sure that that system is as efficient as possible, I have not heard about that happening elsewhere in the country. If I may, I will arrange a meeting between my hon. Friend and the vaccine roll-out Minister, my hon. Friend the Member



for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), to make sure that we can get to the bottom of it and that things are running as smoothly as possible in Harrow.

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): On this glorious and momentous Brexit day, I celebrate with others the news that another vaccine has been approved. Will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking all NHS providers in Southend for their heroic efforts throughout the pandemic? As a result of the increased number of infections, will he and his splendid team see what further help they can give us, particularly with delivering the new vaccine?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, of course. The Brexit deal that the House has just passed with such an enormous majority will help to support UK life sciences. This vaccine also shows what we can achieve as a country. We work with international partners, absolutely, but this shows what we can achieve with British science, British industry and the British Government all working together, and with the NHS, to make this happen. I will absolutely work with my hon. Friend to support the NHS in Southend, which is under pressure. The case rate is very, very high in Southend. I say to everybody in Southend that the single thing that they can do is to limit all social contact unless it is absolutely necessary. It is not a nice thing to have to say and it is not easy to do, but it is absolutely necessary in Southend.

**Martyn Day** (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP) [V]: Covid is a truly horrible disease that poses potentially long-term consequences for even the young and the healthy, so today's vaccine approval is truly welcome news and makes eliminating community transmission of the virus more possible than ever before. As such, is it the UK Government's plan to loosen restrictions only when the most vulnerable have been vaccinated, or when a vaccine has been given to a significant proportion of the population as a whole? If so, what will that proportion be?

**Matt Hancock:** We have not set that out yet, because while our general approach is to vaccinate, as soon as possible, as many as possible of those who are vulnerable to this disease, and then to be able to lift restrictions, as I said in my answer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), the exact timing depends on the roll-out of the vaccine and its impact on bringing down the rate of transmission. The change in the dosage schedule from four weeks to 12 weeks means that we can get the protection to as many people as possible sooner, and in a more accelerated way, than we would previously have been able to do.

**Craig Mackinlay** (South Thanet) (Con): The approval by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is great news at the end of a truly wretched year. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the speed of roll-out should be governed only by the rate of vaccine production? Will he assure me that his Department will cut through all and any pettifogging rules and bureaucracy to ensure that newly retired nurses and doctors, or those on career breaks, can be approved as vaccinators, so that the only limiting factor is vaccination production, not the availability of vaccinators or locations?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, that is our goal. We changed the law to enable more people to inject vaccines and we have a big training programme on now. At the moment, it is the supply that is the rate-limiting step. We want to increase the rate of supply and the NHS's capacity to deliver it at the same time.

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab) [V]: In not needing extreme refrigeration, the new Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is a real breakthrough. Will the Health Secretary tell us how it will be administered to over-80s in care homes or at home who are too immobile to travel and who perhaps have carers, including dementia patients, under the hub-and-spoke model? Locally, ambulances are needed, ICU is full, Ealing Hospital is on a black alert and the fact that doctors are being told to use oxygen sparingly is raising suspicions that it is running out. Hub-and-spoke is good on paper, but it may be time that the Secretary of State revisits it, because it keeps throwing up loads of anomalies.

**Matt Hancock:** The ability of the Oxford vaccine to be easily transported makes a huge difference, because it means we can take it to care homes—we can take the vaccine to the people—rather than the other way round for those who are immobile. Of course, for people who find it easy to travel, it is much more efficient to do it the other way round, so we will have a combination of community roll-out where we take the vaccine to the people and vaccination hubs where people come to get vaccinated. It is all based, as per my previous answer, on optimising the speed of delivery of the vaccine. That is what will both save lives and get us out of the restrictions as fast as possible.

**Robbie Moore** (Keighley) (Con) [V]: We all want to ensure that classrooms remain open so that our children's education continues with as little disruption as possible. We have seen the impact that armed forces personnel have had in Liverpool and Dover in helping to carry out mass testing. Will my right hon. Friend confirm whether plans will be put in place to utilise our armed forces to assist with regular testing in schools, colleges and universities?

**Matt Hancock:** The Education Secretary is about to make a statement to set out more details, but the armed forces have been brilliant in all sorts of parts of the response to the pandemic, one of which is supporting schools to get mass testing under way in an appropriate way, using the experience they have gained by helping us so much over this crisis.

**Dame Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab) [V]: As we have heard, by mid-October more than 600 health and social care staff had already died from covid. Professor Andrew Goddard, the president of the Royal College of Physicians, said today:

“Frontline NHS and care staff must be vaccinated in the next couple of weeks as a priority, as the current pressures on the NHS will be impossible to withstand without a fit and protected workforce”.

With today's further good news on vaccines, will the Secretary of State give our NHS workforce the undertaking that they will be vaccinated in the next couple of weeks?

**Matt Hancock:** We will vaccinate NHS and social care staff as soon as we can. They are, of course, in the priority list. They are in priority group 2, except for social care home staff, who are in priority group 1. The groups are all set out according to clinical need. That is the basis on which we will vaccinate. We will also vaccinate at pace, which often means that spare vaccines that are left at the end of the day in a hospital or primary care setting are used to vaccinate staff who are to hand, where that can be done. That is being done right now. In short, the answer is that we are trying to do this as quickly as we possibly can.

**Chris Grayling** (Epsom and Ewell) (Con) [V]: I congratulate my right hon. Friend and his team on the work they have done to put us in such a relatively strong position to vaccinate in the coming months, and I pay tribute to the team here at the Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust for the work that they are doing at the moment. This area has been in tier 4 for 10 days, and there is a continuing acceleration in the number of infections reported locally. By definition, those are not happening in the business premises that were closed as a result of moving to tiers 3 and 4. What information does the Secretary of State have about where these infections are being transmitted under tier 4?

**Matt Hancock:** The majority of infections happen within the household, from one person in a household to another. That is, perhaps, inevitable, because we are physically closest to those with whom we live. Over the last 10 days, it has not yet been possible to do a full analysis of where we think the transmission is happening within tier 4. The reason for that is simply that the data are not available, and the data are particularly difficult to interpret over the Christmas period. I am very happy to keep talking to my right hon. Friend to try to understand as much as we can about where the transmissions are happening, because that is the route to keeping them under control in the least damaging way possible until we can complete the vaccine roll-out.

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab) [V]: I, too, welcome the vaccine news. I know the Secretary of State is a keen advocate of the use of lateral flow tests in care homes. In one group consisting of three homes in my constituency, it is taking a thousand staff hours a month to deliver just under 4,000 tests. That is not manageable without their neglecting other vital duties. What can the Secretary of State offer by way of help?

**Matt Hancock:** We have put in more support to help care homes with the challenges that covid throws up, in relation to both testing and other things such as PPE that are so necessary. I am very happy to arrange a meeting between the hon. Gentleman and the Minister for Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately), to see what more can be done, and in particular whether the burden that he describes—the time taken to do these vital tests—can be minimised in some way.

**Sir Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con) [V]: I welcome the work that the Secretary of State is doing, and particularly his answer to my hon. Friend the Member for South Thanet (Craig Mackinlay) about the importance of getting enough vaccinators. Even within London

boroughs, I am conscious of a difference in the speed of roll-out, even to very vulnerable people. In my constituency, I have a number of recently retired medical people—doctors, clinicians and nurses—who would willingly volunteer if they were asked. In addition, will the Secretary of State make, or has he made, approaches to private healthcare providers? As I understand it, many of them have capacity and, I am told, would be willing in some cases to make their staff available on a pro bono basis to help the NHS to roll out this vaccine.

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, I am pretty sure that that has been done. If it has not, I will absolutely check and get back to my hon. Friend. If anybody who is clinically qualified comes forward, we are very enthusiastic to hear from them. NHS Professionals, the body that is responsible for extra staff in the NHS, is organising the distribution of those who want to come back into service in order to help to vaccinate, and we look forward to hearing from people.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab) [V]: My constituents will be gutted today. We are making sacrifices and our beautiful town's economy is tanking. Moreover, the tiering system is not working. Areas that previously moved into tier 4 still have rising infection rates, so what evidence is the Secretary of State using that shows that moving South Shields from tier 3 into tier 4 will reduce the spread of the virus?

**Matt Hancock:** It is not easy moving from tier 3 to tier 4—I understand that—but the rates in South Shields are going up sharply. With the support of the council and, indeed, all the councils across the north-east, we have taken this action. The evidence base is that in those areas that have been in tier 4 the longest, we are starting to see a reduction in the rate of increase and in some places a fall, particularly in some parts of Kent, but there is still an awful lot more to do. This new variant, which we can now sadly see in the north-east of England—much in the way that it started in the south-east—spreads so much more easily. It is much harder to keep control of. The job of suppressing the virus has got harder with the new variant at the same time as the approval of the vaccines has made the job of getting out of this easier. That is the challenge we face.

**Paul Bristow** (Peterborough) (Con): Yesterday, I went to visit the vaccination hub at Peterborough City Hospital. After everything we have been through, and after seeing hope behind the smiles of those waiting for the jab, I must confess to feeling almost emotional during my visit. I place on record my thanks to everyone working at the hub and within the wider Peterborough NHS. With the superb news today of the approval of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, is now the time to prioritise the vaccination of NHS staff to prevent staff shortages and ease NHS winter pressures?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes. My hon. Friend speaks so powerfully for Peterborough. I am glad that the vaccination centre is working well there. This new vaccine does mean that we can accelerate the roll-out of the vaccine to NHS staff, and that is good news in Peterborough and across the country.

**Ms Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab) [V]: The Secretary of State has today announced 23 more areas that will move into tier 4. Three quarters of the country is now in tier 4. How long before he looks at this again and can make other announcements? What further escalation will he be considering if even tier 4 does not bring down these soaring infection rates?

**Matt Hancock:** For areas in tier 4 where we still need to get the infection rate down, the most important thing we can all do is take responsibility to restrict the spread of infection, because this new variant spreads so easily from person to person. Everybody has to behave. If everybody behaves like they might have the virus and therefore restricts their social contact, that is the best way we can get these rates down. It does take all of us to do this; it is not just about the rules that are set out from this Dispatch Box and voted on by this House.

I know that people in Wallasey and across Liverpool have done so much and got the rates right down under control, but unfortunately they have started to rise again, and with the new variant, it has been necessary to put Liverpool into tier 3. I just hope, like the rest of the country, that we can get out of this after the next few difficult weeks.

**Dame Cheryl Gillan** (Chesham and Amersham) (Con) [V]: Buckinghamshire health services are under severe pressure with escalating rates of covid and hospital admissions. On behalf of all my colleagues in Buckinghamshire, may I give an enormous public thank you to our healthcare staff, who are working round the clock in a growing emergency, as well as providing testing and vaccinations at multiple sites in the county? Despite those pressures, the trust is establishing a centre to help people with the effects of long covid, which are now causing increased concern. It will be at Stoke Mandeville. What extra resources can the Secretary of State make available to support our valiant health workers and, in particular, to help those now suffering from the effects of long covid, which are very serious in some cases?

**Matt Hancock:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely spot on. The issue of long covid is very serious, and we have put more support into the NHS and into research to try to understand it better. I know about it very much myself, and I understand the impacts that it can have, which can be debilitating on people's lives. I am delighted that there is a long covid centre at Stoke Mandeville. It is such an excellent hospital, and I am not surprised that it is doing all the cutting-edge work that is needed, but the single most important thing we can do to support those who have long covid is to understand the causes better and therefore understand what we can do to help people get their lives back to normal.

**Feryal Clark** (Enfield North) (Lab) [V]: The Secretary of State has said in many statements over the past 10 months that we have the virus under control. Only two weeks ago, he said that we could not let cases rise again, yet that is exactly what is happening on his watch. Yesterday, the UK reported a further 53,135 cases of coronavirus, which is the highest daily total since the pandemic began. With many hospitals in London and the south-east at breaking point, it is clear that the Government have lost control of the virus. With schools set to go back in a week's time, what public health strategy does he have in place to keep our children, their families and teachers safe?

**Matt Hancock:** The new variant of this virus makes it very difficult to control, which is why it is so important that everybody follows those public health messages. That is the challenge we are all dealing with, together, and we just have to remember that we are all on the same side in that great battle. Help is on its way, in the testing for schools, in the measures that my right hon. Friend the Education Secretary is shortly to announce and in the vaccine, which will help to protect those who are most vulnerable. Once we have got through all the clinical prioritisation, we can then move on, in general, to the under-50s. Their risk of death from covid is, thankfully, low but it is highly likely that they will still want to have a vaccine to protect themselves from this disease.

**Adam Afriyie** (Windsor) (Con): First, I wish to commend the Secretary of State for making it clear that the vaccine will be available to all over-65s—by the end of February, we hope—as that is really important. This should be a joyous day. We have been given the gift of a free trade agreement with the EU by our Prime Minister and the gift of a new vaccine—we also have a new vaccines Minister—by our scientists and world-leading Government objectives. But the gift people really want this Christmas is to know that their jobs, livelihoods and civil liberties will be given back to them as soon as possible, so will the Secretary of State make the position clear today by telling us at what point on the priority list of vaccinations he will allow restrictions to be lifted?

**Matt Hancock:** We have to remember that the vaccine is a great symbol of hope, but it is a means to an end, and the end is the lifting of restrictions and the restoration of our liberties and the freedom for us to act as we please. That is the goal of this programme: to make people safe so that we can get life back to normal and, of course, protect the NHS. On the timing, it is absolutely right, as I said in my response to my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), that the speed of roll-out can be accelerated because of the decisions announced this morning. The precise timing of that has to be determined by the manufacture, because although we can forecast that, we cannot know exactly how much will be delivered. On the question of how far down the priority list we need to go before people are safe, we will observe that as we observe the reduction—I hope—in transmission, as well as the protection of individuals. So we will keep this under review, but the good news is that I am highly confident that by the spring we will be through this. It was not possible before the approval of this vaccine to say that.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab) [V]: What information has the Secretary of State received from the experts in the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies about the roles that schools played in the spread of infection in places such as south-east London? Does this suggest that we should have a roll-out of a mass vaccination programme for schools?

**Matt Hancock:** We will vaccinate according to clinical need, because that is the best way both to protect lives and to be able to lift the restrictions.

**Daisy Cooper** (St Albans) (LD) [V]: Even once vaccinated, some older and clinically vulnerable people will have no one to look after them if their unpaid carers get ill with coronavirus. Vaccinating unpaid carers would be a clear

[Daisy Cooper]

way of reducing pressure on the NHS and social care, with the double benefit of protecting carers and providing the care that the NHS and social care system would then not need to provide. So will the Secretary of State give an unequivocal commitment that unpaid carers will be included in priority categories for vaccination?

**Matt Hancock:** As I have said, we will absolutely vaccinate according to clinical need. Once we are through those clinical need cohorts, there is a very important call on the next set of prioritisations, which we have not yet set out, and both teachers and unpaid carers have a good case to make.

**Aaron Bell** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con) [V]: As the Health Secretary has said, today is clearly a day of mixed emotions. I hugely welcome the news about the Oxford vaccine and pay tribute to Cobra Biologics in my constituency, which has been manufacturing it and has been involved since the outset. However, moving Staffordshire to tier 4 is very tough on the people of Newcastle. We have worked hard to get our rate down and it is currently stable and, indeed, falling slightly. I understand the risk of the new variant, but will he confirm that there is a way out of tier 4 and that he will take into account vaccination rates and the effect on the NHS, and not look purely at case numbers once we have the vaccination programme rolled out?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, I absolutely will. We already look at the impact on the NHS, of course, but that will become more important as more and more people are vaccinated and, we hope, the correlation between cases and future hospitalisations, which is currently stable, starts to go down and there are fewer hospitalisations for every individual case. Obviously we should take that into account.

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Ind) [V]: As everyone knows, the vaccine is important and necessary, but we also know that the effects of corona have fallen disproportionately on the most vulnerable in our society. The World Health Organisation asked for special consideration to be given to those with disabilities, yet a wholly disproportionate number of the deaths that have occurred have been people with disabilities. Those with learning disabilities have often lost out on the support they would normally receive, and we have 1.5 million children facing mental health problems, if not crises, at the present time. Can the Secretary of State assure us that work will be done to support those with disabilities and, in particular, that work will be done and greater support given to young people and children who are suffering often quite profound mental health difficulties as a result of the stress of isolation that they have suffered over the past nine months?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, of course. This has been looked into in great detail, and the clinical prioritisation includes those who are under 50 but are clinically vulnerable to the effects of covid-19. They come into the prioritisation in categories 4 and 6 alongside the over-70s and over-60s, taking into account precisely the sort of considerations that the right hon. Gentleman sets out.

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Given that the main effort is the protection of the NHS, surely, the moment we start to get a reduction in hospital admissions, we can start lifting the restrictions.

**Matt Hancock:** Well, yes—in principle. The point is to protect the NHS and to stop people dying from the disease. While at the moment cases are a very clear proxy for future hospitalisations and future deaths, as the vaccine is rolled out we would hope that for every number of cases we would have fewer hospitalisations and fewer deaths. It is that protection from hospitalisations and deaths that the vaccine gives us, which is why it is the route out of the crisis.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I pay tribute to Homerton University Hospital in the heart of my constituency, where the staff are working flat out now with the rising number of cases, and to the Royal London Hospital in a neighbouring constituency, which of course had a queue of ambulances with covid patients waiting to be treated. Given the pressure on the NHS, which I know the Secretary of State also feels very strongly about, what is he doing to ensure that the nurses and other staff we need are available? Recent press reports suggest that of the 71,000 available nurses, only just over 1,000 had been deployed. Is he working with the Nursing and Midwifery Council to track down those with the right registration and skills and to get them into the right places?

**Matt Hancock:** Yes, it is incredibly important that we support the NHS with the workforce that it needs—both the permanent workforce, where we have increased the number of nurses by over 13,000 in the past 12 months, and a temporary workforce for the difficult few weeks that we have ahead of us in the NHS. I am working with the NHS and others on exactly the question that the hon. Lady rightly raises, and I join her in praising the team at the Homerton, who are doing a great job.

**Suzanne Webb** (Stourbridge) (Con) [V]: There is no doubt that the news of the vaccine and the Brexit deal are a grand finale to what has been a difficult year, albeit one with mixed emotions, as constituencies such as mine go into tier 4. As a fitting way to end this statement, will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking everybody working in the NHS and social care, not just across my constituency but in all constituencies, for the work they have done this year, and especially those who worked tirelessly over Christmas to help to keep the most vulnerable safe? Will he also extend an extra-special thank you to all those caring for children with disabilities and special needs, such as Lifted Spirits, who are a bunch of mums and dads in my constituency? As I am sure he will agree, this has been a particularly challenging year too for those who are carers.

**Matt Hancock:** In what I hope is my last statement of the year, and most likely my last answer of the year, I thank my hon. Friend for her question, and not just for praising those at Lifted Spirits and others who are doing so much to care for others, but for giving me the opportunity and the prompting to thank NHS staff who during 2020 have done more than in almost certainly any other year since its formation, and the social care staff of this country, who have gone out of their way to

care for others and those who are most vulnerable, not just to covid but to other health problems. There is no limit to my gratitude to those who are working so hard; they really put their shoulders to the wheel. The attitude of the NHS—that when there is a crisis, we lean in, we come together and we fix it—inspires me, and I know it inspires so many other people.

**Mr Speaker:** In order to allow the safe exit of hon. Members participating in this item of business and the safe arrival of those participating in the next, I am suspending the House for three minutes.

4.11 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

## Education: Return in January

4.13 pm

**The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson):**

With permission, I would like to make a statement regarding our plans for bringing children back to school this academic term.

Dealing with this pandemic has always been an exercise in managing risk. Throughout, we have been adamant that the education of children is an absolute priority and that keeping schools open is uppermost in all our plans.

The magnificent efforts of all the leaders, teachers and staff in all our schools and colleges have ensured that settings are as safe and covid secure as possible, but we must always act swiftly when circumstances change. The evidence about the new covid variant and rising infection rates has required some immediate adjustment to our plans for the new term. This is, of course, a rapidly shifting situation, but some things remain constant. We continue to act to preserve lives and safeguard the national health service, and we continue to protect education by putting children first. Above all, our response is proportionate to the risk at hand and makes every use of the contingency framework that we put in place earlier this year.

The latest study we have from Public Health England is that covid infections among children are triggered by changes in the community rate. The study also says that the wider impact of school closures on children's development would be significant. I am quite clear that we must continue to do all we can to keep children in school. Taking all those factors into account means that we have had to make a number of changes for the new term in order to help break chains of transmission and to assist with keeping all our children and education settings as safe as we can. The fact that we have managed to do that so successfully throughout the entire pandemic is due to the incredible dedication of all our teachers, leaders and support staff, and I know that the House will join me once more in thanking them for everything that they continue to do to keep children learning as safely as possible.

Accordingly, we will be opening the majority of primary schools as planned on Monday 4 January. We know how vital it is for our younger children to be in school for their education, wellbeing and wider development. In a small number of areas where the infection rates are highest, we will implement our existing contingency framework such that only vulnerable children and children of critical workers will attend face-to-face. We will publish that list of areas today on the gov.uk website.

I would like to emphasise that this is being used only as a last resort. This is not all tier 4 areas, and the overwhelming majority of primary schools will open as planned on Monday. The areas will also be reviewed regularly, so that schools can reopen at the very earliest moment. Ongoing testing for primary school staff will follow later in January and we will be working to establish an ambitious testing programme, helping to break chains of transmission and reducing the need for self-isolation where students and staff test negative for the virus.

We have already announced our intention for a staggered return to education this term for secondary age pupils and those in colleges. Because the covid infection rate is particularly high among this age group, we will allow more time so that every school and college is able to

[Gavin Williamson]

fully roll out testing for all its pupils and staff. I would like to thank school leaders and staff for all their ongoing work in preparing that. This kind of mass testing will not just help to protect children and young people; it will benefit everyone in the community. It will break the chains of transmission that are making infection rates shoot up. That, in turn, will make it safer for more children to physically return to school.

All pupils in exam years are to return during the week beginning 11 January, with all secondary school and college students returning full time on 18 January. During the first week of term after 4 January, secondary schools and colleges will prepare to test as many staff and students as possible, and will be open only to vulnerable children and the children of key workers.

The 1,500 military personnel committed to supporting schools and colleges will remain on task, providing virtual training and advice on establishing the testing process, with teams on stand-by to provide in-person support if schools require it. Testing will then begin in earnest the following week, with those who are in exam years at the head of the queue. This is in preparation for the full return of all pupils in all year groups on 18 January in most areas. To allow this focus on the establishment of testing throughout the first week of term, exam year groups will continue to have lessons remotely, in line with what they would receive in class, and only vulnerable children and the children of critical workers will have face-to-face teaching.

As with primary schools, we will apply our existing contingency framework for education in areas of the country with very high rates of covid infection or transmission of the virus. This will require secondary schools and colleges to offer face-to-face education only to those in exam years, vulnerable children and the children of critical workers, with remote education for all other students if they are in one of the contingency framework areas. We are also asking universities to reduce the number of students who return to campus at the start of January, prioritising students who require practical learning to gain their professional qualifications. All university students should be offered two rapid tests on return to reduce the chance of covid being spread.

To support remote education and online learning during this period, the Government expect to deliver more than 50,000 devices to schools throughout the country on 4 January alone, and more than 100,000 altogether during the first week of term. That is in addition to the 560,000 devices that have already been delivered, as we continue to aim for a target of distributing more than 1 million devices for the children who need them most. The programme is now being extended to include students aged 16 to 19 in colleges and schools.

So often, we have had to close things down to try to beat this awful disease, but with schools our best line of attack is to keep them open, using the mass-testing tools that we now have available to ensure that children are able to continue to gain the benefit of a world-class education. As we continue to hear more encouraging news about the vaccine roll-out, I am more determined than ever that children will not have to pay the price for beating covid. I have spoken many times of my determination that we cannot let covid damage the life chances of an entire year of children and students. With these plans,

which allow for rapid testing and the controlled return of schools, I am confident that we can minimise the latest health risks posed by the virus. I commend this statement to the House.

4.23 pm

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab) [V]: Before I begin, I put on record my thanks, and the thanks of the whole Labour party, to every leader, teacher and lecturer and the support staff, early years professionals and social workers who have moved mountains to keep children and young people safe and educated in the face of enormous odds. They deserve not just the thanks of this House but genuine support, and I hope that when he stands to speak again the Secretary of State will give more information about that support.

I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement, but the truth is that we should not be in this position. Only days before many schools should have been opening again to all pupils, the Secretary of State has announced that many will not be returning as planned. This delay and disruption to children's education is a direct result of the Government's failure: they have lost control of the virus and now they are losing control of children's education. The cost to pupils, the pressure on staff and the challenges for families caused by school closures are huge, but we know that action must be taken to control the virus. Is the Secretary of State confident that the measures he has announced today will control the virus? Will he publish the advice on this issue from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies?

There is consensus across the House that the best place for children is in school, but the Government have failed to give schools the support they need to make that happen. For months, Labour has been calling for mass testing in schools. The Secretary of State announced it just before schools broke up for Christmas, creating huge additional work for overstretched school staff, but just two weeks later it is clear that his plan has failed and that many schools will not open as planned next week. Can he tell us how many schools now have testing infrastructure in place and how many will have it next week and the week after? Can he guarantee that every school will have the testing it needs when it is due to open again?

The Secretary of State's announcement that some primary and secondary schools will not reopen to pupils in January will be a cause of huge concern to parents. Can he tell us how many primary and secondary schools will not open and how many pupils will be affected? Will students not in exam classes receive remote teaching while their school is closed? I am hugely concerned that even with school open to them, the most vulnerable children may simply not attend. Can the Secretary of State tell us how he plans to keep them safely in school in the weeks ahead?

I am glad that the Secretary of State announced an expansion of remote learning, but I remain concerned that it is not sufficient to support all pupils. Can he guarantee that every pupil will have the device and the connectivity that they need to learn, and will he ensure that that is available for every child whose school is not open?

Will there be any support for parents with children who cannot attend school? Can the Secretary of State confirm that parents can be furloughed if they have

childcare commitments? Can that happen on a flexible basis that allows parents, particularly mothers, to balance work with caring for their children?

Many people who are clinically extremely vulnerable will be concerned about a return to school, whether they are a vulnerable parent of a child or a vulnerable member of staff. What reassurance and support can the Secretary of State give them?

It has been reported in recent days that teachers will be prioritised for vaccination, but an announcement today suggested that there would not be prioritisation based on occupation. I understand the clinical priorities for the first phase of the vaccination programme, but does the Secretary of State believe that not only teachers but all school staff, including in special schools, should be prioritised for vaccination thereafter in order to protect them and safeguard children's education?

Turning to exams, the Government's failure to get a grip on the virus has caused huge disruption to pupils' education—disruption that will continue into the new year. Will the Secretary of State be making any changes to his plans to reflect that? Labour has said time and again that there needs to be a credible plan B in the event of disruption continuing that means exams cannot take place fairly. This is now urgent. Over 100,000 young people will be taking exams in the next few weeks for BTECs and other vocational qualifications. Can the Secretary of State tell us what he is doing to make those exams fair?

The Secretary of State told us weeks ago about the expert group on learning loss, but at the time he could not tell us who was on it, when it would sit or when it would report. Can he answer those questions today?

I welcome the decision to delay the return of students to university in January, which is sadly necessary for public health. Can the Secretary of State confirm that he has discussed this with unions and university and student representatives?

We should never have been in the position we are in today. If the Government had acted more quickly, followed the science and given schools the support that they needed throughout this pandemic, we would not be facing a new year with this new wave of infections and huge disruption to the lives of pupils, their families and staff across our education system. The Government have lost control of the virus, and it is children and young people across the country who are paying the price.

**Gavin Williamson:** I thank the hon. Lady for echoing my words and my thanks to all teachers, leaders and all those who work in our schools, colleges and childcare settings for the wonderful work that they do.

The hon. Lady talks about what extra support we are giving those schools in rolling out the largest mass testing exercise that this country has seen to ensure that children are able to get back into school and have the benefits of being in school. We are supporting them not just by making sure that they have the equipment that is due to be delivered to all secondary school settings on 4 January, but with extra finance—a package of £78 million—in order to help them get this mass testing programme set up, established and there to test all students and all staff as they return to secondary school. This is about taking the opportunity to beat back this virus, have a

real understanding of where the infection is within the community, and ensure that schools are even safer than they have already been.

The hon. Lady asks about the SAGE advice. As she knows full well, SAGE publishes its advice, and it will of course do so soon. The contingency framework was published and has been a public document for a number of months, so I am sure she will have had the opportunity to look at it. It makes clear that for schools that have been placed in part of a contingency framework, there must be the continued delivery of remote education. To be clear: children who are in exam group years will be returning to secondary school on 11 January, even if they are in a contingency framework area.

The hon. Lady rightly highlights the issue of vulnerable children. Those in our school system, as well as our local authorities and social workers, can be proud of the amazing work that they have been doing with those children who are most vulnerable in society. We must ensure that we do everything to get them attending school, so that they have the protection of school around them. Those efforts, working with local authorities, the police and schools, will continue. Finally, as the hon. Lady says, many students are about to take examinations in technical and vocational qualifications in early January, and those assessments will continue, as planned, in the educational establishments that are delivering them.

**Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con) [V]:** I believe that my right hon. Friend wants to keep schools open and teachers and children safe, but I have real worries about the effect of school closures particularly hurting vulnerable children, and putting enormous pressures on parents. What risk assessments have the Government made regarding the impact of school closures for millions of pupils on educational inequality, wellbeing and mental health, especially when the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health has stated that eating disorders among young people have gone up fourfold, partly because of school closures and social isolation? Will the Department introduce a tracker on individual pupils, at least those in exam years, working with schools and local authorities, to ensure that those at home get the learning they need? Will he ensure that teachers and support staff get priority for vaccinations, so that we can get our schools open again soon? Finally, will he thank teachers and support staff in my constituency of Harlow, who are doing all they can to keep children learning?

**Gavin Williamson:** I join my right hon. Friend in thanking the teachers and support staff who have done so much in his constituency of Harlow to keep children learning. The importance of school is why we continue to proceed with opening primary schools on 4 January. The importance of education is why we are rolling out the mass testing regime, to ensure that secondary school students in the majority of the country will be able to return to school. We know how important this is. Children need to be in school, which is why we will always do everything we can to resist knee-jerk reactions to close schools or colleges. We recognise how important it is for children's life chances for them to be in school.

My right hon. Friend raises the important issue of the impact of lost learning, on which we commissioned the Education Policy Institute and Renaissance Learning to do a close study on lost learning. We will be looking

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closely at the impact of that, especially on exam year cohorts, as well as on the wider school population, to ensure that that work is there to inform us in any future policy decisions.

**Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP) [V]: I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement. I join others in recognising the work our teachers and school staff are carrying out in very challenging circumstances, and I hope they are managing to get some well-deserved rest over the Christmas break.

This new covid strain means that it is difficult to make concrete decisions and commitments for the future, but the problem is that the Secretary of State is once again making last-minute decisions that leave schools with absolutely no time to plan. Will he therefore outline how his actions align with the advice received from SAGE?

Ongoing testing for school staff is welcome, but anyone who has spent any time in primary or secondary schools will know that these are busy, often tightly packed environments. According to Professor Neil Ferguson, this new strain hints at a higher propensity to infect children. We are therefore asking teachers, some with underlying health conditions, to work in a potentially risky environment. NHS and frontline care staff must of course be prioritised for the vaccine, but will the Secretary of State ensure that, following those groups, teachers are a priority for getting the vaccine?

Let me finish by saying that there is a massive difference between posting activities online and actual live online teaching and learning, with realtime interactions between a teacher and their class. What steps is the Secretary of State taking to ensure that schools have the capacity and bandwidth to deliver proper online learning? Will he accept that he may need to amend his current strategy if the need arises?

**Gavin Williamson:** I thank the hon. Lady for her comments and for recognising that we are in a rapidly changing situation. We sometimes have to adapt our responses as a result of the changing coronavirus, and I know that the Scottish Government have faced similar challenges to the UK Government.

We recognise that this new strain means that we have to take a different approach. That is why we are saying that the mass testing regime we are rolling out in our secondary schools has to move from being optional and an offer to schools to being something we require schools to do. Schools are a unique environment, and it is important that we put as many protections in place as we can.

Like the hon. Lady, I want to see all teachers right up there in the best possible position to be vaccinated, so that they can carry on the incredibly important work of keeping children in education. I am incredibly pleased that we are in a position to ensure that primary schools are opening on 4 January and that secondary schools will be welcoming back children in the exam cohorts on 11 January and all other pupils on 18 January.

**James Cartlidge** (South Suffolk) (Con) [V]: We have obviously had fantastic news today about the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. May I therefore join the previous two speakers, including my right hon. Friend the Member

for Harlow (Robert Halfon), the Chair of the Education Committee, and urge my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to do what he can within current policy to ensure that teachers are priorities? Does he not agree that were we to vaccinate as many teachers as possible as soon as possible, that would not only make schools safer and boost teacher morale but reduce the pressure to close schools in the first place?

**Gavin Williamson:** I often agree with my hon. Friend, and I do not disagree with him on this occasion. Obviously, we have to prioritise decisions on vaccinations, taking into account a whole raft of areas. The key thing is prioritising those people who are most clinically vulnerable, but as we get through that stage of clinical need, I certainly hope that we can look at how we can vaccinate those who are in the teaching profession and who support education.

**Daisy Cooper** (St Albans) (LD) [V]: We are in a race against time to stop a new catastrophe of educational inequality. Some children have lost more than six months of learning and some schools still cannot access the covid workforce budget because of absurd criteria. It is shocking that only half of digital devices have been delivered and that mass testing is being rolled out only four months after school has returned. When will the Secretary of State give schools the rota powers, the funding, the devices and the trust that they need and deserve to stay open safely?

**Gavin Williamson:** We had announced the additional £78 million of funding just before the Christmas period to assist in the roll-out of a mass testing regime in all secondary schools. We announced the distribution of an extra half a million devices on top of the half a million that had already been distributed just the other week. If the hon. Lady had listened to my statement, she would have heard that we are planning to distribute 50,000 on 4 January and another 100,000 over the following week. I am sure that, at some point, she will look at my statement in detail and pay attention to it.

**Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con) [V]: My children are in the next room paying rather more attention than is usual to the House's proceedings this afternoon. What steps is my right hon. Friend taking to help schools and colleges to take up the offer that the Government have made to provide rapid testing, which will be so vital in helping to keep children, teachers and, indeed, parents safe?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. This is not just about helping schools, or just about helping pupils and that workforce within the schools, but about helping the families with school-age children. It is about helping the whole community to push back the tide of this virus, because we will be testing more people than ever before. We will be testing literally millions of children every single week. Yes, we recognise that schools need that extra support. That is why we created the £78 million fund in order to be able to support them. The other week, we shared with schools information on how much money they will be eligible to get, but we do understand that there will be some schools that have unique problems or challenges in rolling out this mass testing. I am incredibly grateful both to Her Majesty's armed forces for making themselves available and to Ofsted for supporting schools that are



facing challenges in rolling out the mass testing programme to ensure that it is implemented in all secondary schools and all colleges, because this will benefit everyone in school, everyone in college and everyone in the community.

**Matt Western** (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab) [V]: Like so many frontline workers, teaching staff are deeply committed to their profession, but they have also been among the most vulnerable, particularly given that 12 to 17-year-olds have been a major vector for transmission. I spoke with headteachers just before Christmas and they were left angered by the Government's late announcement to introduce testing without any support and with little direction. Today we hear that there will be a delay to schools reopening. May I ask the Secretary of State just two questions? As I asked him back in November, will he prioritise frontline line teaching staff for vaccinations given the political will to keep schools and colleges open as much as possible? Secondly, given that so many students will be taking BTECs and other technical and vocational exams in the next few weeks, what support will the Government be providing to those students and the staff assisting them?

**Gavin Williamson:** The hon. Gentleman is right to highlight the issue of those children taking BTEC qualifications, and we have made the decision about the importance of those youngsters being able to continue to take those qualifications over the coming weeks. On vaccination, he has picked up on a thread raised by previous questioners. Obviously, as Education Secretary, it is not within my remit to determine who will be receiving vaccinations. However, when we have worked through the groups that are most vulnerable to covid, I certainly hope that those working in our education settings are looked at in the most positive way to ensure that they are high up on the list of those receiving vaccinations.

**Aaron Bell** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con) [V]: May I join the Education Secretary in paying tribute to all those working in schools at this difficult time? I welcome his statement and the announcement that all secondary school and college students will receive two rapid tests at the start of the new term to identify asymptomatic cases. However—I know this as a father myself—it is the self-isolation that has caused such disruption for teachers, students and pupils, so will he confirm that his intention is to use rapid testing for staff and students who have come into contact with confirmed cases to help to reduce the need for self-isolation? Will that testing be available daily, if necessary?

**Gavin Williamson:** I can absolutely confirm to my hon. Friend that testing will be available both to students and to staff members in secondary school settings. Importantly, that means that we will be in a position to reduce the number of children and teachers who are having to self-isolate, and that it will be easier for education settings to work fully and as normally as possible. Most importantly, however, students will be in a position to maximise the amount of time they spend studying.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab) [V]: New College Pontefract is currently having to organise twice-weekly mass testing for 2,500 sixth-formers, but it has had no allocation of funding and no contact from the military. The college is having to find additional staff, and it has no space in which to do the tests.

Why have the Government not given schools and colleges a clear allocation of funding that will cover additional staff, Disclosure and Barring Service checks, and the other practicalities of delivering mass testing? They all want to do it, but the support from Ministers and the Department for Education is always too late or too chaotic. Frankly, they are not getting the support they need to keep children safely in education.

**Gavin Williamson:** I will certainly ensure that advice on where schools can get that information is passed on to the right hon. Lady. It was published and made available to colleges and schools before Christmas, but I will ensure that my private office forwards it on. Information is readily available, and should hopefully be of assistance to her in her duties as a constituency Member of Parliament.

**Felicity Buchan** (Kensington) (Con): I pay tribute to all teachers in Kensington and Chelsea, who have been heroic in their efforts to keep schools open, even with the very high case rates in London. Will my right hon. Friend clarify whether London will be part of the contingency framework? He mentioned a two-week delay, so can he clarify whether schools will definitely reopen after two weeks or if there will be a review at that point?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend is right to ask that question, and there will be a review after the two-week period. The hope and desire is that areas in the contingency framework will be moving out of it, but we will obviously be guided by the available public health and scientific advice. It is important that such decisions are made not on a regional basis, but on a local basis, because I want the maximum number of children in school at every stage. I do not want sweeping decisions; we should minimise the disruption to children, schools and parents as much as possible.

**Mr Kevan Jones** (North Durham) (Lab) [V]: It was disappointing that the Secretary of State did not make a statement to the House before the Christmas recess, and that mixed messages from his Department throughout Christmas have led to much anxiety among parents, teachers and students. I doubt whether his statement today will reassure many of them. On testing, what will be the role of local directors of public health? Who will support local schools and colleges, because 1,500 Army personnel will not be enough to fill that role? More important, what will happen to the data collected from that testing? Without a comprehensive locally based plan, he is in danger of making all the same mistakes that we have seen with the national test and trace system. Can the Government not wake up to the fact that local plans need to be put in place, rather than plans being dictated nationally? That will not work.

**Gavin Williamson:** The right hon. Gentleman raises an important point about how vital it is to work with local directors of public health and local authorities. We believe that this will be of enormous assistance to those local authorities in identifying where more covid cases are. It will be an opportunity to deliver more rapid testing than has been delivered so far—not just in County Durham, but across the country. The right hon. Gentleman might have heard that extra support is being provided to schools and colleges so that they can set up this testing. In some areas where schools and colleges

[Gavin Williamson]

have particular problems, we will look at supporting them with a team to help to get the mass testing up and established. Of course, the data being collected is vital. When youngsters test positive in a lateral flow test, that data will be fed immediately into the test and trace system, which is shared with local authorities.

**Caroline Nokes** (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con) [V]: Teachers, parents and pupils all need certainty. They need to be able to plan the return to school and prepare for exams if they are going to happen, and parents need to know whether they will need additional childcare. I commend my right hon. Friend for his ability to make changes when required, but will he please assure my constituents that this is a plan that will stick and that it will give them all the certainty that they are desperately calling out for?

**Gavin Williamson:** I certainly hope that it does give people confidence to know that primary schools in my right hon. Friend's constituency of Romsey will be opening on Monday, that exam year groups will be returning to secondary school and colleges on 11 January, and that all year groups will be returning shortly after that.

**Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab) [V]: The Secretary of State has just said that we can be confident about what is happening next week but, frankly, as a parent and as a legislator, I have no confidence in what he has just said. I am none the wiser after his statement, having heard privately from health experts this afternoon. Parents have one question for the Secretary of State: how will we know, when we send our kids back to school this week or the week after, that it is safe to do so?

**Gavin Williamson:** What we have seen consistently since the start of June is that millions of children have safely returned to school thanks to the amazing efforts of so many teaching and support staff to create safe and secure environments for children to learn in and others to work in. We recognise that this new strain means we have to go that bit further—so much further. That is why we are introducing this mass testing scheme, the largest that this country has ever seen, to give parents and those who work in secondary schools extra confidence and belief that it is safe for those children to return, to help all who are engaged in this battle against covid to root out the disease, and ensure that those who are infected by it know that they are and can self-isolate.

**Suzanne Webb** (Stourbridge) (Con) [V]: I stand steadfast behind the Government in their determination to protect young people's education, and Ministers are right to say that it is a national priority. There is a theme to my questions today, and rightly so, as we end what has been a difficult and challenging year for those working on the frontline. Will my right hon. Friend join me in thanking all those who work in schools in my constituency—from teaching assistants to teachers, heads of department, heads of schools, those who transport children to school, those who keep schools clean and safe and those in schools who have fed and watered our children—who often go above and beyond and are doing their utmost to protect our children's education and keep our schools open? We owe them a debt of gratitude.

**Gavin Williamson:** I certainly join my hon. Friend and constituency neighbour in thanking all those working in education settings in Derbyshire and right across the country. Many children in my constituency travel into Stourbridge to benefit from some of the brilliant schools in her constituency. Teachers and support staff have done an amazing job, and it is true to say that we are asking even more of them, but we are asking them to do more because we understand how vital it is to do everything possible to keep schools open and ensure that children continue to benefit from the education that we want every child to get.

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): We all know that children benefit from being in school, and we have seen the gap between those from the richest and the poorest households widen during covid. The Secretary of State's permanent secretary set great store by the tutoring programme when she appeared before the Public Accounts Committee nearly two weeks ago. Could the right hon. Gentleman give us an update on that, as well as on the steering group in his Department that is looking seriously at this issue and at the impact on more vulnerable pupils? Can he be precise about what he is doing to ensure that that gap, which had been narrowing massively in some of the excellent schools in my constituency, will not stay wide and get wider still as we come out on the other side of the pandemic?

**Gavin Williamson:** The hon. Lady is right to talk passionately about the brilliant schools in her constituency. We have seen a transformation in schools in London as a result of reforms that were introduced by this Government and changes that were made in the latter part of the last Labour Government. We have seen education as an incredibly powerful tool in closing the attainment gap and the disadvantage gap, and London has been one of the real powers in driving that forward. The roll-out of the national tutoring programme is going as planned and we are very pleased with it. I am sure she will have noticed that, as part of the spending review, we want to see this as something that happens not just for one year, but over multiple years, because we believe that that is where the real benefit will be had.

I must confess—I am a little bit old-fashioned about this—that I will constantly do everything I can, whether it is in the hon. Lady's constituency or mine, and take quite extraordinary measures, to keep schools open wherever it is possible to do so. If they do have to close, I will ensure that it is for the minimum possible time, because we see children suffering as a result of isolation. Both my children have had to self-isolate as a result of being in contact with other children with covid. Whether it is the national tutoring programme, the covid catch-up fund or the continued reforms that have been made to education, which have driven up standards so much in her constituency and mine, we must not lose sight of the fact that these reforms have to carry on to continue to drive standards and reduce the attainment gap.

**Ruth Edwards** (Rushcliffe) (Con) [V]: I have been contacted by school leaders who have highlighted their need to get clarity over future changes to school opening arrangements as quickly as possible. Will my right hon. Friend consider a suggestion from one deputy head in my constituency: publish the real-time data that influences these decisions via an online dashboard similar to the one published by the Department of Health and Social

Care so that schools have as much time as possible to plan? Will he meet me and my constituent to discuss that in more detail?

**Gavin Williamson:** We are certainly always more than happy to look at different ways of being able to share as much information as possible with schools and communities about what best informs decisions. The Minister for School Standards, as I was about to leap to my feet, immediately wanted to meet my hon. Friend and her constituent, so I know that he will be organising that swiftly to be able to listen in greater detail to the thoughts and ideas not just about the current challenges that schools face, but about how we can continue to drive our reforms and improvements within the school system not just this year, but for decades into the future.

**Lucy Powell** (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: Finally, the Secretary of State has come to Parliament to address the issues that have been swirling around everywhere over Christmas, which began with him ordering schools to go online for the first week of term on the last day of term, having taken legal action against councils that wanted to do the same thing only three days earlier. Today, he tells us that some primary schools will not open, but he has not actually published the list of those schools. This really is a catalogue of incompetence from the Secretary of State. After months of our asking, he still has not answered the critical question of how the differential impact of missing school will be addressed, especially for the most disadvantaged. There has been no word on how exams this year can proceed on a level playing field, so if the test of his legacy is the attainment gap, I am afraid that it is one he is going to totally fail.

**Gavin Williamson:** It is always lovely to hear from the hon. Lady, and with such a festive backdrop behind her. Frankly, whatever we do, she will probably always be a little bit miserable about everything. We put in a £1 billion covid catch-up fund, making sure that we are supporting children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. We go above and beyond at every stage to ensure that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are given the most assistance. We on the Government side of the House have always understood that actually preserving education, making sure that children are in the position to be able to return to school at the earliest possible moment and to benefit from being in school, is the best way to give them the greatest advantages in life. I know the hon. Lady—it is not in her DNA to be able to give credit to any Government. I am not sure whether it would take £1 billion, £2 billion or £3 billion for her to acknowledge the fact that we are taking action.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con) [V]: I welcome the—[*Inaudible.*—]—showing at this stage. Given that Amber Valley as a local authority area has some of the higher levels of cases in the country, will the Secretary of State confirm whether we are in the contingency area where schools will not be allowed to open at all? I hope that we are not, but will he publish the criteria for deciding in which areas schools cannot open?

**Gavin Williamson:** We will be publishing details of those local authorities within contingency framework areas later today on the gov.uk website. We would want to see schools entering the contingency framework very much as an absolute last resort, where the public health

evidence and public health advice are that it is important and vital to do so in terms of the management of covid infections.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: This academic year has been significantly disrupted. It is clear that many children have missed significant portions of their education while others have missed none, resulting in major inequalities, and, of course, disruption is getting worse. I ask not if but when the Secretary of State will announce an alternative plan to end-of-year assessments beyond this exam plan. Will he publish a full equality impact assessment on all end-of-year options so that we can see which will be the fairest?

**Gavin Williamson:** We all recognise that this has been an incredibly challenging year for all students. We have seen the impact on our own children and, of course, on children in our constituencies. As those who have been involved in education recognise, exams are the fairest and best form of assessment. We recognise that this is a unique year that has presented unique challenges. That is why we have taken the unusual and unique steps of ensuring that the generosity of grading is similar to and mirrors that of children who took exams in the previous year, and of taking action to make sure that there is advance notice of the areas that children will be tested on to make sure that they are in the best possible position to succeed and do the best they possibly can in those exams.

**Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con) [V]: I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement and for adopting a pragmatic approach to the changing situation. I also thank all schools locally, many of which have been open and welcoming students throughout the pandemic. If all schools and students are not going to return as expected, however, I am concerned that students, particularly those from less well-off backgrounds, will miss out on their education. Can he confirm what extra support he and the Government will give to move to quality remote learning and maintain it for as long as it is needed?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend will be aware that I want to see all children in schools at all times, if possible. As he highlights, however, there will be certain areas of the country where additional action needs to be taken that will lead to the temporary closure of schools. That has happened across the country all the way through the pandemic, but we will probably see a little more of it over the coming term than we saw in the previous term. That is part of the reason why we made the announcement of the distribution of 1 million laptops to support remote learning in schools, and that is why we have made and continue to make increased investment in the Oak National Academy to support online learning and to make sure that there is a whole suite of lessons for every subject and every year group to support schools. It is an important resource enabling them to teach their children. That support will continue, as well as the covid catch-up fund of £1 billion, which has been made available to schools and colleges.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. We still have a lot of business to get through today. I appreciate it is more difficult when people are participating

[Madam Deputy Speaker]

virtually for them to work out how long they are taking in asking a question, but can I remind Members that a question should be a question? It is not a speech; it is just a question. If we have short questions, I know the Secretary of State will be able to give short answers.

**Andrew Gwynne** (Denton and Reddish) (Lab) [V]: Greater Manchester has been under restrictions since the end of July. Many areas got the virus right down only for rates to spike again when schools, colleges and universities went back. What happened in the autumn term did not work; it was too disruptive for too many. What guarantee can the Secretary of State give the House that that will not happen again? Where schools are closed, will he guarantee that all students will have the laptops and digital access required to learn remotely, because not all did last time?

**Gavin Williamson:** In tribute to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will be very brief in answering the hon. Gentleman. He probably heard in my earlier response that we are rolling out the distribution of 1 million laptops, more than 150,000 of which will be going out over the first couple of weeks of the coming term. The measures that we have seen meant that, actually, 99% of schools were able to open. We had excellent attendance at schools across the country, including in areas with high infection rates, and areas with high infection rates were able to maintain schools being open. The measures that we are taking, in terms of a mass testing regime, will ensure that schools can continue to remain open, which I am sure he will celebrate.

**Jonathan Gullis** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): I want to thank all the teachers and support staff across Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke. I welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to mass testing. My main concerns, however, remain about children—particularly those in disadvantaged homes—and the work with catching up. The national tutoring programme is helping students in Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke to catch up, but we can also use alternatives to the Oak National Academy, which is online. Will my right hon. Friend speak to textbook publishers to see whether they will be willing at cost price to send textbooks to some of our most vulnerable children to enable them to sit their exams this year?

**Gavin Williamson:** My hon. Friend so often has brilliant ideas, and I would be very happy to sit down with him to look at how we could do that. The Minister for School Standards is one of the greatest advocates in this country of textbooks and of their real impact and the support they offer students in their learning. We can sit down and discuss my hon. Friend's thoughts and ideas.

**Dr Rupa Huq** (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab) [V]: All teachers want rapid testing, but at a time when they feel exposed and scared by the new variant—80% of my schools have cases anyway—will the Secretary of State develop stronger guidance in partnership with the profession, rather than seeing it as a unionised enemy to spring last-minute changes on? Can he provide any funding to the head of a convent I spoke to who is desperate to roll out testing? It operates on tight margins, but as it is an independent, she has been told that there is none.

**Gavin Williamson:** While we are not in a position to be able to provide independent schools with funding to roll out testing, we are providing them with facilities, testing equipment and all the other additional equipment that is required for the full testing regime. That is being provided to all schools and all settings that are teaching and providing education facilities for children in years 7 and above.

**Rob Butler** (Aylesbury) (Con) [V]: My right hon. Friend has been consistent throughout the crisis in insisting that we balance the need to keep people safe with the vital need for children to continue their education. In the light of that, can he reassure parents of primary school children in tier 4 areas such as Aylesbury that he has fully considered the safety of pupils and staff in reaching his decision that those primary schools can reopen next week and continue their very valuable education?

**Gavin Williamson:** As my hon. Friend will recognise, at every stage the safety of pupils and those who work in schools is at the very heart of every decision we make. We all recognise the impact of not being in school on children's life chances. It is always important to balance the need to get children in with ensuring that they are in a safe environment. The measures we are taking on testing go so far to ensure that children not only get the benefit of that brilliant education but have the surety and confidence of knowing that they are going into a safe and secure environment.

**Mike Amesbury** (Weaver Vale) (Lab) [V]: Surely, given that Cheshire West and Chester has now been put into tier 4, we require an update from the Secretary of State on whether primary schools are going to reopen on Monday, and surely teaching staff should be prioritised for the vaccine. That just makes sense.

**Gavin Williamson:** I can assure the hon. Gentleman that primary schools in Cheshire West and Chester will be open on Monday.

**Mrs Flick Drummond** (Meon Valley) (Con) [V]: May I join the previous questioner and ask my right hon. Friend whether he agrees that the best way to get schools back and working properly is to prioritise vaccines for teachers and pupils, who may be spreading the virus asymptotically? Will he urge the Department of Health and Social Care to prioritise that?

**Gavin Williamson:** I would certainly urge the Department of Health and Social Care to prioritise vaccination of those who work in schools. All the vaccines currently available have not had or have not completed trials on people under the age of 18. I am sure my hon. Friend recognises the necessity of completing those trials before rolling out any vaccination programme to the younger cohorts.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab) [V]: If Greenwich schools are included in one of the contingency areas, I hope the Secretary of State will have the decency to apologise to parents in our borough. With that in mind, if mass testing shows up high infection rates among children in schools, what is the contingency plan other than disruption to children's education continuing into the future? Surely the end point has to be vaccination in schools when it becomes available. Is he planning for when that can be done?

**Gavin Williamson:** I am not sure the hon. Gentleman heard my reply to the previous question, but none of the vaccines has been through full trials on children under 18. It would not be ethical to vaccinate children before the completion of the trials.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con) [V]: I declare an interest in that my daughter is a teacher. I agree with the approach the Secretary of State has outlined today. In a constantly changing situation, it is a sensible approach, but may I return to the question of vaccinations for teachers and staff? Clearly, in tier 3 and 4 areas it would be valuable, and coupled with the testing regime it would give teachers and parents the confidence that is needed. I accept that it is not in his remit, as he said, but may I urge him to press his Government colleagues to look at it again?

**Gavin Williamson:** I can absolutely confirm that I will respond to my hon. Friend's pressing me to press others to do that. I know how important it is and what a heroic job so many in our schools have been doing to ensure continuity of education for all our children.

**Kim Johnson** (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab): Pupils in Liverpool, Riverside have suffered disproportionate learning loss. We have heard the rhetoric on how this Government are levelling up, but it is time to move from the rhetoric to the reality. How many of the thousands of laptops have made it to those in the greatest need? Has that been monitored? The national tutoring programme is projected to reach just one in six pupils on free school meals. Will the Minister join me in thanking and supporting all education and support staff in my constituency, who have gone above and beyond since the first lockdown to support both children and our community throughout this pandemic?

**Gavin Williamson:** I join the hon. Lady in thanking all those in her constituency who have done so much to ensure continuity of education for so many children. The great city of Liverpool is one of the areas that have experienced very high infection rates. The teaching staff and communities making sure that schools stayed open and that children were able to get the benefit of education are a real testament to the hard work done by so many in the teaching profession.

Over 500,000 of the laptops have already been distributed to children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Many hundreds of thousands more will be distributed in the coming weeks. That will benefit the hon. Lady's constituents, mine, and the constituents of us all.

**Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): Those who are due to sit their A-levels and GCSEs in 2021 have suffered, and continue to suffer, far more disruption than those who were due to sit them earlier this year. Will the Secretary of State accept that the only sensible and fair course of action is to cancel these exams too, to ensure that those students' prospects are not damaged by taking exams that will have been rendered virtually meaningless?

**Gavin Williamson:** That is why we took action to ensure that the generosity of grading mirrors that of 2020 and have announced the exam subjects with advance notice, so that teachers and students, in the final months in the run-up to the exams, can focus on the topics and

areas that will be examined. We believe that unless there are exceptional circumstances, exams are the fairest and best form of assessment. All the evidence points out that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and children from black and ethnic minority communities are most disadvantaged by non-exam assessment and are given the greatest advantage when they sit exams.

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab) [V]: Headteachers at primary schools, and at all schools, are willing and able to be partners in ensuring that our children get a proper education, but the Secretary of State has said that some primary schools will not open next week. What will the criteria be for schools not opening? When will the headteachers of those schools be given the courtesy of advance warning and treated with respect by the Secretary of State?

**Gavin Williamson:** I am sure that the hon. Lady is aware of the gold command chaired by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, which looks at all the decisions on tiering and other measures that need to be taken to deal with the pandemic. Those decisions will be made as part of that health structure through joint working by the Health Secretary and me, because the powers to close sit with me as Education Secretary. The hon. Lady will be familiar with gov.uk; notice and details of the areas that will be put in the contingency framework are published on that website.

**Sir David Amess** (Southend West) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement. Will he join me in thanking all education providers in Southend West for their heroic efforts during the coronavirus pandemic? Most importantly, will he ensure that when they return to school there is clarity in a practical sense regarding testing and the arrangements for the summer examinations?

**Gavin Williamson:** I thank my hon. Friend for raising the wonderful work that educators, teachers and support staff have done in providing the Rolls-Royce education that we want all children to benefit from. We have already published considerable guidance and support for schools as they roll out mass testing; we have also published information about the funding that they can receive, so that they can properly budget and make provision for the type of support that they need to roll out that mass testing. With respect to the—I hope—small number of schools that have particular problems in establishing a testing regime, the armed forces have kindly stepped forward, along with Ofsted, to provide and establish support in the exceptional circumstances in which schools and colleges are having real problems.

**Ian Byrne** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab) [V]: I thank the Secretary of State for his kind words about the educators and teachers in Liverpool, who have done such an outstanding job.

Hundreds of thousands of working-class children educated in the state system are facing exams in complete despair. The inequality of opportunity for those children is due to the ineptitude of the Government's response, including a lack of resource allocation and a complete failure to listen to teachers' concerns. Will the Secretary of State meet me and headteachers in Liverpool, West Derby as soon as possible to discuss the resources and measures that are urgently needed from the Government?

**Gavin Williamson:** We always listen to what the teaching profession says and act taking its advice and guidance into account. That is how we crafted our response, including the creation of the covid catch-up fund and the national tutoring programme, which were very much targeted at children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. My right hon Friend the Minister for School Standards said he would be absolutely delighted and looks forward to meeting the hon. Gentleman and the wonderful professionals in his constituency who are so committed and dedicated to delivering the very best education for every child in Liverpool, West Derby.

**Mr William Wragg (Hazel Grove) (Con):** I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement and recognise the invidious choices he has to make as Secretary of State. I also thank all the teachers and, in particular, the leaders of schools in the Hazel Grove constituency for their hard work over the Christmas holidays to prepare for mass testing on the schools' return. Does my right hon. Friend think it somewhat ironic that later on today's Order Paper is a motion to extend the Adjournment of the House to 11 January? What message does that send to our schools?

**Gavin Williamson:** I certainly join my hon. Friend in thanking the teachers and support staff in Hazel Grove for all the work that they do. We all recognise that we are placing great burdens on so many public servants. Our job as a Department is to give them as much support as possible. As a former Chief Whip, I think it is always best to focus on the Department and job that one has, which is why my focus is on education and schools.

**Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab) [V]:** According to Sutton Trust research, 15% of teachers report that a third of their students do not have adequate facilities to learn remotely from home. While I accept that some attempt has been made to rectify that, there are still too many pupils unable to learn online. Will the Secretary of State tell us how many pupils in those schools not reopening next month do not currently have access to online learning?

**Gavin Williamson:** The hon. Gentleman is right to point out that the best place for children to learn is in school, which is why we have at every stage driven as hard as possible to ensure that schools are open and remain open. That is why we are taking the actions we are—whether that is the mass testing regime or the fact that primary schools will open up on 4 January—because we realise that the best place for children to be is in school. We looked at the needs of schools for additional laptops and digital equipment and have expanded the original provision of 200,000 laptops to more than 1 million. As I touched on earlier, that distribution of additional laptops is currently ongoing and will continue over the coming weeks.

**Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con) [V]:** I welcome my right hon. Friend's flexibility and pragmatic approach at this difficult time, and also his determination to keep schools open. I praise all the teachers in my borough of Bexley for their commitment and hard work. However, as a strong supporter of social mobility, I am naturally concerned about the effect on

the education of our most disadvantaged children during this coronavirus pandemic. Can he confirm that the additional financial support he has given will help to prevent them from being left behind in their education?

**Gavin Williamson:** I thank my right hon. Friend for highlighting something that he and I care so passionately about: ensuring that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds are not left behind. That is why the national tutoring programme and the covid catch-up fund are so vital, not only for his constituents but for my constituents and all our constituents from those most disadvantaged communities. We recognise that this pandemic has impacted every community up and down the country. It is vital that we do everything we can to get them back on their feet, learning and closing that gap once more.

**Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab):** If I may continue on the theme of resources for home-based learning, we know that it is less satisfactory than children being at school but infinitely better than nothing. Unfortunately, nine months into the pandemic, only 700 laptops have been distributed in my borough, despite there being 5,000 children on free school meals. Will the Secretary of State explain why it has taken so long to make sure there is adequate access to laptops? Will he also advise everybody how many children in each constituency are deemed to be in need of capacity for home-based learning, so that we are able to assess just how effective the distribution of laptops has been?

**Gavin Williamson:** I will certainly happily provide the latest information on the distribution of laptops in the hon. Member's constituency. The reason we announced the uplift to the distribution of 1 million laptops is that we recognise that the challenges of the pandemic require more digital provision. That is why we made the move to increase it from 500,000 to 1 million.

**Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con):** This feels slightly like my own first day back at school, though I am rather near the bottom of this particular class.

Does my right hon. Friend agree that the importance of his mass testing programme for schools derives from the danger that infected children may be spreaders without symptoms?

**Gavin Williamson:** If my right hon. Friend is a new boy back in school, I think the Chief Whip is the headmaster, so he will probably be keeping a close eye on my right hon. Friend. However, it is good to see him back with the Conservative Whip, as I very much felt it was a great privilege to work so closely with him when he was Chairman of the Defence Committee and I was in a previous role.

My right hon. Friend is right that, actually, many children who have coronavirus do not exhibit symptoms. This is why the move to mass testing in secondary schools is so important. It gives us the opportunity to identify many more children who have the virus and just do not know it. That means that many more households can be informed that they also need to be tested as they may also have the virus. This is an important step in defeating this virus and taking the battle to covid to ensure that we defeat it and are triumphant in doing so.

**Janet Daby** (Lewisham East) (Lab) [V]: Testing for the virus is key to supporting a child to stay in school. When children are not in school, their learning is disrupted. It causes a lot of anxiety in relation to family plans and affects the ability of the adult or adults in the home to work. Can the Secretary of State confidently say to my constituents and to parents that schools will have adequate testing infrastructure and support in place for pupils and staff when both primary and secondary schools reopen, and does he agree that the vaccine should be prioritised for all staff working in education?

**Gavin Williamson:** I thank the hon. Lady for her question, and I can absolutely assure her that the roll-out of mass testing in secondary schools is properly supported. Schools will be getting the first batch of both equipment and tests on 4 January, and this is being distributed right across the country, with additional tests very rapidly following, to ensure that all pupils and all staff within schools can be tested. As I touched on in my statement, we are also looking at rolling out the testing mechanism, the screening test and the serial testing for staff in primary schools. As I am sure the hon. Lady will appreciate, the ability to deliver testing in primary schools does present some challenges, because the age of pupils in primary school means they are not necessarily able to do it themselves. However, when we are in a position to go further on testing and home tests can be distributed, we will look at expanding the role of mass testing in schools even further.

**Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con) [V]: I would like to thank all the wonderful teachers and support staff across my constituency and to welcome plans for all secondary and college students to receive two rapid tests at the start of term. The Royal Air Force has already been helping to deliver rapid tests across Kirklees as part of mass community testing. Has the Secretary of State considered using military support on the ground in schools and colleges—the military having done such a wonderful job in extreme circumstances in the past few months—to help deliver mass rapid tests and take the pressure off some of our teachers?

**Gavin Williamson:** I join my hon. Friend in his thanks. I know that he served in the Royal Air Force for a number of years, so he has a particular fondness for our

armed forces, as we all do. They have done an amazing job. Looking at the sheer number of schools across the country and the whole workforce within them, we felt that it would not be right or proper to ask the armed forces to deliver testing in every single secondary school. That is why we have provided additional financial support for schools to help them deliver the mass testing regime. We are very fortunate that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has agreed a MACA request that means that we are able to provide military support to schools that are really struggling to set up a testing regime. We believe that when they are set up, schools will be in an excellent position to keep running and have a real impact in driving down coronavirus infection rates in my hon. Friend's constituency and all our constituencies.

**Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): I, too, pay tribute to schools, teachers, support staff and young people in my constituency for the incredibly effective way that they responded to the coronavirus crisis in the autumn. However, as the Secretary of State knows, the pressures on schools in tier 4 areas are significant, and they are growing all the time. Will he commit to reviewing the level of support that is being provided? It is clear that, with just half a member of the armed forces per English secondary school, that level of support is quite meagre.

**Gavin Williamson:** We are providing schools with the resources to deliver the testing programme themselves. We would look at providing armed forces personnel only in the most exceptional circumstances where a school, for whatever reason, is unable to set up a testing regime. We have given schools the extra time as well as the £78 million in order for all secondary schools to establish a regime. In exceptional circumstances we have teams, supported by the armed forces and Ofsted as well as the Department for Education, to help get a regime up and running and support schools so that every secondary school can have a mass testing regime.

5.37 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

## Business of the House

5.41 pm

**The Leader of the House of Commons (Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg):** The business for the week commencing 11 January will include:

MONDAY 11 JANUARY—General debate on global Britain.

TUESDAY 12 JANUARY—General debate on covid-19.

WEDNESDAY 13 JANUARY—Remaining stages of the Financial Services Bill.

THURSDAY 14 JANUARY—Business to be determined by the Backbench Business Committee.

FRIDAY 15 JANUARY—Private Members' Bills.

Provisional business for the week commencing 18 January will include:

MONDAY 18 JANUARY—Opposition day (14th allotted day) There will be a debate on a motion in the name of the official Opposition, subject to be announced.

**Valerie Vaz (Walsall South) (Lab):** What a lovely statement—something for everybody. It is a bit like a cracker, except I do not think that we are supposed to use crackers any more, as they are not good for the environment. I thank the Leader of the House for the statement, and obviously for the Opposition day. Depending on what happens later with the motion, he may have to return and make a further statement: we shall have to see.

I want to begin by thanking all the staff for bringing us back here and enabling us to carry out our business on this very important day. Some of them were up until 4 o'clock in the morning. Many of them have produced call lists, and have arranged the business today at short notice. I thank everyone who has done that—they have actually been on the estate. The key thing is that we do not see them—they are unseen—and sometimes they do not have a voice. Both the Leader of the House and I are aware of the work that goes on behind the scenes. It was absolutely exceptional that we agreed the motion on virtual proceedings. Not even an hour later, our colleagues were able to take part and have a voice on one of the most important pieces of legislation. I hope that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, Mr Speaker, and the other Deputy Speakers will pass on our thanks to all the staff who have done that.

We have moved the Leader of the House, finally, to enable virtual proceedings, to allow our colleagues to take part in a virtual debate. I thank the Procedure Committee for the work that it has done, and for listening to Members who have expressed concern about their inability to take part in debates. Members are still moving around the country—we still have to travel here, but we know that the majority of the country is in tier 4. I want to ask the Leader of the House if he will look again at remote voting. Whatever we think about proxy votes, they work, but even when we use the card reader, there is a lot of behind-the-scenes work that goes on, and we must make sure that Members' staff and staff of the House are safe as well. I hope that he will look at that, and try to facilitate it, because the new variant is haunting the country. The Prime Minister has already announced—I think he has announced it outside, not necessarily to the House—that we might not be out of tier 4 until April, so—

**Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con):** Oh no!

**Valerie Vaz:** Yes, well, perhaps the right hon. Gentleman should be listening to Peston, not coming into the House.

I thank and pay tribute to all the NHS staff—all the carers, everyone in care homes and hospitals, and the ambulance drivers who are apparently lining up and are having to make decisions on who has an ambulance first, which is a terrible, terrible state to be in. The Leader of the House has announced a general debate on covid on Tuesday 12 January. Given that we have the Oxford vaccine now approved, may I ask for a statement from the vaccine Minister? We now have two lots of vaccine and we need to know exactly what is going on—perhaps a dashboard of how the vaccine is progressing throughout the country—because that will help us all to do our work.

The Leader of the House has announced a general debate on global Britain. He will now know that the incoming Biden-Harris Administration do not want to deal with the UK any more—they are going to deal with the EU directly, which is a pity—so it might actually be quite a short debate. But will he clarify the Foreign Secretary's remarks when he said that British citizens should not expect support when they are abroad? I know the Leader of the House has been very assiduous, and I thank him and his staff for writing the letters to the Secretary of State when I have asked at the Dispatch Box, but has the British ambassador seen Nazanin and Anousheh? Certainly Anousheh also needs diplomatic protection, like Nazanin has.

Today was an unacceptable way to pass the most important piece of legislation that this Parliament is going to pass. Yes, we facilitated it, but that does not mean we agree with it. The EU has not said that this is the responsible thing to do. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster—[*Interruption.*] Perhaps hon. Members will just hang on for a second and listen to what I have to say rather than heckling; I know it is pantomime season, but even so. The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster seemed to spend more time deriding leaders of the Opposition parties than actually saying why businesses should have a bumpy ride. We heard about Brussels tape, but in fact we are going to see a lot more Tory tape from now on as goods move from one side to another and we have a border in the Irish sea.

Will the Leader of the House's new year resolution be about allowing Parliament to be respected a bit more, with statements made first to the House, and particularly, on all our legislation that is passed, that the House will be told first, rather than those outside?

On behalf of the Opposition, I send my condolences to Brian Binley's family. He was a lovely, lovely man, and very kind to new Members.

As we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of Beethoven, and remember how his music was used to unite countries after the terrible war, I want to quote a couple of lines from the "Ode to Joy"—because Labour Members will still be singing the "Ode to Joy": "All that custom has divided, All men and women will be brothers and sisters, Under the sway of thy gentle wing." I wish everyone a very happy new year.



**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I think the answer is “da-da-da-dah, da-da-da-dah”, which I seem to remember is Morse code for “V for victory”, which is very much the spirit that we are in today.

I am very grateful to the right hon. Lady for her support on today’s business. It is the sensible way—the right way—to have conducted our business. It is one of the glories of our constitution that this Parliament—this nation—can be flexible when necessary. It has to be said that the debate on this subject has gone on for many years: there is hardly a new thing that can be said upon it. Therefore, it was quite right, it was suitable and it was appropriate that we met our international obligations in the way that we did.

I am grateful to the right hon. Lady for her tribute to Brian Binley, who was a much loved Member of this House on all sides. He showed great personal kindness to new Members, including to me when I first entered the House. He was always available with a wise and friendly word. He never appeared grand or pompous in his approach to Parliament, but was a committed and true parliamentarian. He will be sadly missed.

The right hon. Lady asked whether business might change subject to the vote later this evening. She is, as always, accurate in her understanding of parliamentary procedure. There is a vote on the Adjournment of the House until 11 January. If that does not pass, we will be back tomorrow morning at 9.30, with Mr Speaker in the Chair, as if it were any ordinary Thursday, but we will have to see how the vote goes.

The right hon. Lady’s main point about thanking the staff is of fundamental importance. As she rightly says, they were up until 4 o’clock in the morning to ensure the papers were ready for today, but that is not the end of it. Many staff will be working late into tonight, once Royal Assent has been given, to ensure that the statutory instruments are available, and that is why I think the proposed recess extension is absolutely suitable.

MPs will be working in their constituencies, or should be working in their constituencies, and they should be attending to their constituents’ interests and seeking redress of grievances outside the Chamber, but we owe it to the officials, the professionals, the staff of this House, who have worked unceasingly over Christmas to ensure the business was ready for 31 December, that they should be allowed to have a week off to recover.

It is not only this last week; the House sat an exceptionally long time in 2020, for 40 weeks, which is the highest number since 2010. I am not saying it has not been higher over a longer period, but we have only checked back to 2010. We did not have the conference recess, so the staff of this House have really come up trumps for us and deserve great tribute. *Hansard* cannot see your elegant nod, Madam Deputy Speaker, but I hope the *Hansard* reporter from her eyrie will note in her report that you are nodding in agreement, because we owe our staff a great debt and the least we can do is allow them to have a few days off. But of course they and we stand ready to come back if circumstances require it. That has always been the case. Recall is an accepted part of our constitution, and it would not be impossible to speculate on the circumstances that might lead to a recall in this business session.

As regards Members coming here, Members have an absolute right to come to this House and have done so since 1340—although not to this specific House, because

it had not been built then—to attend Parliament, and that is a right we should defend. It is important that Parliament works.

As the right hon. Lady kindly said, the proxy system is working and also has the advantage of a fall-back system so that if the card readers do not work, as we found when they did not work on one occasion, the vote can be taken immediately. That is of great importance, because it did fail in the House of Lords and they had no stand-by procedure. If it were to have failed today, imagine the inconvenience it would have caused, so having a robust, effective system is absolutely what we want. We really do not want to model ourselves on the House of Lords on this occasion, worthy and noble though their lordships are.

The right hon. Lady is right to thank the NHS staff, who have worked so hard and are doing such terrific work to ensure that people are vaccinated, and the reports I am hearing anecdotally from my friends who are 80 and older are very encouraging. On her request for a statement from the vaccine Minister, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care himself spoke about the vaccine earlier, and it is going well. The vaccine is being rolled out and is fundamental to the hope we have for next year.

The right hon. Lady rightly raises the case of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe every week. I have always been with the former Foreign Secretary, Palmerston, who, at the end of the Don Pacifico debate—one in which people were saying he was overreacting in defence of a British subject—said:

“the Roman, in days of old, held himself free from indignity, when he could say *Civis Romanus sum*; so also a British subject, in whatever land he may be, shall feel confident that the watchful eye and the strong arm of England, will protect him against injustice and wrong.”—[*Official Report*, 25 June 1850; Vol. 112, c. 444.]

The Government always wish and always seek to defend British subjects from injustice and wrong. The Prime Minister has raised the case of Nazanin directly with President Rouhani, and the Foreign Secretary did so with his counterpart two weeks ago, on 13 December.

I pass on to the Foreign Secretary the questions that have been raised in this House every time they are raised, and the right hon. Lady is right to raise them because it is fundamental that a state must defend its subjects when they are treated unjustly in other countries. That is what the Foreign Office tries to do wherever it can.

Finally, on new year’s resolutions and anniversaries, I cannot resist reminding everybody that yesterday was the 850th anniversary of the murder of Saint Thomas à Becket, a great defender of religious liberty.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP) *indicated assent.*

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am glad to see the hon. Gentleman nodding in approval of the work of Thomas à Becket, who we remember and ask to pray for us. Respect for Parliament is always uppermost in the mind of Her Majesty’s Government. That is why we are having so many statements and so many debates, which are exactly what we should have.

**Christian Wakeford** (Bury South) (Con): Just over a year ago, I stood on a manifesto commitment of increased funding for the police and more bobbies on the beat. I welcome the work the Prime Minister and the Home

[*Christian Wakeford*]

Secretary are doing to fulfil that pledge. However, in Greater Manchester, we now have a police force in special measures, following years of poor leadership and a lack of attention from the Mayor. I ask my right hon. Friend for a statement from the Home Secretary on what is being done to address those failings by the Mayor.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** My hon. Friend is right to raise this deeply troubling issue. It is quite wrong that Greater Manchester police—the country’s second largest police force—has got itself into this position and has had to be put into special measures. The Home Office and Her Majesty’s inspectorate of constabulary and fire and rescue services have stepped up their efforts to work closely with the police force to improve its performance rapidly. The police force is, of course, operationally independent and it is not for a Minister to weigh in on its daily affairs, although I understand that it exhibited serious failings in how it recorded crimes.

It is, I suppose, a case of who guards the guards themselves when we find that a police force is in special measures. We do expect and hope—although this may be the triumph of hope over experience—that the Mayor of Greater Manchester will remember that his primary job as the local police and crime commissioner is to keep his local communities safe. I hope that MPs like my hon. Friend will continue to bang on his door and ensure that he is at least making some effort to do his job.

**Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP) [V]: First, let me welcome the Leader of the House’s conversion to virtual participation. A big majority of those who participated in today’s debate did so safely and efficiently from a remote location. Can I ask him also to stop resisting remote voting and to switch the system back on, so that all Members can vote according to their own conscience and without breaching public health guidelines?

When are we to expect a third party Opposition day, which is now long overdue?

Today, we saw the Government push through their deal with a complete lack of scrutiny and examination. The Government created this timetable by refusing even a short extension to the transition period, hoping that Christmas and covid would provide a smokescreen for their awful deal. The Government, and probably the Opposition, will be hoping that this concludes the matter, but it does not. Many Members on the call list were not called today, and many more who wanted to speak did not even make it on to the list. I would have thought that the first order of business in the new year would be to continue the discussion of the deal and allow those Members the chance to participate.

I ask for a specific debate on the Scottish fishing industry, which has now been betrayed by this Government. The removal of quota swaps and leases, which this deal includes, means that in five years’ time fewer white fish will be landed in Scottish harbours than happens now. That is a major kick in the teeth for Scotland’s coastal communities, and the Government ought to be prepared to debate how they will mitigate the effects of this disastrous deal on them.

The Leader of the House may be aware that earlier this afternoon, the Scottish Parliament voted by 92 votes to 30 not to give consent to today’s Bill. Given that, can

we have a debate on the consequences of the deal for devolution and on what this House should do when people vote in the Scottish general election for the right to choose to become an independent country?

Finally, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I wish you, the Leader of the House, the shadow Leader of the House and all colleagues a very happy new year when it comes?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I heartily reciprocate the kind good wishes of the hon. Gentleman. I hope he has a splendid new year and that he, his party, his friends and family and everyone in this House have a very jolly new year and a better 2021 than perhaps 2020 has been.

Every week, the hon. Gentleman complains that he lost the referendum in 2014. However, that does not change the fact that he lost. And when he lost, it was said by the SNP, which we now know is nationalist with a small “n”, that the result was for a generation. It is still for a generation, that generation has still not passed and he has still lost. I basically just repeat what I have been saying for the past few weeks.

The fishing industry, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, is one of the great beneficiaries of Brexit. Is it not extraordinary that the Scottish nationalists, with a small “n”, wish to hand it back to Brussels and lose all the opportunities for Scottish fishing, so that they can be regulated from Brussels? It is quite extraordinary. It must be—what is it?—Stockholm syndrome that they have got. They have been imprisoned so long by the EU that they cannot bear to leave and want to be controlled, even at the cost of their fishing communities.

The hon. Gentleman complains that the debate was not long enough. Well, it was long enough—it was probably 50 years of debate over our membership of the European Union, in truth—but if he wants to speak further on it, I know that the House will be waiting with bated breath for his contributions to the global Britain debate, which will be held on 11 January.

As regards the prospect of increasing the period of transition, that would have been a very unwise thing to do, because it would have potentially entered us into billions of pounds of risk, as it would have taken us into the new multi-annual financial framework. It was fundamentally important that we did not take that risk and that we left when we said we would. It is also quite important to stick to commitments made to voters. We had promised the voters that we would leave, and so we did.

Proxy voting allows people to vote effectively and safely, and with their conscience. The hon. Gentleman might not have noticed, but the Deputy Chief Whip has facilitated people voting against the Government, if that is what they wish to do. The votes are being recorded according to the Member’s desire, not what they are ordered to do, because one cannot order Members. Members vote of their own accord, although occasionally their friends give them helpful advice.

As regards the move to more hybrid technology, the hon. Gentleman is in Scotland and may not have noticed that London has gone into tier 4. We have therefore adopted a scheme similar to the one we had earlier in the year, when the highest level of restrictions was in place. This is merely responding to the reality in the country at large, which we always said we did. It is therefore consistent, but I look forward to us getting

back to normal and having a full, bustling Chamber, without Perspex screens, plastic markings and signs facing this great Chamber.

**Theresa Villiers** (Chipping Barnet) (Con): It is great news that the Oxford vaccine was approved today. Can we have a debate at the earliest opportunity on the delivery of that vaccine? It is desperately important that it happens quickly. People are desperate to get their jobs, their businesses and their lives back, and the only way to do that is to make sure that jabs start being delivered as soon as possible.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** My right hon. Friend's wish is my command. I am glad, therefore, to say that there will be a debate on covid on 12 January, which will be absolutely the opportunity to raise these issues. My right hon. Friend, as so often, is absolutely right: the roll-out of the vaccine is key to us getting back our freedoms.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** We now go to the Chair of the Backbench Business Committee.

**Ian Mearns** (Gateshead) (Lab) [V]: I thank the Leader of the House for the business statement and for his stated intention, with the rescheduling, to move our first Backbench day from 7 January to 14 January. I think we have now contacted Members who were scheduled to have their debates on 7 January, and they have agreed to proceed on 14 January, so we are ready to roll, as it were.

I am afraid that, despite the Secretary of State for Education's exhortations otherwise, the links to the info on the reopening of primary schools is not apparent on the front page of the gov.uk website. Will the Leader of the House make sure that it is easily flagged up for headteachers, so that they can see exactly what is expected of them when they return to school?

Madam Deputy Speaker, may I also take this opportunity to wish you, Members across the House and all House staff a very happy new year—or as happy as might be possible—and to thank our NHS staff, Gateshead Council staff and every worker across the board who has kept things going to keep us safe, and to keep shops and services going to sustain us and all our constituents in these most difficult times? Happy new year.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am glad that we are able to move the Backbench Business debate. I wonder if I may make a plea in return to the hon. Gentleman that he might protect those whose debates in Westminster Hall need to be moved, because one of them is present in the Chamber, and it is obviously a concern that people do not lose the debates that they had.

The hon. Gentleman makes the point about the website explaining what schools will have to do, and the Secretary of State for Education's statement that it will be up and running and that headmasters and headmistresses will be able to use it efficiently. I am sure that is right, but immediately after this session I will check with the Secretary of State to ensure that is taking place, because if there are gremlins in the system, the gremlins need to be removed.

**Mr Peter Bone** (Wellingborough) (Con) [V]: May I endorse the Leader of the House's comments about the great Northamptonshire MP Brian Binley? He will be greatly missed, but I think that, as someone who wanted

to come out of the European Union, he will be smiling down on us today. When my hon. Friend the Member for Corby (Tom Pursglove) and I founded GO, the Grassroots Out campaign to leave the EU, our goals were to end the free movement of people, to stop spending billions and billions of pounds each and every year with the EU and to make our own laws in our own country, judged by our own judges. Today, the Prime Minister has delivered on that pledge. He has delivered for the people. Given the historic nature of the treaty and the fact that so many Members of Parliament could not participate in the debate today, will the Leader of the House arrange for a series of debates on the treaty, rather like those we have on the Queen's Speech?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** We are going to have a debate as soon as we are back on global Britain, which allows us to look to the future now that we have left the European Union. I thank my hon. Friend: he has been a tireless campaigner in the Eurosceptic cause for as long as I have known him and is one of the people who ensured that we got the referendum victory, so today is in many ways thanks to his efforts. I thought he was going to ask for a public holiday, and I was going to suggest that he could have one, not tomorrow, but the day after.

**Wes Streeting** (Ilford North) (Lab): I am sure the Leader of the House will agree that it was totally unacceptable that the Education Secretary laid a written ministerial statement before the Christmas recess only after a press release had been issued by the Department for Education. I think he will also agree that it is worse still that that was issued on the last day of term—in fact, many schools had already broken up. The goalposts have been shifted again today, and headteachers, teachers and support staff also deserve a well-earned rest after a year of busting a gut for children and young people across the country. Can he understand why those staff, who are being asked to return to work on Monday, will look aghast and with horror at the fact that this House is proposing to give itself an extra week, at the Government's suggestion? On that basis, does he not agree it that would be right and proper, if teachers and support staff are back on Monday, for us to be back here too?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** On the issue of written ministerial statements, the House ought always to be informed first, but I would point out that what is going on at the moment is changing rapidly in response to the course of the pandemic. Therefore, things often change and statements are made later than would otherwise be hoped for, because of the necessity of keeping up with the new information.

As regards the House and schools, the House does not sit at the same times as schools—we have come back today—and, as I said earlier, the fact that the House is not sitting does not mean that MPs are not working. Members of Parliament ought to be working, but we have to think about the staff of the House. The hon. Gentleman is being unfair on them. The hours that some members of staff have been working are really heroic, and they have done that to make our democracy function. We should be proud of them and praise them; we should not say, as Rehoboam said to Solomon, that having been scourged with whips they should now be scourged with scorpions. I think the whips have been quite enough.

**Selaine Saxby** (North Devon) (Con) [V]: Does my right hon. Friend agree that preventing the spread of covid-19 within workplaces is paramount? Can he therefore explain what additional measures are being considered to allow MPs to participate physically when we return after recess? I also take this opportunity to thank House staff for making today's sitting possible.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am very grateful to my hon. Friend for her question. We want to get back to people's participating physically as soon as possible. The House has been running an effective testing system for people who may have covid, and the question of flow testing has been considered, but other priorities have meant that the facilities are not there for that. Obviously, higher-risk Members of Parliament will be vaccinated in accordance with their turn. That will begin to take effect, and I assume that some of the older Members of the House are beginning to get appointments to be vaccinated or, indeed, possibly are being vaccinated. It is important, however, that we get back physically so that we have the proper cut and thrust of debate, operate in the normal way on behalf of our constituents, and are in the same state as the rest of the country.

**Kirsten Oswald** (East Renfrewshire) (SNP) [V]: It is a great shame that the UK Government elected to leave the Erasmus scheme, which has enabled thousands of young Scottish people to study and work abroad, as well as supporting youth work, adult education and vocational training. Many elements of Erasmus support are not replicated in the proposed new Turing scheme, so thousands will lose out, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Can we have an urgent debate on resolving the problems caused by this short-sighted and damaging decision?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** When I was a schoolboy, I had to learn to construe the letters of Erasmus from Latin into English, which I was never very good at, and I am afraid that rather than seeing him as a great figure of renaissance and learning, I found that he mainly complained about his lumbago and the poor dinners he was getting. None the less, the Erasmus programme is being replaced with a better programme, one that encapsulates what we are looking at. We are leaving the European Union and we thought that participation in the Erasmus programme would not be in the interests of the United Kingdom, but we are going to be looking globally, because that is what we are doing: we are taking our eyes from the narrow European focus and lifting them up to the horizon of the globe.

**Ms Nusrat Ghani** (Wealden) (Con): The Leader of the House is already aware of my concerns about the House not sitting next week. Of course, like my colleagues, I will continue to represent and work with my constituents across Wealden, but I do that best when I am here in the House. Will he confirm that the reason the House will not sit next week is that we need to protect the staff who enable this House to perform? If that is the case, will he work with all other authorities in the House to make sure that there is enough resilience among staff and that we use the best technology possible so that we do not find ourselves in this situation again? Covid has changed everything, and the House must change too.

Very quickly, will the Leader of the House confirm when the Trade Bill will return to this House from the other place? One of the beauties of the Prime Minister's new trade deal with the EU is that we have our parliamentary sovereignty back and can make our own trade deals, and we want to make sure that our trade deals with anyone with whom we wish to engage are done in accordance with values and ethics based on human rights.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. Given that we have a very long debate later, I urge Members to ask just one question.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I quite like one question, too—it makes it easier to answer—but I will do my best to answer both questions. With regard to the recess, I cannot agree to what my hon. Friend suggests. We have the right number of staff and the right level of expertise. We cannot duplicate such fine figures as the Clerk of the House. That is one person and to have the in-built redundancy of a spare Clerk of the House would be enormously expensive and, I think, very inefficient. We have to recognise that our staff are absolutely fantastic at taking on the extra load when that is necessary, but we must not burden them when it is not necessary.

As regards the Trade Bill, one of the interesting things about the past few months and the way in which we and the Lords have operated is that in our mainly physical presence we have managed to get through business rather more quickly than their lordships, so it would be wrong of me to speculate as to when their lordships may have chewed through the Trade Bill.

**Jeremy Corbyn** (Islington North) (Ind) [V]: Before the corona crisis, there was already a rising mental health problem in Britain, with unprecedented numbers of people trying to access mental support, which was often inadequate and they did not get any, and an increasing number of suicides, particularly among young men. The corona crisis has thrown this up and made the situation even worse, with many not getting the support they need, many left isolated, and 1.5 million children going through a profound mental health crisis or stress.

I ask the Leader of the House to speak to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government about consulting local health authorities and local government to see what we can do to increase support for people going through mental health crisis, and to consider what can be done to alleviate isolation through the appropriately managed opening of libraries and indoor sports facilities. That would give people in my constituency and many others some space beyond the very small and overcrowded flats in which many of them have to live, and which make their stress levels worse and worse. This is, I hasten to add, a very serious crisis, and if we do not deal with it now, it will be even worse when we finally come out of the corona lockdown.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The right hon. Gentleman is so right to raise this issue, and I think this concern is shared by Members from across the House. The stresses of covid have exacerbated the problem, and people who are living in accommodation that is small or does not have outside space must be finding this particularly difficult.

I can say what the Government are doing in terms of overall funding, with £13.3 billion in 2019-20. There will be the largest expansion of mental health services in a generation, with an extra £2.3 billion by 2023-24 to support 380,000 more adults and 345,000 more children. I am glad to say that the Mental Health Act 1983 will be updated; that was a manifesto commitment of the Government, and work is going on towards that. We must all make a great effort to ensure that there is proper care and proper concern for people with mental health difficulties, because, as the right hon. Gentleman says, it is a serious problem, which has been getting more serious.

**Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con) [V]: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Brexit deal will greatly facilitate future business of the House, because Parliament can now ensure that there is a Brexit dividend? There can be a cost of living dividend, because we can control our VAT rates fully and cut energy bills; a skills dividend, as we train up our young people with the lifetime skills guarantee; and a social justice dividend, as we can spend the multi-billion-pound annual membership fee that we used to give the EU and establish a redistribution fund so that that money can go to disadvantaged and poorer communities across the UK instead.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that we have this authority. VAT rates will not be set by the European Court of Justice or by any European body; they will be set by this House. We have taken back control. As the Prime Minister himself has said, it provides us with the freedom to manoeuvre and govern our own affairs once again. The restoration of parliamentary sovereignty will be the engine of our future prosperity. It will drive our ambitious legislation for the future, the use of new and exciting technologies, regulatory freedom and independence, and, of course, the levelling-up agenda. Above all else, Members such as my right hon. Friend will know who is responsible for decisions. Decisions will be made by and through this House.

May I confess to one fear, however? My right hon. Friend is such an effective campaigner that by the time he has set his sights on VAT, fuel duty and heaven knows what else, I am not sure that Her Majesty's Government will have any revenue left.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab) [V]: From tomorrow, three quarters of the country will be placed in tier 4, meaning millions more businesses will have to shut overnight. Since tier 4 was created, we have heard nothing from the Chancellor of the Exchequer about what is being done to support businesses that are being forced to close again. Does the Leader of the House not think that people who are facing financial ruin will find it absolutely appalling that Parliament will not be sitting next week, and that that sends a terrible message about the importance his Government place on support for businesses, which might not be able to wait another week to get the answers that they need?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The action taken so far has been absolutely unprecedented. Over £200 billion of taxpayers' money has been dedicated to helping the economy; 12 million jobs have been protected through the furlough scheme and self-employed schemes, at a cost of £56 billion; thousands of businesses have been helped with over

£100 billion-worth of support in loans, VAT deferrals, business grants, business rates relief and targeted grants and VAT cuts; the furlough scheme is continuing during this period for all parts of the United Kingdom until March; and the self-employment grant covers up to 80% of profit. A great deal is being done to help businesses, and local authorities have specific funds that they can use to help businesses that might otherwise not be able to achieve help through the specific schemes. A great deal is being done, the Chancellor has come to the House regularly, and there will be a debate on covid on the Tuesday after we return.

**Alberto Costa** (South Leicestershire) (Con) [V]: A very happy new year to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and indeed to all the staff and the Leader of the House.

Two weeks ago, the inquiry I chaired for British Future, that respected independent think tank, published its "Barriers to Britishness" report, seeking a new approach to British citizenship policy. Its recommendations included the awarding of honorary British citizenship to migrants who have contributed in an outstanding and exemplary manner to our British society. Would the Leader of the House support a debate on how we can improve on citizenship policy?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am tempted to go back to Don Pacifico, because he was a British citizen by virtue of being born in Gibraltar, yet his British citizenship was upheld by the then Government—by Palmerston—regardless. I think that British citizenship is equal among all of us, and that all British citizens, whether they have been British citizens through their families for hundreds of years or they became a British citizen five minutes ago, are equally British citizens, equally subject to the protection of law, equal in front of the law and equally part of our democratic society. We should all give that message, and everything my hon. Friend does to encourage that I fully support.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP) [V]: LEAP Sports Scotland, in my constituency, does fantastic work to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in sports and to break down barriers. It has been among many non-academic groups that have benefited from the wide opportunities afforded by Erasmus+ and is most concerned that it would lose out under the Turing scheme. May we have a debate on facilitating Scotland's continued participation in Erasmus+ as has been afforded to the people in Northern Ireland?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** There will be an opportunity to debate the Turing scheme when we come back and discuss global Britain, and to think about how much better it is for the whole country to look globally rather than at the narrow European sphere. It has to be said that the Scots have led the world in this; over centuries, Scottish explorers and adventurers—great figures from Scotland—have done so much in their travels abroad, and I hope that that will continue under the Turing scheme.

**Mr Richard Holden** (North West Durham) (Con) [V]: Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish you, the staff of the House and all Members a happy new year. Despite tier 4, I know that my constituents are excited about and welcome today's vaccine announcement, which shows that we are hopefully in the final furlong—final furlough,

[Mr Richard Holden]

I should say—of the pandemic. I am glad to see the debate on global Britain happening in the new year, and I hope that the Leader of the House will ensure that we shall have plenty of these debates, now that we are free from the shackles of the EU. I hope they will be regular debates, particularly on both our new trade agreements and on our new year's resolution, which is doubling down on levelling up for constituencies such as mine.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I hope we are in the last furlong of the furlough scheme, which was perhaps what my hon. Friend was getting at, with “furlong” and “furlough” all coming together. Yes, we must have lots of debates on the opportunities that face us, and I am sure that we will and that when we are back that will set us off to a good start. We will get the Trade Bill back from the House of Lords, and there will no doubt be Lords amendments to consider, and we will have an exciting legislative programme as well. He is absolutely right: double down and level up. That is a wonderful mixed metaphor and it is mathematically extremely complex, but, none the less, it is what we should be doing.

**Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD) [V]:** Before I ask my question, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I take the opportunity to wish you, the Leader of the House, fellow MPs and members of staff a happy new year? May I also take the opportunity to educate the Leader of the House on a great German composer, as “da-da-da-dah, da-da-da-dah” is Beethoven's fifth symphony, whereas “Ode to Joy” is the ninth? But hey-ho.

When the fisheries Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Banbury (Victoria Prentis), held the call for MPs on Christmas eve, the answer she had for most questions was “I don't yet know.” Since then, we have worked out some details for ourselves. Fishermen now want to know how they have ended up with a small increase in some quotas but will in fact be able to catch less fish than before. May we have an early statement from the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, so that he can explain to the fishing communities what has actually been done to deliver the sea of opportunities that he has promised?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am so sorry I was not clear; I thought that everybody knew that “da-da-da-dah, da-da-da-dah” was the fifth symphony. It was, of course, used as the signature tune of the BBC during the second world war to indicate that freedom was coming to Europe. As regards fishermen, the deal delivers for our fishermen. It recognises UK sovereignty over our fishing waters and puts us in a position to rebuild our fishing fleet and increase quotas in the next few years. There will be a rapid increase in quota—an uplift of up to 25%—by the end of five and a half years, beginning at 15%, before annual negotiations mean we can steadily increase beyond that point. In addition, £100 million will be spent in a programme to modernise the fishing fleet and the fish processing industry, so this is a great new opportunity for fishing. As the Prime Minister said in his speech earlier, it is putting right the wrongs of the common fisheries policy. May I finish by wishing my neighbour in Somerset a very happy new year? I am sorry that both Bath and North East Somerset are going into

tier 3 from midnight tonight, or one minute past midnight tomorrow morning, but at least we will be able to have happy celebrations among ourselves.

**Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con):** I thank my right hon. Friend for his sterling personal contribution to securing the full Brexit of our dreams, but may I remind him that there is an organisation still frustrating our power to control our own borders and laws? I am referring to the European Court of Human Rights. Can we have a debate about that Court, particularly in light of its judgment, reported in *The Times* law reports yesterday, in the case of Unuane? That is a case in which we deported a foreign national offender who had been sentenced to five and a half years' imprisonment for very serious immigration offences—assisting other people to break our immigration laws. The Court has said that deportation was unlawful. Can we have a debate to discuss judge-made law, which the Court itself referred to? It said that it was interpreting the law itself, although it is not spelt out in article 8.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The official Home Office line is that the Home Office is disappointed with the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, as it has a duty to protect the public by removing foreign criminals who violate our laws, and that is obviously right, but I would say to my hon. Friend that there is one fundamental difference between the ECJ and the European Court of Human Rights: ECJ judgments became our law automatically, whereas judgments of the European Court of Human Rights have to come through Parliament at some point to make our law compatible, but that ultimately is a choice. He will remember that it was a choice we were very reluctant to make over voting rights for prisoners. The European Court of Human Rights has a different status—a lesser status—and the great protector of human rights in this nation is this House of Commons, not any court outside the country.

**Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab) [V]:** I thank the Leader of the House for his reply to my letter regarding his Scrooge-like attack on charities helping British children just before Christmas. When will he allow time for us to debate all the efforts of organisations such as UNICEF to support UK children so negatively affected by his Government's policies, such as universal credit? Will he say what was neglected in his letter, which is when he will visit Southwark to see the excellent UNICEF-funded School Food Matters work here?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question. People do think that UNICEF will be funding people in Yemen, and that is where it boasts of spending money and helping people who are in dire need, which is quite right. That is a worthy service, and it is where it has support from the British Government. Domestically, the British Government's record is absolutely first class. We are working incredibly hard. We have extended free school meals to all five to seven-year-olds, benefiting 1.4 million children. We have doubled free childcare for eligible working parents, and we will establish a £1 billion childcare fund, giving parents the support and freedom to look after their children. We are spending £400 million of taxpayers' money to support children, families and the most vulnerable over winter and through 2021, and we are putting an additional £1.7 billion into universal credit work allowances by 2023-24, which will give families an extra £630 a year. In addition, over

630,000 fewer children are living in workless households than did in 2010—the best route out of poverty—with 100,000 fewer children in absolute poverty between 2010 and 2019. That is a very strong record. UNICEF does admirable work outside the United Kingdom.

**Felicity Buchan** (Kensington) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend reassure me that he will do everything to get this Chamber back up and fully operational as quickly as possible, since we are here to scrutinise Government and there is important legislation we need to get through in the new year, such as the fire and building safety Bill, which is very important for my constituency?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** My hon. Friend and I are completely at one on this. It is so important that we get this House back to normal. Scrutiny is more effective when it is spontaneous and it is more spontaneous when it is not dialled in. Debates are better when there is the free flow of interventions that make it lively and exciting. It keeps people on their mettle, rather than their reading out speeches they wrote a week ago. That is not a proper debate. That is not holding people to account. That is not developing thought in the way that a debate does. The sooner we are back to normal the better, but we are living within the constraints of the pandemic. However, with the vaccination programme being rolled out and the temporary orders remaining until the end of March, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The Chair of the Backbench Business Committee and the Leader of the House have just confirmed that my debate on 7 January will be carried over to 14 January, but as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker, I always come prepared with a substitute question and I have one here which I will be able to use right now. Elim Missions, located in my constituency in Newtonards, does excellent work in Swaziland on health, education, farming and job creation. Will the Leader of the House consider a debate on support available for countries such as Swaziland in Africa, whose hospitals are overwhelmed and understaffed with little access to necessary treatments and medication, and are in urgent need of support?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The hon. Gentleman is right to praise the operation in his constituency that supports people in Swaziland. It sounds a really noble and worthy effort. As regards a debate, I sometimes feel, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the hon. Gentleman knows more about how to get debates in this place than I do. I feel that telling him how to get a debate is teaching my grandmother to suck eggs.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con) [V]: Will the Leader of the House join me in commending the staff of the Committee on the Future Relationship with the European Union for enabling us to publish a report overnight one working day after the deal was published? Will he use one of the five sitting days when we get back to give the Committee some more time to do a proper job of scrutinising the 1,200 pages of the agreement? That is, after all, the Committee's main job and we have not had much time for parliamentary scrutiny today.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** My hon. Friend once again highlights the amazing work done by the people who serve us in this House and their fantastic commitment to democracy

to make sure that the wheels of democracy turn properly. I am in correspondence with the right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn), the Chairman of the relevant Select Committee. Of course, my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) chairs the European Scrutiny Committee, which looks at similar matters. The two of them may wish to confer.

**Apsana Begum** (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab) [V]: The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office website states:

“We are responsible for:...supporting British nationals around the world through modern and efficient consular services”.

It has been widely reported that British citizens arrested overseas through no fault of their own no longer have the right to Government assistance or protection from the Foreign Office, even if they are tortured or held as diplomatic leverage against their country. Can the Leader of the House explain what his Government believe to be the consular functions of the FCDO? Can he confirm whether they have changed? What measures have been considered for support on a discretionary basis that the FCDO currently says it provides? If there have been any changes in the consular functions, will he ensure that they are brought to the House for full, open and transparent debate and scrutiny?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office supports 30,000 British nationals overseas each year—from victims of crime or personal accidents to complicated, long-running cases, such as of those who have been detained. I think the issue is that the FCDO is saying that it is harder to help dual nationals, but the Government are absolutely clear that one of the great responsibilities of any Government is to defend Her Majesty's subjects. I will certainly pass on to my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary the hon. Lady's desire that this should be done, because the defence of the realm and of Her Majesty's subjects is at the heart of government.

**Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con) [V]: From tomorrow, most of England will be in tier 4, causing great difficulties for many businesses, but particularly for hospitality and related sectors, many of which have been unable to receive covid support because of state aid de minimis limits. May we have a debate on how, following the passing of the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill, we can use our new freedoms to make sure that businesses big and small get the support that they need during this pandemic?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** Local councils do have £4.6 billion of un-ringfenced funding, which they can use to help businesses, but my hon. Friend is right to raise the issue of hospitality businesses, which are particularly badly affected. It has been a very hard time for them. They do usually benefit from the normal schemes—the furlough scheme and the rate reduction scheme, and of course all benefit from the VAT reduction scheme—but I think that you, Madam Deputy Speaker, along with Mr Speaker and the other Deputy Speakers, would not look askance at such issues being raised on the Monday and Tuesday when we are back from recess, as they are covered by both the debates I mentioned.

**Kevin Brennan** (Cardiff West) (Lab) [V]: The pandemic has highlighted the lack of a safety net for the self-employed, including in respect of issues such as paternity and shared parental leave. May we have a statement on when we will see the employment rights Bill that was promised in the Queen's Speech?

May I wish you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and everyone in the House a happy and healthy new year, and extend that to my 91-year-old mother Beryl, who received the covid vaccine yesterday?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** First, may I say happy new year to the hon. Gentleman and to his mother Beryl, and say how delighted I am that she has received the vaccine? All of us with parents whom one dare not call elderly but who are no longer in the first spring of youth are greatly relieved when they receive the vaccine, so I think the whole House is pleased on the hon. Gentleman's behalf.

As regards what is being done to help the self-employed, the self-employment schemes have given support directly: 80% of income has gone to self-employed people if they have been self-employed for long enough—I accept that some people have not been eligible—so there has been some element of safety net for them. That has been important, but people who are self-employed know that they are aiming to get greater rewards and taking a higher degree of risk, so their employment rights are inevitably different from those of people working under contracts of employment.

**Scott Benton** (Blackpool South) (Con) [V]: The tourism sector has been hit particularly hard by this year's restrictions, which have had a significant impact on coastal communities such as Blackpool. Many of my local businesses, including the world-famous Blackpool Pleasure Beach, have seen their revenue decimated and now face a difficult winter period until they can reopen. Will my right hon. Friend therefore look to hold a debate in Government time on how we can support the tourism industry and ensure that it can reopen safely in 2021?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I absolutely recognise the severe impact of covid restrictions on tourism and hospitality, which is why the Government have provided a range of targeted measures to see the sector through this period. On top of the wider economic support package, the Government have provided business rates relief and one-off grants for eligible hospitality and leisure businesses, and VAT has been cut from 20% to 5% for tourism and hospitality activities until the end of March. The Government are committed to working with the sector to develop a tourism recovery plan, which will ensure that the UK's tourism industry can build back better and warmly welcome visitors to all parts of the UK as soon as it is safe to do so. My hon. Friend may want to have a word with the chairman of the Conservative party, my right hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling), and lobby her to get the party conference back to Blackpool. I know that many people enjoyed it greatly when it used to be held there.

**Ruth Jones** (Newport West) (Lab) [V]: Madam Deputy Speaker, I wish you and all the staff of the House a very happy, peaceful and healthy new year.

Given the current escalation of the pandemic due to the new covid strain, and given that we as Members of the House have been encouraged to keep ourselves and parliamentary staff safe by working remotely, when will we move back to online voting? Now that we have got Brexit done—allegedly—is it not time for the House of Commons to level up with the other place and resume electronic voting? After all, the system is shovel-ready.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** In wishing the hon. Lady a happy new year, I congratulate her on her ability to get Brexit slogans into her question. This is almost a bingo game that we can play at future business questions to see who can get the most into any one question.

I am sorry to disappoint the hon. Lady, but the proxy system works extremely well, and it is robust. As we all know, the House of Lords system failed, and if it had failed on a crucial occasion such as today, that would have caused a real problem. I do not think we want to model ourselves on the House of Lords in this instance. It is interesting quite how many people are currently voting in the House of Lords—it is many more than normal.

**Sara Britcliffe** (Hyndburn) (Con) [V]: I would like to take this opportunity to wish everybody all the best for the new year.

Swathes of the country are now moving into tier 4, including, disappointingly, Hyndburn and Haslingden, where constituents have faced restrictions for longer than most. This morning's vaccine news was another real positive, but can I urge that the vaccine is distributed as quickly as possible? Also, can the Leader of the House assure me that everything is being done to make sure that Parliament is covid-secure to keep it functioning physically and virtually, so that our constituents are represented properly in the Houses of Parliament?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because she touches on what I and others have been trying to do since we rose for the Easter recess in March. It is so important that Parliament operates, and I take this opportunity to thank the shadow Leader of the House, who has been very supportive in ensuring that Parliament could operate, and, obviously, Mr Speaker and the Clerks. It is reassuring to know that Members across the House are so enthusiastic for our proper business to carry on. Early on, people wondered whether a functioning democracy was actually an essential part of the nation's activities. We always felt that it was and that we had to ensure that democratic representation went on, because the best Governments are the ones that are well and effectively scrutinised.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP) [V]: If the Leader of the House thinks that the current arrangements represent a covid-secure Parliament, he must have been attending a different Parliament from the one I attended in the last four weeks before Christmas, and if he thinks that that represents a functioning democracy, he must be living on a different planet from most of us.

My Trade Agreements (Exclusion of National Health Services) Bill is due to receive its Second Reading in early January—in fact, there may be a decision of the House on that later today. A large number of MPs have told me that they would be keen to speak in that debate,



and it would be perfectly easy to allow them to do that remotely, but the Leader of the House is determined that they must instead travel from all over the United Kingdom to Westminster, inevitably creating an additional risk of spreading the virus. Will he agree to reconsider his dogmatic and irrational opposition to allowing full participation in all proceedings of the House so that MPs who want to speak in support of our NHS can do so without themselves running the risk of placing an extra burden on our health services?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am a bit puzzled, because I irrationally and dogmatically brought forward a motion earlier today that allows exactly what the hon. Gentleman wants.

**James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con):** I really welcome ongoing progress with virtual participation, although it does fall short of where the House needs to be. Given that our role in this place is ultimately to serve others, and given that no self-respecting MP would wish to jump the queue, does my right hon. Friend agree that we need to bring in testing and perhaps also to advance vaccinations for Members of Parliament?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The House authorities have worked hard to implement a robust and efficient system of PCR testing for those who work on the parliamentary estate and experience symptoms. We are fortunate that that testing provides highly accurate results in a short turnaround time. The current testing regime, combined with the social distancing and covid security measures on the estate, has enabled Parliament to continue to function effectively, but—I agree with my hon. Friend—less effectively than when we are fully physically present.

The House authorities have been working with Public Health England and the Department of Health and Social Care to explore the potential use of lateral flow tests. That work continues, but currently the roll-out of lateral flow testing has been prioritised to other sites, such as schools, hospitals and care homes. We are working to ensure that all MPs will be able to participate remotely in debates and use the proxy system that has been in place for some time. That is the right compromise for the time being, but we celebrate the news that the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is now available and will be rolled out, and that once a sufficient number of people have been vaccinated and it is safe to do so, this House can get back to normal. However, I agree with my hon. Friend that it would not be right for us to jump the queue.

**Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op) [V]:** I am delighted to hear from my constituency neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Cardiff West (Kevin Brennan), that his mother has received the vaccine, and I am delighted that the Oxford vaccine has been approved—I pay tribute to all the scientists behind that—but we are in a race against time now. We have heard this afternoon that there will be only 530,000 doses of the vaccine available next week, not the millions that were promised; Jonathan Van-Tam has been telling us that there is a global fill and production capacity issue; and the Prime Minister is now refusing to give guarantees on the number of doses that will be administered each week by the NHS.

Will the Leader of the House therefore speak to his colleague the vaccines Minister, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), and ask him to make an urgent statement to the House? I think that we should be sitting next week, virtually. If we do not, will the vaccines Minister do a virtual session online for Members of Parliament? The last one, before Christmas, was an absolute shambles, which hardly gives us confidence. Our constituents want to know what is happening with the vaccine, and they want to know now.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his enthusiasm for the vaccine, which at least was the preamble to his question. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care was here earlier this afternoon answering questions about the vaccine. As soon as we are back—the day after, on the Tuesday—there will be a debate on covid, which will be another opportunity to raise questions. One has to be realistic about this. The vaccine is being rolled out as swiftly as possible. This is very important. It is a great achievement. We have been one of the first countries in the world to license a vaccine and get it into people's arms, and that is going to make the country safer earlier than would otherwise be the case. I think one should look at the good news rather than being too Eeyore-ish about it.

**John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) [V]:** I was surprised by the lack of Government business in the forward look from the Leader of the House. I had assumed that Ministers would be jostling to come forward with ways to use all the new freedoms we will have following independence day on 1 January. Can the Leader of the House give us some insight into when we will hear from the Government about the taxes they will be changing and removing, the laws they will be improving, and the grant, subsidy and support schemes they will be shaping in Britain's interest? I am sure that we can improve on many of the things that we were suffering under during our time in the European Union.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I am very grateful to my right hon. Friend. His views on what should happen and mine are very close. I would point out to him that there are quite a few Bills currently in their lordships' House, which they are working through patiently; of course, every peer has important views that they wish to express on many of these issues. Those will come back, and as they come back, that will take up our time. But there is good news for my right hon. Friend: although it is not necessarily right for me to announce the Bills that are coming, because other Secretaries of State may wish to announce them individually, I have a feeling that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary may be cooking something up that he will like very much.

**Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab) [V]:** I am sure that the well-informed and intelligent Leader of the House will know that written on the first page of every UK passport is a commitment to

“afford the bearer such assistance and protection as may be necessary.”

yet the Government this week stated that British citizens unlawfully arrested and detained abroad have no right to consular assistance. There is serious concern among my constituents in Hampstead and Kilburn that the

[*Tulip Siddiq*]

Government are not taking seriously their responsibilities to British citizens abroad, so may we have a debate in Government time about the UK's duty to help those such as my constituent Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, who has been held hostage in Iran for nearly five years now?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** I pay tribute to the hon. Lady, and the shadow Leader of the House, for their tireless campaigning for Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, which is a model of how Members of Parliament ought to behave when seeking redress of grievance for their constituents. The hon. Member for Hampstead and Kilburn (*Tulip Siddiq*) is absolutely right. The words in the passport are:

“Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State requests and requires in the name of Her Majesty”.

We are, I believe, the only country that both requests and requires. When Government documents say such things, I expect them to be factual. The Foreign Office helps 30,000 British nationals each year. As I said earlier, it is a fundamental point that the British Government must protect Her Majesty's subjects.

**Sir Robert Syms (Poole) (Con):** Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole have an infection rate of about 220 people per 100,000. We are being moved up two tiers; we will be in tier 4 along with areas such as Thurrock, which has seven times that infection rate. People turning up to spend the new year in Bournemouth hotels are being turned round and sent back home with less than eight hours' notice. This is a disaster for local businesses. If the health nutters are determined to ruin businesses in Dorset, can they at least set out clear criteria for doing it?

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** The problem is that the rates have been increasing very rapidly even in areas where they are very low, and this new strain seems to be infecting people more quickly. Obviously, there is hope from the vaccine. I assume that my hon. Friend did not get in on questions to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care; if I may, I will pass on his question directly to our right hon. Friend for, perhaps, a more comprehensive answer.

**Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP):** Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and all the House staff, for making today possible.

This Friday, Northern Ireland enters into its celebratory centenary year. What an exciting year! Nationalists tell us that it is the end of the Union, but we are just beginning. Could the Leader of the House, who I know wants the Union to flourish, bring together all his Cabinet colleagues to put together a list of things that they intend to do to promote Northern Ireland throughout the coming year, to help us all celebrate, and to establish that this is the first year of the second century of Northern Ireland? I look forward to the party that the Leader of the House intends to throw for Ulster.

**Mr Rees-Mogg:** That sounds like a date. Once the restrictions are lifted, we must celebrate the 100th anniversary of Northern Ireland, and of the United Kingdom in its current form. We should always celebrate our nation. The hon. Gentleman has given me

an excuse to have a second glass of champagne tomorrow night—and in the spirit of good will to our European friends, it will of course be champagne. I can have one at 11 o'clock to celebrate the end of the transition period, and another at 12 o'clock to celebrate 100 years of the United Kingdom in its current form. It has to be said—I do not know whether you know this, Madam Deputy Speaker—that the parties in Northern Ireland are absolutely fantastic. I went to speak in the hon. Gentleman's constituency, and it was absolutely brilliant: at the end of their events, they all stand up and sing the national anthem. I am tempted to suggest that we do that at the end of the Adjournment debate every evening in the House of Commons.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I thank hon. and right hon. Members for their kind words this afternoon about our hard-working staff.

### BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (TODAY)

*Ordered,*

That, at this day's sitting

(a) notwithstanding the provisions of Standing Order No. 16, proceedings on the first of the Motions in the name of a Minister of the Crown relating to 5 Public Health regulations (SI, 2020, Nos. 1518, 1533, 1572, 1611 & 1646) shall be brought to a conclusion not later than three hours after the commencement of proceedings on the first motion and the Speaker shall then put forthwith the Questions necessary to dispose of each such Motion; and

(b) the Question on the motion in the name of Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg relating to Private Members' Bills shall be put forthwith;

and such proceedings, though opposed, may be continued or entered upon after the moment of interruption; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(*Jacob Rees-Mogg.*)

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** We will now have a brief suspension to allow for the safe exit and entry of hon. and right hon. Members.

6.54 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

6.58 pm

*On resuming—*

**Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab):** On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Just a short while ago the Secretary of State for Education told the House that “the overwhelming majority” of primary schools would be open on Monday 4 January, but moments later snuck out a statement which makes it clear that huge numbers of pupils across the country—half a million in London alone—will not be at primary school on Monday. I am sure that it was not his intention to mislead the House, but, I believe that inadvertently, that may have happened. I ask that the Education Secretary return to the House to apologise to parents, teachers and school staff across the country, because his statement has added confusion and chaos to weeks of just that.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. It is not really a matter for the Chair, but Members on the Treasury Bench will have heard his points, and if the Secretary of State wishes to offer any further clarification, I am sure that he will do so.

## Public Health

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** The Business of the House motion just agreed to by the House provides for the motions on the five statutory instruments on today's Order Paper, each relating to public health, to be debated together for up to three hours. Those are SI Nos. 1518, 1533, 1572, 1611 and 1646. At the end of the debate, I will put the Question on each motion separately. A large number of Members want to contribute to the debate, so we will start with a five-minute time limit.

7 pm

**The Minister for Care (Helen Whately):** I beg to move,

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation and Linked Households) (England) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1518), dated 11 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11 December, be approved.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** With this we shall debate the following motions:

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1533), dated 14 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 14 December, be approved.

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1572), dated 17 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17 December, be approved.

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers and Obligations of Undertakings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1611), dated 20 December 2020, a copy of which were laid before this House on 21 December, be approved.

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1646), dated 24 December 2020, a copy of which were laid before this House on 29 December, be approved.

**Helen Whately:** Before I say anything else, I want to say thank you to all our health and social care workers who have been working day and night through Christmas, Boxing day and the bank holiday. I know that every single one of them is feeling the strain and that they are not just tired but exhausted, having gone not just the extra mile but miles and miles of extra miles. I would also like to thank everyone across the country who has forgone the joy of sharing Christmas with family or friends. We have all missed those precious moments, and I know that this has been particularly painful for those facing what may be the last chance to spend Christmas with a loved one nearing the end of their life. That is why I say thank you to them from the bottom of my heart for what they have done, not so much for their own sake but to protect others.

I would like to take a moment to celebrate the good news of the authorisation of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine for use. Although the development of vaccines is an international collaboration, we should recognise the contribution of the British life sciences sector, which offers the UK a way out of this disease and will make a huge impact on the global response.

**Mr William Wragg (Hazel Grove) (Con):** Could my hon. Friend confirm the numbers of the AstraZeneca vaccine that are ready to be administered?

**Helen Whately:** My hon. Friend may well have heard the statement by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, after which he answered a large number of questions about the vaccine. As he said, we will be rolling out the vaccine as rapidly as possible, we are poised and ready to start rolling out that particular vaccine as of next week, and it is all about getting the supply of the vaccine in to enable us to do that.

There is light at the end of the tunnel, but we are not there yet. We are here today to debate regulations that increased the restrictions on parts of the country before Christmas, but we also heard the Health Secretary's statement earlier and know the seriousness of the situation we face despite those greater restrictions. We know that we have just had the highest number of new cases in one day—over 53,000—and in many parts of the country, our hospitals are stretched to the limit. We know we are facing a new variant of covid that is more infectious and spreading rapidly in many parts of the country, so I am in no doubt that we were right to introduce further restrictions when we did.

Before going into the details of the regulations, I will give a brief overview of the measures we are debating. On 2 December, a revised tiering system was introduced following approval of the all-tiers regulations in both Houses. Those have been amended four times. On 14 and 16 December, the all-tiers regulations were amended to move some local authority areas between tiers. Those changes came into force on 16 and 19 December respectively. On 20 December, the all-tiers regulations were amended to introduce a further level of restrictions—tier 4—and to move some local authority areas into that tier and to exclude tier 4 from the Christmas easements. Finally, on 24 December, the all-tiers regulations were amended to move some local authority areas into higher tiers, and some amendments were made to the measures in tier 4.

In addition to those four amendments to the all-tiers regulations, we are debating the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation and Linked Households) (England) Regulations 2020, which reduce the self-isolation period for household and non-household contacts from 14 days to 10, based on evidence showing that the likelihood of being infectious as a contact after 10 days is low. That decision was made following advice from UK chief medical officers. To bring English policy in line with other nations in the UK, we now count the start date of this period from the day after exposure, onset of symptoms or a test. Those with covid-19 should continue to self-isolate for 10 days, as per Government guidelines. We have brought the wait time for those switching support or childcare bubbles down to 10 days, in line with those changes.

I know that some hon. Members have previously raised concerns about parliamentary scrutiny, and some may be disappointed that those amendments were made in advance of this debate. However, I am sure hon. Members will also appreciate that this virus does not wait for parliamentary procedure. The situation we faced in the run-up to Christmas, as we identified that the cause of the rapid rise in infections was the new variant, meant that we had to act, and act fast.

**Sir Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con):** The great disappointment felt by many colleagues, who appreciate that the Government are under enormous pressure, is that the House rose on the Thursday, and the decision was made pretty much the next day. It is a great shame that

[*Sir Charles Walker*]

the House was not recalled on the Friday, or possibly even the Saturday before Christmas, to scrutinise the new regulations. That is where the sense of disappointment lies. Most families are more than capable of making the right decisions for their relatives without being instructed to do that in law.

**Helen Whately:** I hear my hon. Friend's point, and I share his view that throughout this pandemic the vast majority of people have behaved with great responsibility. I know that people in tiers other than tier 4 thought very hard about whether they should gather with relatives, even within the easing that was allowed during the Christmas period, and rightly so. We must all play our part in controlling the virus and stopping its spread.

**Sir Christopher Chope** (Christchurch) (Con): Will the Minister give way?

**Helen Whately:** I will make some progress.

At the time of these provisions we were seeing an exponential rise in cases in London, Kent, and some other parts of the south-east, and it was clear that the tier 3 restrictions were not sufficient. We identified the existence of a new variant in those areas, and further analysis showed us that the new variant was driving the steep trajectory of infections. The new and emerging respiratory virus threats advisory group—NERVTAG—tells us that the new variant demonstrates a substantial increase in transmissibility, compared with other variants, and that the R value appears to be significantly higher, with initial estimates suggesting an increase of between 0.4 and 0.9.

There is no evidence to suggest that the new variant of the virus is more likely to cause more serious disease, but increased infections lead to increased hospital admissions and, sadly, increased loss of life. These winter months already pose great challenges for our NHS. That is why we had to take the action that we took before Christmas, and the further steps announced today to control the relentless spread of the virus. However, it is not all bad news.

**Sir Christopher Chope:** Will my hon. Friend give way on that point?

**Helen Whately:** I am making some progress and I am mindful that many Members want to speak this evening.

The roll-out of the Pfizer vaccine is happening at pace, with more than 600,000 people receiving it between 8 and 20 December. Vaccinations in care homes started on 16 December, and the NHS has already been getting the vaccine to those who are most vulnerable, and the care workers who look after them. Now the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved, and it is much easier to get out to people and into arms. There is every reason for optimism, but we are not there yet. We must suppress the virus now and in the weeks ahead.

On the specific measures in these regulations, in response to the greatly increased risk, the addition of tier 4 stay-at-home measures will be familiar to people from the November national restrictions. Tier 4 involves minor changes to those national restrictions. As of November, people in tier 4 areas must stay at home and not travel out of tier 4. They may only leave for a

limited number of reasons such as work, education, or caring purposes. We are advising that clinically extremely vulnerable people in tier 4 areas should do as they did in November and stay at home as much as possible, except to go outdoors for exercise or to attend health appointments. The regulations contain the same exemptions as other tiers for childcare and support bubbles. We advise that people elsewhere avoid travelling into a tier 4 area, unless they need to do so for work, education or health purposes.

**Sir Christopher Chope:** Can my hon. Friend help me? Statutory instrument No. 1572 required the people of Christchurch to move from tier 1 to tier 2, and it came into effect on 19 December. Today, the Secretary of State has announced that the people of Christchurch should be moving into tier 4, with effect from midnight tonight. What has happened between 19 December and today to force the people of Christchurch to lose all that liberty?

**Helen Whately:** One thing that I will do when I have finished speaking is see whether I can look up the specific data for the hon. Member's constituency. In general, however, the announcements made today, just as with previous announcements, are based on the data that we are seeing, which includes rapidly rising rates of infection in certain areas, the level of new infections, the trajectory and hospital pressures.

The tier 4 regulations require all non-essential retail, indoor entertainment, hairdressers and other personal care services to close. International travel is restricted to business trips. However, we have listened to hon. Members and the public about what is most important to people in their daily lives so, unlike in the November restrictions, communal worship and a wider range of outdoor recreation are still permitted. We also recognise the restrictions' impact on businesses and continue to provide them with ongoing support to help them get through the crisis.

We know that these measures are hard. We know that they keep families and friends apart, yet we also know that they are necessary for us to get through this situation and to prevent the loss of lives as we do so. This virus thrives on the things that make life worth living, such as social contact, but that means we can all play our part in stopping the spread—as I said, if not for ourselves, then for others. The end is in sight, but for now it is our duty here in Parliament to put in place these restrictions—onerous though they are—to control this virus. I commend the regulations to the House.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** As I said, we will start with a five-minute time limit on Back-Bench speeches. I remind hon. Members that, when a speaking limit is in effect for Back Benchers, a countdown clock will be visible on the screens of right hon. and hon. Members participating virtually and on the screens in the Chamber. For right hon. and hon. Members participating physically, the usual clock will operate.

7.12 pm

**Alex Norris** (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): I hope you had a good Christmas, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I wish you and all colleagues a happy new year. I take this moment to express our gratitude for the work of you and the staff to ensure that we could sit today. I

also associate myself with the Minister's comments regarding this country's outstanding health and social care workforce, who have made Herculean efforts over Christmas and new year. They are greatly appreciated.

There is something very 2020 about discussing covid regulations three hours after a subsequent set of regulations were introduced, but it is nevertheless important that we do so. I will cover each of them, perhaps making some cross-cutting points as I do so.

With regard to SI No. 1611, we discuss these regulations today because we are obliged to do so following their introduction on 20 December. However, we are compelled to do so because the failures of the restrictions announced on 2 December. At some point in the next few parliamentary days, we will debate the restrictions announced from the Dispatch Box earlier, and we are compelled to do that because of the failure of restrictions that we talk about today. This episode is a perfect encapsulation of the failings of the Government's handling of the pandemic: slow and always falling short.

The Government have now had three goes at a tier system. The first two have failed, and today's announcement marks the final attempt to salvage a third go. We must hear from the Minister today a clear commitment that, based on the best scientific guidance available, the Government firmly believe that these restrictions will halt the rise in the infection rate and, indeed, start to reduce it. We must have that commitment today, because otherwise we will be back here time and again. When the Minister, hopefully, makes that commitment, there ought also to be a commitment to publish the guidance that the judgments are based on, so that we might begin to repair damaged trust.

The stakes are high. We cannot afford failure. Our national health service is experiencing dire pressures. A major incident was declared in Essex this afternoon. Elsewhere, exasperated doctors are taking to social media to report that oxygen is running out. An internal incident has been declared at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich. London hospitals are asking their counterparts in Yorkshire for support. Rates of sickness in our care facilities are increasing. Right hon. and hon. Members had a call this afternoon with Stephen Powis from NHS England, and it was clear not only that the pressures are significant, but that we can expect multiple weeks of growing demand. If the Government dither and delay again today, the price will be significant indeed.

We are considering a bundle of five different regulations. I do not intend to labour too much on SI No. 1533 or SI No. 1572, as they deal exclusively with moving specific geographies into specific tiers and are now significantly out of date, as was elegantly demonstrated by the hon. Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope).

SI No. 1611 creates tier 4, something that nearly 80% of us will now need to get used to. I shall cover that shortly, but it also deals with Christmas. Although that is of course now in the past, it is worth reflecting on briefly. The change was announced on 19 December, turning the nation's plans upside down at a stroke. Of course, some allowance must be made for the changing nature of the virus; I accept that. We are in very fast-moving times. However, it was clear many days before the announcements were made that the initial Christmas plans would not be sustainable. That was regrettable, but it was clear. On 16 December, the Leader of the

Opposition asked the Prime Minister from this Dispatch Box to look at it again, and the Prime Minister replied characteristically with bluster and bluff. Later that day, he said that it would be an "inhuman" thing to do, but of course he had to. He delayed, he dithered and, eventually, he had to do it anyway. Again, these things matter because they chip away at public confidence bit by bit to create a sense that the Government do not really have a handle on the crisis.

We will all have been cheered—the Minister majored on this in her speech—to wake up this morning to the news of the approval by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. This is an extraordinary scientific success and a vindication of the Government's backing of multiple vaccine candidates. We should be exceptionally proud of Britain's role in this vaccine and others. It is a great success story for our country and our place in the world after such a significant day today.

The Health Secretary said today that the vaccine is the way out of the pandemic, so for us today the vaccine must be the way to end the regulations. That is nearly right, because actually it is a vaccination programme that is the way out of this. Of course, a vaccine is the most vital component of such a programme, but now that we have that it ceases to be so much a question of science and becomes a much more rudimentary and basic exercise in logistics.

The Government have faced two such major logistics challenges in this pandemic. The first was the effective and urgent procurement and distribution of personal protective equipment and the second was the roll-out of the test, trace and isolate system. Both have been significant failures. The PPE roll-out was a farce for at least the first two months, and the test and trace system has not delivered, even on the Government's own metrics, since its introduction. At the root of both these failures has been the same slowness that has characterised the Government's response to the pandemic. They have been slow to respond and slow to grasp the scale of the challenge—this cannot happen again with the vaccine.

I have an awful lot more confidence in a programme that will be delivered by the NHS than in one delivered by one of the companies that the Government seem to default to even though they do not tend to deliver for them. There are still some questions, however. NHS staff are in category 2 of the initial prioritisation, but we are still hearing that there has not yet been a full roll-out. Can the Minister let us know when she anticipates that all our NHS heroes will have had their jab? Of course, that is the least they deserve, but we have heard today from the British Medical Association that NHS staff absence is at 10%, so it is a pragmatic necessity that, as we deal with increasing demand, we have a resilient workforce to do that.

We saw a significant change of direction in the administration of the vaccine this morning. Previously, we were administering it in pairs about a month apart, and that was seen as the best way of delivering it effectively. Now, the Government have made the judgment that they will go to a first shot, with a second shot to come three months or so later. I assume that this reflects the best advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, and if so we will support it, but will the Minister publish that advice and, crucially, the roll-out plan?

[Alex Norris]

We know now that we have enough vaccines for everyone who wishes to take the offer up. We know that we have a national health service and different ways of dispensing it through our GPs and our hospitals. We know all the components, but we now need to know the timetable. That is important so that it can be scrutinised and perhaps improved, but also so that we can build public confidence in this crucial plan. People are rightly looking at this with great hope, and it is right that they know that there is a proper process behind it. In the meantime, however, the way out of the tiers as constituted in SIs Nos. 1611 and 1646 remains to reduce the five metrics on which the Government say the tiering decisions are based.

As a constituency MP, I have to say that this is a Kafkaesque process. Like you, I suspect, Madam Deputy Speaker, I have met Ministers, Government scientists and NHS leaders, both national and regional, and I still do not believe that there is a particular criterion for going up and down tiers. It is more that you kind of know it when you see it. To an extent, that is understandable. This is a complicated mix of infection rates, healthcare capacity and their associated trajectories and directions of travel, and then you kind of cook them all up altogether, so it is never going to be one number at one time at one moment. However, it is a significant issue for us as local leaders that we cannot build confidence in regulations by answering the basic question from constituents. I have had this multiple times, as will have other hon. and right hon. colleagues. Constituents are saying, “I accept that we are in the tier that we are in, and it is important that we are. I wish that we were in a lower one, so that I could do more of the things that I enjoy doing. What do we need to do in order to achieve that?” Frankly, as a local leader, I cannot answer that question and I doubt that anybody, including the Minister, could answer that question either.

What we did not hear from the Health Secretary from the Dispatch Box earlier, and what we did not hear from the Care Minister in her contribution just now, is that the reality is that people are in their tiers now, especially in tier 4, until the vaccine is rolled out. However, we have heard from the Prime Minister on that, hints on that from Robert Peston and hints on that in a reply after the Downing Street briefing. If that is the case, it is time for the Government to be honest about it. The one thing that we know after the year we have had is that the British people can take it. They can take that level of honesty. What they hate is when plans are changed at the last minute. What they hate is being told that, if they push down the infection rate in their community, they will be able to get back to doing the things that they love doing, and then finding out that it is no longer that but the percentage of positive tests. We have been through that in Nottingham; it is horrible and it is chipping away at confidence. It is time for a bit more honesty.

We support the introduction of these tiers. We withheld our support from the three-tier system. We did not believe that it would work and it did not. This goes further, so we are willing to support it, but two things need to be resolved with regulations that flow from today's announcements, but also relate to the regulations we are discussing today. First, on the support for business, the £1,000 for wet pubs was an insult—£30 a day for the

busiest time of year. Tiers 3 and 4 mean a shuttered hospitality sector. Viable businesses, jobs and livelihoods that are closed for very good reason must be better supported.

Similarly, tier 4 restrictions were introduced 10 days ago. We have worked throughout this pandemic on the principle that as restrictions increase, so does support for businesses, jobs and communities, but we have heard nothing since then. Where is the Chancellor? His slow and shorthanded response in his winter economic plan meant that, in the end, he had to have four different versions of it. Frankly, we might need another one because, otherwise, these restrictions will mean significant damage to our economy and to lives. This means action, finally, for those who have fallen between the various schemes on offer. We could dispute all day how many have been excluded, but we cannot deny their existence. I would give the Government significant latitude in understanding that, making a furlough scheme and a self-employed scheme out of nowhere for the first time, means there will be gaps between those schemes. It is entirely obvious that that will happen. However, we must do something about it and close those gaps. It has been months and months, and now the Government really have to do it.

Secondly, a fundamental gap remains the test, trace and isolate system, which is fundamental to breaking the chains of transmission. The Prime Minister promised 100% of results within 24 hours nearly six months ago. At the moment, that figure is 19%. If we allow for next day, rather than 24 hours—because it is still the Christmas season—that figure rises to 37%, which is pathetic. On tracing, things have got better, with the greater improvement of local authority teams. However, the one way the Government have made significant inroads in their testing statistics is by defaulting to the canniest tactic in the book; they have changed the way this is counted. Generally, that is not a good sign about how things are going. Again, progress here has been pathetic.

Crucially, we come to isolation payments. All colleagues will have heard stories of constituents making that impossible choice between feeding their families and doing the right thing for the national effort. The £500 payment was too slow to come forward and does not adequately replace lost income. The scheme is still so full of holes and very much depends on how the system picks people up. Self-isolation should be automatic and we have failed communities by not creating conditions for it to be so. Ministers will want to blame the new strain for covid's continued spread, but the reality is that they did not have control of the virus prior to this and they still do not have an adequate test and trace system to subdue and control it anyway. In the course of such a defective system, we have managed to spend £22 billion—dearie, dearie me.

Finally, on SI No. 1518, we are happy to support the reduction of the self-isolation period from 14 to 10 days, assuming, again, that it is based on the best scientific evidence. Will the Minister commit to publishing this?

To conclude, we are at a crucial point in this pandemic. Today, with profound sadness, we hear of the passing of a further 981 of our fellow countrymen and women. The total directly who have lost their lives from covid alone is over 70,000 but, in reality, it will be many, many more. Those are big numbers but behind every one of

them is a life, a person missed, a grieving family. Today, we have heard that the way out of this is in sight. However, we have also heard that things are poised to get much, much worse before they get better. In recognising this, the Government's response is another system of tiers. These have failed every time so far. They must not fail now and we must hear from them why they believe they will work. We must also hear more clearly what they are going to do to deliver on other crucial aspects—on the vaccine and on test and trace. Failure to do that will cause extraordinary harm.

7.25 pm

**Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): This House legislated explicitly for specific arrangements to govern the celebration of Christmas, and no sooner than the House had risen itself for Christmas, the Government, by ministerial fiat, changed those arrangements. We are asked this evening to give retrospective legislative approval to the changes that they made. We are in the absurd position of being asked to vote for the ghost of Christmas past.

Sometimes in a democracy, process has an importance. I am constantly—daily—confronted by individuals and businesses facing ruin, notwithstanding the huge investment that they made in covid-secure premises and procedures. What we have never had, and what we have always been asking for, is the cost-benefit analysis that the Government made on each of the restrictive measures that make up the menu of their tier system. I do not for one moment question the motives of Ministers. I do, however, question their ability, in exactly the way that I question my own ability.

When the House rose, the lobby of Government scientific advisers—a lobby, we should remember, that had already publicly expressed their frustration that their earlier strictures on how Christmas should be celebrated had not been fully taken on board by the Government—announced that they had discovered a new strain of the disease so much more transmissible than the earlier one. They bounced the Government. I have to accept, of course, the possibility that they may be absolutely right, but I know this: were I presented by such a lobby of eminent scientists—eminent people leading in their field—and told that they had discovered this new emergency, and that so many more people were going to die, and unless I did what they said, I would be responsible for their deaths, I would find great difficulty in having the wherewithal to identify and ask the right questions to be sure that they were on the money, or 100 miles from it.

What I would certainly want, and what I believe the Government need, is an alternative source of expertise—a competitive source of expertise—particularly statisticians leading in their fields, who would be able to furnish me, to arm me, to arm Ministers, with the right questions to ask about the validity of the modelling and the data. It can only improve the decision-making process. But what is really galling in all this is then to hear on the airwaves Professor Ferguson being interviewed, giving his wisdom to the nation once again, to all intents and purposes as if he were still a key Government adviser. I do hope that the Minister winding up the debate will be able to assure us that that is most certainly not the case. I was always rather jealous of Poole, Christchurch and Bournemouth, because our infection rate in the New

Forest was substantially lower than theirs, but they turned out to be in tier 2 and we were in tier 3. Now we are all together in tier 4.

**Sir Christopher Chope:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that we are now in tier 4, but in statutory instrument No. 1646, which was laid before this House on 29 December, we were in tier 2. Today—one day later—we are in tier 4. Is that not a mockery?

**Sir Desmond Swayne:** The reality is this. These are the questions that my constituents put to me, and I am reduced to saying, "It's one of life's great mysteries." The decision-making process is entirely opaque. That is why I voted against it when I had the chance.

7.30 pm

**Barbara Keeley** (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab) [V]: May I join colleagues in thanking House staff, Mr Speaker and the Deputy Speakers for enabling us to be recalled today?

This is a dangerous moment for our country, with hospitalisations now higher than they were during the first peak. With a new variant of the virus circulating in many areas of the country, we need action to protect lives. The route out of this pandemic is vaccination, so it is welcome news that we have the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and that the vaccine roll-out is accelerating. However, there remains significant confusion about who is currently eligible for the vaccine. We have been told that NHS and care staff will be a priority, but I have also heard that some trusts are putting a 5% cap on the number of vaccines for staff. We have already lost more than 600 healthcare workers to the virus, and leaving them unvaccinated for longer puts them at risk.

Does the Minister agree that we need a target date for vaccinating all frontline NHS and care staff, rather than just leaving it that they can get any vaccines spare at the end of the day, as the Secretary of State said earlier? The Minister thanked our staff, but can we now ensure that we protect them by vaccinating them?

We know that restrictions will work only if people comply with them, and although compliance has been generally high with people choosing to do the right thing, it appears to be slipping. That is deeply concerning in the context of the higher transmission rates that we are now seeing with the new variant. Unless compliance remains high, we will need ever-tighter restrictions to keep the virus under control. Will the Minister set out what the Government are doing to boost compliance, particularly with regulations such as those on face coverings? Will he confirm what support the Government are giving to local authorities and businesses to allow them to enforce the regulations? At the moment, many businesses feel unable to take the steps they need to take to keep their customers and staff safe. That is vital because of the pressure that our NHS is now under.

With more than 21,000 people in hospital and major incidents declared across the south-east, it is clear that our hospitals cannot cope if cases continue to rise. On top of that, many NHS staff are worn out and burned out after a year in which they have been under constant pressure. We are facing a situation in which the NHS may be overwhelmed, and there appears to be no safety net. Will the Minister confirm what the Government are

[Barbara Keeley]

doing to get more staff into or back into the NHS, and what contingency plans they have to ensure that routine services can continue if coronavirus cases continue to rise?

Finally, I want to ask the Minister what will happen if moving many areas into tier 4 restrictions, which we have been told is necessary to control the new strain of the virus, proves insufficient. What are the escalation plans and trigger points after tier 4? Setting out any plans for escalation in advance would enable people and businesses to plan for the worst while hoping for the best. I hope the Government will now set out a plan that makes clear what they will do if case numbers continue to rise. As my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris) said, the British people can take honesty.

7.34 pm

**Mr Mark Harper** (Forest of Dean) (Con): May I put on the record some remarks about our former colleague the Member for Northampton South, Brian Binley? He was first elected in 2005, in the same election as me, and was a valued colleague and a very kind man; many new Members have said that he was very kind to them, and I know that he will be much missed by his family and friends. I thought it appropriate to make those remarks in this Chamber, where he loved serving his constituents.

I also mention Parliament because I am very disappointed that the House will not sit next week. I listened carefully to Mr Speaker's remarks at the start of today's business and I recognise the pressures on the staff of the House; I add my thanks to all those who have worked and are working incredibly hard, not just today but on preceding and subsequent days, to ensure that the House can sit. However, at a time when the country faces incredible challenges and many workers in the public service are working incredibly hard, the House's role in scrutinising the important decisions of Government is essential.

I made representations earlier today and was pleased to listen to the Leader of the House's response to the shadow Leader of the House, the right hon. Member for Walsall South (Valerie Vaz), in which he made it clear that if the House votes this evening to adjourn until 11 January and if events over the next week or so demand it, the Government will seek to recall the House so that it can hold them to account. I assure the Government that if events necessitate a recall but it does not happen, hon. Members—certainly on the Conservative Benches, but I suspect on both sides of the House—will make appropriate representations very loudly indeed.

I have a couple of questions about the new variant of coronavirus. I have read some of the science behind it, and I recognise that there is a significant body of evidence about the increased transmissibility, but I am not clear what other steps individuals should take to deal with the fact that it is more transmissible. I have not heard any guidance about whether we need to maintain larger distances, wear masks in more scenarios or take other steps ourselves. The Government's only response seems to have been to shut more sectors of the economy. I think the Prime Minister admitted at the press conference today that it is an open question whether the tier 4 measures are likely to be effective.

**Steve Brine** (Winchester) (Con): As usual, my right hon. Friend is making a very thoughtful speech. As the Health Secretary said this evening, the vast majority of the big rise in infections yesterday were of the new variant, which logically suggests that the old variant is almost disappearing from the community. We could do with understanding that distinction each day when new data on infections is published.

**Mr Harper:** My hon. Friend makes a good point, because that will help us to understand the extent to which the new variant is spreading across the country; I know that the Government are concerned about that. I suspect, although I do not know—perhaps the Minister could confirm this at the end of the debate—that that was behind the move of significant portions of the country into tier 4.

Given that most of the country is in tier 4 and most of England is now effectively in lockdown, it seems to me that the only measure in terms of closure that remains to the Government is to close schools and colleges—we saw a hint of that this afternoon in what the Secretary of State for Education said. There are not many other measures left to the Government, so if that does not work, they will need to think again.

Finally, let me elaborate on what I said to the Secretary of State earlier about the vaccine roll-out. As the Government have made clear and as I think the Secretary of State said in an interview with Andrew Marr, the areas that have been moved into tier 4, which includes 78% of the country and I suspect by next week will probably include the rest, will basically stay there until we have rolled out the vaccine; the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris), referred to that as well. It therefore has to be job No. 1, not just for the Department of Health and Social Care but for the whole Government, to get the vaccine rolled out as fast as possible.

In my question to the Secretary of State, I said that that meant that the Government need to get to 2 million doses a week. If they do that, we can vaccinate everybody over 65 by the third week of February, which will take nearly 90% of the risks of death and hospitalisation out of the equation. At that point, we should be able to remove restrictions, at least in law, and allow the country to open up again. The Secretary of State appeared to agree—he said that he agreed.

The Government need to put their shoulder to that objective. This has got to be the central task, and the reason for that is the significant cost to businesses. I know that many businesses in my constituency—non-essential retail, personal care services—will be devastated by the fact that, as of midnight tonight, they are going to have to close. I have had drawn to my attention the devastation in hospitality businesses in tier 2 areas that were preparing for a really busy evening tomorrow, but that, with just 24 hours' notice, are now going to have to close. They are going to have a huge amount of stock and product that they have bought, which in effect will have to be thrown away. They are not going to get compensated for that, and that economic loss is going to be devastating for many businesses.

Those are the things that I think the Government need to weigh in the balance, and I look forward to listening to the Minister when she winds up the debate in a couple of hours' time.



7.40 pm

**Emma Hardy** (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab) [V]: I want to start by giving my thanks to key workers and the NHS for everything they have been doing across Christmas. I know many of them are feeling utterly and completely exhausted, and that many are feeling frightened when they think about how they are going to cope and what is going to happen in the weeks and months ahead. I just want to put on record my gratitude to them for everything they have done.

I fear that I will be repeating myself, because this is the third debate I have spoken in on this subject and I am nothing if not persistent. I may be overly optimistic that, at some point, the Government will listen and give me the things I am asking for. My questions include: where are the Nightingale hospitals? I have raised this question many times and I tried to raise it earlier in a call with the Minister, but I still have not been given a clear answer. Are they going to be opened and are they going to be used again? Where is the surge capacity that the Government promised us? I am in danger of thinking that the opening of these hospitals was in fact just a publicity stunt, but surely I must be wrong.

I recognise the need for the additional covid restrictions to help save lives, especially with the new variant being transmitted at a much higher rate. However, I fear that the Government will lose support for these restrictions and their tiering system if people continue to see their livelihoods go and their life's work destroyed. Whenever they announce tiers and restrictions, surely at the same time the Government should be putting out an economic statement telling people how jobs must be saved.

I make no apology for again raising the plight of the coach industry. This is the fifth time I have raised this problem, and I had hoped after I had a personal meeting with a Treasury Minister, along with representatives from the industry, that the Government had finally listened. However, I was deeply disappointed with the response to some of our asks, especially since—believe it or not, Madam Deputy Speaker—I had managed to make requests that were cost-neutral to the Government. They just required will and a little bit of effort. In a letter from the Minister, the Government stated that

“it will not be possible to preserve every job or business indefinitely, nor stand in the way of the economy adapting and people finding new jobs or starting new businesses.”

This completely failed to recognise that the coach industry is a viable industry. The only reason this industry is suffering is the covid restrictions—there are no other reasons—and it will be successful again.

When I raised concerns about the coronavirus business interruption loans and the fact that only 20% of the industry was successful in applying for them, the response again from the Government was:

“We believe these measures to be sufficient.”

That is in complete contrast to the reality these businesses face. They also said in the letter that

“it would not be appropriate to contact lenders on a sector by sector basis.”

I really urge the Government to think again about that, because that is exactly what this industry needs. Finally, to make it worse, in the letter the Government wash their hands of any further support for the industry, stating that “options to refinance existing facilities...is at the discretion of the lender”.

Basically, they are saying, “It’s nothing to do with us.” It is no wonder that people are rebelling against the restrictions the Government are imposing when they are not being given the support they need. The Government could decide to support this industry, and they are actively making a choice not to.

In the remaining time I have, I would like to mention, also again, the young people excluded from support, who are facing a desperate Christmas. I want to quote from a letter from Charles Cracknell regarding the young entrepreneurs in Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle, because this makes the point for me. He said:

“I am particularly concerned for those that came off benefits to establish a business or who were working and/or studying to run a business and now find themselves on benefits which means it’s more difficult for them to invest in their businesses or had just started out and who had struggled even before the current situation but were showing great determination to make a contribution to the local economy. Less than a third of the young entrepreneurs that we have supported...are in a position to trade at the moment and even with gradual reduction in lockdown arrangements find themselves in difficulties and it would be inappropriate for them to take out a loan and to be honest why should they at this early stage of development as a business.”

These young people have received nothing from Government and face seeing the businesses they have worked so hard to develop being destroyed, with a return to the life on benefits that they have only just escaped. Because of the restrictions, their businesses cannot open, so more must be done to help them.

In my last 20 seconds, I want to mention the hospitality industry again. Why are there rules to shut down yoga studios? Why the lack of additional support for Hull? If the Government want support for tiers to continue and if they want my support for these restrictions, they must begin to give Hull West and Hessle the financial support that we need.

7.45 pm

**Munira Wilson** (Twickenham) (LD) [V]: May I, too, add my thanks to all our frontline NHS and care staff, and to all those who have been involved in bringing the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine to approval today? The news is very welcome.

With all this talk of the cavalry arriving, the reality at our hospitals on the ground is stark. We see ambulances queuing and major incidents being declared in London and Essex, with reports that ICU patients are being transferred the length and breadth of the country. It did not have to be this way. The timing of this debate and the content of the statutory instruments that we have been asked to consider epitomise the Government’s handling of the pandemic to date: too little, too late, in the face of clear advice from scientists and health service leaders. The fact that, as a London MP, I was asked to consider the move to put my area into tier 3 on 16 December after just two weeks in tier 2, following a national lockdown, then the move into tier 4 on 20 December, together with the belated changes to Christmas restrictions, shows just how ineffective, ill-timed and ill-thought-through some of the interventions have been, with limited transparency on some of the criteria.

That dither and delay, with constant chopping and changing on the rules, is proving a catastrophe for our health service, costing thousands of lives. Of course, the new variant of the virus has made matters much worse, and quickly, but all the signs were that something was

[Munira Wilson]

afoot in Kent in the November national lockdown. Given the growing gravity of this national health emergency, new restrictions and the confirmation of the new variant, I simply do not understand why Parliament was not recalled before Christmas, as other hon. and right hon. Members have said. To bundle all these retrospective decisions up with consideration of a monumental change to this country's relationship with the European Union on just one day of parliamentary time demonstrates the Government's complete and utter contempt for Parliament.

Over the past nine months, my Liberal Democrat colleagues and I have raised in the House what experts have repeatedly called for to tackle the pandemic more effectively, including evidence-based interventions; a robust system not just to test but to trace and isolate every case; proper support for our health and care staff, including personal protective equipment, mental health support and now vaccination; and prioritisation of social care alongside the NHS. The Government have either not listened or have been too slow to act. They have let down the House and our country, and they have let down the very people on the frontline who are tackling the crisis head-on: NHS and care workers. We have seen a growing mental health crisis among staff, which is set to become worse with the prospect of another peak that is worse than the first. The Secretary of State promised to look at my proposals for additional mental health provision for staff in May, yet this week a psychiatrist said to me:

"Staff are anxious and we...have been treating colleagues who are at breaking point and attempted suicide. Some have been admitted to mental health units.

That happened before but it is worse now.

Add to that the message that staff are expendable and getting the vaccine to them is not happening and I think my mental health team will be seeing more staff."

While Ministers are patting themselves on the back today, they should hang their heads in shame. We are beginning 2021 as the sick man of Europe, with our health care workforce on their knees. If the very welcome cavalry are to succeed, Ministers must urgently publish a detailed, cross-departmental roll-out plan for the vaccine. Modelling has shown that a vaccination rate of 2 million per week will need to be delivered, alongside ongoing restrictions, to significantly reduce deaths by next summer. With GP surgeries and hospitals already overstretched, the logistical challenge is immense.

There was an alternative to 2020. We did not have to be in the position where people were alone at Christmas and families sat down with an empty space at the table. As we start the new year, I beg the Government to show some humility. They should listen to the experts and ensure a swift and efficient roll-out of the vaccine, or they will not be forgiven. So we will support these regulations, given the parlous situation we face, but we need more transparency and publication of all the evidence and criteria. We need an improvement in contact tracing, giving local authorities control of that, and more financial and practical support for self-isolation, as well as financial support for the hardest-hit sectors.

7.50 pm

**Simon Jupp** (East Devon) (Con) [V]: I hope that everyone in this House would agree that we all long for the day when we can throw the last mask in the bin and

enjoy the freedoms we expect in life. I am sure that my constituents in East Devon will share my disappointment that we are now heading into tier 3, but throwing caution to the winds now could bring more than a hangover in the new year, as case numbers continue to rise across Devon and our NHS remains under strain. However, it is clear that we need a pathway and a timeframe to come out of these restrictions sooner rather than later. The hospitality industry now faces widespread closure as more of the country heads into tougher restrictions; it is time to look again at the financial support for our pubs, hotels and restaurants and their suppliers. They all did their duty to keep customers safe, so let us not put hard-working staff in danger of losing their jobs.

As 2020, thankfully, draws to a close we do have real hope for the future; the roll-out of the Pfizer BioNTech vaccine was a major step forward in our fight against covid. I would like to thank Dr Barry Coakley, Dr Simon Kerr and everyone at the vaccination centre in Exmouth for their hard work to give 2,000 people the first dose of the vaccine in the run-up to Christmas. It is a truly remarkable achievement, and Exmouth is not the only place where people in East Devon can get vaccinated.

We all woke up to the very welcome news about the independent approval of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. The Government have ordered 100 million doses. That is enough to vaccinate 50 million people. The roll-out begins next week, and I would like to thank the Secretary of State and his team for all their hard work to make this possible.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we cannot let our guard down, but we can now look ahead to 2021 with renewed hope and optimism.

7.53 pm

**Meg Hillier** (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I also pay tribute to those working on the frontline, particularly at the moment at the Homerton hospital in the heart of my constituency, which is experiencing a very high pressure of new covid cases coming in, and the Royal London, where I lived for nine weeks with one of my children when they were very sick, which is also experiencing huge pressure and which also serves my constituency well. I also pay tribute to Hackney council staff, in particular those who empty our bins and keep our streets clean and our parks nice. Our public realm has risen to the occasion, which is an odd thing to say in covid, but we always had clean streets and good parks. They have done a sterling job and kept us going through the dark days of lockdown.

Hackney and the City—we were linked with the City for health purposes—were already in tier 4 and have been since before Christmas. Our cases are now more than 850 per 100,000, which is an exponential increase when we look back to 25 November when we were at 124 per 100,000. Just before we went into tier 4 we were at just over 500 cases per 100,000. It is a very serious matter and had this been a month ago, when we were at 124, I would perhaps have been arguing a slightly different case. So on public health grounds I back tier 4 and I suspect—I hope that the Minister will be honest—that there will be a tier 5 or some further lockdown if this new strain keeps replicating at the rate it is doing, and of course if any other new strains arrive. We all pray that no strain becomes apparent that will affect our children more badly than they are already affected.

I do have concerns—very big concerns—about how the Government have handled this. We have had mixed messages. The schools announcements today and just before the recess were all over the place. Half-announcements are made, but no detailed information is available. If we press a question, we get nothing back. It is great when the House is sitting, as theoretically we can hold Ministers to account, but too often we get no answers. At times we have online briefings, but—I say this with respect for the Minister, who is a good Minister and tries hard—they are short; they are not enough. We cannot get hundreds of colleagues on and get their questions answered. As MPs in our area, we need information to be able to answer the questions that are already flying in from headteachers not knowing what is going on with schools next week, with our rates so high but our schools still open. Of course I and local headteachers want our schools open, but why are they open when schools in neighbouring boroughs with similar rates are closed? It is very confusing.

We also need clarity about where the transmission is coming from. What I understand from public health briefings—I am sure the Minister will elaborate—is that it is largely community-driven. The community driver goes into schools, from where it then spreads. We need to be really clear about that, because, judging by a number of emails I have had in the past couple of days, teachers and headteachers are frightened about what next week will bring. They need clarity and certainty. They are vital frontline key workers, doing their best to educate our children in difficult circumstances.

I completely agree with the hon. Member for East Devon (Simon Jupp) about the business issues. My local hospitality industry has been decimated. The 10 pm curfew seems to have been plucked from the air, because it became 11 pm only about six weeks later. Again, we need clarity. If it is not clear, or the decision is a subjective one, fine, but level with the British public and the industries affected—the events industry, the creative industries. Tell them, engage them, get them into contact with Government earlier. When I talk to permanent secretaries, as I often do on the Public Accounts Committee, and ask them who they are engaging with, I get vague answers, but sometimes they do not have the right people in the room. However brilliant and clever our civil servants are, they need to be talking to people on the frontline, because in the end who is delivering the tests in schools? It is the headteachers and staff. Who is on the frontline in hospitals? It is not civil servants; it is our health workers, and we need to listen to them.

I am concerned about the frontline impact in the NHS. Earlier, I raised with the Secretary of State the number of nurses who are potentially able to work and want to—about 71,000 of them, yet only 1,000 got through the system. Frontline nurses from various parts of the country, not just Hackney, have told me that they are struggling to get to the right place to contribute.

In short, we need proper economic support for the businesses that are closed. We need proper testing in place, and that must be worked on with the organisations that will have to deliver testing. We need clarity on testing and in the messaging. Above all, we need honesty—honesty about the route out. We need to treat the British public with the respect they deserve by providing information and explanation when it is not clear. That is enough.

People understand that difficult decisions have to be made, sometimes at the last minute, but they need to know if something is coming down the line. People in government always think they need to have a definite decision or a definite point of view to put out there, but actually, in this situation, people can sense what is coming and the Government need to be much more honest about that. I hope the Minister will respond when she winds up the debate.

7.58 pm

**Dr Andrew Murrison** (South West Wiltshire) (Con) [V]: None of us went into politics to do this kind of thing—to put restrictions on people's liberties and their livelihoods. With the exception of statutory instrument No. 1518, which at least reduces the period of self-isolation from 14 to 10 days, I loathe all these regulations, but I judge that this time, based on the evidence available to us right now, they are necessary. However, today's good news means that we may see the end of these horrible measures sooner rather than later. In particular, the news that one jab will bring 70% efficacy is good news indeed, because it means that we may see the back of this sooner than many of us thought possible. That is the good news.

We also need a degree of humility. No set of regulations can govern every vignette of human activity. I feel for those who had to draft the instruments and plough through them, trying to work out what might cause people to be at risk. Producing something that makes at least some sort of sense and that we can sell to our constituents is extremely difficult. We also need to understand that the virus is not orderly; it does not respect the parliamentary timetable, so anticipating what may be required in two, three or four days' or indeed weeks' time is almost impossible. Pointing out that statutory instrument No. 1646 has already been overtaken by events is therefore churlish. I am sorry that the Opposition do not cut us a little bit of slack when we are faced with a virus that does not respect any sort of timetable and that will change and change again.

It is difficult to explain to our constituents why, for example, they can go to a garden centre but cannot play golf. It is the duty of all colleagues to explain to the public, who are the unsung heroes in all of this and who, by and large, have kept the faith, why we have to have these restrictions and that all of us are trying to ensure that their liberties and livelihoods are returned to them at the earliest possible opportunity.

I have been troubled by one or two points about tiering. The tiers are based on five points, one of which is the ability of hospitals to cope. In the south-west this has been disappointing, because it has revealed that our capacity is not as robust as in other parts of the country. Partly that is because of staffing. I was disappointed over the summer that many of those who volunteered, either as recent retirees or as people who are not currently in patient-facing roles, were not trained. That has been, to some extent, a missed opportunity. I hope that as we go into the second wave, those skills that are not now in place will not be needed, otherwise there is scope for some embarrassment. I know, because I spoke to the Secretary of State, that he understands and empathises with some of these difficulties. I hope that Ministers will redouble their efforts to make sure that those volunteers are utilised.

[Dr Andrew Murrison]

I very much welcome the remarks of the Education Secretary earlier on. The contingency framework, which those who are less charitable might say creates tier 5 or tier 4-plus, is correct. If possible, I would like some resolution of the confusion over the scale of the schools that are involved. It seems to be rather more than we initially expected. I urge Ministers to do everything they can to keep schools open. It is vital, for every conceivable reason, that we keep schools open. I again emphasise the work of Ackland and others in Edinburgh, using the Imperial College model, which was published in the October edition of the *BMJ*. It suggests that closing schools may have a counterproductive effect in terms of lives saved from covid.

I entirely endorse the remarks of the hon. Member for Leicester South (Jonathan Ashworth), who said that we should “go hell for leather” in vaccinating people. That is clearly the way out of this, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) made clear.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, may I wish you, the officers and staff of the House who have worked so hard and colleagues a much happier new year?

8.3 pm

**Steve McCabe** (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab) [V]: I accept that we need measures to suppress the virus while we await the vaccine roll-out, even if those measures are draconian. I therefore find it difficult to object to the Government restrictions, but I am not convinced that areas switching tiers or being placed in higher tiers will work. The tier system seems flawed, with arbitrary entry points, as in the initial London decision, and no obvious exit route. We have also seen the nonsense of a tier 1 area, Herefordshire, sharing a border with Wales.

If we need a lockdown and further restrictions, surely it should be the same for everyone. This thing does not recognise boundaries on a map, and businesses in all areas have the same needs. If they cannot open and operate, they should receive adequate support and compensation. They need protection from the financial consequences of Government action as well as those of the virus. The hospitality sector, vital small enterprises that cannot pay their rent, the self-employed being punished through no fault of their own—they all need support.

In Birmingham, many of those businesses will be wiped out and thousands more people thrown out of work if the Government do not act. Sure, it costs money, but I say that punishing innocent people will prove more costly in the long run. They are the people and businesses that will help our economy to pick up when we have got on top of this thing and are able to move on.

Why not be honest with everyone—health workers and teachers who have given so much, parents and the elderly? Why not admit another lockdown is necessary? The vast majority will co-operate if they believe it is fair. I think the Minister is well intentioned, but creating umpteen different systems and restrictions has proved a recipe for chaos rather than controlling the virus. And, of course, just as the Barnard Castle episode damaged initial trust, the spectacle of this Government standing by while the Boxing day hunts were free to spread the virus far and wide just serves to reinforce the idea that the rules are not applied fairly to all.

It is not too late to row back from what has become a suicidal game of snakes and ladders, pitting area against area and punishing people for no good reason. I fear that these inadequate solutions will only sow further divisions. Let us learn from mistakes and not go into the new year repeating the same old errors.

8.6 pm

**Chris Green** (Bolton West) (Con): One concern that I share with the hon. Member for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) is about the certainty and clarity of the tiering system and what can be seen as a slightly erratic aspect of that. I appreciate that from the Government’s perspective it is very difficult to judge the impact that tiering will have. As the spread of the virus evolves, it is difficult to have a cast-iron guaranteed view of it, so of course there will be uncertainty in this area, and I think we all appreciate that.

One area where we ought to have a bit more clarity, however—a point well made by many colleagues—is the overall impact assessments that we ought to have for the lockdown. What impact does the lockdown have on employment and business? What impact does it have on health, whether we are thinking about cancer and heart disease, or cataract surgeries and hip replacements? We must also think about the impact on education, which is particularly pertinent today, given the statement by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Education.

We ought to know more clearly about those issues, because we have the experience of the impact on people’s health and education, if they are excluded from education or they do not get their healthcare. We ought to have a greater sense of that, and the Government should have the ability to share that data so that we are better informed when we come to a vote. I also appreciate that when we are looking at tier 4—it was a little bit of a surprise, but not a complete surprise, when it was announced at the beginning of Christmas—we can see why the Government would feel that it had to come in, because of this mutant strain, or variation on a theme, of severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2.

We appreciate why tier 4 came in, but I found it very disappointing, as someone who represents Bolton and can see the impact of having slightly harsher conditions than much of the rest of the country, to see the south-east of England being plunged into tier 4. It was disappointing today to see Bolton as well as Wigan—I represent both boroughs—being put into tier 4. It is disappointing that there has not been the opportunity to have a vote on that today, but there may be an opportunity for a vote on what has already been implemented and imposed this year. It would therefore be useful if we could vote in advance and have that data and information so that we can make an informed decision when we vote and get a sense of the impact. Yes, the data on the spread of the virus will not be perfect, but we should be better informed about the impact of the lockdown on our society.

How tiering is imposed is also concerning. For example, Wigan and Bolton boroughs have a lower transmission rate than all the boroughs in the Liverpool city region, yet Liverpool city region is in tier 3 while my constituents are in tier 4. Earlier in the pandemic, the Secretary of State for Health was very clear that individual areas—this is represented now by Slough, I think—can be taken out of a wider lockdown, such as that imposed on

Greater Manchester. We would appreciate being withdrawn from tier 4 and perhaps going to tier 3 or lower as soon as possible.

My hon. Friend the Minister for Care may not have the information to hand, but I would like her to look into that and report back, perhaps working with colleagues in the Department for Education, as soon as possible. We know that there will be far more testing in tier 4. We know that the Government's plan is to have far more testing in schools, and we know that with each positive test, a class or perhaps even a year will be sent home. That has a major impact on children's education. For months children were excluded from schools and, in the term we have just had, many will have been excluded not once or twice but three times. That means for six weeks. We know that this is set to get worse in the coming year, because there will be far more testing and therefore far more positive tests, which will mean the exclusion of those children. Can we at least have an assessment of the impact of this tier 4 lockdown on those children?

8.12 pm

**Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): I would like to echo what many have said by wishing the House staff a very happy new year and thanking them for what they have done. I also thank those on the frontline in the health service, who have worked so hard for so many months. They may have had a little respite in the summer, but since then they have not stopped, and I know that many are feeling very tired indeed.

I should like to start my few remarks on a positive note by talking about the AstraZeneca vaccine. Everybody in the country must have welcomed waking up this morning to find that it had been licensed. We need to roll it out as fast as we can. I agree with many other Members, particularly my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper), who has said that we need to vaccinate 2 million a week. We need to do that to get ourselves out of this desperate situation of lockdown that does not work and all sorts of problems with businesses, schools and the overwhelming of the NHS, which is what Ministers are extremely worried about. We have to do this as fast as we can. I would like the Minister for Care to look into how well Derbyshire will do that, because I am not convinced that it is ready to go full pelt and vaccinate all the vulnerable and elderly. It is right to aim to get those above 65 vaccinated within seven weeks. That is really important.

I am going to change tack slightly and say, "Bah, humbug!" I felt very disappointed earlier this year when we went into lockdown. In Derbyshire, we had voluntarily gone into tier 2. We then went into the second lockdown, came out several weeks later and were immediately put into tier 3. We are now going into tier 4, from a minute past midnight tonight. When we were put into tier 3, the same as many other constituencies, why were we not called back, since the decision was made the day after we left for our Christmas recess? We could have operated remotely, as many of us are doing today. Looking at the Chamber now, there are very few Members present, so most of us are working remotely. We could have done that on the day after we had gone into recess. It would have been simple to do, because the staff were still around. We could have made the decision and voted on it then. We are now being asked today to vote on a

decision that was made several weeks ago, but we will not be voting on the decision that has been made today. That does not seem logical. Some areas moved into much higher tiers just a few days after the previous decision, but none of us will be voting on the decision today whereby people have gone up to a higher tier and we do not have a clue when we will be coming out of it.

Since coronavirus began and we started having all the lockdowns and the different tiers, I have been very concerned about businesses. Hospitality businesses spent tens of thousands of pounds, in some cases, on making themselves covid-secure, but they have never been allowed to open. There are small craft breweries in my constituency that are having real trouble because they cannot sell to the pubs as they are not open, so they are selling to the public. There are artists, actors, musicians, singers and dancers who have no job at the moment, and many other self-employed people who are really struggling. We have to look at how we can support those people. We have to look at how quickly we can get this vaccine out so that we know that we are going to be covid-secure and covid-safe and people can get on with their lives.

8.16 pm

**Claudia Webbe** (Leicester East) (Ind): As announced today, Leicester will move into tier 4. This is a city that has been in lockdown for longer than most. In Leicester we have not been allowed to meet inside any household since the start of the first UK lockdown—that is 10 months.

The Home Secretary was dangerously wrong to claim that the Government have been ahead of the curve throughout the pandemic. There can be zero doubt that on every major strategy the Government have got this wrong. The Government have lost control of the virus. Today there have been 50,023 new covid cases and 981 deaths. On 1 August, deaths from coronavirus had fallen to almost zero. We were at a crossroads. The Government should have opted for a zero covid strategy. Germany invested €500 million in improving schools' ventilation. China brought plexi-screens into classes. Italy carried out randomised testing of pupils. In England—I mean with no disrespect to our teachers—headteachers and excellent teaching unions, we put some sticky yellow tape on the floor, claiming that that meant distancing in the classroom would be sufficient to scare off the virus. The Prime Minister visited a school in the county of Leicestershire and proclaimed that students' classrooms were safe. Within days of his visit, a positive infection had been confirmed.

The Government had a choice. Their own SAGE experts told them that opening schools would push the R rate above 1. Indeed, this week SAGE explicitly told the Government to close schools. In the first wave alone, 148 education staff died of coronavirus, according to the Office for National Statistics. In the second wave, deaths of teachers have continued to mount. History will judge us harshly for ignoring teaching professionals and scientists when they warned us to close schools.

The Government acted in the way they did because they perceived themselves to be putting wealth before health. It did not matter to them that African, Asian and minority ethnic people or the poor were more than twice as likely to die from coronavirus. As long as the City of London kept trading, they thought it was a

[Claudia Webbe]

price worth paying. What the Government have failed to grasp is that health is wealth. It was a false choice. By pursuing a zero covid approach, they could have crushed the R rate right down and bought time to implement a proper randomised testing system. They could have invested in online learning and proper equipment, including the internet, so that students could study from home.

Most of all, the Government should have trusted NHS professionals to run the test and trace system. In handing £12 billion of coronavirus contracts to people linked to the Tory party, they put donors first. Public Health England and local NHS bodies are ideally placed to conduct test and trace, and the Government failed to include them.

There is still time to save many thousands of lives, go further than the tiered approach, which at best gives rise to divide and rule, and implement a zero covid approach and a national lockdown. Yes, close schools and keep them closed. Listen to the science and give people the full financial support to stay safe, including the 3 million excluded. We are only as safe as the most vulnerable among us. Give status now to all undocumented workers.

The recently announced vaccine approval is inspiring news for all. Where politicians have failed, scientists have stepped up. The Government must now ensure that those most at risk get the vaccine first, which obviously means care home residents and NHS staff, but it should also include the minimum-wage workers who are getting us through this pandemic. A Deliveroo rider has more right to the vaccine than Etonian billionaires.

We must also make sure that African, Asian and minority ethnic communities and the poor are given fair access to the vaccine. We know that the elderly are most at risk from the virus, yet more than 70,000 Indian and Pakistani grandparents live with school-age children. The Government would be willing to place these communities at risk by reopening schools. I implore the Government to change direction before many thousands more lives are lost.

One last thing, Mr Deputy Speaker—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** No, sorry. The time limit is the time limit.

8.21 pm

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con) [V]: I would like to start by paying tribute to the NHS staff and care workers who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to care for people suffering from this dreadful virus, and to all those who have been involved in setting up testing centres and the new vaccination centres. They, once again, have had to work incredible hours over the festive period to make our lives more tolerable and to enable people to be tested and vaccinated.

The situation in London tonight is at a critical stage. The report suggests that London hospital capacity is at 99.7%, which does not leave any room for people suffering from covid to be transported to hospital. Equally, the new variant appears to be causing this huge rise in the transmission rate, and the last data showed that every London borough is experiencing an increase in the transmission rate across the board.

In the last public data, my borough was sitting at 632 cases per 100,000 population, yet tonight the report says it is 792—a dramatic increase once again. All the boroughs across London are experiencing these problems, and testing is definitely the answer, but there is a confusing message.

I ask my hon. Friend the Minister for Care to ensure that people understand the process by which they should go for a test. By definition, if we have walk-in centres, some people are walking in thinking that that is all they have to do to get a test. They are not phoning ahead to book a test, or even going on the website to make sure of the correct advice before they turn up. Even more confusingly, some people are literally walking in and getting a test, whereas others are being turned away.

I am also concerned about the position of the vaccine centres. The reality is that, if we now advise people that one jab will be sufficient and that they should wait 12 weeks for the next jab, this will potentially lead to confusion. One of the problems we are going to experience is that people can still carry covid-19 and infect others, even after they have had a vaccine. We need to be clear on that position so that people do not go out and inadvertently cause further infections and transmissions.

The position of learning-disabled people on the vaccination priority list is also an issue. They appear to be included based solely on the age range, but in many cases learning-disabled people need the assistance of a carer to attend a vaccine centre. They are not necessarily able to do that by themselves.

We must also take into account the economic impact of this dreadful virus. We have heard about the hospitality industry, but there are many people who have received no help whatsoever from the Government. They may have changed jobs at just the wrong time, or they may be self-employed and unable to produce accounts—we could go through the list. Those people desperately need assistance. In my own borough, unemployment has doubled since the pandemic began. We had virtually full employment, so we were in a position to cope with that, but that has not been the case in many other parts of the country.

On vaccination rates, the reality is that if we vaccinate 1 million people a week, it will take 14 months to vaccinate the whole population. If we can do 2 million a week, we will reduce it to seven months, but that is still far too long. There are also people out there who will resist having the vaccine. We have to promote the vaccine and encourage people to have it as quickly as possible, so that we can get back to as near normal as possible by Easter and beyond. Then we can make sure that the economy bounces back and people are safe.

Finally, I ask my hon. Friend the Minister for Care to respond to this point. The whole of London is in tier 4 right now, but the position in Harrow is confusing because it appears that all the primary schools in the surrounding boroughs will be closed from next Monday, whereas those in Harrow will be open. That seems to be confusing everyone, given that we are in the same position as every other London borough.

8.26 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): First, I put on the record my thanks to all the doctors, nurses and care workers who have done their utmost for each and every

one of us and our constituents across the whole of the UK of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. These are difficult times and it is difficult to know whether we are getting it right, but as has been said to me, we have to do the best we can and, in my case and everybody's case, we have to leave it to our Lord Saviour to take us through.

The public health motions before the House most certainly attempt to do what is seen as the best. However, only time will be able to judge whether they are right. That is not anybody's fault, by the way, because we and the Government are doing the best we can.

In his covid-19 update statement, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care underlined that he has regular discussions with the devolved Health Ministers, and I know that he has regular meetings with the Northern Ireland Minister of Health. In the past week, the vaccine has been rolled out to all the nurses and care workers in all the trusts in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is, of course, under different restrictions. We have a strict curfew from 8 pm until 6 am every day. That really makes me wonder sometimes. We are allowing fewer businesses to open and the Health Department makes the call on what is and what is not essential. I tried to explain to the cooker and washing machine shop next to my advice centre in Newtownards that mechanics are essential but they are not. I sometimes find that hard to understand and explain. We ask those who can work from home to do so. That is right and proper, but can additional help be provided to coffee shops, which open for takeaway but have no footfall for their business? Although they are able to open, it is not cost-effective for them to do so. What help is coming the way of egg distributors whose sales have dropped by over one third due to hospitality closures and who have donated eggs to homeless centres, shelters and food banks?

We need to implement rules to keep people safe, but that cannot be done without help for businesses going hand in hand with them. I know that this is not the Minister's responsibility, but my point is that the Chancellor and Health Ministers can work together to provide help.

Lives are paramount and so is future health, and the health of the economy to pay for cancer drugs, innovative treatments and research on diseases that kill tens of thousands of people each year. That can only come with money in the Treasury, which can only be there if we invest in viable businesses to keep them afloat in these difficult days. We need to understand that paying rates and council tax is not enough when businesses have to deal with hiring equipment and with mortgaged or rented premises. Although the extension of furlough has undoubtedly saved jobs, and I thank the Chancellor for all he has done, it is not enough to save businesses in the long term. Although I welcome the moves to keep as many people as possible in work until the vaccine roll-out is well established, this may not be enough—indeed, for some it may be too late.

I know that these motions are about health, but, having dealt with businesses, I know that they hear the headline of what is to close and what can remain open, and then wait weeks to hear about the assistance they are to receive. The assistance needs to be there almost immediately, and we must do more to make dual announcements, instead of propagating fear, which inevitably turns to anger. I have seen local businesses breathe a sigh of

relief to have made it through the lockdown, only to find out that there is another lockdown and more regulations. They then have to deal with that and muddle their way through, hoping that they can get enough of a breather to get to the other side. It is little wonder that fear and mistrust are giving way to lies spread on social media, which are taking hold, with people believing that it is safe to live life as they ever did before. No, they cannot! We all have a responsibility for each other. We must ensure that regulations, such as those we seek to approve today, come with information and guidance that take the fear out of the equation and deliver the facts. We must help people to understand the medical rationale behind a decision, while understanding that they are not being left alone and that help is available.

Today, the Oxford vaccine has given us great hope. As I said earlier, it has almost put a skip in my step to realise that potentially we have turned the corner. It has been hailed as the easiest vaccine to distribute because it does not need to be stored at very cold temperatures. Some stories in the press have been about vaccine being lost because of the temperature controls not being right, but this time we will be able to produce and distribute the vaccine ourselves. We hope that it will speed up the ability of businesses to open, still in a safe way, but permanently.

The danger we face is that businesses are worried for the future, staff are waiting on the redundancy letter, families are stressed, the elderly and vulnerable are feeling alone, and schoolchildren are feeling isolated and uncertain as to what their future lives look like. I am aware, as are others in the Chamber, that mental health problems are rising among our children. The message that comes from this place must show a plan of action and highlight the fact that our Government are standing shoulder to shoulder with every age group that needs help. I plead with the Government to ensure that the same messaging is clear in every region of the UK: we are stronger together, we are coming through this and we must help each other. We can help each other and we can be better together for the future.

8.32 pm

**Jackie Doyle-Price (Thurrock) (Con):** This time last year, I was really looking forward to 2020, as the year when we would finally get Brexit done. Everything was looking so positive, but what an appalling year it has been. It is nice to end it on a bit of a high, not least having passed the Bill today, but with the welcome news about the AstraZeneca vaccine, which will transform the way in which we will handle this disease. I pay tribute to everyone who has been involved in all the missions to find an appropriate vaccine—it has been a trial. I was not confident that we would ever achieve it and it is a blessing that we finally have done so. It will transform our ability to manage this disease, but we still have a long way to go, because the logistical task of vaccinating a critical mass of the population in order to stop the spread of the disease and save lives will take a number of weeks.

We are therefore still facing restrictions on our behaviour for some time yet, particularly as the Government are using the tools in these motions to tackle the transmission. I still have serious concerns about whether these measures are effective, and I say that as the representative for Thurrock. We are at the top of a league that no one wants

[Jackie Doyle-Price]

to top, as we currently have the highest incidence of covid cases at 1,411 per 100,000 people—the figure for the over-60s is 1,012. We are at that stage despite going into the November lockdown in tier 1. We came from such a good place; we had had no deaths since July and the disease was being managed, yet lockdown has seen it mushroom.

So what has happened? The truth is that closing down businesses clearly was not effective in stopping the transmission of the virus, because it grew in our schools. We had asymptomatic transmission, with schoolchildren taking it home and then from the homes it was going into the workplaces. In Thurrock, we have particular workplaces where the disease has just spread. For example, our local Royal Mail depot has had to close because of the extent of the infection, and in Grays, where I live, we have not had any postal deliveries for three weeks. You can imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, how upset our constituents get at Christmas when they do not receive their post. I have not been a very popular Member of Parliament when I have asked people to be patient at this time of year. That illustrates that there is a question about whether we have really been using the right tools to tackle virus transmission. Putting Thurrock—home to Lakeside shopping centre, a major employer—in tier 4 in the last week before Christmas has frankly done nothing to stop the spread, but it has caused significant economic harm to all who work in retail in my constituency. I urge the Government please to focus on whether the measures that we are using to tackle this virus are effective and delivering the outcomes that we want.

In previous debates on these matters, I have paid tribute to particular staff involved in delivering our healthcare, most notably pharmacists, paramedics and ambulance workers. Today, I want to thank all those in our care homes who have given real care, particularly over Christmas, to vulnerable people who are in the twilight of their lives and who are experiencing severe distress at the inability to spend time with their families. For an elderly person in the twilight of their life to see their loved ones through plastic screens and wearing masks—frankly, it ain't much fun. It is made bearable only by the real dedication of those who look after our elderly people, and I really pay tribute to those staff today.

Finally, I come back to businesses. Once the March lockdown was lifted, 25% of our independent retailers did not reopen. We know that the retail sector depends heavily on Christmas to sustain businesses for the rest of the year. I have serious fears about what will happen to the retail sector after we emerge from this period, because businesses will have lost that Christmas. They will emerge debt-ridden, with no cash flow. What this Government have done has hastened the decline of the high street, and the economic costs will be severe.

8.37 pm

**Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth) (Con):** Today is a bittersweet end to the year. The news is sweet nationally, as we hear of another new vaccine coming online in the fight against the coronavirus, and because we have got the Brexit deal done. That is hugely important to my constituents, the majority of whom voted for Brexit, but it also gives us the chance to pull remain and leave together to look forward, I hope, to an outward future for 2021. However,

the news is bitter locally, because my constituency and the entire region in which I live are moving into tier 4. With that comes all the heartache, anxiety, stress, morbidity and mortality that go with increasing rates of covid.

I accept that decision, and I think it is the right one. I have had contact with the hospitals that serve my area and the clinical commissioning group in Leicestershire. Some 30% of my patients go across towards the George Eliot, and both the health organisations there have talked about the pressure on the NHS—not only the numbers of covid patients coming in, but the pressure on non-covid services and the impact of covid on staffing, with the real threat posed by absences. Those things combined make for a really difficult issue.

On top of that, our rates are steadily increasing, although in my patch, in particular, we are lower than the national average. That all comes on top of the new strains that we have heard about in the last few weeks. I believe the Government were right to take the decisions that they took, and to change when the information changes. That is why I am pleased to welcome the Government's dropping of the 14 days of isolation to 10 days. As the science changes and as we know more, we should change our approach and do something different.

That leads me on to my asks for the Government, and they are threefold. First, I have previously welcomed the Government's approach of structuring their focus and putting the NHS first, followed by education, businesses, health and leisure activities, and then the hospitality industry. However, as we have ratcheted back up with the new tiers, we clearly still have the fundamental problems of providing support for sectors such as the travel industry, the pubs, the restaurants, the events industry and the wedding industry. Those problems are not going away. Fortunately, with the advent of a vaccine, the period is time-limited, so I urge the Government to consider providing in further support for those businesses to try to get them through.

My second ask is about the vaccine roll-out. As I said, I welcome the fact that the Oxford vaccine has now come on line and will be going live from 4 January, with more than 500,000 vaccinations going out in the first week. It is also good news that Ministers are reassuring us that the infrastructure is there and that as the supply becomes greater so too will the delivery, getting the fight against this virus under way. However, I am concerned about, and would like the Government to address, what happens when 10% or 20% of the population are vaccinated. For me, there is a real issue. As the public start to see people getting vaccinated, the way they behave may well change and in turn create a vicious spiral, where we elongate the period under covid and the need for further tiered restrictions, because people feel that it is safe to go out. A strong message must come from the Government to make sure that people adhere to the restrictions and to give us an idea of what the saturation point for covid will look like. As the science changes, so should the advice.

Finally, in my last minute, I would like to raise something that I raised in the summer. Given that the end of the covid debacle is hopefully in sight, be it in the spring or the summer, I want to push again for a Department of virus legacy—a time-limited Department to look at all the changes that have taken place during the covid pandemic. After all, covid has hit every aspect



of our working lives and, indeed, our social lives—sometimes for good, and sometimes for bad. It is important for the future to understand the lessons learned and to capitalise on the changes in my sphere of medicine, for example, where we now have telemedicine, better communications, a huge diagnostic network and a much improved vaccine programme, which will cover the entire nation. All those things should be looked at and capitalised on to make sure we have something that will stand the test of time if we ever face another virus.

8.41 pm

**Dr Ben Spencer** (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con): Naturally, my constituents and I are disappointed that we were placed in tier 4 and by the short notice of the changes. Of course it is right that in the face of changing facts the Government respond quickly and decisively, and while I regret that we have not been able to debate the tier 4 restrictions sooner, I am glad that Parliament is here now and that we are debating the changes today.

There have been two huge developments in the last fortnight in terms of the pandemic and our response to it. One is the emergence of a new strain of covid that is more infective and is thwarting some of our measures to contain it, and the other is the development of safe and effective vaccines that can be deployed at pace. I am sure that everyone in the House will celebrate the success of the British science and research that led to the development of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine and of the genomics surveillance that made possible the early discovery of the new variant of covid. It is the Government's long-term planning that led to our procuring the vaccine in advance, so that we are now best placed to deliver it at pace to our population, and it is science that led to the reduction of the self-isolation time, reducing the impact of infection control measures and making it easier for people to follow them.

However, amidst this positive news, the evidence that the new variant is much more infectious is concerning indeed. It raises serious concerns about the effectiveness of our previous tiers and the individual restrictions in reducing rates of infection and ensuring that they do not spiral out of control and overwhelm NHS capacity—and this is all about NHS capacity. We therefore need to take stock in the context of a rapidly changing situation, with rates increasing in front of us, and urgently research this new variant and the impact of the measures needed to control the rate of infection.

While I am disappointed that my constituency has gone into tier 4, we can all see the pressure that the NHS faces at the moment, we can see the impact of the new variant and we can see our rapidly expanding vaccination programme, which, after today, will really take off. As a doctor, I was always taught to look at every intervention in terms of the risks and the benefits, the costs and the harms. I have been calling for a cost-benefit analysis of the suite of individual restrictions that we and all our constituents have to face. Clearly, the facts that I have just laid out radically shift the cost-benefit ratio faced by our constituents and our country, which we have discussed in this place at length. A change in the facts can, and in his case I believe must, force a change in response.

I support the restrictions that are coming into force, but they will not be without their own harms, which need to be mitigated until the restrictions can be lifted.

I wish to talk in particular about uncertainty. I have had many meetings with constituents who work in a range of sectors that are directly impacted by the restrictions. I have spoken to Runnymede and Weybridge's businesses, publicans and gym owners and to people who work in events, corporate events and weddings—the list goes on—and the message from each is clear: the uncertainty around the restrictions and all the opening and closing is one of the most difficult challenges that they face. My local school leaders tell me that they can prepare and handle anything for the good of their pupils and students; they just need time to put in the contingency planning so that they know where they stand.

Uncertainty is not just harmful for business but detrimental to us all. We need to know, and see, how and how soon we can get out of this situation and when we will be able to see our friends and family again and to reopen those businesses that have shut down. A vaccine is here and about to be scaled up, so as we start to plan for a future when the pandemic is behind us, will my hon. Friend the Minister chart and publish the plan out, detailing in granular detail how many need to be vaccinated and what impact that will have on lifting the restrictions, and show my constituents in Runnymede and Weybridge the road map through the pandemic to the other side and the end of the restrictions that we have brought in to mitigate it?

8.46 pm

**Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I am very supportive of this legislation and the principle of tiers, but the counterpart to legislation is, of course, implementation, which could perhaps be improved by the taking of a more localised approach and by giving local responsibility to our excellent local resilience forum. Will our excellent Minister consider making the North Yorkshire local resilience forum a pilot scheme for a more localised implementation process?

I have listened carefully to many of the speeches in this debate, and I understand the concerns about a Government who restrict freedoms. In particular, our Government—a Conservative Government—should be the guardian of our freedoms. We are the party of business and should at all costs keep the economy open, so I understand the concerns. Having said that, we are also the party that is responsible for running the NHS, and it would not be me or other Back Benchers who have spoken in this debate who would have to answer to the press, to other parliamentarians and to the public if the NHS was overrun by covid, so I understand that we need these restrictions.

Today, North Yorkshire has gone into tier 3, which I support—other areas have gone into tier 3 at a similar level of infections—but North Yorkshire is a huge place: our districts are the size of counties in other parts of the country. As you probably know, Mr Deputy Speaker, it takes two and a half hours to drive from one side of the constituency in the west to the east side—and that is not in my car; that is in a good car on a good day. Putting a huge county such as North Yorkshire into one tier masks huge differences in the infection rate among districts. Some districts have an infection rate that is two or three times that in other districts, so it is possible that some of our districts should be in a higher tier and some in a lower tier. We should consider that.

[Kevin Hollinrake]

My other concern about tier 3, as I understand it, is that many areas have gone into tier 3 and not seen infection rates fall. That may well be because of what we have seen in North Yorkshire: we saw lots of people from other parts of the country that were in higher tiers travel down into York and North Yorkshire because of our greater freedoms. There are a number of things that our local resilience forum might try in York and North Yorkshire—for example, using districts for tiers because of the huge geographical differences and the differences in infection rates, and taking a different approach to solving problems. Our resilience forum identified that the problem in one part of the county was not with hospitality but with household mixing. It introduced an excellent process of speaking to households and informing them, which has seen rates falling in one district of the county very successfully.

We might try a shorter, sharper shock, which I would support from a business point of view; I declare my interest in that regard. We may feel that schools should close for a longer period, to try to bring infection rates down more quickly to a level that will enable us to go into a lower tier. I speak as the parent of a child who is doing A-level exams this year, so I do not say that lightly. We would definitely want to move travel restrictions from guidance to being an offence. That would prevent a lot of the travel we are seeing, with many people moving from different parts of the country into our area, which is increasing infection rates. Whatever the Minister decides, I ask her to take that away. When the police have used their powers to deal with mixing within hospitality venues or households, that has been very effective, and the word has gone round quickly. It would have a similar effect if we started to fine people for travelling without good cause.

We also need to look at the financial side of things now that we are in a higher tier. The monthly grants should be increased for businesses that are required to close and those that can stay open but are affected by covid, and the job retention scheme does not allow those who were employed after 30 October to access it, so I ask the Treasury to look at that.

8.51 pm

**Ben Everitt** (Milton Keynes North) (Con): These regulations allow for changes between tiers. I speak as a veteran of tier 4, and this is an example of the pace of change in public life and the pace at which the virus has affected us all. Milton Keynes has been in tier 4 since 20 December, and it is a fortnight since I lost a night's sleep on a Tuesday because I was worrying about Milton Keynes going into tier 3. On the Friday we were in tier 2, by Saturday we were in tier 3 and by Sunday we were in tier 4. That is how quickly these things happen. That is the pace at which this virus can overtake our lives. It has been a storm, and it feels like Milton Keynes has been the eye of the storm for most of this time.

Back in February, I remember being taken aside by the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Bury St Edmunds (Jo Churchill), who put her arm around me—as you could, then—and said, “Darling, I’ve got news for you. There’s a repatriation centre in Milton Keynes, and we’re bringing British nationals and their dependants

back from Wuhan. I’m sorry, but it’s on your patch.” Soon after, we had the second recorded death from covid in Milton Keynes University Hospital. Soon after that, we had the Lighthouse lab with the robot freezers, which is very on-brand for Milton Keynes, and the mobile testing centre. Then we had Ross Kemp visiting Milton Keynes Hospital, and more recently we had a vaccination centre in the hospital, which is now vaccinating up to 400 people a day.

That hospital is amazing. All the staff there are working so hard. They are heroes, and I want to thank them. Currently the intensive care unit is full in Milton Keynes Hospital. They have a contingency plan, but the ICU is full. Bed occupancy is 98%, and 60% of general beds are filled with covid patients. They have more than 200 patients in the hospital with coronavirus, which is twice as many as during the first peak. Everybody at the hospital is working incredibly hard, and I want to thank them from the bottom of my heart, because it is our healthcare professionals who will help us get through this. With vaccinations, with new treatments and with this tiered system, we will get through this.

8.54 pm

**Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con) [V]: This morning’s news that the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has been approved really is the best late Christmas present any of us could ask for. It is our best chance for the world to come out of the pandemic. It is testament to the genius and innovation that is possible when academic research works so effectively with the private sector in pursuit of a common goal. But the strong position the United Kingdom is in, getting early doses of the Pfizer vaccine and being well placed for the Oxford vaccine, and having robust contracts for all the leading vaccines under development, is due in large part to Kate Bingham and her fantastic team, as well as the effective leadership at the Department of Health and Social Care.

The vaccine provides a bright glimmer of hope after what has been the grimmest of years for families and businesses around the country. While there is light at the end of the tunnel, and very clear light, the tunnel ahead of us is still very long and the path still uncertain. Our immediate challenge is to minimise the number of tragic avoidable deaths until a vaccine can be fully rolled out and effective, but also to prevent our national health service from being overwhelmed by new waves and new variants of this debilitating virus.

Scepticism about national statistics and experts’ projections is not uncommon, particularly if one reads mainstream media or so much social media. There will never be a counterfactual that we can use as a control group and we will never know what would have happened if action had not been taken, but we can see what is happening in our local communities. When my local hospital in Dudley tells me that it risks being overwhelmed if numbers continue to rise at the rate they were last month, and when it tells me that a couple of weeks ago it had just four in-patient beds available in the whole of the hospital—and that is after relying on surge capacity—it would be the very height of irresponsibility and indeed callousness to dismiss those direct and dire warnings out of hand.

It is clear that action has been needed to tackle the virus. Looking at the rising infection rates we still see today, including in Dudley South, it is clear that further

action is needed. However, we need to be clear about why the scientific and medical experts believe so firmly that the particular measures we are being asked to consider are necessary and, more to the point, why they would be effective.

In September, we were told that much of the spread was due to hospitality. As we know, most of that sector has been shut in much of the country for nearly two months, yet infection rates still rise. We have been told at other times that it is because of schools and universities, but most have been closed for two weeks, during which time infection rates do not seem to have dropped off. We have been told that some of the transmission has been through retail, but in tier 4 areas, where shops have been closed for nearly a fortnight, we still see very high infection rates that are, in some areas, still rising. So we need to know where the infection is spreading, why it is spreading and why these measures will help to stop it. We know that the measures taken so far, and the new restrictions that will be introduced in Dudley South and throughout much of the country tomorrow under tier 4, are devastating for many families and many businesses—for economic, social and mental wellbeing. So we need to be sure that what we are doing is both proportionate and necessary for the very real and serious challenge we face. For us to be sure of that, we need to be sure that these measures have the best chance of being effective in helping to save lives and reduce the pressures on our national health services.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** I am sorry we lost a bit of the video there, Mike, but we heard you loud and clear, with a nice picture on the screen.

8.59 pm

**Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con):** At the end of a year like no other, for the people of Aylesbury constituency, this was a Christmas like no other. Little did I know when I described Buckinghamshire's entry into tier 3 as heralding the bleakest midwinter that just a few days later, a new tier 4 would bring an even more bitter chill, with many local businesses forced to close and long-wished-for festive reunions cancelled.

I do not believe that a single Member of this place came here wishing to impose restrictions that would curtail our livelihoods, our liberty or our democracy, but nor did a single one of us anticipate a pandemic that would sweep the world, putting unprecedented pressure on our health service. Ensuring that the health service in Buckinghamshire can care for not just those with covid, but those with other conditions or serious illnesses, such as cancer, heart disease or stroke, has consistently determined how I vote. It does so again today.

I pay tribute to all local NHS staff who have continued to work over Christmas, particularly the brilliant team at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. The pressure on that hospital has escalated in recent days. Critical care beds are full and more wards have had to be dedicated to covid patients. That illustrates that, unfortunately, the previous restrictions of tiers 2 and 3 were not enough, especially given the new variant of the coronavirus, whose increased transmissibility is extremely alarming. Indeed, Buckinghamshire Council, in conjunction with its health partners, this afternoon declared a major incident amid fears that the rapid rise in the number of

covid-19 cases could overwhelm the county's health and social care services. So although I do not like the retrospective nature of voting for the regulations, I recognise that they were and are necessary as a short-term means of trying to hold back the escalating spread of the virus.

I have received the most vitriolic criticism for previously voting for the tier system of restrictions because of their broader societal impact—criticism that included being likened to a murderer. However, it was precisely to save lives that I found myself continually voting against my Conservative instincts in the desperate hope of a vaccine that would permit a gradual return to normality.

Today, we are a step closer to realising that hope, with the wonderful news of the approval of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. I look forward to its roll-out and that of the Pfizer vaccine in the Aylesbury constituency as soon as possible. Constituents understandably want to get the protection that the vaccines afford, and their need is all the more urgent given our early tier 4 status and the very serious infection rates behind it. It is especially difficult for local people to understand why those in neighbouring areas with a lower incidence of coronavirus are ahead of them in the queue to be vaccinated. I am grateful that my hon. Friend the Minister for Care is now addressing that challenge.

Recognising the need for greater restrictions means that we must also recognise the greater impact on businesses, especially those that would usually have enjoyed their most lucrative time of the year in the immediate run-up to Christmas. I therefore ask my right hon. Friend the Chancellor to consider new ways in which he might be able to help such firms, especially those that have not been able to benefit from his generous financial support package or from the excellent schemes that Buckinghamshire Council is now running, perhaps missing out because of their place in the supply chain, their size or because they needed to help customers obtain refunds and could not therefore furlough staff, despite receiving no revenue.

I conclude with not my words, but those of members of the crews of South Central Ambulance Service, to whom my constituents and I owe a great debt of gratitude. In a virtual meeting just before Christmas, one told me bluntly, "It really is a silent killer. It doesn't matter who you are. Anyone can get it." Another paramedic said, "I would love to give the country one simple message: please follow the rules." Message delivered.

9.4 pm

**Greg Smith (Buckingham) (Con):** It is a pleasure to follow my constituency neighbour, my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Rob Butler). I have spoken in previous debates on covid about my belief that we need to look for a better balance in our response to what is undoubtedly a horrendous virus. We need greater analysis of the impact of the restrictions that we are asking people to abide by—the detailed analysis that my hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Dr Spencer) spoke of so eloquently a few moments ago—to ensure that we have the most proportionate possible response to covid-19.

I have voted with the Government in all the votes on our response so far. I have to say that I did so reluctantly on the last occasion, but I did so on the commitment that we could have a more granular approach—that my Buckingham constituency, which has consistently had

[Greg Smith]

lower infection rates than surrounding areas such as the south of Buckinghamshire, could be looked at on its own. Unfortunately, that did not happen, despite the numbers continuing to be low before Christmas. Instead, as my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes North (Ben Everitt) mentioned, we went from tier 2 to tier 4 in just a matter of days. That brought with it significant devastation for business and, I fear, a long-term mental health crisis that will be with us for generations.

I cannot be alone in this House in having received many emails and letters from constituents highlighting that devastation. A restaurant owner in Buckingham wrote to say that a lot of businesses, including theirs, are suffering in silence, some resigned to failure. I have visited wet pubs that are grateful for the £1,000 but, when they are losing £3,500 a week, are in a very grim place indeed.

Perhaps this email from Mrs M will bring it into perspective. She wrote:

“I live alone. I lost my father earlier this year, during the first lockdown. No proper funeral. No family other than my Step Mum. His ashes are still with the undertakers. I haven’t been able to process my grief properly as the rites of passage haven’t happened. I feel as if I’m in solitary confinement without any reason to prolong my...existence.”

Or this from Mrs H, who wrote:

“I live on my own and I’ve been self-isolating much of the year. I suffer from complex PTSD as well as diabetes and other disorders. My anxiety and depression linked to my mental health issues are a constant battle, and spending Christmas alone and worrying about my mother has been too much to bear.”

I could go on; I have literally hundreds of such emails outlining the level of devastation suffered.

I offer those as examples of why we need that detailed analysis and a real understanding of the impact of the restrictions on real people’s lives, beyond covid. We need an understanding of how it can be that in Buckinghamshire, we went into the second lockdown in tier 1, came out in tier 2 and then had that rapid rise to tier 4, yet with each restriction that has been added it seems that the infection rate has got worse. We need to understand why that is. Why is it that lockdowns do not appear to be working?

As my hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury mentioned a few moments ago, my local council declared a major incident today. I have talked to our hospital trust, and it is full; it is in a capacity crisis. Likewise, my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes North spoke passionately about the situation at Milton Keynes Hospital, which is used by many of my constituents.

With that in mind, and without the detailed analysis that really shows what these restrictions are doing, I cannot vote for the Government’s measures tonight, but I cannot vote against them either. It is hard for me to abstain, as I always like to be for or against something, but I urge the Minister to produce that analysis so that we can move forward with the hope that the vaccine brings.

9.9 pm

**Paul Bristow** (Peterborough) (Con): I heard the news that Peterborough would enter tier 4 restrictions in a rather peculiar situation. I was dressed as Santa, delivering donated toys and presents to families in my city. I joined other volunteer Santas and elves from the Coronaheroes

Peterborough Facebook group, helping those in need. Like the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes North (Ben Everitt), Peterborough went from tier 2 to tier 3 to tier 4 in what seemed like 24 hours. I was not happy.

I thought it was perhaps best that I got home and changed before accepting invitations to discuss the restrictions on local television, but another thought did strike me. When I told the other volunteers about the tier 4 restrictions, as disappointed as they were, they doubled down and pledged to continue to help those struggling during this pandemic. My reaction to the news became, “We will get through tier 4 together.” That is exactly what will happen.

While Peterborough’s most unconvincing Santa will put the costume back in the drawer, groups such as the Coronaheroes Peterborough Facebook group will continue their work. The Light Project and the Garden House will continue to look after rough sleepers and families in temporary accommodation. Charities such as Care Zone will provide household furniture. The WestRaven café will provide food parcels, and churches, mosques and temples will offer support.

Businesses will also do what they can for our NHS and frontline social care staff. Takeaways, restaurants and pubs will continue to step up, but it is for hospitality and retail that I want to make a case. Tier 4 has been justified because of the increase in infections, the strain now being placed on our NHS and the new strains of covid-19 that have been identified. Peterborough’s rate stood at 403 cases per 100,000 on Christmas Eve, which I note is around the England average, but that statistic is not the fault of the hospitality industry. Public health officials in Peterborough have told me as much.

Spikes in Peterborough have not been caused by pubs, bars or restaurants. There is not this magic trade-off between schools and hospitality. Hospitality businesses have been forced to close before their busiest time, which is costing jobs, viable businesses and livelihoods. If they are to remain closed in Peterborough and other tier 3 and tier 4 areas, I urge those on the Front Bench and the Minister listening to my speech please to protect them. Will she at least lobby her colleagues at the Treasury to protect them? When a pub closes, it can have a detrimental impact on a community. It has a huge impact on supply chains and other elements of the local economy.

Furlough has been useful, there is no doubt about that. Business rates relief has been crucial, but pubs and the hospitality industry need more support. While they can open for delivery or takeaway, in many cases that is just not cost-effective. They need more support, so I urge the Minister to make representations to the Treasury for further support for hospitality.

When I visited the vaccination centre in Peterborough yesterday, I felt hope. When I heard my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care at the Dispatch Box earlier, I felt hope again, because the prospect of vaccinating millions of people throughout January and February is incredibly positive. Some are talking about a figure of 2 million a week. That would be a tremendous achievement, and we have done that before in procuring millions and millions of items of PPE and ramping up testing when we needed

to. It is fantastic to end this year on a note of hope and a positive vision for the future, because while 2020 has been a wretched year for many places in our country, 2021 offers hope not just for Peterborough, but for our country.

9.14 pm

**Anthony Browne** (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): I join colleagues from across the House in welcoming the approval of the AstraZeneca vaccine. As I might have mentioned a couple of times, AstraZeneca has its global headquarters in my constituency. We often call it the Oxford vaccine, but I will call it the Oxford-Cambridge vaccine, for fairness.

I pay tribute to all the scientists, and to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, the Health Ministers and their team, for making sure that the UK has led the way in the fight against coronavirus. We are a world leader, not only in vaccination—we had the first approval, and now have the Oxford-Cambridge vaccine, which will be rolled out across the world—but in testing: we do more of it than any other European country. We are also world-leading in genomics. A colleague mentioned genomic surveillance. That is done largely in my constituency by the Wellcome Sanger Institute; we do more than the rest of the world put together. We are also world-leading in developing a clinically proven drug against coronavirus. The pandemic has shown that the UK is a life sciences superpower, and that is something of which we should be proud.

The new vaccine has been hailed as a game changer. When the announcement was made this morning, I could almost hear the sigh of relief across the country; finally, there was a light at the end of the tunnel. It was a great end to an absolutely horrible year, but as we have discussed this evening, the number of infections is rising as I speak. It is far higher than it has been, and so is the number of hospitalisations. NHS managers tell us that their hospitals are at the tipping point; they are creaking under the strain and may not be able to cope. That is why the Government announced new tier regulations just before Christmas and today. I support those regulations with a heavy heart, because I know the damage that they do to businesses, mental health and people's lives, but having gone through all the data, I cannot see any alternative. I am very keen, though, for us to get out of them as quickly as possible. That, hopefully, is what the vaccine will allow us to do.

We now have a race between the infection rate, which is rising rapidly, and rolling out the vaccination as quickly as possible. The vaccination programme will change the dynamic of the pandemic, which means that we should change how we assess the restrictions and the tiers in future. At the moment, our focus is mainly on infection rates. That makes good sense, because infection leads to hospitalisation, and hospitalisation leads to death as night follows day; there is a clear link. As we vaccinate those most at risk—the elderly and the vulnerable—the death rate will come down rapidly. We could end up with infection rates staying quite high, particularly among unvaccinated young people, but death rates plummeting. There will be a breakdown in the relationship between the death rate and the infection rate, and that relationship has guided policy so far. The Government's focus, in their policy on restrictions, should be not on infections, but on the death rate.

Let me give an example. Some 95% of deaths from coronavirus have been of people over the age of 60. Only 5% of deaths have been of people under that age. If we vaccinate all people over 60, which we can do by mid-February, it will lead to a 90% fall in the death rate, which is really quite astonishing. That is why, in recent months, I have been urging the Government to publish the case fatality rate—the proportion of people with coronavirus who end up dying. That rate has been plummeting. Our World in Data, an independent and highly respected website, does charts on countries around the world, and it says that the case fatality rate for coronavirus in the UK has dropped by 75% since September. As the vaccine is rolled out, that rate will fall further and further.

One thing that we can all agree on in this House is that we do not want these restrictions for longer than is absolutely necessary. I see at first hand in my constituency their impact on pubs, businesses, the events industry, wedding planners, and people's social lives. We have to get out of the restrictions as quickly as possible. That is why I urge the Government, in the new year, to think not so much about the rate of infection as about the number of deaths. If deaths are going down, we can lift the restrictions.

I am 53 and in cohort 9—[*Interruption.*] Honestly! I know I do not look it. I have my own hair. In short, my point is this: do not wait for people my age to get vaccinated before allowing the pubs of South Cambridgeshire to reopen. There is light at the end of the tunnel; let us make sure that we get there as quickly as possible.

9.19 pm

**Aaron Bell** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow a typically excellent speech from my hon. Friend the Member for South Cambridgeshire (Anthony Browne). I thank the House staff for all they have done to make today possible. It has been a momentous day both in this Chamber and in plenty of living rooms around the country. Not only have we had the Brexit Bill, but we have been discussing some of the most serious matters on the domestic front for many years.

I also pay tribute to all the NHS and testing centre staff who have been working not just throughout the pandemic, but particularly over the Christmas period. It is noticeable from the figures that we have kept up our testing rate over Christmas, whereas other countries have not necessarily done that, so I pay tribute to everyone who has given up their Christmas to try to make our lives a bit better.

We started today with the welcome news about the vaccine. It is a huge triumph for British science—I say to my hon. Friend the Member for South Cambridgeshire that I am going to call it the Oxford vaccine—but I just wonder whether the world as a whole may look back and consider whether we could have proceeded differently with the vaccine. I was struck by a recent article saying that Moderna actually had its vaccine produced in January. Perhaps if we had taken a different approach, maybe using supersized trials once we had proved the basic safety of a vaccine, we might have mitigated some of the enormous costs of the pandemic this year.

That is perhaps a question for the Science and Technology Committee, on which I sit, and I praise the Committee's staff for letting us hold an emergency evidence session

[Aaron Bell]

on 23 December, in which we had three witnesses from NERVTAG, led by the excellent Professor Peter Horby, who explained the new variant and all its details. I have to say that, as we have all heard, the numbers showing how quickly it can spread are pretty worrying.

Before I move on to talk about tiers more generally, I want to welcome the statutory instrument on self-isolation that we are debating today. Again, it is something we have discussed in our Committee, and moving from 14 to 10 days is an evidence-based and probability-based move. I do not think that those final four days of isolation have been cutting out many cases at all, and they cannot really be justified, so I am glad that the Government have moved on that.

I am no lockdown enthusiast. How can I be with Newcastle-under-Lyme being put into tier 4 today? It is a decision that will cause a lot of hardship. Indeed, I said in my first ever virtual speech in this Chamber on 4 May, when we were debating the first coronavirus SIs, that

“any future calculus needs to recognise properly all the costs of lockdown: health, economic and social.”—[*Official Report*, 4 May 2020; Vol. 675, c. 464.]

That still holds, but I have to be a lockdown realist as well, and we must look at both sides of the equation. Contrary to some commentators, the figures, especially from the November national lockdown, are clear that lockdowns and strict measures do actually work and that they can get things under control. We will have to wait and see whether they will be sufficient for the new variant, because we do not yet have all the data, but the vaccine has changed the calculus. We are no longer looking at an indefinite lockdown. We have light at the end of the tunnel, and we have a clear goal to aim for.

Some of the commentators who are so prominent on social media—often in the comments on our own pages—are dead set against lockdowns, but they keep moving the goalposts. First, they were asking, “Where are the cases?” and then there were cases. They asked, “Where are the hospitalisations?” and, sure as night follows day, there were hospitalisations. Then they said, “But where are the deaths?” Well, 981 deaths were reported today, and I am afraid to say that number is only going to increase based on everything we know about this virus and the lags involved.

In recent days, those commentators have taken to the rather tasteless statistic that only 388 under-60s with no underlying conditions have died with coronavirus in the UK. First, 388 is quite a large number, and we should be worried about that, but what about the over-60s? What about those who have underlying conditions? What about people with manageable underlying conditions such as mild asthma? Are we really saying that the people over 60 or people with underlying conditions are somehow worth less in this calculus? People who make that case should think about what it says about their value system. It is right that the Government have rejected that approach throughout and have sought to protect the most vulnerable, and it is right that society has done that, with people who are not at much risk from coronavirus making sacrifices.

As others have said, we have had two major changes since we last met to discuss coronavirus in this place: the variant and the vaccine. They really have changed things.

Before, we were perhaps in what you might call a siege—an unpleasant one that was certainly driving people stir crazy. Now, we are in a race instead. Given that we are in a race—the variant is spreading more rapidly and the vaccines are coming on board quicker and quicker—the Government must use all their tools to slow the progression of the virus and that, unfortunately, includes tighter lockdowns and measures such as today’s. Just as importantly the Government must use all their tools to speed up the vaccinations, and I urge them to do that.

9.24 pm

**James Sunderland** (Bracknell) (Con): The year 2020 has been grim for so many of us. Nobody wants the restrictions, but they are necessary and I welcome them, and I will therefore be voting with the Government this evening on all the motions.

The retrospective nature of this legislation has been difficult to stomach. Starting the recess and then facing this on the Friday was difficult for me, as it was for all MPs and constituents, but this measure is not being imposed for any reason other than the public health imperative. At the back of our minds, we must always remember that.

I say all the time to constituents who write to me, “This is not personal. The fact that you can’t go and see family at Christmas, the fact that you are locked away for this awful winter—there is nothing personal there at all. It is simply the Government doing what they have to do to keep people safe.” I have had many letters from people in Bracknell and the wider constituency over the past few months. I understand their frustrations completely and I empathise with them. Having Christmas plans curtailed at the last minute was awful. Nobody takes any pleasure at all in restricting people from seeing their loved ones, but it is the duty of any responsible Government to take tough and unpopular decisions to protect lives. It is a sign of good leadership that the Government are making these decisions.

I again commend my constituents. The public have been resolute in the main in abiding by the rules, and the self-discipline we have seen across the UK this year has been phenomenal. We welcome today’s news of a second vaccine—it is fantastic—so there is light at the end of the tunnel, and we must look forward to a more positive 2021.

It has been a difficult few weeks in my constituency. Bracknell went from tier 2 to tier 4 in a matter of days, which was a bitter blow to the morale and mental health of so many. As of today, we are at a rate of 568 cases per 100,000. It is no exaggeration to say that it has septupled in the past month. Over a six-week period, that is a 1,000% increase in the rate in my constituency, and it is mirrored elsewhere locally. In Wokingham it is 413, in Reading it is 452, in Windsor and Maidenhead it is 509, and in Slough it is 646. The fact is that the virus is ripping through the constituency and beyond. This is the wave that we were fortunate not to have had so far.

Locally, our hospitals are really struggling. Wexham Park, Royal Berkshire and Frimley Park Hospitals are at maximum capacity, and today the Thames Valley Local Resilience Forum was almost at the point of declaring a major incident in Berkshire because it has got that bad. When the statistics are presented, it is irresponsible not to react to the exponential increase in cases, however tough it is to stomach. A decision not to act would have been a grave dereliction of duty.

To be a critical friend to the Government, there are three areas that I would like to concentrate on very quickly. First, on gyms, we need to make sure we do not curtail freedoms to the extent that people cannot exercise. We have known about the restrictions on the fitness and leisure industry for some time, so I ask the Government please to review the rules on gyms and all forms of exercise and sport so that life can continue as best it can for many.

Small businesses have also had it really bad and some are on their last legs. We have seen giant online corporations such as Amazon and Google dominating the market, continuing to sell goods with impunity and making it increasingly difficult for the high street to survive. There must, please, be more support for those businesses. We have also heard about the excluded, and we cannot ignore them. It is important that we do whatever we can, even at this stage, to help them.

I welcome the Government's stance on keeping schools open. That is a necessity for our children and their parents, many of whom need to go back to work, but I implore the Government to maximise testing in schools and roll out vaccinations for teachers at the earliest opportunity.

Notwithstanding the grim nature of 2020, we have much to look forward to, and we must keep the faith. Last week, I visited the fantastic Bracknell vaccination centre, run by the East Berkshire clinical commissioning group, and what I saw there was simply amazing. I saw people in their 80s and 90s who had left home for the first time. I want to share with my hon. Friend the Member for Peterborough (Paul Bristow) the hope that I saw, which was quite staggering. What I saw there was magnificent, and I commend everyone in the NHS, key workers and other key staff across the UK for what they are doing. We will get through this.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** I call the last Back-Bench speaker, Richard Holden.

9.29 pm

**Mr Richard Holden** (North West Durham) (Con): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker. Like many Members on the Government side of the House, and I am sure on both sides, the last thing I want to do is be here again insisting on further lockdowns and further measures to restrict the freedom of my constituents. It is certainly not what I came into politics for.

We have had some good news today: the vaccine coming forward looks like it will put us in the final furlong for furloughed Britain, which is a really good place to be, but we are not there yet, so I will reluctantly support these measures today. I know that the Health Minister has been getting it in the neck from both sides of the House, and it is right that we as Back Benchers challenge the Government on the measures they are taking, but I have spoken to my local NHS hospital trust chief executive today and the trust is seeing a massive surge. Durham is going back into tier 4. It has seen a real spike in cases and a real spike in hospitalisations just over the last couple of weeks, after we had been seeing a real reduction in cases in tier 3 over a very prolonged period. It is quite clear that there is a real issue, so everything that can be done to get this vaccine out needs to be done. We really need to get it there as quickly as possible.

Like other hon. Members, I support SI No. 1518—the move from the Government on self-isolation from 14 to 10 days. We must do anything that can be done to improve the freedoms of my constituents at the earliest opportunity. I know that the support from the Government has been huge, but this is taxpayers' money. It has been absolutely massive, with the furlough, self-employment income support and grants to businesses.

Like my hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (James Sunderland), I want to speak about gyms. I have had a huge number of people in my constituency again getting in touch with me today, really concerned about the impact that this is going to have. Gym owners have been in touch because January and February is the time of year when they finally make some money, so any extra support from the Government for them would be particularly welcome. Anything in terms of instruction, via the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, on discretionary grant schemes from councils for gyms would be particularly helpful. If I can make a targeted suggestion that those on the Treasury Bench can pass on to the Treasury, perhaps, when we get through this, we could push out a scheme such as “Work out to help out” or something similar for this sector.

High streets more generally, from beauticians to bookshops, have been particularly hammered. They have not suffered like some of the massive international companies, and it is those guys on the frontlines running small businesses—the hearts and souls of our communities—who have been really affected. Anything more to push support, either discretionary or across the board, would be particularly helpful.

I cannot fail to mention the hospitality sector. I was particularly struck by what the hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Meg Hillier) said. Whether it is on Shoreditch High Street or South Street in Crook in my constituency, or Sherburn Terrace in Consett, or Stanhope town centre, the hospitality sector across the country has been absolutely mullered by this disease, so anything that can be done to help it now will be particularly helpful. I also urge the Front-Bench team to look particularly at on-sale beer duty cuts come the Budget and at whether there could be a further targeted scheme around eat out to help out, when they are able to reopen, to help them to restart again, just to give them the confidence to get going again. That would also be particularly welcome.

As hon. Members across the House have said, keeping schools open is important, but it is also right that we treat teachers as essential workers. If we can get the vaccines out to them, that will be really helpful. So many of my school leaders have been getting in touch with me. I thank the Government for the extra cash for schools and, if necessary, the military support, but we have to get some more support to them to help, because they are really doing everything they can, on the vaccine levels.

Just on the NHS, I paid fantastic visits to both Shotley Bridge Community Hospital and Weardale Community Hospital in my constituency in the run-up to Christmas to see some of the staff there on the night shift. It is clear, however, that staff are really knackered, so if anything can be done to support our NHS staff, particularly in terms of mental health, that would be particularly helpful.

[Mr Richard Holden]

Finally on the vaccine, and in reference to my hon. Friend the Member for South Cambridgeshire (Anthony Browne)—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. Sorry, Richard, you have run out of time.

9.34 pm

**Alex Norris:** This has been an excellent debate. We have heard lots of different views and perspectives about how to wrestle with this knotty crisis—the great national question of the day—but I do not mistake the disagreement and points of difference for a lack of faith or a lack of love of community or country. All Members have attacked the question with a commitment to wanting the best for our country, even if sometimes we disagree on the conclusions.

That is particularly important today. Today has been a momentous day and the past 12 hours and five minutes of parliamentary business will be remembered—perhaps that is one for your book, Mr Deputy Speaker, and please be kind if I do anything to earn a place in there. Who knows how I could do that? There will be some for whom today is a day of great joy, and there will be some for whom today is a day of pain. Whatever people feel about what has happened here today, we have to come together. We have had four years—longer, really—of significant disagreement and division and what we have seen in the pandemic is that the UK is at its best when it is united and comes together. I hope that we will move forward from today in that spirit, and tackling the virus reminds us why we ought to do that.

Let me reflect on the contributions from colleagues. My hon. Friend the Member for Worsley and Eccles South (Barbara Keeley) made the point about ensuring that NHS staff are vaccinated. As I said in my opening speech, that is important because it is the right thing to do and because of the sacrifices they make and the risks they run on our behalf, but also because of the need for a resilient workforce.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) made a very important point: when the right support is not in place, whether that is for the individual to self-isolate or for businesses to shut their doors in challenging times, it undermines people's confidence and faith in the overall process. That is why the Government's economic support package needs to move hand in hand with increased regulation to protect public health.

My hon. Friends the Members for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Meg Hillier) and for Birmingham, Selly Oak (Steve McCabe) both referenced an important theme about honesty. I will reiterate what I said to the Minister—the British people are ready for candour. If we are in tier 4 from now until the vaccine, now is definitely the time to tell us.

I am not going to itemise all the Government Back-Bench colleagues who spoke—there were too many. We really ought to do something about that at the next election; at least I can commit to that. I particularly want to mention the speech made by the right hon. Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison), because he referred directly to my speech and suggested that when I talked about SI No. 1646 I was a bit churlish. I do not think I

was; I was a bit saddened by that. I shadowed the right hon. Gentleman when he was a Minister for international development and I was never churlish then, and I was not churlish now. My point about SI No. 1646 was that we were concerned—and said so at the time—that the three-tier restrictions would not go far enough, but in that SI in particular it is not clear how to get out of a tier. I have not heard anything in the subsequent speeches, and I doubt we will hear anything from the Minister, that gives a clear set of criteria even around the five metrics for exiting tiers. That remains a significant problem for public confidence in the process.

I wanted to pull out two quick themes from Government Back-Bench contributions. The first is about tiers. In contributions their, the right hon. Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) and the hon. Members for Bolton West (Chris Green), for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) and for Buckingham (Greg Smith), they all put admirable scrutiny and pressure on their Minister, as I have heard them do before, and I know that she will be keen to respond. I would be keen to enlist that support for matters beyond tiers. Tiers are a symptom, not a cause, of the challenges of the restrictions on liberty we are making today. Tiers are put in place when we lose control of the virus. Some of that can be accounted for by the mutant strain, which is 56% more potent, but the issues existed before then. We needed tiers before that, and tiers that constantly increased in strength, because we do not have the fundamentals right, particularly on test and trace. I implore those Members to apply that level of scrutiny and pressure on their Ministers on that, too, because it would make a real difference.

The second theme was vaccines. Many colleagues, including the right hon. Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) and the hon. Members for Mid Derbyshire (Mrs Latham), for Runnymede and Weybridge (Dr Spencer), for Dudley South (Mike Wood), for Aylesbury (Rob Butler), for South Cambridgeshire (Anthony Browne) and for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell)—everyone, in fact, but particularly those Members—expressed joy about the plan. The right hon. Member for Forest of Dean made a particularly detailed and powerful case for the levels he felt that the Government should be aspiring to. I hope the Minister will engage with that directly and say whether it is realistic. If it is not, can she say why not and what a more realistic level is?

I want to reiterate the point on schools that was made by a number of colleagues. I am not suggesting that Members would ever look at social media during a colleague's contribution, but if they did, they will have seen that there is significant anxiety as a result of the announcement by the Secretary of State for Education this afternoon. It just will not do to say that some schools will be open and that some schools will not be open and then not to publish the list, and then when the list is eventually published, it is incomplete. This has caused a significant amount of anxiety. We must not forget that we are—what—five days away from those schools opening. Parents need to know. Schools need to know. It really will not do and I hope the Minister might be able to give some clarity on that and, if not, a sense of when the Government will return to finish off that job.

I just want to finish by reiterating three key questions to the Minister. I know that she will have an awful lot to cover, so I wanted to make sure that I left her the lion's



share of the winding-up time—whether she will thank me for that I do not know. First, we do need to hear the Government say with both clarity and commitment that, on the basis of the best scientific evidence available, they believe that the tier system is sufficient to control the spread of the virus. This is their third go at a tier system. The first two failed and we are here today because the third one is not working either. We need to hear that explicitly, because otherwise we will have to take more significant action later. We might as well be honest about that now.

Secondly, when will we see the roll-out plan for the vaccine so that we can help to build confidence and perhaps to improve it through parliamentary scrutiny? The plan should include NHS staff as a priority, but, in general, it needs to ensure that we get through the entire population. It is a wonderful and joyous moment when we know that we will have access to enough vaccines for everyone who wants one. It is a wonderful moment. Now our responsibility is to demonstrate that we can get them out for people in the quickest and safest possible manner.

Finally, there should be no extra health regulations without extra support for business. Where is that support package? When will we see it? When asked that question earlier—I think by a Back-Bench colleague of mine—the Secretary of State for Health said, “Well, I’m not a Treasury Minister, I am a Health Minister.” Nobody thinks that that is how it works here. We cannot afford for it to work in that way. The two need to move in lockstep, so can we have clarity about when we will see that support package? I will sit down now, Mr Deputy Speaker. It has been a very good debate, but I hope that the Minister can now give clarity on the points that I have raised.

9.42 pm

**Helen Whately:** I thank hon. Members from across the House and those who have contributed virtually for the many truly thoughtful contributions in what has been a really wide-ranging debate this evening. In a moment, I will respond, as far as I can in the time that I have, to many of the points and questions that have been raised.

As I stated at the outset, although we have the truly welcome news of the MHRA approval of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine for use, right now we face a very serious situation. We face rapid rates of covid transmission and new cases of the new variant of the virus. We began to see that before Christmas, when we brought in the measures and tier 4, which we are debating today. No Government would want to do what we are having to do, which is to put such restrictions on people’s lives, but, as many hon. Members have recognised in their speeches, we see the pressures on the NHS and know that rises in infections and rises in hospital admissions very sadly lead to loss of life. We also know the implications of those pressures on the NHS not only for those with covid, but for those needing treatment for other illnesses. The alternative to taking measures to suppress the virus is unthinkable. These decisions are not easy to make, but the data is clear, including on the additional infectiousness of the new variant.

Some hon. Friends asked why their constituencies had been moved up tiers either in the past couple of weeks or today, sometimes moving at some pace from a low tier to as far up as tier 4. The reason is that a combination of the epidemiological evidence and hospital

pressures, in relation to the five criteria that we have set out, makes it clear that that is what needs to happen. I remind my hon. Friends of the five criteria. We look at the case rates for all ages, the case rates for over-60s—which particularly translate into hospital admissions—the change in the case rate, the positivity rate and pressures on hospitals such as occupancy rates and the trajectory of those. When we look at that dataset, it is clear when action is needed.

**Mr Harper:** Can I look into that point a bit? I thank the Opposition spokesman for giving us so much time to deal with the things we did not have time to deal with in our limited remarks. On the point about looking at the data—I listened carefully to a number of colleagues, and I had this in my constituency—I genuinely do not understand how my constituency was put into tier 3 starting at midnight on Boxing day, and after only three days had elapsed a decision was taken to move it to tier 4. What data had changed? Nothing significant happened between those two dates. Other colleagues went through three tiers in a matter of days. The problem is that that does not engender confidence among our constituents that the decisions are being taken for understandable reasons. Will the Minister say a little bit more about the decision-making process so that we can take that back to our constituents to try to give them a little more confidence?

**Helen Whately:** Something that I can say to give my right hon. Friend some extra insight is that, for instance in introducing the latest measures, one of the things that we saw was a rapidly changing situation. During the national lockdown and the weeks following that, there was some puzzling about what was going on. We were seeing a large increase in the case rate in the south-east, especially in Kent and part of my constituency. What we came to investigate and understand was the new variant playing its part in that. It is the data that tells us that we need to make an urgent change, for instance in the tier that an area is in.

I have one very specific example that I want to give, not in relation to my right hon. Friend’s constituency but in response to the question that my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch (Sir Christopher Chope) asked about why his constituency had changed tier and what had happened in the period that we are talking about. I can tell my hon. Friend the Member for Christchurch—he is not in his place, but I hope that he is listening remotely—that we saw a 68% increase in the case rate in his area of the country between 17 and 23 December, as well as a rapidly rising rate in the over-60s and a rising positivity rate. That is the kind of story that tells us that we need to take rapid action.

My right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne) also questioned the timing of the introduction of the new measures, and I can tell him that we saw the number of cases increasing fast—both cases and hospital admissions. There was quite simply no time to waste. The analysis was clear that that was driven by the new variant.

Some hon. Members have questioned the effectiveness of the measures. My hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price) spoke about her area now having the highest case rate in the country—something I can relate to because part of my constituency previously had the highest case rate in the country—and it is not a reason why you want your area to be famous.

[Helen Whately]

In the parts of Kent that were hit hardest with the new variant a few weeks ago, we are now seeing some stabilisation in rates. I should warn that that is at a relatively high level. It is also very soon after the introduction of tier 4—just 10 days ago—for us to see its full effect. We and everyone living in those areas can play their part in making sure that the restrictions work. My hon. Friend the Member for Aylesbury (Rob Butler) said to us on the screen that he had one simple message, which was to follow the rules. The virus thrives on social contact and the restrictions reduce that, and the Government will of course continue to keep these measures and their effectiveness under review.

Many hon. Members spoke up for businesses in their constituencies, and I absolutely recognise the huge challenges that the pandemic has placed on many businesses in some sectors such as hospitality and tourism and travel in particular. We have, of course, sought to protect livelihoods as well as lives. We have spent over £280 billion this year to support businesses and individuals. That includes extra support for higher tiers, recognising the extra costs incurred in those areas. I have no doubt that my honourable colleagues in the Treasury will be taking note of many of the arguments made by Members today.

**Mr Harper:** Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Helen Whately:** May I make a little progress? I did take an intervention from my right hon. Friend a moment ago, and I am trying to respond to the many points made in the debate.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison) rightly referred to the unpredictability of this virus, and to how it does not follow due process, as we have seen with the new variant. Unlike many mutations, which are normal things that occur with a virus, this variant has changed the behaviour of the virus. As my hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Dr Spencer) said, thanks to the UK's world-leading virus surveillance capability, we were able to detect and analyse the spread of this new strain. We know that it is most evident in the areas with exponential rises in cases at the moment, and those are the areas that have been placed in tier 4, either before Christmas or with the announcements today.

Many hon. Members spoke about the vaccination programme, and they welcomed the good news about the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. Some hon. Friends even sought to change the way we describe the vaccine, by claiming it for their own constituencies. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) said that the vaccine has put a spring or a skip in his step, which I know that Members around the House will welcome.

The NHS has done a brilliant job of already vaccinating more than 600,000 people with the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, and with the opportunity to now bring into play the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, we are driven and committed to its rapid roll-out. We have secured 100 million doses, and the NHS stands ready to deploy them from next week. We have an infrastructure of hospital hubs, GPs, vaccination centres and pharmacies ready to play their part and, as my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Wiltshire said, they will be

drawing on a workforce that includes volunteers from among our fabulous NHS returners, who stepped forward to offer their help to the NHS during the pandemic.

**Mr Harper:** The Minister is being generous in giving way. I wish to ask about one issue that cropped up today at the Prime Minister's press conference, and something that Professor Van-Tam said about what we do and do not know about the vaccine's ability to reduce the transmission of the virus. My understanding is that once we have vaccinated those who are at most risk, and reduced the risk of people dying or being hospitalised, we will then be in a much better place. He seemed to imply that if the vaccine does not reduce the transmission of the virus, that will somehow prolong the restrictions we have to keep in place, but I do not follow why that would be. Can the Minister clarify the Government's position on that? I think that once we have vaccinated the at-risk groups, we can remove the restrictions. Am I wrong?

**Helen Whately:** I do not think that now is the moment for me to hold a remote debate on that with the deputy chief medical officer, and my right hon. Friend also asks me to see into the future regarding the roll-out of the vaccine. I can say, however, that we are following the prioritisation as set out by Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation. That is first and foremost to vaccinate those who are at greatest risk of losing their lives to covid, and that is why we are starting with residents in care homes, which have been so hard hit by the pandemic, as well as care home workers. The next priority category is those who are over 80 and broader health and social care workers, and it then moves down the ages. Our approach follows the JCVI prioritisation to put the vaccine to that crucial and important effect of saving people's lives from this cruel disease.

The hon. Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris) asked about the publication of JCVI advice on the use of the vaccine. I can tell him that it has already been published and is available on gov.uk.

**Steve Brine:** I want to get clarity on the point made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper). If the reason for the restrictions on our constituents' lives is to prevent people from getting infected, getting very sick and being hospitalised, and thereby to protect the NHS, once we have vaccinated the people who could get very sick and use the NHS, we will no longer have the problem of protecting the NHS, so we should be able to lift the restrictions. Even if the Minister cannot clarify that that is the Government's position, does it not seem like the logical consequence, or am I just completely daft?

**Helen Whately:** I am being counselled not to respond to my hon. Friend's description of himself. I do not think I should be drawn into speculation on the roll-out and what we face ahead of us. He will have heard the good news from the Secretary of State earlier that we have an additional vaccine that we can use and that the NHS is ready and poised to roll out at great pace. We are determined to do so. That is so important, as it means that we have hope as we go through this very difficult time.

It was very good to hear so many hon. Members recognise and thank not only NHS staff but those working in social care. Care home workers in particular were mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock, as were the social care workforce more widely.

The hon. Member for Twickenham (Munira Wilson) mentioned the mental health of the NHS and social care workforce—something about which I care a great deal. I assure her and others who are concerned about this matter that we have put in place extra mental health support for frontline NHS and social care workers, including specialist helplines that are available 24/7 so that there is always someone they can call.

In conclusion, as we go about our lives under these restrictions, we must remember the pressure the pandemic puts on that workforce. I once again thank the public for all playing their part and for the sacrifices they are making for themselves, but especially for others. The end is in sight, but we have a way to go and we must take the steps necessary to suppress the virus here and now.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Self-Isolation and Linked Households) (England) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1518), dated 11 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 11 December, be approved.

## PUBLIC HEALTH

*Resolved,*

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1533), dated 14 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 14 December, be approved.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

*Resolved,*

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1572), dated 17 December 2020, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17 December, be approved.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

*Resolved,*

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers and Obligations of Undertakings) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1611), dated 20 December 2020, a copy of which were laid before this House on 21 December, be approved.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

*Resolved,*

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) (No. 3) Regulations 2020 (S.I., 2020, No. 1646), dated 24 December 2020, a copy of which were laid before this House on 29 December, be approved.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

## Business without Debate

### DEFERRED DIVISIONS

*Ordered,*

That at this day's sitting, Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply to the Motion in the name of Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg relating to Sittings of the House.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

### SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 25),*

That this House, at its rising this day, do adjourn until 11 January 2021.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

*The House divided: Ayes 335, Noes 212.*

### Division No. 192

**[10 pm**

#### AYES

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

Atherton, Sarah	Double, Steve
Atkins, Victoria	Dowden, rh Oliver
Bacon, Gareth	Doyle-Price, Jackie
Bacon, Mr Richard	Drax, Richard
Badenoch, Kemi	Drummond, Mrs Flick
Bailey, Shaun	Duddridge, James
Baillie, Siobhan	Duguid, David
Baker, Duncan	Dunne, rh Philip
Baker, Mr Steve	Eastwood, Mark
Barclay, rh Steve	Edwards, Ruth
Baron, Mr John	Ellis, rh Michael
Baynes, Simon	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Bell, Aaron	Eustice, rh George
Benton, Scott	Evans, Dr Luke
Beresford, Sir Paul	Evennett, rh Sir David
Berry, rh Jake	Everitt, Ben
Bhatti, Saqib	Fabricant, Michael
Blackman, Bob	Farris, Laura
Blunt, Crispin	Fell, Simon
Bowie, Andrew	Fletcher, Katherine
Bradley, Ben	Fletcher, Mark
Bradley, rh Karen	Fletcher, Nick
Braverman, rh Suella	Ford, Vicky
Brereton, Jack	Foster, Kevin
Bridgen, Andrew	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Brine, Steve	Foy, Mary Kelly
Bristow, Paul	Francois, rh Mr Mark
Britcliffe, Sara	Frazer, Lucy
Brokenshire, rh James	Freer, Mike
Browne, Anthony	Fuller, Richard
Bruce, Fiona	Fysh, Mr Marcus
Buchan, Felicity	Gale, rh Sir Roger
Buckland, rh Robert	Garnier, Mark
Burghart, Alex	Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Burns, rh Conor	Gibb, rh Nick
Butler, Rob	Gibson, Peter
Cairns, rh Alun	Gideon, Jo
Carter, Andy	Gillan, rh Dame Cheryl
Cartlidge, James	Glen, John
Cash, Sir William	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Cates, Miriam	Gove, rh Michael
Caulfield, Maria	Graham, Richard
Chalk, Alex	Grant, Mrs Helen
Chishti, Rehman	Gray, James
Churchill, Jo	Grayling, rh Chris
Clark, rh Greg	Green, rh Damian
Clarke, Mr Simon	Griffith, Andrew
Clarke, Theo	Griffiths, Kate
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Grundy, James
Clarkson, Chris	Gullis, Jonathan
Cleverly, rh James	Halfon, rh Robert
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Hall, Luke
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Hammond, Stephen
Colburn, Elliot	Hancock, rh Matt
Collins, Damian	Hands, rh Greg
Costa, Alberto	Harris, Rebecca
Courts, Robert	Harrison, Trudy
Coutinho, Claire	Hart, Sally-Ann
Cox, rh Mr Geoffrey	Hart, rh Simon
Crabb, rh Stephen	Hayes, rh Sir John
Crosbie, Virginia	Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Daly, James	Heapey, James
Davies, David T. C.	Heaton-Harris, Chris
Davies, Gareth	Henderson, Gordon
Davies, Dr James	Henry, Darren
Davies, Mims	Higginbotham, Antony
Davies, Philip	Hill, Mike
Davison, Dehenna	Hinds, rh Damian
Dinenage, Caroline	Hoare, Simon
Dines, Miss Sarah	Holden, Mr Richard
Donelan, Michelle	Hollinrake, Kevin
Dorries, Ms Nadine	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  
 Langan, Robert  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Leadsom, rh Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Mackrory, Cherilyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Mak, Alan  
 Malthouse, Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McDonnell, rh John  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 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, Grahame  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Mundell, rh David  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Nici, Lia  
 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  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 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, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Ross, Douglas  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Skidmore, rh Chris  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 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  
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie  
 Trickett, Jon  
 Trott, Laura  
 Truss, rh Elizabeth  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Mr Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
 Abrahams, Debbie  
 Ali, Rushanara  
 Ali, Tahir  
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena  
 Amesbury, Mike  
 Anderson, Fleur  
 Antoniazzi, Tonia  
 Ashworth, Jonathan  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barker, Paula  
 Beckett, rh Margaret  
 Begum, Apsana  
 Benn, rh Hilary  
 Betts, Mr Clive  
 Blake, Olivia  
 Blomfield, Paul  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Brabin, Tracy  
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brown, Ms Lyn  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burgon, Richard  
 Butler, Dawn  
 Byrne, Ian  
 Byrne, rh Liam  
 Cadbury, Ruth  
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
 Carden, Dan  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Chamberlain, Wendy  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Charalambous, Bambos  
 Clark, Feryal  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cooper, Rosie  
 Cooper, rh Yvette  
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
 Creasy, Stella  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cryer, John  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Daby, Janet  
 Davey, rh Ed  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint  
 Davies-Jones, Alex

Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Whately, Helen  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittaker, Craig  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob  
 Zahawi, Nadhim

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
 Leo Docherty and  
 James Morris

#### NOES

Davis, rh Mr David  
 De Cordova, Marsha  
 Debbonaire, Thangam  
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Dodds, Anneliese  
 Doughty, Stephen  
 Dowd, Peter  
 Dromey, Jack  
 Duffield, Rosie  
 Eagle, Ms Angela  
 Eagle, Maria  
 Efford, Clive  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Eshalomi, Florence  
 Esterson, Bill  
 Evans, Chris  
 Farron, Tim  
 Farry, Stephen  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Fovargue, Yvonne  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gill, Preet Kaur  
 Glindon, Mary  
 Green, Kate  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Greenwood, Margaret  
 Griffith, Nia  
 Gwynne, Andrew  
 Haigh, Louise  
 Hamilton, Fabian  
 Hardy, Emma  
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet  
 Harris, Carolyn  
 Hayes, Helen  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Holler, Kate  
 Hopkins, Rachel  
 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  
 Kane, Mike  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lynch, Holly  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Matheson, Christian  
 McCabe, Steve  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonagh, Siobhain  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGinn, Conor  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Moran, Layla  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Murray, Ian  
 Murray, James  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norris, Alex  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Peacock, Stephanie

Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Powell, Lucy  
 Qureshi, Yasmin  
 Rayner, Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Rees, Christina  
 Reeves, Ellie  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Shah, Naz  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Starmer, rh Keir  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sultana, Zarah  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thomas, Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, Nick  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Webbe, Claudia  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittome, Nadia  
 Wilson, Munira  
 Winter, Beth  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Noes:**

**Matt Rodda and  
 Meg Hillier**

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*The list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy, is published at the end of today's debates.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS**

*Ordered,*

That:

(1) the Resolution of the House of 16 January 2020 (Business of the House (Private Members' Bills)), as amended by the Orders of the House of 25 March, 22 April, 12 May, 10 June, 1 July and 3 November 2020 (Business of the House (Private Members' Bills)), is further amended as follows:

leave out "8 January 2021", and leave out "5 March 2021 and 12 March 2021" and insert "5 March 2021, 12 March 2021 and 26 March 2021"

(2) the Orders for Second Reading of Bills and for subsequent stages having precedence in accordance with Standing Order No. 14(9) on each of the days listed under Day 1 in the table below are read and discharged;

(3) each such Bill is ordered to be read a second time or to be set down for the relevant stage on the corresponding day listed under Day 2 in the table; and

(4) those Bills are so set down on the appropriate Day 2 in the order in which they were so set down on the corresponding Day 1.

Day 1	Day 2
8 January 2021	15 January 2021
15 January 2021	22 January 2021
22 January 2021	29 January 2021
29 January 2021	5 February 2021
5 February 2021	26 February 2021
26 February 2021	5 March 2021
5 March 2021	12 March 2021
12 March 2021	26 March 2021

—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Under the order of the House agreed today, I may not adjourn the House until any message from the Lords on the European Union (Future Relationship) Bill has been received and the Speaker has reported the Royal Assent to any Act agreed upon by both Houses. The Speaker will be coming back to do that.

As Members have said, this is an historic and momentous day, and it is in so many ways, but it is ending on a message of hope with the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine. While 2020, as I think we can all agree without a Division, has been the most dismal year in memory, towards its end, 2021 is already looking to be a much better year—one full of hope, not just for the United Kingdom but for the entire world. May I therefore wish everybody a happy 2021?

The sitting is accordingly suspended until the House has received a message from the House of Lords about amendments to the Bill or until the Speaker is able to signify Royal Assent. I will arrange for the Division bells to be sounded a few minutes before the sitting is resumed.

10.13 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

12.25 am

*On resuming—*

### ROYAL ASSENT

**Mr Speaker:** I have to notify the House, in accordance with the Royal Assent Act 1967, that the Queen has signified her Royal Assent to the following Act:

European Union (Future Relationship) Act 2020.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I rise to say that this is an act of constitutional vandalism. We are in the position this evening where the three devolved Parliaments—those in Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast—have refused to give legislative consent. It is the practice that this House is supposed to legislate on matters that concern the devolved Administrations only with their consent. We were told in 2014 that if we stayed in the United Kingdom, our rights as European Union citizens would be respected. What has happened this evening is unacceptable to my Government in Edinburgh, to our Parliament and to the people of Scotland, because we have been taken out of a union, and out of our relationship with our historic partners in Europe, against our consent. I have long warned the Government that we in the Scottish National party would not put up with this. We understand that those in England have the right to remove themselves from the union with the European Union, but the people in Scotland did not and do not give their consent to be removed from the EU. There will be consequences to this, and tonight I give notice to this place that Scotland will have the right to determine its own future.

It is historically the case that it is the people of Scotland who are sovereign, and I seek your advice, Mr Speaker, about what we have to do to make sure that the people of my country have that right and will seek their destiny as an independent member of the European Union.

**Mr Speaker:** What I would say is that we cannot continue the debate, as the decision has already been taken. Your comments have certainly been put on the record. I think the debate will continue in the future, but it will not continue tonight.

I would just like to put on the record my thanks to all the staff of the House of Commons. They have worked since Boxing day in order that today's sitting could happen, and I cannot thank them enough. Thanks to the House passing the motion, they are going to get the break that they deserve—they have been working for the full week. I just want to say thank you to the Members who have given them that right to their holiday, because without the staff of the House we would not be sitting here. It really, really is appreciated—thanks for that. All the best for the new year.

### ADJOURNMENT

*Resolved,* That this House do now adjourn.—(*Tom Pursglove.*)

12.28 am

*House adjourned.*

## Members Eligible for a Proxy Vote

*The following is the list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy:*

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Nigel Adams (Selby and Ainsty) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Imran Ahmad Khan (Wakefield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nickie Aiken (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Tahir Ali (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stuart Anderson (Wolverhampton South West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Edward Argar (Charnwood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sarah Atherton (Wrexham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gareth Bacon (Orpington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kemi Badenoch (Saffron Walden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steve Barclay (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Paula Barker (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Baynes (Clwyd South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Margaret Beckett (Derby South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Saqib Bhatti (Meriden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steven Bonnar (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sir Graham Brady (Altrincham and Sale West) (Con)	Charles Walker
Suella Braverman (Fareham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
James Brokenshire (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudon) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Ms Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alex Burghart (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Richard Burgon (Leeds East) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Conor Burns (Bournemouth West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Byrne (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Amy Callaghan (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP)	Patrick Grady

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Sir Alan Campbell (Tynemouth) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Jon Cruddas (Dagenham and Rainham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP)	Sammy Wilson	John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD)	Sarah Olney	Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
James Cartledge (South Suffolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	James Daly (Bury North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD)	Sarah Olney
Miriam Cates (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Maria Caulfield (Lewes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gareth Davies (Grantham and Stamford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Wendy Chamberlain (North East Fife) (LD)	Sarah Olney	Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Dr James Davies (Vale of Clwyd) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Mims Davies (Mid Sussex) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jo Churchill (Bury St Edmunds) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Feryal Clark (Enfield North) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Marsha De Cordova (Battersea)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Theo Clarke (Stafford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Caroline Dinenage (Gosport) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Clarkson (Heywood and Middleton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Miss Sarah Dines (Derbyshire Dales) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Elliot Colburn (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP)	Sammy Wilson
Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Michelle Donelan (Chippenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD)	Sarah Olney	Dave Doogan (Angus) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Allan Dorans (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Ms Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Robert Courts (Witney) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Claire Coutinho (East Surrey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Oliver Dowden (Hertsmere) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Geoffrey Cox (Torridge and West Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Rosie Duffield (Canterbury) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Virginia Crosbie (Ynys Môn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David Duguid (Banff and Buchan) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con)	Rebecca Harris		



Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Peter Gibson (Darlington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Jo Gideon (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP)	Patrick Grady	Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Mark Eastwood (Dewsbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP)	Sammy Wilson
Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab)	Mark Tami	John Glen (Salisbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Michael Gove (Surrey Heath) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Tami (Ogmore) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Natalie Elphicke (Dover) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Helen Grant (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami	Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami	James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami	Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Damian Green (Ashford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Laura Farris (Newbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD)	Sarah Olney	Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance)	Sarah Olney	Kate Griffiths (Burton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	James Grundy (Leigh) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind)	Jonathan Edwards	Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Colleen Fletcher (Coventry North East) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Katherine Fletcher (South Ribble) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Louise Haigh (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Nick Fletcher (Don Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con)	Rebecca Harris
Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Luke Hall (Thornbury and Yate) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Yvonne Fovargue (Makerfield) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Liam Fox (North Somerset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Claire Hanna (Belfast South) (SDLP)	Ben Lake
Mary Kelly Foy (City of Durham) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Lucy Frazer (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Gill Furniss (Sheffield Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Trudy Harrison (Copeland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Garnier (Wyre Forest) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		
Nick Gibb (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab)	Mark Tami
James Heapey (Wells) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David Johnston (Wantage) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Darren Jones (Bristol North West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Gordon Henderson (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami	Fay Jones (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Darren Henry (Broxtowe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Anthony Higginbotham (Burnley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mike Hill (Hartlepool) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Damian Hinds (East Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Simon Jupp (East Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD)	Sarah Olney	Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kate Hollern (Blackburn) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Adam Holloway (Gravesham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Paul Holmes (Eastleigh) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stewart Hosie (Dundee East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Danny Kruger (Devizes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Howell (Henley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Howell (Sedgefield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Dr Neil Hudson (Penrith and The Border) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Robert Langan (High Peak) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con)	Mr William Wragg
Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con)	Chris Loder	Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Alister Jack (Dumfries and Galloway) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ian Levy (Blyth Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD)	Sarah Olney	Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Andrew Lewer (Northampton South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sajid Javid (Bromsgrove) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Brandon Lewis (Great Yarmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Ranil Jayawardena (North East Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mark Jenkinson (Workington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Boris Johnson (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Carla Lockhart (Upper Bann) (DUP)	Sammy Wilson
Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Mark Logan (Bolton North East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julia Lopez (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jack Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kenny MacAskill (East Lothian) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Robin Millar (Aberconwy) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Amanda Milling (Cannock Chase) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Navendu Mishra (Stockport) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Gagan Mohindra (South West Hertfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West)	Patrick Grady
Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Damien Moore (Southport) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Conor McGinn (St Helens North) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD)	Sarah Olney
Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Penny Mordaunt (Portsmouth North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Cherilyn Mackrory (Truro and Falmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jim McMahan (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab)	Mark Tami	David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Anna McMorrin (Cardiff North) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab)	Mark Tami
John Mc Nally (Falkirk) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Joy Morrissey (Beaconsfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen McPartland (Stevenage) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con)	Chris Loder
Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Holly Mumby-Croft (Scunthorpe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab)	Mark Tami	David Mundell (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab)	Mark Tami	James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Alan Mak (Havant) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kit Malthouse (North West Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julie Marson (Hertford and Stortford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP)	Patrick Grady

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lia Nici (Great Grimsby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Tom Randall (Gedling) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Nicolson (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jesse Norman (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Steve Reed (Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami	Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con)	Rebecca Harris	Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Nicola Richards (West Bromwich East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ms Marie Rimmer (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Abena Opong-Asare (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Rob Roberts (Delyn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kate Osamor (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kate Osborne (Jarrow) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP)	Sammy Wilson
Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Taiwo Owatemi (Coventry North West) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sarah Owen (Luton North) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP)	Sammy Wilson	Dean Russell (Watford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Priti Patel (Witham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David Rutley (Macclesfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gary Sambrook (Birmingham, Northfield) (Lab)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC)	Ben Lake
Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Selaine Saxby (North Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Paul Scully (Sutton and Cheam) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con)	Rebecca Harris
Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Grant Shapps (Welwyn Hatfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Alok Sharma (Reading West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami
Christopher Pincher (Tamworth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami	Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami	Chris Skidmore (Kingswood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Alyn Smith (Stirling) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Chloe Smith (Norwich North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Will Quince (Colchester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab)	Mark Tami
		Julian Smith (Skipton and Ripon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Royston Smith (Southampton, Itchen) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Karl Turner (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Amanda Solloway (Derby North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Matt Vickers (Stockton South) (Con)	Chris Loder
Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Ben Wallace (Wyre and Preston North)	Stuart Andrew
Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Dr Jamie Wallis (Bridgend) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David Warburton (Somerset and Frome) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Suzanne Webb (Stourbridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)	Sarah Olney	Claudia Webbe (Leicester East) (Ind)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Sir Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Mel Stride (Central Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Mrs Heather Wheeler (South Derbyshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Julian Sturdy (York Outer) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Mick Whitley (Birkenhead) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Rishi Sunak (Richmond (Yorks)) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sam Tarry (Ilford South) (Lab)	Mark Tami	John Whittingdale (Malden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Nadia Whittome (Nottingham East) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op)	Mark Tami	James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Craig Williams (Montgomeryshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Richard Thomson (Gordon) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC)	Ben Lake
Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab)	Mark Tami	Gavin Williamson (Montgomeryshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Maggie Throup (Erewash) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD)	Sarah Olney
Edward Timpson (Eddisbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Beth Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab)	Rachel Hopkins
Kelly Tolhurst (Rochester and Strood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Craig Tracey (North Warwickshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Anne-Marie Trevelyan (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jon Trickett (Hemsworth) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Laura Trott (Sevenoaks) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab)	Mark Tami
Elizabeth Truss (South West Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		



# Written Statement

*Wednesday 30 December 2020*

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### Covid-19 Update

**The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock):** Yesterday, we conducted the latest formal review of tier allocations across England. The allocations and a detailed rationale can be found attached.

The new variant means that most of the country is now in tier 4 and almost all of the country in tiers 3 and 4. This is absolutely necessary. Where we still can give places greater freedoms, we will continue to do so.

As set out in the covid-19 winter plan, there are five indicators which guide our decisions for any given area, alongside consideration of “human geographies” like travel patterns.

These are:

1. Case detection rates in all age groups
2. Case detection rates in the over 60s
3. The rate at which cases are rising or falling
4. Positivity rate (the number of positive cases detected as a percentage of tests taken)
5. Pressure on the NHS.

These are not easy decisions, but they have been made according to the best clinical advice, and the best possible data from the JBC.

The regulations will require the Government to review the allocations at least every 14 days. We will also take urgent action when the data suggests it is required.

We will also deposit a comprehensive list and the data packs used to inform these decisions in the Libraries of both Houses.

These changes will apply from Thursday 31 December 2020. This list has also been published on gov.uk and a postcode checker will be available for the public to check what rules apply in their local area.

The attachments can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2020-12-30/HCWS687/>.

[HCWS687]





# Petitions

Wednesday 30 December 2020

## OBSERVATIONS

### BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

#### Support for the wedding industry

*The petition of the residents of the constituency of Kilmarnock and Loudoun,*

Declares that the economic consequences of the Coronavirus pandemic have had a devastating effect on the wider wedding industry; further declares that this impact is felt across hospitality venues, catering suppliers, outfitters, bands and DJs, limousine and tax hire companies, coach companies, and photographers; further declares that many of these groups now have no income or support; further declares that these are all viable businesses when restrictions are lifted and full weddings can take place; and further declares that many people have been personally disappointed by the lost opportunity to marry their loved ones in the setting they dreamed of, further that many people hope that they have their maximum choice available post covid-19 pandemic.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to bring forward immediate additional measures to support the wider wedding industry, including hospitality venues, outfitters, suppliers, the entertainment industry, photographers, vehicle hire companies and coach hire companies.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by David Linden, *Official Report*, 21 October 2020; Vol. 682, c. 1178.]

[P002619]

*Observations from the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Paul Scully):*

Policy for wedding receptions and celebrations in England is the responsibility of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Scottish Government are responsible for policy on wedding receptions and celebrations in Scotland.

The Government have provided an unprecedented package of support to help businesses, including those in the wedding sector, across the UK during the covid-19 outbreak. Businesses are able to furlough employees who were on a PAYE payroll prior to 31 October 2020 until the end of April 2021, with the Government paying 80% of wages up to a cap of £2,500 per month for hours not worked and employers expected to pay employer NICS and pension contributions. The UK Government are currently supporting nearly half a million jobs in Scotland, down from a high of more than 930,000 at the end of July. More than 65,000 businesses in Scotland have benefited from UK Government loan schemes.

Self-employed people may be able to benefit from the extension to the self-employed income support scheme which has been extended for 6 months. The level of support available through the first of these two new

grants, which covers the period November to January, has been increased to provide 80% of average trading profits. The UK Government have supported self-employed individuals in Scotland with 126,000 approved claims for the second SEISS grant, totalling £318 million.

Under the local restrictions support grant, businesses which pay business rates and have been required to close due to local or national restrictions will be able to claim support, and £1.1 billion is also being given to local authorities for one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly.

Further information on support for business may be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19>.

Earlier this year the UK Government announced an unprecedented guarantee that the devolved authorities would receive at least £12.7 billion in additional resource funding this year to help them respond to covid-19. We have now increased that by a further £1.3 billion, to at least £14 billion. This means a total increase this year of at least £7.2 billion for the Scottish Government, and the Scottish Government have the freedom to decide how to use this funding irrespective of how the UK Government provides support in England.

Furthermore, the Government have supported self-employed individuals in Scotland with 126,000 approved claims for the second SEISS grant, totalling £318 million. In Scotland, 61% of the potentially eligible population had claimed the second SEISS grant as of 31 August.

As with other parts of the UK, loan schemes are available to businesses in Scotland. The coronavirus business interruption loan scheme (CBILS) has successfully offered Scottish businesses 2,693 facilities, worth £588 million; this forms 5% of total CBILS lending across the UK.

Under the bounce back loan scheme (BBLs), the Government have offered businesses based in Scotland 63,649 facilities, worth £1.84 billion, which forms 6% of total BBLs lending across the UK.

Across these two schemes, the proportion of offered facilities to Scottish businesses is commensurate with Scotland's 6% proportion of UK's small business population and highlights the robust support UKG have provided to Scottish business.

#### Support for the wedding industry

*The petition of the residents of the constituency of Glasgow East,*

Declares that the economic consequences of the coronavirus pandemic have had a devastating effect on the wider wedding industry; further declares that this impact is felt across hospitality venues, catering suppliers, outfitters, bands and DJs, limousine and tax hire companies, coach companies, and photographers; further declares that many of these groups now have no income or support; further declares that these are all viable businesses when restrictions are lifted and full weddings can take place; and further declares that many people have been personally disappointed by the lost opportunity to marry their loved ones in the setting they dreamed of, further that many people hope that they have their maximum choice available post covid-19 pandemic.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to bring forward immediate additional measures to support the wider wedding industry, including hospitality venues, outfitters, suppliers, the entertainment industry, photographers, vehicle hire companies and coach hire companies.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Alan Brown, *Official Report*, 3 November 2020; Vol. 683, c. 286.]

[P002616]

*Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Paul Scully):*

Policy for wedding receptions and celebrations in England is the responsibility of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Scottish Government are responsible for policy on wedding receptions and celebrations in Scotland.

On 2 December the Government introduced a regionally differentiated approach to covid-19, where different tiers of restrictions apply in different parts of the country.

Every area will fit within a covid-19 local alert tier, which determines the restrictions in place in specific areas. Information about the restrictions that apply can be checked at: <https://www.gov.uk/find-coronavirus-local-restrictions>

We appreciate how important weddings are, and how many plans have been impacted by the covid-19 outbreak. This has not just affected the couple wishing to get married, but their families, guests and those companies and organisations wanting to deliver and provide key services at these events. However, the Government have had to take quick and decisive action in response to curb the threat of the virus.

The Government have provided an unprecedented package of support to help businesses across the country during the covid-19 outbreak. Businesses are able to furlough employees who were on a PAYE payroll prior to 31 October 2020 until the end of April 2021, with the Government paying 80% of wages up to a cap of £2,500 per month for hours not worked and employers expected to pay employer NICS and pension contributions. Further details can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-extends-furlough-and-loan-schemes>

Self-employed people may be able to benefit from the extension to the self-employed income support scheme which has been extended for six months. The level of support available through the first of these two new grants, which covers the period November to January, has been increased to provide 80% of average trading profits.

Under the local restrictions support grant, businesses which pay business rates and have been required to close due to local or national restrictions will be able to claim support, and £1.1 billion is also being given to local authorities for one-off payments to enable them to support businesses more broadly.

The Chancellor also laid out further measures which may be of use to the wedding industry in his winter economy plan; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/winter-economy-plan>

Further information on support for business may be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/financial-support-for-businesses-during-coronavirus-covid-19>

In addition to the UK-wide measures listed above, earlier this year the UK Government announced an unprecedented guarantee that the devolved authorities would receive at least £12.7 billion in additional resource funding this year to help them respond to covid-19. We have now increased that by a further £1.3 billion, to at least £14 billion. This means a total increase this year of at least £7.2 billion for the Scottish Government, providing certainty to the Scottish Government enabling them to plan for the future. It is for the Scottish Government to decide how to use this funding irrespective of how UK Government provides support in England. The UK Government are also currently supporting nearly half a million jobs in Scotland, down from a high of more than 930,000 at the end of July. More than 65,000 businesses in Scotland have benefited from UK Government loan schemes.

Furthermore, the Government have supported self-employed individuals in Scotland with 126,000 approved claims for the second SEISS grant, totalling £318 million. In Scotland, 61% of the potentially eligible population had claimed the second SEISS grant as of 31 August.

As with other parts of the UK, loan schemes are available to businesses in Scotland. The coronavirus business interruption loan scheme (CBILS) has successfully offered Scottish businesses 2,693 facilities, worth £588m; this forms 5% of total CBILS lending across the UK.

Under the bounce back loan scheme (BBLs), the Government have offered businesses based in Scotland 63,649 facilities, worth £1.84 billion, which forms 6% of total BBLS lending across the UK.

Across these two schemes, the proportion of offered facilities to Scottish businesses is commensurate with Scotland's 6% proportion of UK's small business population and highlights the robust support UKG have provided to Scottish business.

This is the first time the UK Government have provided an upfront guarantee of additional in-year funding of £7.2 billion to the Scottish Government. Since March, the Government have put in place a comprehensive package of support which will enable firms to get up and running again.

The Government have done the right thing across the UK to support people and businesses through the pandemic, and we will continue to support them as we come out of it.

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Support for rugby league

*The petition of the residents of the constituency of Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford,*

Declares that Castleford Tigers rugby league club is at the heart of the town of Castleford, and supports the whole community, but is now under pressure; further declares that the rugby league faces financial difficulty as covid-19 restrictions mean that supporters cannot go to the Jungle or other grounds but clubs still have outgoing bills to pay; and further declares that it is vital that the Government provide proper support for the rugby league over the course of the pandemic.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to recognise the importance of the rugby league to towns by ensuring that they get the support they need to survive the pandemic.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Yvette Cooper, *Official Report*, 22 October 2020; Vol. 682, c. 1338 .]

[P002617]

*Observations from the Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nigel Huddleston):*

The Government recognise that rugby league is vitally important to communities across the country, with towns and villages making the sport the centre of their civic life.

That is why the Government announced on 1 May that the Rugby Football League (RFL) would receive a £16 million cash injection to safeguard the immediate future of the sport for the communities it serves. Rugby league was the first sport to receive such emergency loan support, reflecting both the Government commitment to protecting the sport and the precarious financial

position of professional clubs. It has helped the sport to deal with the financial impact of covid-19. The RFL has been fully engaged with the process and is ensuring that the sport as a whole is aware of the assistance available and how to access it.

In November we announced a further provisional allocation of £12 million to rugby league as part of the sports winter survival package, to help the sport navigate the period to the end of March without supporters in stadia. Clubs are also able to access a range of support for the grassroots game via Sport England's coronavirus funding.

The events of recent months have shown that the impacts of sport clubs reach beyond sport itself, and rugby league clubs have proved themselves the bedrocks of their communities during this pandemic.

We know this is a challenging period for all sports and we continue to work closely with the whole sector to understand the issues they face and how we can best support them through this difficult time.



# WRITTEN STATEMENT

Wednesday 30 December 2020

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*Col. No.*

# PETITIONS

Wednesday 30 December 2020

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Support for the wedding industry.....	7P	
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	<i>Col. No.</i>	
<b>DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT</b> .....	10P	
Support for rugby league.....	10P	

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**not later than  
Wednesday 6 January 2021**

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