

Monday
1 February 2021

Volume 688
No. 169



HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 1 February 2021

House of Commons

Monday 1 February 2021

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Virtual participation in proceedings commenced (Orders, 4 June and 30 December 2020).

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

Oral Answers to Questions

DEFENCE

The Secretary of State was asked—

Defence Estate

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to make the most effective use of the defence estate. [911594]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace): I would like to take the opportunity, on behalf of everyone in Defence, to send Captain Sir Tom Moore our best wishes for his recovery from covid. He continues to be an inspiration to us all, embodying the “Trust, Courage, Team Spirit” motto of the Army Foundation College in Harrogate, for which he is the honorary colonel. From the newest recruit upwards, we all wish him a very speedy recovery.

We are taking several steps to ensure that we are using the estate in a most effective way. They include updating our infrastructure strategy plans; implementing an asset management system across the estate; and increasing investment in the estate to implement the defence estate optimisation portfolio, reducing our footprint and modernising our infrastructure.

Kevin Hollinrake: My constituents are very proud of the role RAF Linton-on-Ouse has had in the defence of our realm, all the way from the second world war to the current day—or near to it. Will my right hon. Friend update the House on any other potential purposeful military uses he has for the base?

Mr Wallace: At the urging of my hon. Friend—the RAF have been in the process of drawing the base down, as he said—we did look at exploring other military uses for that base, but at the moment no long-term military requirement has been identified. Defence is, I am afraid, therefore completing the final assessment, with disposal details to be announced in due course.

Mr Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab) [V]: May I join the Secretary of State in sending our best wishes to Sir Tom for a speedy recovery? It is a well-known fact that in the 21st century we need to modernise our defence estates to compete, given changing world needs. The Government have announced the closure of 90 sites

across the country, so will the Secretary of State update this House as to how his Department aims to ensure that the British taxpayer is not left paying huge rents on a great number of empty properties, as has already happened, when these sites are closed? How many of these defence estate sites will be affected by the Crichel Down rule?

Mr Wallace: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. The defence estate optimisation programme was and is planned to unlock £1.4 billion, to be reinvested in an overall plan of a £5.1 billion investment in the defence estate across the board, helping soldiers, sailors and air force personnel with better quality accommodation and a better training estate. He is right to point out the challenges relating to historical problems with both private finance initiatives and the Annington home deal at the end of 1997. Some of the PFI schemes introduced under his Government lay a heavy burden on the defence budget. We are both examining and negotiating on a number of those areas to try to reduce the overall burden on the taxpayer.

Military Training: Overseas Armed Forces

John Nicolson (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP): Which overseas armed forces have received military training in the UK since 1 January 2020. [911595]

The Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heapey): In this period, about 2,000 personnel, from more than 100 countries, have received some form of defence training in the United Kingdom.

John Nicolson [V]: The Biden Administration have halted the sale of arms to Saudi Arabia, with many Democrats citing the killing of civilians, including children, by Saudi forces in Yemen. A freedom of information request by *The Guardian* revealed that the Government provided training on UK soil for Saudi military. Will the Minister ensure that the Government expose the widely documented crimes committed by Saudi personnel with US counterparts as they undertake this review? Will he take a leaf out of the American book and reassess whether we should be enabling the Saudi regime, given the awful crimes it has committed?

James Heapey: The hon. Gentleman will know from the many parliamentary questions that have been asked on this that much of the information relating to licensing is subject to ongoing legal proceedings, but our defence relationship with Saudi Arabia on training includes courses, advice and guidance. This supports the efforts of Saudi Arabia to protect national and regional security, as well as its military's compliance with international humanitarian law. The UK is not a member of the Saudi-led coalition and we played no role in setting Saudi-led coalition policy.

Covid-19: Regional Support

Claire Coutinho (East Surrey) (Con): What regional support his Department has provided in tackling the covid-19 outbreak. [911596]

Dehenna Davison (Bishop Auckland) (Con): What regional support his Department has provided in tackling the covid-19 outbreak. [911612]

Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): What regional support his Department has provided in tackling the covid-19 outbreak. [911616]

The Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heapey): As part of the national covid-19 response, Defence has been active in all regions of the UK, providing support in a variety of ways, including through the distribution of personal protective equipment and diagnostic equipment; the planning, construction and staffing of Nightingale hospitals; conducting school and community testing; and providing military support to NHS trusts and support to the vaccine programme. As of 27 January, there are approximately 14,500 personnel committed or at readiness, and service personnel are deployed in every region of the UK.

Claire Coutinho [V]: In the south-east, we are lucky to have more than 300 defence personnel working in a mixture of medical and non-medical roles in our NHS. On Friday, I heard directly from my local trust about how important that has been as a boost to our NHS workforce. Does my hon. Friend agree that we should extend our deepest gratitude to the hard-working men and women who have been working on the frontline of this pandemic?

James Heapey: I certainly do. I am delighted that defence personnel have been of such use to the local authorities in the south-east. Personnel from all three services are employed in a range of roles to support frontline NHS services, both providing direct clinical care and undertaking support roles to free up NHS staff. I know from everything that I have heard from nursing directors and clinicians across the country that their contribution has been of enormous benefit and we are very grateful to them all.

Dehenna Davison [V]: Having volunteered at a new local vaccine centre in Bishop Auckland, I have seen the looks of joy and relief on people's faces. I was pleased to hear that the Ministry of Defence is standing up more than 40 vaccine quick reaction forces, ready to help ensure that the vaccine roll-out reaches even the most remote areas of the UK. Could my hon. Friend update the House on how many of these teams have been deployed and to where?

James Heapey: With pleasure: 42 vaccine quick reaction force teams comprising 252 defence personnel are deployed across seven NHS England regions to locations determined by NHS priorities. As my hon. Friend says, their primary effort is to ensure that the roll-out of the vaccine is equally paced across the country. Where we can reinforce the efforts of local NHS trusts, that is exactly what these quick reaction teams are there to do.

Jonathan Gullis [V]: I thank my hon. Friend for his earlier answer and for the three military planners who are currently supporting the Staffordshire local resilience forum with their covid-19 related planning. Will he expand on the diverse roles that the military planners have carried out in the pandemic so far?

James Heapey: I have been speaking to our joint military commanders in every region and they have all been clear about the value that these planners and their liaison officers have brought in helping the local authorities

to understand what it is that the military could do and in helping us in the MOD to get ahead of that demand so that we can get troops lined up. It is clear that, whatever the lessons learnt about the covid response more generally, one of the biggest lessons for the Ministry of Defence is that those relationships at local level are of huge importance and I hope that we can institutionalise them as we go forward.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP) [V]: May I also put on record my best wishes, and those of my party, to Captain Sir Tom Moore and wish him a speedy recovery?

I have mentioned before that we are extremely grateful for the effort of the armed forces in Scotland, but I must mention the effort that they are making in my constituency at the Castlemilk vaccine centre. It is so good that it even managed to bring the Prime Minister out of Downing Street to my constituency—against all advice, but there we go. What plans does the Minister have to recognise the extraordinary effort and the extraordinary work of those in the armed forces working on the pandemic alongside such brilliant NHS staff up and down the country?

James Heapey: I am not sure whether I agree that the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom visiting the United Kingdom armed forces hard at work in all parts of the United Kingdom is in any way an inappropriate activity for him to undertake. The great thing about our nation's armed forces is that they get on with the job at hand and do not seek any recognition at the time. This is their priority; it is our priority. Of course, we have an eye on how we might recognise their contribution when all this is done.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald: I can tell the Minister that my inbox tells a rather different story. What they want is to be paid properly, to have decent working conditions and employment conditions, and their families to be supported better. But let me ask this. All those NHS and social care workers they are working alongside in Scotland will receive a £500 thank you payment from the Scottish Government. Will he match that for all UK personnel working here and abroad to help fight the pandemic in the upcoming Budget—yes or no?

James Heapey: I will, of course, have a look at what that might mean, if, in return, the hon. Gentleman will consider taxing the armed forces less than the Scottish Government currently do.

Armed Forces Covenant: Military Charities

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with representatives of military charities on strengthening the armed forces covenant; and if he will make a statement. [911597]

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab): What recent discussions he has had with representatives of military charities on strengthening the armed forces covenant; and if he will make a statement. [911604]

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Johnny Mercer): This Government are committed to strengthening the armed forces covenant with measures

to further incorporate it into law introduced last week in the Armed Forces Bill. Service charities play an integral role for the armed forces community. We have regular dialogue, and they also provide observations on our progress each year in an unadulterated version of the covenant annual report.

Andrew Gwynne [V]: I, too, send my best wishes to Captain Sir Tom Moore for a speedy recovery.

I have long been a supporter of the military covenant, and the local authorities in my constituency are among the first to adopt it, but the Minister will know that the director general of the Royal British Legion told the Committee considering the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill that the six-year longstop will breach the military covenant. Why does he think they say that?

Johnny Mercer: I was Minister on that Bill Committee, and the person to whom the hon. Gentleman refers actually supports the legislation. It does not breach the armed forces covenant. We are clear that that legislation gives our soldiers more rights and protects them in a better manner for the intricacies of modern warfare. Those who continue to peddle untruths about that Bill are doing quite a serious disservice to those who need to be protected from vexatious claims when they serve this nation on operations.

Mr Betts [V]: I am sure that the Minister will agree that local authorities play an important role in implementing the national covenant. In Sheffield, extra priority is given to ex-servicemen when it comes to the right to social housing. There is also a wraparound service that includes employment and skills, and mental health. All that is overseen by a council-appointed ex-servicemen's champion, Councillor Tony Damms, who works with local charities, the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association, and the Sheffield and district ex-service associations; they all work closely together. I am sure that the Minister will agree that charities and the council working together in that way is a model for the implementation of the national covenant.

Johnny Mercer: I pay tribute to Tony and to many like him across the country who work tirelessly in the endeavour of veterans' care. I am clear that the future of veterans' care is a blended model between statutory and voluntary provision, where there is a role for everybody, and we mark ourselves by the key questions: "How do you access that care? Does everyone leaving who needs it know where to turn?" Until we get there, we continue to need people such as Tony. It is a team effort, and we will get there in the end.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): Part of the armed forces covenant is, of course, to look after war widows, including an estimated 265 who lost their war widow's pension on cohabitation or remarriage and have not been able to benefit from the change in the law preventing that from happening in the future. I know that the Minister and the Secretary of State personally have been fighting with the Treasury to find a way to settle this debt of honour. In the light of the latest knock-back, what further plans do Ministers have to try to make good their promise to look after those war widows, who have sacrificed so much?

Johnny Mercer: I thank my right hon. Friend for his tireless campaigning on this issue. The Secretary of State has taken a personal lead and has recently written to Mary Moreland. As a result, the Department is currently considering how we can best support those represented through her War Widows Association, and, indeed, what that support might actually look like.

Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab) [V]: I have been speaking to a number of local authorities about their commitment to the armed forces covenant. We already know that many local authorities do a really great job of supporting service personnel, veterans and their families, but having the covenant in law will enhance those responsibilities. When there are more legal responsibilities, will Government funding to local authorities follow?

Johnny Mercer: The Department is looking to issue in due course statutory guidance on how precisely these matters will be achieved. The key thing is that the legislation is very clear that it does not specify outcomes, but simply ensures that a set of principles is adhered to. That is what the armed forces covenant was always about; it was designed never for advantage, but to prevent disadvantage. That is what this Bill does. It is carefully calibrated to ensure that we raise the floor so that the experience for veterans, the serving community and their families is equal across the nation.

Defence Equipment Programme

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese (Slough) (Lab): What steps he is taking to improve cost controls within the defence equipment programme. [911598]

Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab): What steps he is taking to improve cost controls within the defence equipment programme. [911641]

The Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin): We are implementing changes through the acquisition transformation scheme to improve cost controls. Through the outline strategic case, we are ensuring that the right expertise is brought together at the outset, so that projects are properly risk assessed and, with the right commercial expertise available, set up for success.

Mr Dhese: The National Audit Office recently concluded that for the fourth year in a row the defence equipment plan remains unaffordable. While the extra money for defence is to be welcomed, how will the Minister ensure that the investment does not simply disappear into a black hole but delivers on the new capabilities we need as a nation to deal with emerging security threats?

Jeremy Quin: The hon. Gentleman's point is very wise and we would endorse it. We need to invest in the right capabilities to meet the threats of the future. It is good to hear someone on the Labour Benches speaking sense. We agree that that is exactly where our funds should be directed—to meet the threats of the future. That is being undertaken through the integrated review, which is a cross-Government review. More information will be coming out in due course, but we are very focused on it.

Nick Smith [V]: The defence equipment plan has seen escalating costs over time, and agreeing priorities has proved to be difficult. The NAO says that industry has a prioritised list of funding options following a multi-criteria decision analysis exercise. This sounds worth while, if a bit of a mouthful, so will the Minister commit to publishing that list of priorities?

Jeremy Quin: The hon. Gentleman needs to look to the outcome of the integrated review that will take place in due course, which will set out the overarching strategic priorities for the Government in meeting the needs of this country across a broad spectrum of foreign affairs and defence. It is from that strategic set of decisions that we need then to ensure that our procurement follows.

Defence Equipment

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to ensure that British industry can supply the defence equipment needed to meet future threats. [911599]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace): The MOD has been leading work to review our defence and security industrial strategy across Government, and we expect to publish the findings of this work in the spring. In our strategy we are aiming to ensure that we can access the industrial capabilities that we need to meet current and future threats to our national security.

Mark Pawsey [V]: That is good to hear. The national shipbuilding strategy reflects the strategic importance of ship systems and the supply chain that provides them. The Secretary of State will be familiar with the world-beating electric power and propulsion systems produced by General Electric in my constituency of Rugby. Will he confirm that those are considered strategic national assets and that they will be included in the Government's thinking on the forthcoming fleet solid support ships programme?

Mr Wallace: I can certainly confirm that I recognise that many of the benefits of naval procurement are seen in the supply chain; General Electric and other systems providers play a hugely important role as part of the UK's shipbuilding enterprise. I am committed to maximising the benefits to UK industry in all our defence procurement, within the regulations.

John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): The extra funding is welcome and promises an overdue upgrade of Britain's defence and defence industry. The Secretary of State talks about the rise in capital funding but not the real cut in revenue funding over the next four years. This year's defence equipment budget is £16.4 billion, of which over half is revenue-based equipment support. How on earth has he agreed to this cut, and how is he going to meet the future threats to this country and fix the black hole in the budget by cutting day-to-day defence spending?

Mr Wallace: It is great hearing the right hon. Gentleman trying to turn a £16 billion or a £24 billion increase in defence spending into a cut and finding any way, across the budget, to get in the word "cut" so that no doubt at

the next election he can claim that somehow we have cut defence spending despite the £24 billion increase over the next four years. We are planning to spend £186 billion on equipment and support between 2018 and 2028. Of course we have to balance revenue spending and capital spending in terms of the resource departmental expenditure limit throughout the process. The reason our Army and our armed forces are different in size from what they were 20, 30 or 40 years ago is defined not just by the threat but by the equipment we have available. The proportion of our RAF that is unmanned, which will grow, of course means fewer people flying aeroplanes. That is the nature of things. If one looks at the US air force, one will see that pattern over the past 15 to 20 years.

It will be quite easy and perfectly straightforward to try to find the right balance, as long as we are defined by the threat and the ambition we need to meet. Some of the money that we have received—the right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right—is not going to buy new shiny toys in some areas; it is about fixing some of the current problems in infrastructure and so on to ensure that we are more efficient and more productive.

John Healey: I appreciate the Defence Secretary wanting to downplay the real difficulties he faces, but we were told by his predecessor in 2012 that the black hole has "been eliminated and the budget is now in balance",—[*Official Report*, 14 May 2012; Vol. 545, c. 262.]

yet less than a decade later the National Audit Office says that for the fourth year running the equipment plan is unaffordable and the black hole is as high as £17 billion. On the integrated review, where he promises answers to these difficult questions, may I urge him not to repeat the mistakes of past Conservative defence reviews by trying to balance the books off the back of forces personnel, industry investment and equipment support?

Mr Wallace: Since taking my post as Defence Secretary I have been absolutely determined to ensure that the figures that both we and the Treasury use are absolutely of the highest quality and transparency.

If the right hon. Gentleman reflects on the NAO's 1998 report, he will see the same systematic problems in the management of the defence budget: phantom efficiency savings that turned out to have already been spent by other people have been a significant problem in defence for 20 to 30 years. It is not just a governing party problem. All of that has meant that when we publicise the integrated review, we will start from a baseline where we can all be transparent about our figures and trust the figures we are putting before it. I will not indulge in fantasy savings or phantom programmes. I will not allow the services to procure equipment that has a balloon payment at the end, in 10 or 20 years' time, when it becomes somebody else's problem.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): I join the Secretary of State and others in wishing Captain Sir Tom Moore a speedy recovery. He has become a living symbol of the very British spirit that we need to get us through this pandemic, and we all wish him well.

May I press the Government on when the integrated review will be published and warn against suggestions that our infantry might be cut by up to 10,000 personnel? If this pandemic has taught us anything, it is the value

of spare capacity and the built-in resilience to deal with the unexpected. With that in mind, I invite the Defence Secretary to look at deploying RFA Argus, our hospital ship currently alongside in Plymouth, and other military assets to assist with the international roll-out of vaccines to developing countries. The UK set an example by stepping forward during the Ebola outbreak, and we should do so once again with covid-19.

Mr Wallace: I thank my right hon. Friend for his question. HMS Argus has literally just returned from giving assistance in the Caribbean; she has been helping the populations there deal with the initial outbreak and all the problems. She was involved in dealing not only with the covid outbreak, but with security and making sure that the borders and so on were kept from immigration pressures as well.

On the broader issue of the integrated review, I know I have come to this Dispatch Box on a number of occasions to say it was going to be on a certain date. It will be in the spring. Obviously covid has taken its effect. The No. 1 priority of the Government is dealing with covid and delivering a covid response. That does not prevent defence, with a multi-year settlement, setting out and driving forward, in conjunction with the Foreign Office, a plan to ensure that when the review is launched, everyone will be able to see it. I am determined that it will be done this spring, because it is important not just domestically, but for our international allies to understand the direction of travel on our defence.

British National (Overseas) Immigration Pathway

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind): What discussions he has had with the (a) Prime Minister and (b) Home Secretary on securing UK citizenship for UK armed forces veterans arriving in the UK from Hong Kong via the new British National (Overseas) immigration pathway. [911600]

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Johnny Mercer): There have been no discussions on this matter. British national overseas status holders who serve in our armed forces already have the option either to apply for British citizenship while serving or to settle in the UK on discharge. BNO veterans who have not pursued these routes and choose to apply under the new BNO route will be on a pathway to settlement in the UK and can then apply for British citizenship.

Margaret Ferrier [V]: During the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the existing immigration rules meant that only 159 of the 654 soldiers who had served in the British armed forces in Hong Kong and applied to live in the UK were successful at the time. With the opening of the new settlement scheme for British nationals overseas, many of those veterans are keen to escape the crackdown of the Chinese Government on Hong Kong. Can the Defence Minister confirm that he will defend their right to UK citizenship in any consultations on the matter with Cabinet colleagues?

Johnny Mercer: The hon. Member raises a good point and a good question. These negotiations are ongoing at the time. We are very clear, though, that those who have served in the armed forces should suffer no disadvantage

because of their service, and that of course extends to those who apply for BNO residency, should they be eligible.

Armed Forces Covenant

Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to further enshrine the armed forces covenant into law. [911601]

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Johnny Mercer): As committed to in the Queen's Speech, last week measures to further incorporate the armed forces covenant into legislation were introduced in the Armed Forces Bill. The Bill requires those public bodies in scope to consider the principles of the covenant when developing policy and making decisions in health, housing and education—areas that are fundamental to service life.

Caroline Ansell [V]: I thank my hon. Friend for his response, and I am very pleased with that support for the family, which is very much in the spirit of our military covenant. What duty will be applied to education, and what support measures are in place for the children of our military families to support their learning in schools both while the parent is serving and later when a veteran?

Johnny Mercer: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend for her tireless campaigning on this issue. Registered service children in the annual school census in England receive the £310 service pupil premium per child per year up to year 11. Since 2016, registered service children, even if their serving parent has left the armed forces, continue to receive the SPP for up to six years while they attend state schools in England.

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): One of the ways that enshrining the covenant in law could deliver more for our armed forces is on housing. Surveys continue to show low levels of satisfaction with maintenance, and the Government renegotiate the rents on some accommodation. Will the Minister provide an update on the arbitration process for Annington Homes, and can he assure those living in service family accommodation that he will not bring back a deal that hikes up their rent?

Johnny Mercer: We are currently in the process, as the hon. Member knows, of resolution in that case, and I am not going to comment on it in a public forum, but my hon. Friend the Minister for Defence Procurement will write to him this afternoon.

Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons

Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP): What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. [911602]

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): What recent assessment he has made of the effectiveness of the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. [911620]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace):

The Government have been clear that we will not sign the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. We welcome the US offer to extend the new START—strategic arms reduction treaty—with Russia, and we would support that treaty and its robust verification mechanisms continuing.

Patricia Gibson [V] The Secretary of State will be aware of the deep disappointment and frustration felt across Scotland and much of the UK because the UK Government did not join 85 other countries and sign up to the treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons on 22 January. Can he explain why the UK has failed to support this treaty, and how this is consistent with its strategic objectives and obligations under article VI of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty to make attempts in good faith to move towards the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons programmes?

Mr Wallace: The Government did not sign up to it because we do not think it is an effective way of dealing with this. We do think that the nuclear non-proliferation treaty is a more effective way of reducing both the spread and, indeed, the number of nuclear weapons on the planet, and that is why we favour gradual multilateral disarmament negotiated through a step-by-step approach.

Patrick Grady: It seems as if global Britain is running in the opposite direction of global consensus on this issue. Rather than just hoping that nuclear weapons will never be used and working for some eventual point in the future when they might be eradicated, why will the Government not take the bold steps of signing this treaty and, for that matter, removing Trident from the shores of this country?

Mr Wallace: It may have missed the hon. Gentleman's attention that other countries, those much less democratic and with much less regard for human rights, are working in the other direction and developing nuclear weapons. One reason we felt that nuclear weapons are important to the United Kingdom, when other regimes such as, potentially, North Korea and others develop them, is as a deterrent. We will continue to believe that, and seek ways to reduce nuclear holdings around the world in a multilateral, not a unilateral way. If I think that some of those adversaries care about some of those countries having nuclear weapons or not, the world might be slightly different, but it is not. We should be careful and protect our friends. We are a provider of a nuclear deterrent for NATO and for Europe. That has kept the peace for 50 years, despite some very aggressive nuclear powers.

Defence Procurement: Net Zero Carbon Emissions Target

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): What steps he has taken to help ensure that defence procurement contributes towards the UK meeting its net zero carbon emissions target. [911603]

The Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin): Sustainability is considered at all the appropriate stages of the acquisition lifecycle, from setting requirements to

disposal. In addition, we are improving sustainability in the defence estate, which offers a significant opportunity for the future.

Geraint Davies [V]: We face a climate crisis, and we must build back greener out of the pandemic. Will the Government undertake to do more to increase investment in research and development in low-emission planes and ships, working in collaboration with the civil sector? Will he meet me and Airbus, and others, to discuss the opportunities to boost innovation and production of non-military planes and ships—like the US does with Boeing—to help us meet our net-zero obligations? Will he boost exports, so that defence expenditure can be used to defend us against climate change?

Jeremy Quin: We are focused on the Government's world-leading commitment to net zero 2050, and defence will, without doubt, play its part. A lot of work is ongoing regarding how we can increase our activity in that sphere, but we have discussions with commercial entities and throughout the MOD about how we can tackle carbon emissions throughout the armed forces. That includes, recently, clearing MOD planes to use up to 50% sustainable aviation fuel. That is a good step in the right direction, and others will undoubtedly follow.

Soft Power

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): What plans he has for the contribution of soft power to the UK's international defence engagement. [911605]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace): Our armed forces are a force for good, providing security, humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping and defence engagement across the globe. They have a proud track record on the frontline of our national response to humanitarian disasters the world over, from Ebola in west Africa to hurricane seasons in the Caribbean.

Mr Baron [V]: As chair of the British Council all-party group, I suggest that soft power can pay for itself many times over by building links and improving trust and understanding, all of which makes conflict less likely. As the Government assess our international engagement, does my right hon. Friend agree that soft power must be a consideration alongside traditional hard power? Will he assure me that he will make the case for soft power when it comes to the Government's integrated review?

Mr Wallace: I congratulate my hon. Friend on his work on the British Council all-party group. The British Council is an outstanding institution around the world—indeed, in my opinion there is not enough of it around the world. The integrated review will enhance defence engagement, ensuring that our armed forces are more forward, present, and active around the world, and involve changes to operational development structures, defence diplomacy and allowances. I completely agree that alongside hard power must come soft power. It can be delivered by the military, as well as by those excellent non-governmental organisations, and organisations such as the British Council. The best way to not get into a conflict is to avoid one in the first place by understanding each other's issues, and by helping nations and people's economies to build. That is the first way to go.

Dreadnought Class Nuclear Submarine

Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con): What progress is being made on the development of the Dreadnought class nuclear submarine; and when he plans for the first of that class to enter service. [911606]

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace): The 2020 annual update to Parliament on the United Kingdom's future nuclear deterrent provides progress details on the Dreadnought submarine programme. The programme, underpinned by around 30,000 defence nuclear enterprise jobs across the United Kingdom, remains on track to deliver the first of class in the early 2030s. The programme will sustain thousands of jobs across the United Kingdom, including in Scotland.

Mr Clarke [V]: I thank my right hon. Friend for that answer. We live in uncertain times and should always maintain peace through strength, of which the nuclear deterrent is the best example. Will he join me in thanking all those involved in both delivering the Dreadnought programme and operating the Vanguard boats with such dedication and skill in the intervening period until they are replaced?

Mr Wallace: Continuous at-sea deterrence has kept us safe for more than 50 years. I recognise and thank all the personnel involved and their families for the tremendous sacrifices they make, and I am proud of all our Royal Navy and industrial partners for delivering this very important Government commitment.

Covid-19: Overseas Territories

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con): What support his Department has provided to the overseas territories during the covid-19 pandemic. [911607]

The Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heapey): The armed forces have provided a range of support to the British overseas territories throughout the covid-19 pandemic where it has been requested. That has included support to local government and civil authorities in their response, through the provision of defence planners, the deployment of critical care teams, the provision of food and medical supplies, and, more recently, logistical support with vaccine delivery.

Henry Smith [V]: I was pleased that in January the Royal Air Force made two deliveries of life-saving covid-19 vaccines to Gibraltar. Can my hon. Friend confirm how many doses our armed forces have helped deliver to the British overseas territories so far?

James Heapey: Defence has to date delivered 10,725 doses of the Pfizer vaccine to Gibraltar, as mentioned by my hon. Friend. Further deliveries are planned to the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar by the end of today, of 6,825 Pfizer doses and 3,000 AstraZeneca doses respectively. Defence is scoping the delivery of 65,850 further vaccine doses to Ascension Island, Gibraltar and the Falklands throughout February, and of course we stand ready to support vaccine delivery to all the British territories overseas.

Covid-19: Armed Forces Professional Development

Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to ensure that armed forces personnel continue their professional development during the covid-19 pandemic. [911609]

The Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heapey): The Government remain committed to ensuring that the professional development of our armed forces personnel continues during this difficult time. The safety of our workforce and their families is paramount. Measures including social distancing and, where appropriate, testing regimes have supported the continuation of prioritised face-to-face training. Alongside that, innovative ways of working and use of virtual platforms has enabled remote delivery of other professional development activity, including for those transitioning to civilian life or undertaking professional qualifications.

Mrs Drummond [V]: More and more women are pursuing careers in the armed forces. Will my hon. Friend look at how their personal development can be encouraged by ensuring that the remaining gendered rank titles are updated to reflect the modern make-up of the services?

James Heapey: My hon. Friend makes a very valid point, and this former rifleman rather agrees. The issue of gendered rank titles is something that the chiefs have been considering. Diversity and inclusion leads are working collaboratively across the services to develop an inclusive language guide for release in the spring. That guide is informed by the wider work that NATO has done to produce gender-inclusive language manuals.

Procurement

Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con): What recent procurement decisions his Department has taken. [911611]

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): What recent procurement decisions his Department has taken. [911615]

Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con): What recent procurement decisions his Department has taken. [911617]

The Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin): I am pleased to report that throughout the covid pandemic, Defence has continued to maintain a steady drumbeat of orders. Those include recent orders to enhance F-35, a project that particularly benefits the north-west of England, and the next generation munitions solution, which saves £563 million over the course of its contract and supports jobs in Glascoed, Tyne and Wear, and Stoke-on-Trent.

Sally-Ann Hart [V]: Beautiful Hastings and Rye has a number of excellent small to medium-sized manufacturing businesses serving the defence industry. What steps is my hon. Friend taking to ensure that, as part of defence procurement and the levelling-up agenda, those small

companies are given the opportunity to benefit from any increase in defence procurement spending, thereby increasing jobs and helping to turbo-charge our local economy?

Jeremy Quin: My hon. Friend has already discussed the brilliance of her small and medium-sized enterprises with me in the past, and I expect I will be hearing a lot more about them in the future. The good news is that with our SME action plan in place, which I would encourage them to look through, SMEs are now accounting for nearly 20% of all defence procurement expenditure. With a £24 billion investment in defence to come forth, there is plenty for them to go at.

Jason McCartney [V]: What progress has been made with the upgrade of the British armoured vehicle capability? What are the Government doing to ensure that those contracts are fulfilled by British-based manufacturers such as David Brown Santasalo, which is based in my constituency?

Jeremy Quin: It was a great pleasure for me and the Secretary of State to join my hon. Friend in visiting David Brown last year to discuss its vital work on Type 26 frigates not only for us, but our allies. Investment in UK armour, as I think my hon. Friend knows, is ongoing with the Boxer programme and Ajax. Other projects are also under active consideration.

Jane Stevenson [V]: So many industries have been hit hard by the pandemic, including aerospace and engineering companies in Wolverhampton North East. I am delighted to hear about more and more procurement contracts. What steps is the Minister taking to start as many of those contracts as quickly as possible, so that we can really help our industrial economic recovery?

Jeremy Quin: I understand my hon. Friend's question. Throughout the pandemic, we have made certain to maintain the drumbeat of existing orders so that they have continued. Through the interim payments scheme, we have helped to support defence companies with cash where that has been required. It is right that core defence decisions are taken on an holistic basis in the context of the integrated review. However, we have, where possible, advanced procurement in particular on improvements to the defence estate, where tens of millions of pounds of improvements are ongoing as we speak.

Topical Questions

[911654] **Andrew Percy** (Brigg and Goole) (Con): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Defence (Mr Ben Wallace): Today, I am placing a copy of the Department's qualitative whole force inclusivity report in the House of Commons Library. It will form part of the evidence the Ministry of Defence is submitting to the Defence Committee's inquiry into women in the armed forces. The report helps to underline the scale of the task we must address. Given the significance of the issue, I felt that a wider readership was important. The armed forces offer a fantastic career opportunity for men and women alike, but, as the reports highlights, their experiences are not always equal and in some cases are unacceptable. I am

determined to level up opportunities for all who work in defence through behaviour and culture change. While much is being done, including the implementation of the Wigston and Gray reports, I am grateful to the Defence Committee for its additional work in this important area.

We take taskforce protection of our service personnel allies very seriously, and want Iran to engage seriously with the international community, especially on its nuclear commitments. We remain concerned over support for militant proscribed groups. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a whole remains subject to UK, EU and US sanctions. Many associated individuals and entities are also designated. We review the list of proscribed groups, but do not routinely comment on specific organisations.

Andrew Percy: I thank the Secretary of State for answering my question before I asked it, which was excellent and very timely. I thank him for his answer. In recent weeks, Iran has once again threatened to crush its enemies. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has been testing long-range missiles and drones. I am aware of what my right hon. Friend said in regard to proscribing the revolutionary guard, but this is a country that continues to destabilise the middle east so we really must go further.

Mr Wallace: I apologise to my hon. Friend for jumping the gun, so to speak. The IRGC and its activities in the region are destabilising. That is why the United Kingdom is investing, along with its allies and NATO, in keeping places such as Iraq stable and secure. We ask the IRGC and the Iranian Government to desist from that activity, and to return to the table on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action now that we have a new US Administration. Let us try to resolve the nuclear issue and return to some stability.

John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): The Secretary of State mentions nuclear proliferation in relation to Iran, but I am disappointed that he makes no mention of New START—strategic arms reduction treaty—which President Biden rescued last week, particularly as Britain is a beneficiary of the stability that it brings to Europe. He made no mention of New START when it collapsed with President Trump last year. He was also silent when the US pulled out of the 34-nation open skies treaty, so why has Britain become a bystander while the international rules-based order has been breaking down? While it remains essential to maintain our UK nuclear deterrent, will he also use the integrated review to reboot Britain's commitment to help forge the next generation of necessary arms controls and security agreements?

Mr Speaker: May I just remind Front Benchers that topicals are meant to be short and punchy so that we get through the list?

Mr Wallace: First, we did not necessarily write it, but I read the right hon. Gentleman's good article over the weekend with the shadow Foreign Secretary, the hon. Member for Wigan (Lisa Nandy), calling for action on a number of these issues. It was not the case that the United Kingdom did not communicate to the United States Administration the importance of both the open

skies treaty and the New START agreement. We welcome its return. Sometimes we do things in public; sometimes we do things in private. It is incredibly important, and we welcome the steps that are being taken, but we should not forget that Russia has consistently broken some of these treaties and played on loopholes, both on chemical weapons and nuclear weapons.

[911655] **Robert Halfon** (Harlow) (Con) [V]: My right hon. Friend will be aware that between 1952 and 1967, more than 22,000 British servicemen participated in the nuclear testing programme in Australia and the south Pacific. These individuals were subjected to dangerous levels of radiation and have been faced with difficulties as a result. My constituent, Mr Michael Todd, has been campaigning tirelessly on this issue. Will my right hon. Friend praise the hard work and service of these individuals and set out what steps his Department will be taking to honour their efforts in Australia and the south Pacific?

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Johnny Mercer): I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend for his relentless campaigning on this. The recent review by the independent Advisory Military Sub-Committee into the case for medallic recognition concluded that it did not meet the level of risk and rigour. However, we are committed to ensuring that we have good wraparound care for those who suffered injury from these operations and exercises at the time.

[911657] **Martin Docherty-Hughes** (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP) [V]: The Minister will be aware of the negotiations for facility management contracts that are under way at Her Majesty's naval base, Clyde, involving a significant number of my constituents. Unfortunately, what the Minister's Government excitedly call "efficiency savings" often have a direct and deleterious effect on the terms and conditions of the most vulnerable defence people. Will the Minister advise what the Ministry of Defence is doing to ensure that these efficiency savings are not simply an excuse to drive down working conditions and increase profits for private companies?

Mr Wallace: I can give the hon. Gentleman an assurance that the current contract—which is obviously in the middle of a competition, so I have to be cautious in what I say—is not about driving down terms and conditions; it is about increasing the productivity around getting our boats and ships out on the water and making sure that our men and women of the armed forces are getting the maintenance and the turnaround that is required for taxpayers' money. I have already met a number of stakeholders, including the leader of the trade union to discuss his concerns. My eyes and ears are wide open to the fears of the workforce, and I shall be working to make sure that whatever comes afterwards is not about driving down conditions, but about increasing and improving service.

Mr Speaker: Let us head up the stairs to Bedfordshire, with Richard Fuller.

[911656] **Richard Fuller** (North East Bedfordshire) (Con) [V]: Thank you, Mr Speaker. As my right hon. Friend considers his review priorities, will he commend the Warrior capability sustainment programme for providing greater

certainty in delivering on its budget and greater confidence that that will be delivered on time, and for its commitment to developing skills and the UK supply chain?

The Minister for Defence Procurement (Jeremy Quin): The Warrior CSP is now at an advanced stage in its demonstration phase. It has been ongoing for a period—it is now 75% through—but all projects are subject to the integrated review. I know that my hon. Friend would not expect me to comment on any particular project at this stage, but I will say that it is one of a huge number of contributions that Bedfordshire makes to defence, including across Ajax, Wildcat and Tempest. It is a county that has got a great investment in and support for our services.

[911658] **Ms Lyn Brown** (West Ham) (Lab) [V]: I recently met a veteran with untreated post-traumatic stress disorder. He attempted suicide twice using disturbing methods in public. After the first attempt, he was admitted to a psychiatric hospital, released unwell and then attempted suicide again. For that, he received a prison sentence. On release, he was left homeless, jobless and in no better mental state than when he went in. Is this in keeping with the covenant, and if not, what are the Government going to do about it?

Johnny Mercer: I thank the hon. Lady for her question. If she writes to me with the specific details, I will be more than happy to help her. However, I am very clear that no previous Government have done more than we have for armed forces communities. We are absolutely determined to get to the root causes of veterans' suicide, and if the hon. Lady writes to me with the particular case, I will of course reach out and see what we can do.

[911660] **Jonathan Gullis** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con) [V]: On Saturday, I joined my hon. Friends the Members for Stoke-on-Trent South (Jack Brereton) and for Stoke-on-Trent Central (Jo Gideon) for a shift at our city's mass vaccination centre. Overseeing the volunteers were brave ex-servicemen and women from RE:ACT, who are providing vital support, enabling our NHS heroes to get jabs into arms. Will my hon. Friend join me in thanking local veterans from Stoke-on-Trent, Kidsgrove and Talke, and all those involved in RE:ACT, for once again stepping up to serve the nation and protect the people of our United Kingdom?

Johnny Mercer: I of course pay tribute to my hon. Friend's constituents from RE:ACT, and to Richard Sharp, who set up RE:ACT. I think that every vaccination centre in the UK has veterans serving again in what is a national effort to defeat coronavirus. I pay tribute to them, I thank them for their work, and I urge them to keep going.

[911661] **Emma Hardy** (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab) [V]: Babcock International aerospace staff at RAF Leeming are currently on strike over a £5,000 pay disparity with colleagues performing the same duties at other bases. Does the Secretary of State agree that this pay injustice is wrong, and will he join me in calling for Babcock to engage meaningfully with Unite the union to resolve this dispute and end the disruption to training flight schedules?

Jeremy Quin: I am not aware of the details of that case, and it would be unwise to comment without learning more, but I will look into it and write to the hon. Lady.

[911663] **Mrs Flick Drummond** (Meon Valley) (Con) [V]: I welcome the improvements to the service justice system that are part of the new Armed Forces Bill. Many serving personnel have been put off complaining by the existing system, and the time it takes to proceed with their complaint. Can the Minister confirm that both current and new complaints will be dealt with in a more timely manner, to not only help the mental health of the complainant but improve military operational effectiveness?

Johnny Mercer: There are a number of measures related to service justice in the Armed Forces Bill, which was introduced last Monday. Those measures are particularly focused on improving the experience of those who use the system and make service complaints, making that system more transparent, with more integrity and more resilience to challenge. My hon. Friend will be delighted to hear that the Bill will have its Second Reading next Monday. There is some really good stuff in there; I urge her to have a look at it, and I am more than happy to engage with her further on the issues.

[911662] **Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD) [V]: One of the big stories in today's newspapers is the fact that Scotland is lagging badly behind when it comes to the roll-out of the vaccine. Clearly, all of us want to get people vaccinated as quickly as possible. What can our excellent armed forces do to sort out this very worrying situation in Scotland?

Mr Wallace: The hon. Gentleman makes a point, which is that first, we, as the United Kingdom armed forces, are here to help, and will do whatever is needed to help any one of the four nations of the United Kingdom. The amazing thing about the United Kingdom—the most successful political union in history—is that we are here to help each other seamlessly. An 80-year-old in need of a vaccine in London has the same need as an 80-year-old in Caithness. Our armed forces are all of our armed forces, and we will not be playing petty nationalist politics when it comes to defeating this evil virus.

Mark Logan (Bolton North East) (Con): On behalf of everyone in Bolton, I would also like to wish Sir Tom a speedy recovery. I was heartened to hear that many soldiers have been deployed to set up 80 new covid-19 vaccine centres for NHS Scotland. Can my hon. Friend confirm how many have now opened as a result of this military support?

The Minister for the Armed Forces (James Heapey): We are very proud of the fact that military planners and advisers are embedded in so many Departments of the Scottish Government, just as they are down here in Whitehall with the UK Government, helping to make sure that the response of the Scottish Government is properly resourced with military expertise and planning horsepower. At present, 70 vaccination centres have been identified in Scotland as a result of the support from the United Kingdom's armed forces, with 11 of those now open.

[911669] **Debbie Abrahams** (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab) [V]: David Clapson was a former serviceman who was sanctioned for a month by the Department for Work and Pensions after missing two jobcentre appointments. He died 18 days later after his money was stopped, at the age of 59, from diabetic ketoacidosis, caused by an acute lack of insulin. Basically, he could not afford electricity to keep his insulin cool. What discussions has the Defence Secretary had with the Work and Pensions Secretary on the number of former service personnel whose applications for personal independence payments have been rejected since 2012, and who have died within six months of their claim being rejected?

Johnny Mercer: I am happy to look into the specific parameters of the issue that the hon. Lady raises. I have been very clear that with representatives of the armed forces in every DWP centre, helping users of the service, we now have a better service than we have ever had for those who use those jobcentres. We are always looking to do more. My heart goes out in this appalling case, and I am more than happy to look at it. However, the reality is that the vast majority of our people have an excellent experience in very difficult times. I pay tribute to the staff at the DWP and all those working in jobcentres, particularly at the moment.

[911665] **Simon Jupp** (East Devon) (Con) [V]: Our impressive vaccination programme has been bolstered by the extraordinary efforts of our armed forces. The Royal Marines' commando training centre in Lympstone in East Devon is playing a vital part in this national effort, with Dr Ross Hemingway and Diane Young volunteering at vaccination centres in Exmouth and Westpoint. Will my hon. Friend explain the steps that have been taken to train non-medical personnel to vaccinate?

James Heapey: We have many team medics, who are trained in advanced first aid and are well used to injecting morphine with some urgency on the battlefield. We are looking at how we might train them to be part of the vaccination process. There are 275 of them currently undertaking training, and clearly, the more of them we can make available, the better we will be able to support the NHS in vaccine delivery.

[911670] **Jessica Morden** (Newport East) (Lab) [V]: Newport veterans hub, with support from the Welsh Government and Age Cymru, has done an excellent job helping veterans and their families in these difficult times. With the pandemic adding to the vulnerability of many veterans in our community, when will the remaining phase of the veterans recognition scheme be put in place to help veterans access more support services?

Johnny Mercer: The veterans ID card is an important recognition of those who have served. Everyone who leaves the services receives an ID card. The hon. Lady is right to identify the challenges in backdating the cards, with issues of fraud and so on. We are committed to delivering this year, and backdating the cards for all those who have served, so that everyone has an important memento of their service in the UK armed forces.

[911666] **Julian Sturdy** (York Outer) (Con) [V]: What steps have been taken to ensure that servicemen and women who are doing a fantastic job assisting with vaccine deployment across the country receive the support that they would expect if stationed at barracks?

James Heappey: I can confirm that that is very much the requirement, and we would fully expect all those whom we send out to support local authorities to be properly catered for. There have been one or two instances—one was reported to me by my hon. Friend—in which the service has fallen short. That is not good enough; we are investigating.

[911683] **Taiwo Owatemi** (Coventry North West) (Lab) [V]: The Royal British Legion estimates that between 3% and 6% of homeless people are from an armed forces background. It is an unspeakable injustice that we are not safeguarding and protecting our veterans in the midst of a global pandemic. My constituents in Coventry North West and I would like to ask the

Minister what support his Department is providing to homeless veterans in my city and across the country during the covid-19 outbreak.

Johnny Mercer: The Department has worked hard to put our arms around veterans across the community, working with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to make sure that our homeless veterans are looked after. We have commissioned studies from King's College to look at the specific impacts of the covid-19 pandemic on veterans. We are committed to making sure that we do our duty by those who serve, and I am confident that we will do so.

Mr Speaker: I am suspending the House for a few minutes to enable the necessary arrangements for the next business to be made.

3.34 pm

Sitting suspended.

Opposition Day

16TH ALLOTTED DAY

Unsafe Cladding: Protecting Tenants and Leaseholders

3.38 pm

Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab) [V]: I beg to move,

That this House calls on the Government to urgently establish the extent of dangerous cladding and prioritise buildings according to risk; provide upfront funding to ensure cladding remediation can start immediately; protect leaseholders and taxpayers from the cost by pursuing those responsible for the cladding crisis; and update Parliament once a month in the form of a Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State.

Buying your first home is a life-defining moment. It is exciting and scary. It symbolises security, and the time to start a family and build a future, but for so many what was a dream come true has become a nightmare. The Grenfell tragedy shed light on a crisis of building safety in this country, and hundreds of buildings have the same cladding that caused the Grenfell fire to be so deadly. Thousands have other equally dangerous cladding, and even more have other serious fire safety problems, such as combustible insulation, missing fire breaks and faulty fire doors. Millions of homeowners are caught up in the wider building safety crisis caused by the defects and are unable to sell, remortgage or buy a flat, freezing up 16% of the housing market and affecting possibly as many as 11 million people.

It can be easy to get caught up in the vast numbers, but it truly is a human tragedy. Many in this House will have read or heard Hayley's story. Hayley was a first-time buyer in Leeds. She bought her flat through an affordable housing scheme designed to help people on low incomes take that first step on to the housing ladder. After moving in, Hayley was told that the roof of her building was covered in dangerous cladding similar to that used on Grenfell Tower, and further inspections threw up more problems with brickwork, insulation, balconies and possibly firebreaks.

Every month, Hayley faced an additional £300 in charges for what is called a waking watch—a 24-hour fire safety patrol that gives little confidence but costs dearly. That £300 a month was as much as her mortgage, and she just could not afford it. The terms of her mortgage meant that she could not move or rent out her flat. Facing mounting bills for the repairs, fire alarms and the looming threat of the costs of fixing the building, Hayley declared bankruptcy. A first-time buyer so recently, Hayley would now struggle to take out a loan to buy a car.

However, the crisis is not just affecting those at the beginning of their housing journey. I was written to recently by an elderly constituent who wants to move out of his flat and into a home that better suits his mobility needs. His block does not have dangerous cladding, but misguided advice from the Government means that he cannot get a survey to prove it. His home cannot be mortgaged, so he cannot get a buyer and so he cannot move into a home where he can be comfortable.

The situation is reflected across the country. People are being forced to pay more than they can afford for a problem they did not cause. Some are paying so much that they cannot keep their home: first-time buyers getting on

the housing ladder to secure their future; people trying to move up and start a family; people approaching or in retirement wanting somewhere smaller; key workers such as NHS junior doctor Will, also in the media today, working on the covid frontline in Sheffield and facing costs of £52,000, a doubling service charge each month and skyrocketing insurance costs; housing associations, councils and their tenants; and everyone in between.

Everyone in this House, I think, agrees that this intolerable situation must not go on. People cannot continue living in unsafe homes. Leaseholders should not face mounting bills for a crisis they did not cause. Labour's motion today expresses three simple principles that we hope will receive endorsement from across the House. First, the Government must urgently establish how much unsafe cladding there is, where it is and what danger it poses. It is extraordinary, three and a half years on from Grenfell, that we still do not have such basic information. Immediately after Grenfell, the Government could have done as Victoria in Australia did and set up a taskforce to establish the extent of dangerous cladding, prioritised by risk, and ensured enforcement against those who refuse to undertake the work. We are calling on the Government to do that today.

Many leaseholders are discovering that there is a shortage of engineers and fire safety specialists to carry out inspections and works. The Victoria taskforce manages the supply chain and ensures that it is directed first to the buildings that are most at risk. It has also prioritised safety by ensuring that the highest-risk buildings are fixed first, rather than the first come, first served approach that the UK Government are currently taking.

Secondly, people's homes should be made safe as soon as possible. Where there is dangerous cladding on buildings or other serious fire safety problems, that must be fixed immediately. All the big players in this crisis have spent the past few years pointing fingers and avoiding responsibility, and the Government have called on building owners to do the right thing, but there is nothing to prevent building owners from passing on costs to leaseholders, and indeed they have a fiduciary duty to do so in many cases. Leaseholders simply cannot afford it, and they simply should not have to. If someone bought a new car that turned out to be dangerous, they would not expect to be told to take out a loan of tens of thousands of pounds to pay for it—often more than the price of the original car—but here we are talking about people's homes. The stalemate we have now is leaving hundreds of thousands of people stuck in flammable buildings, and the only way to make homes safe is for the Government provide up-front funding to make that happen.

Finally, the cost of the work should not fall on leaseholders or taxpayers. Residents did not cause this crisis. They bought their homes in good faith only to find themselves victim to years of corporate malpractice, Government inaction and a broken leasehold system. Ministers have promised at least 15 times that leaseholders would not bear the cost, but recently the language has shifted to state that they should not bear "unaffordable" costs, and there is talk of loans. Labour's motion calls on them to reaffirm and put substance behind their original promises to leaseholders.

Neither should the taxpayer carry the burden. The Government should pursue the dodgy developers, cowboy builders and manufacturers of flammable cladding through

legal action—that is the “polluter pays” principle. Where laws need to be changed to make that easier, we should do so. There is precedent for that in Australia. Many councils and social landlords are being stung for the cost of the remediation. The Government have set them two impossible tasks: build to the building targets they have set, and at the same time carry out expensive fire remediation without passing on the costs to hard-pressed tenants. That must also change.

I am a Member of Her Majesty’s Opposition, but I am not here to score party political points. We know that at least 34 Conservative MPs agree that leaseholders should not pay for these costs, and I am sure there are many more who have not yet said so publicly. I commend in particular the work of the hon. Members for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland) and for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith) on the Fire Safety Bill. Their amendments sought to protect leaseholders and push the Government to take action. We have tabled our own amendments that build on theirs and fill in some gaps, but the Government have not said when the Fire Safety Bill will come back, and the end of this parliamentary Session is rumoured to be fast approaching.

The Government may say that Opposition day motions are not binding, but it is up to them if they choose not to be bound by the sovereign will of the country’s elected representatives in this House. Many people remember that when the Labour Government were defeated on an Opposition day motion on Gurkhas, they honoured the will of Parliament and changed the policy the very next day. I ask the Government to heed the will of this House.

Further delay and inaction is not an option. Building insurance will continue to skyrocket and the unaffordable cost of waking watch security guards will continue. On top of all that, the colossal cost for fixing buildings will fall on leaseholders. People will go broke. Mortgages risk going into negative equity on a massive scale as more and more flats become literally valueless. We need a solution to this crisis that fixes buildings and ensures that those responsible pay.

I pay tribute to the absolutely inspiring cladding campaigners. I have met some in my constituency of Bristol West and others from across the country along with my colleague, the excellent shadow Minister for housing and housing safety, my hon. Friend the Member for Weaver Vale (Mike Amesbury). Those residents just want to get on with their lives. It is a tribute to all of them that they keep campaigning. So many MPs tried to get on to the speaking list today that they could not all get on. I commend colleagues for standing up for leaseholders, whether they are able to speak today or not.

There is cross-party consensus—agreement across both Houses and across the country—that we should put the needs of those first-time buyers, key workers and pensioners first. I am not asking Members to vote with the Opposition; I am asking them to vote with their constituents to show that they will always put their interests first. If Members agree with what is in the motion, they should vote for it. It is as simple as that.

Mr Speaker: I remind Back Benchers that there will be a three-minute limit.

3.48 pm

The Minister for Housing (Christopher Pincher): There is a shared desire in Parliament to ensure that absolutely everyone in our society lives somewhere decent, safe and secure. We are united in that commitment, and our thoughts naturally turn to the still unimaginable tragedy of Grenfell Tower. It should not have taken such a deadly fire, with such a terrible loss of life and suffering, for us to face up to the failures of building safety that have built up over decades under successive Governments. We are determined to do our duty by those whose lives were changed forever that night, right the wrongs of the past, and bring about the biggest improvement to building safety in a generation.

Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister will know that cladding issues affect thousands of my constituents, as do the wider issues of fire safety and building safety. Will he make clear when the legislation will come forward on both fire safety and building safety? Will he also give us an update on the EWS1 forms? He told the House in November that there had been negotiations, through the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, with lenders, but many of my constituents say that they are still facing serious issues in acquiring those forms.

Christopher Pincher: I am obliged to the hon. Gentleman for his question, and I shall certainly address the fire safety and building safety legislation as I advance through my remarks. With respect to the EWS1 forms, he will know that RICS has undertaken a consultation on the reform proposals, which ought to reduce some of the burden that some people face. That consultation closed on 26 January, and we await its results, but certainly as a result of the negotiations that we undertook with the industry and with RICS, some 450,000 people who might otherwise have been affected by the EWS1 forms are no longer obliged to complete them.

We know that, through no fault of their own, many leaseholders have found themselves in a most challenging, difficult and, indeed, agonising situation. Their situation is undoubtedly a complex one. Its roots extend over many years, and there are no easy answers.

Christian Wakeford (Bury South) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that leaseholders will not be gagged by confidentiality clauses in any remediation contracts?

Christopher Pincher: I am obliged to my hon. Friend for that question. He is absolutely right. Leaseholders will in no way be gagged by the standard contractual obligations between Government and applicants for Government moneys for remediation. We have written to anybody that has applied to the scheme to make it clear that if people wish to make comments about policy or about their own remediation situation, they should be allowed to do so. I say to my hon. Friend that should anybody from petty officialdom suggest that his or any other constituents do not speak out, they offer that petty official a good old-fashioned Anglo-Saxon gesture in response.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): Will the Minister give way?

Christopher Pincher: I will make some progress; I shall give way to the hon. Gentleman later on.

I welcome the opportunity to speak in this debate and to outline the decisive action that we are undertaking to remove unsafe cladding, to strengthen the regulations and to support leaseholders. We established our building safety programme within days of the Grenfell Tower tragedy. Its aim has always been to ensure that residents in high-rise blocks of flats are safe now and in the future. We have worked intensively and extensively to ensure that buildings with dangerous cladding are made safe as quickly as possible and, backed by £600 million of Government funding, real strides have been made in removing this unsafe aluminium composite material—ACM—cladding. Last year, despite the pressures of covid-19, more high rises with ACM cladding were made safe—either their works were begun or they were made safe—than in any previous year, which is nearly double the number in the previous year, 2019. Last month, we reached a major milestone. All high-rise social sector buildings have either had their unsafe ACM cladding replaced or seen the work get under way.

Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con): My constituents in Ipswich are very pleased that they will be eligible for the waking watch relief fund, but it is only £30 million and many are concerned that it simply will not go far enough in addressing all buildings that need a new fire alarm system. What would the Minister say in response to their concerns?

Christopher Pincher: I am obliged to my hon. Friend, who I know is a doughty campaigner for his constituents in Ipswich. I shall be addressing the issue of the waking watch and the support measures that we are putting in place as I move through my remarks.

I should also say that around 95% of all high-rise ACM buildings identified before the beginning of last year, across both the public and private sectors, are either fully remediated or have seen work commence on site. Indeed, all the buildings with unsafe ACM cladding in the constituency of the hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire) constituency have at least seen works start, if they are not already fully completed. These figures bear testament to the progress that we have made, the pressure that we have successfully exerted and the action that we have taken over the last three and a half years to get this job done. Where funding alone has not been enough to increase the pace of remediation, the Government have not hesitated to direct expert support to projects. Where building owners have still failed to take action despite that support, we have backed robust enforcement measures, spurring them to act without delay. Indeed, there have been 57 enforcement actions so far, 19 of which have been supported by the Government's joint inspection team.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): Will the Minister give way?

Christopher Pincher: I will give way very briefly, and then I must make some progress.

Kevin Hollinrake: I am very grateful the Minister. He refers to building owners. Clearly, where there is a contractual obligation for building owners to remediate, that is absolutely right, but does he accept that lots of building owners have no contractual obligation—no legal obligation—to carry out that work? At Nova

House in Slough, for example, the building owner simply gave it back to the local authority, which then issued service charges to the residents because there was no contractual obligation for anybody else to do the work. Perhaps we need to look at a wider community, rather than just building owners, to provide a funding solution for this problem.

Christopher Pincher: My hon. Friend puts his finger on the nub of the matter, which is the complexity of the situation with which we and those people who find themselves in this difficult situation have to grapple, and that is what the Government are doing.

The Government initially focused our efforts on ACM cladding of the type used on Grenfell Tower because it poses the most severe safety risk on high-rise residential buildings, but we recognise that other forms of unsafe cladding, although less dangerous than ACM, should never have been used. Although many building owners have taken action, some have not. Too many building owners and managing agents in the private sector have been slow in getting remediation work started, which is why we introduced the £1 billion building safety fund to remediate high-rise residential buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding as soon as possible and protect the leaseholders from burdensome costs.

We received 2,840 registrations for the fund, and have been able to make eligibility decisions on a significant number of them that were fully completed. It is disappointing that, despite our requirements having been made clear from the outset, many building owners have been unable to provide the basic information needed to advance works, including information such as the height of their building, the EWS systems on their walls and even sample lease agreements. We have been engaging with registrants and the industry bodies to understand the challenges they have in meeting the deadlines, and have set a new deadline of June based on what we now know about the registrants and their readiness to be able to deliver.

Building owners should be in no doubt: it is vital that dangerous cladding is removed as fast as possible, and the Government will not tolerate unnecessary delays. If they can collect the service charges, they can get the remediation on their buildings done. That applies just as much to small blocks of flats as it does to large ones, and we have given clear expert advice on a range of safety issues for buildings of all heights. Public funding has rightly been focused on remediating unsafe cladding on high-rise buildings of 18 metres-plus. That reflects the exceptional fire risk that certain cladding products pose at that height, as Dame Judith Hackitt observed in her report into fire safety. However, our guidance is unambiguous in stating that building safety is the responsibility of building owners, irrespective of whether their buildings are above or below 18 metres in height. The Government will continue to ensure that building owners—the ones who are ultimately responsible for making sure that these homes are safe—do the right thing.

We have targeted remediation funding where it is needed most: removing and replacing cladding on high-rise residential buildings. Interim safety measures such as waking watch have in many cases been used to ensure that the safety of residents in buildings with unsafe cladding is maintained. However, we are clear that

waking watch regimes should only ever be used in the short term, because they are an entirely inadequate substitute for remediation. Some building owners have been using them for too long and have been passing on costs, which are unsustainable to leaseholders and residents, adding to the emotional distress and financial strain that they already suffer. We have been clear that that behaviour is unacceptable and cannot continue, which is why my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State announced in December a £30 million fund to pay for the costs of installing alarm systems in buildings with unsafe cladding, thereby reducing the need for a waking watch. The fund is available across England. It is now open and I encourage those eligible not to delay but to start their applications now, so that we can urgently distribute the payments.

It is wrong and unjust for leaseholders to have to shoulder unfair costs to fix historical safety defects that they did not cause. That is why the Government have already set aside £1.6 billion in funding for cladding remediation. The funding was put in place precisely to ensure that the most dangerous types of cladding were removed as quickly as possible without imposing crippling bills on leaseholders. However, public funding does not absolve industry from taking the responsibility for the failures that led to unsafe cladding in the first place by putting materials on buildings that should not have been there.

We have seen many developers and building owners rightly taking responsibility for correcting those defects. They have done so in more than half of the high-rise private sector buildings with unsafe cladding. We absolutely expect developers, investors and building owners who have the means to pay to do the right thing and cover the costs of remediation of other unsafe cladding themselves without passing on the cost to leaseholders. However, in many cases, building owners or their managing agents have simply passed on significant remediation costs to leaseholders without regard to the affordability of those measures. That is why we have been accelerating the work to develop a financial solution to protect leaseholders from such costs. There is no quick fix. If there were, we would have done it long ago. It is complex and it involves many parties: leaseholders with different leases, developers, warranty holders, the insurance industry, the mortgage lenders, and the owners themselves. We have to find a solution that is right and proper, that demands of owners and developers that they put right the problems and defects they caused, that is fair to leaseholders who should not have to carry unfair costs for problems that they did not cause or envisage, and that is fair to the taxpayer, who is already shouldering a significant burden in remediating many buildings.

I can assure hon. Members that we will be making a further announcement on this important work “very shortly”, as my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister said at PMQs last week. We must recognise that Government funding alone cannot solve some of the deep-rooted issues surrounding building safety. As Dame Judith Hackitt concluded in her review, it is vital that we reform the entire building safety regime, and that means a fundamental change in the regulatory framework, in industry and in its culture.

We are committed to bringing forward the most significant building reform in almost 40 years, with two landmark pieces of legislation: the forthcoming Building

Safety Bill that will create a more accountable system, and the Fire Safety Bill, currently before the House, which clarifies the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. Taken together, these measures will improve the safety of residents in blocks of flats of all heights.

It may be worthwhile if, before I conclude, I commented on some of the amendments tabled to the Fire Safety Bill, particularly those by my hon. Friend the Member for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland) and by my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith), who is in his place. We fully understand what our hon. Friends are attempting to achieve in their amendments. We entirely understand that they want to remove or reduce the burden on leaseholders, and we wish to do the same. However, having looked at their amendments closely, it is clear to us that their scope, as currently drafted, would mean they would apply only to residents and leaseholders who have had a fire risk assessment undertaken, and not to residents who have suffered an incident or had works done for any other reason. Nor are the amendments drafted in such a way as to allow them to be introduced without significant change to the Bill, both to the primary legislation and to the secondary legislation that must follow. As a result, the amendments would significantly impair the Bill’s progress through the House—they would delay it—and so, having looked carefully at my hon. Friends’ amendments, I encourage them to withdraw them.

The Building Safety Bill is the best mechanism to achieve my hon. Friends’ aims, which are to introduce a new and stronger regulatory regime for building safety in buildings of 18 metres or more in height, and for all construction products. The Bill will establish a new building safety regulator in the Health and Safety Executive, sitting at the heart of the reformed building programme. It will place clear legal duties on those who build and manage buildings in scope of the new regime to manage any risks that they create and, crucially, it will enable the regulator to enforce those laws.

In conclusion, high-rise buildings in this country should never have been fitted with dangerous or unsafe cladding. Successive Governments have failed to confront this issue, but it is this Government who are resolving it once and for all, making homes safer and protecting the residents from crippling costs, and at a pace that the severity of the situation demands. That is what we have already achieved: almost 95% of buildings identified at the beginning of last year with unsafe ACM cladding have now completed or are in the process of completing their remediation; we are advancing applications for the building safety fund; we are appointing specialist consultants to increase the pace of remediation; and we are introducing our additional landmark legislation. We will not let up. This work will be going on long after this Opposition day is over and long after the Leader of the Opposition has issued his tweet. We will not let even the pandemic, which is affecting our country and the world, slow us down. We will work to restore the inalienable right of everyone in this country to live somewhere that is decent, secure and, above all, safe—a place that they can rightly and proudly call home.

4.7 pm

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): The Grenfell fire of 2017 was a catastrophic event and its devastating consequences are still being seen even today, with the

[David Linden]

public inquiry revealing new information each week. I want to take a moment to remember all those who died in the fire—all those lives so needlessly lost. I also want to pay tribute to the tireless campaigning by their families. It is vital that the victims of the fire and their families receive the justice they deserve through the inquiry. It is my hope that, because of the work of the Grenfell inquiry, serious measures will be put in place to prevent another catastrophic event such as Grenfell from ever happening again.

However, when we look at how the UK Government are currently tackling the cladding crisis, we see that their policies fall short. For example, the fund provided by the UK Government is not enough to cover all the properties with dangerous cladding, leading to a first come, first served approach and many people still living with unsafe cladding on their properties. Obviously, housing and local government is a devolved issue, but the UK Government's building safety programme will undoubtedly have consequences for Scotland. Despite the building safety programme applying only in England and Wales, its advice is being used by insurance companies and mortgage providers in Scotland to guide their decisions. The EWS1 form currently applies only to properties in England, but the *Glasgow Times* has reported that inspectors are using the form and granting homeowners a certificate of safety. Without the EWS1 being law, homeowners are looking towards England's cladding situation as guidance.

While these decisions by the UK Government are positive for improving safety, they have meant that many property owners in England are unable to remortgage, sell or insure their properties, as insurance and mortgage providers refuse to accept the risk of external cladding. Residents are not legally responsible for the external cladding and do not have the money to remove it, which has left huge numbers of people completely stuck and unable to sell their properties.

Guidance is now even affecting properties below the 11-metre and the 18-metre mark. Again, while this currently applies only to England and Wales, insurance companies in Scotland are also following these recommendations, thus affecting Scottish homeowners and tenants. Surely the UK Government and the Minister can see that it is completely unfair that residents and leaseholders are burdened with the costs of removing cladding that they had no say in installing. There are certainly reports of residents in England facing huge and very unfair repair bills, while the housing firms that own the at-risk buildings are having their costs recovered.

I recently heard the story of Sophie Grayling, a mother who was so proud to buy her first home in 2017. However, the flat that she bought was part of a building clad in ACM cladding—the exact same type, as we know, used on Grenfell Tower. Ms Grayling's building is under the 18-metre threshold for the fund offered by the UK Government to remove the cladding, and with cladding remaining in place she has seen the sale of her home fall through, is facing a bill of thousands to fix the block's issues and, most importantly, every night puts her child to bed with the knowledge that her building is covered in the same material that saw 72 lives lost in the inferno at Grenfell.

It is clear that that is unjust. Homeowners like Ms Grayling now face a Catch-22 situation: they either pay out of their own pocket to fix a problem that is not their fault or stay stuck in an unsellable flat that risks their safety. That story is not unique. More than 1 million people are still unable to remortgage or sell their properties because of the cladding. However, the frustration does not even end there: the UK Government are attempting to silence homeowners currently waiting for support, demanding that they do not speak to the media.

Homeowners applying for the fund to help to pay to remediate buildings will not be able to talk to a journalist. I know that the Minister said earlier that people should not listen to petty officialdom, but in order for petty officialdom to come to the fore at some point a Minister was not doing their job in terms of signing this off. People who are stuck in that incredibly tough position—unable to sell their house and facing massive bills because of the UK Government's policy—must be able to speak to the press and expose the reality of how the cladding scandal is being dealt with.

In Scotland, cladding has been handled differently. As I said, housing and local government are devolved, so the removal of cladding is within the remit of the Scottish Government. That has enabled Scotland to require buildings to be constructed in a way that aids in the prevention of fires, which has contributed to Scotland having only a handful of properties—albeit, in my view, still too many—with Grenfell-style cladding compared with more than 450 in England.

However, even with that lower number, the Scottish Government are avoiding being complacent on cladding through the building standards futures board, and are continuing to improve building standards across all of Scotland. They are looking at other issues related to fire outside of cladding, such as holistically addressing high-rise buildings to make them safer, leading to requirements that will soon be introduced for sprinklers to be installed in new-build social housing and flats.

The UK Government should similarly address the cladding scandal by placing a focus on those who own and rent properties with unsafe cladding. The people most affected by the dangers of cladding should be at the centre of the discussion. Instead, the UK Government are burdening them with huge costs and the inability to sell or remortgage their flats.

John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): The hon. Member has obviously been very critical of the UK Government and full of praise, as usual, for his colleagues in the Scottish Government, but he will be aware that the press reports in Scotland are highly critical of the high-rise inventory and how the Scottish Government have managed it. Furthermore, the group set up by the Scottish Government to allocate the almost £100 million fund that was designed to support people having to deal with cladding issues has not met since April last year. I would like to hear his comments on those points, please.

David Linden: I am grateful to the hon. Member for that intervention. Speaking as someone who has 10 tower blocks in my constituency—I do not know how many there are in rural Scotland—I am very familiar with the issue, and I assure him that the conversations that I have on a regular basis with the Minister for Local Government,

Housing and Planning, Kevin Stewart, indicate that it is a very high priority for the Scottish Government. That is precisely why they have taken that action. I am none the less very grateful to the hon. Member for making what I am sure is not a party political point on what I think we all agree is a very serious issue.

The English fund covers only around one third of the costs to remove cladding in England, and with its being first come, first served, it will exclude some of the buildings in the most dire need of remediation. The UK Government should invest the money necessary to ensure that all at-risk residences in England can have remedial action carried out on them. The UK Government should also follow Scotland's example of targeted support for the most at-risk buildings to avoid the first come, first served approach.

Instead of the UK Government's policies targeting the companies responsible for the dangerous cladding, they are burdening homeowners and leaseholders. When we look at preventing further fires caused by cladding, it is important that we keep renters and homeowners in mind, such as Sophie Grayling and her young son, both of whom are stuck in an unsafe flat facing huge bills. We should consider the impact on homeowners and renters who already feel unsafe in their own homes. It is time for the UK Government to step up and truly tackle the cladding crisis, and help those in the most vulnerable position.

4.15 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con) [V]: It is on record that I am a leaseholder, and I face no problems of these kinds. I have been working on leaseholders' problems for well over 10 years, with the support of the campaigning charity Leasehold Knowledge Partnership.

I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Minister and to the Secretary of State, who are now showing that Government understand a large part of the scale of the problems. I believe that it is better if we do not have a vote today. We should look on this debate as a "take note" one. We are all trying to face the problems of our constituents who are living in homes that are unsafe, unsaleable and unaffordable. I pay tribute to the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, and I look forward to hearing the Chair, the hon. Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts), speak shortly. Its reports on the situation of leaseholders even before we knew about this tragedy and its subsequent reports about the Fire Safety Bill are important.

I wish Michael Wade well in trying to advise Government on finding ways forward, and I commend the then Prime Minister who, on 27 June two and a half years ago, said that the Government do not rule anything out. What needs to be ruled in are, first, making the money available so that buildings can be made safe; secondly, challenging the insurance industry, which is putting premiums up at rates that I think should be investigated by the Competition and Markets Authority to see whether they are fully justifiable; and, thirdly, making sure that in the end, and as we know from court actions and inquiry results we can anticipate, the people who are responsible for this chaos—dangerous chaos—will actually have to pay. I do not think the taxpayer should necessarily have to do it; the Government have to make themselves responsible for finding the way forward.

Those who are responsible—not all, knowingly—include the developers, the builders and the present landlords, some of whom were the developers. They include local building control possibly, national regulators certainly and the component manufacturers. Those of us who have been speaking about the problem for the past three years—and I wish that some of the other advisers to Government on leasehold issues had been saying the same thing rather more clearly—think that this has to be tackled in a way that cuts short waiting for court actions that may take 10 years and provides the money now, by the end of the year, so that work can be started and finished as soon as possible and so that people have homes they can stay in or leave safely, and are affordable. I would trust those on the Select Committee most to work with Government to make sure that we find the solution, and I would hope to know that we have done that before we have got another few months further forward.

4.18 pm

Mr Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab) [V]: I begin by thanking the Father of the House for his very kind comments. Certainly, we have worked together on these issues. I congratulate all the members of the Select Committee as well. We have looked at the issue of building safety, particularly cladding, on a number of occasions, and we have produced a number of reports, all of them unanimously. It is to the credit of all members of the Committee—I notice that the next speaker will be the hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman), who is an important member of the Select Committee—that we have done so on a cross-party basis.

I will quote one or two of our very clear recommendations. In 2019, we said that the Government should provide funding to remove "any form of combustible cladding...from any high-rise or high-risk building",

regardless of height. In our 2020 report, we recommended:

"The Building Safety Fund will need to be increased to address all fire safety defects in every high-risk residential building—potentially costing up to £15 billion."

Then we did pre-legislative scrutiny of the Building Safety Bill, and we said:

"The Government must recommit to the principle that leaseholders should not pay anything towards the cost of remediating historical building safety defects".

We have been very clear on all those matters: leaseholders should not pay. They should not pay some unidentified, affordable amount or fair amount, and neither should we get into a position of offering them loans to pay off the debts, because what do loans do but put leaseholders in more debt? At the same time, loans would put many of them into negative equity.

The leaseholder should not pay, and we know that developers and others eventually should be held accountable, but as the Father of the House has just explained, so many potential organisations could be held accountable and the legal arguments will go on and on. Many of the developers have gone out of business and do not exist anymore. Yes, we should pursue them, but in the meantime, the Government have to stand up and commit far more funding than is in the Building Safety Bill, which simply does not cover anything like the £15 billion of potential costs. Eventually there might need to be an industrial levy to pay part of it, and it is for the Government to come forward with recommendations, if they so choose.

[Mr Clive Betts]

The issue is not just about high-rise buildings over six storeys—I think the Minister has accepted that point. It is about all buildings where people could be at risk, including residential homes, care homes and so on. It is also not just about cladding, but about all potential fire risks in buildings, such as dangerous balconies, faulty fire doors, missing firebreaks and faulty installation—all the things together that need putting right to make the buildings that people live in safe.

Finally, we talk about numbers, but in the end behind all these numbers are individuals and families living in potentially dangerous buildings with debts around their neck that they cannot afford to pay, unable to sell their homes if they so wish. We owe it to them to get action on this issue immediately.

4.22 pm

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the Chairman of the Select Committee, who spoke about the inquiries that we have done—seemingly endlessly—over the past six and a half years. Three and a half years after the Grenfell tragedy, we still have leaseholders living in unsaleable, un-mortgageable, uninsurable, unsafe properties, and that is a disgrace that we have to put right. Progress on remediation has unfortunately been slow. It picked up last year, which is good news, but it has been slow and we still have buildings with unsafe cladding, which makes the homes almost impossible to sell, should someone so wish.

This is a complicated debate and a complicated issue, because we have ACM and non-ACM cladding and we have other fire safety issues, to which the Chairman of the Select Committee has referred. The Government, however, are responsible for two things that are important in this process: first, the testing regime, which is not fit for purpose and needs fundamental reform to ensure that cladding and other things that are put in buildings are safe; and secondly, the building regulations that control them.

We have a problem with building ownership, which is complex and unclear, with many buildings owned by offshore trusts and other organisations. We have to deal with those particular issues, but it is fundamental that leaseholders should not have to pay a penny piece towards the cost of remediating unsafe cladding.

The Government have rightly come forward with the Fire Safety Bill and the Building Safety Bill, and I sat through the pre-legislative scrutiny on the Building Safety Bill. The problem with the Building Safety Bill is that it will take a very long time before it comes into law and is actually put into practice. If the Government are against the amendments to the Fire Safety Bill tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith) and for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland), they are honour bound to come forward with alternative amendments that meet the fundamental principle that leaseholders should not pay.

The key is this: what do we do for the people who are in this position? Surveys cost an enormous amount of money. The industry cannot have the capacity at the moment to rectify all the damage that has been done. What is clear is that we need to ensure that the building owners and those responsible foot the bill. We have to end self-certification of buildings. It is unacceptable

that building developers can just self-certify that their buildings are safe and are within the scope. We have to make sure that the Government extend the building safety fund into next year, increase the amount of money available, and make sure that the work is done—if necessary, taking over these buildings, remediating them, and then turning them into commonhold so that the leaseholders know that they have a safe building and are not paying a penny.

4.25 pm

Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman).

In June 2019, Samuel Garside House, a block of flats in Barking, was consumed in a wild inferno, going up in flames in seven minutes. It is a miracle that because the fire occurred in daylight, nobody died, but many residents, mainly leaseholders, lost all their possessions. In Barking, leaseholders are families who a generation ago would have been housed by the council, but with the shocking lack of affordable social housing, their only option is to stretch their finances to the absolute limit by buying a lease. They live on the edge from one pay cheque to the next, and they cannot even afford household contents insurance. They, and thousands of others in my constituency, certainly cannot afford to pay for putting right the mistakes of others. They are locked into an absolute nightmare in unsafe homes, unable to sell, unable to remortgage, and facing mounting bills to fix a crisis they did not create. The Government's response today had little basis in reality. They have, in truth, shunted this into the "too difficult to tackle" box and abandoned leaseholders.

In three minutes I have three issues. First, the Government must act to protect all multi-occupancy buildings. Fire does not discriminate between one height and another. Samuel Garside was below 18 metres but it was a lethal fire trap. Arbitrary height thresholds do not work. All leaseholders must be covered and existing buildings must also be remediated.

Secondly, I have spent months of research trying to identify the owners of blocks in Barking. Ownership is often hidden. The properties are sometimes held through companies located in tax havens. Freeholders who make easy money by charging a ground rent are getting away scot-free. Freeholders must contribute towards the massive remediation costs, alongside developers, contractors, suppliers and regulators.

Thirdly, the Government must solve the spiralling cost of building insurance. Some are struggling to find any insurance cover at all. Residents of one block are facing a 900% hike in their building insurance. The Association of British Insurers told me that the Government are simply not engaging in a realistic dialogue to produce a scheme where risks are shared between the taxpayer and insurance companies. They have done so on covid issues but they have singularly failed where people are living in danger in their own homes.

I have not forgotten my constituents, but the Government have failed them. Those living in the Ropeworks, Academy Central, Spring Place, Samuel Garside, Central House, Benedicts Wharf, Rivermill Lofts, 360 Barking and Spectrum Building are all being left behind, abandoned by a Government refusing to—

Mr Speaker: Order. I call Royston Smith.

4.28 pm

Royston Smith (Southampton, Itchen) (Con): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. I say that just for the avoidance of doubt, as I do not think the leasehold property that I own is included in this matter.

The cladding and fire safety crisis has blighted too many lives for far too long. Leaseholders bought their homes in good faith. They would have trusted the developer to build a safe home and they would have trusted the Government to ensure that it conformed with the law. Most would have needed a valuation for a mortgage and nearly all would have used a solicitor to ensure that everything was legal. Governments have encouraged them to buy by offering them incentives to do so. Buyers had every reason to expect that our building regulations were sound and could be more than forgiven for believing that modern flats built in Britain would be safe. However, the events of the past few years have shown that this is not the case. Leaseholders have had to wake up to a sobering reality that the dream of home ownership has turned into a living nightmare as they face huge bills and bankruptcy.

Let me make something clear: the Government are not to blame for this situation. This is not the fault of my right hon. Friends the Secretary of State or the Housing Minister; it is a failure of building safety regulation over many decades, involving many Governments. Regardless of what happens today, the Government have an opportunity to sort this out once and for all. They can give leaseholders the certainty and security they deserve and let the unwitting victims of this crisis once again sleep soundly in their beds at night.

The Government may feel that our amendment to the Fire Safety Bill is defective. Perhaps it does not do what leaseholders would like or it would slow the progress of the Bill. There is a simple solution, which was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for Harrow East (Bob Blackman): accept our amendment, tidy it up, and ensure that it does protect innocent leaseholders.

The shadow Minister for Housing and the Leader of the Opposition said in interviews today that we should put party politics aside and work together. I could not agree more. Labour has had seven weeks to sign our amendment—seven weeks of victims of this scandal begging it to join us—and what has it done? It has done as it always does—ignored the opportunity and instead jumped on a passing bandwagon. Labour has led the victims of the cladding crisis up the hill, and now it is going to abandon them at the top.

There are options for the Government, and I know that they are working hard to find one that works, but today I ask them to accept our amendment and once and for all tell the leaseholders that it is not their fault and they will not have to pay.

4.31 pm

Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab) [V]: It is shocking that, almost four years on from the Grenfell disaster, the Government have failed to get a grip of the cladding scandal. Despite repeated promises that leaseholders would not bear the cost of fixing this problem, there are countless families living in flammable buildings facing colossal bills for repair work and increased service charges to pay for interim safety measures.

One of my constituents living in Austen Apartments in Anerley is expecting her second child in March. She and her partner, along with their one-year-old daughter, had been hoping to move from their current two-bedroom flat to a bigger family home, but in October they were told that their property was covered in dangerous cladding. That meant they were unable to sell their flat, effectively trapping them in a fire hazard with no ability to move out. The estimated cost of removing the cladding is £30,000. Meanwhile, they face the prospect of increased service charges for a fire marshal and have received a notice from the building owner that the installation of a new alarm system costing £81,000 will be billed to residents.

My constituent told me:

“We live in a state of crippling uncertainty. Our plans to move are on hold indefinitely. We have no choice but to raise our young family in a small flat with no garden that is also unsafe. And we face the prospect that all the money we have worked extremely hard to save in order to buy our first family house will instead be spent on paying for remediation works or steep mortgage fees—through no fault of our own.”

Another constituent from the same building wrote to me:

“I am a single parent with two young children. I am currently not in employment and in receipt of Universal Credit. So, to now be potentially facing astronomical fees on top of already costly service charges is having a real negative effect on my mental health.”

Those testimonies are deeply worrying. While the £1.6 billion building safety fund has been set up to pay for remediation of unsafe buildings, it does not go nearly far enough, and buildings such as Austen Apartments are not even eligible for the fund because they are below 18 metres.

Sadly, Austen Apartments is not an isolated case. Another building in my constituency, in Forest Hill, also below 18 metres, no longer conforms to fire safety standards. Residents have contacted me saying that they are likely to have to split the remediation costs of £350,000 between 11 flats.

My constituents bought their flats in good faith, only then to find out that their homes are a potential fire hazard and that they face huge costs to make them safe. The Government should be doing everything possible to protect leaseholders from these costs and pursue those responsible for the cladding crisis. For the sake of my constituents and thousands like them, I hope that the Government will finally take meaningful action to resolve this injustice.

4.34 pm

Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con) [V]: Last May, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee heard from Alex Di-Giuseppe, the co-founder of Manchester Cladators, who told us how it felt to live in an unsafe high-rise building. Describing the fear of residents of buildings where a fire could happen at any point, who faced unaffordable bills, he said:

“It is the fear of living in the unknown...It is the feeling that we are trapped; we cannot sell and we cannot move.”

At the end of last year, ACM cladding remained on more than 160 buildings in England. Although progress on cladding removal is welcome, every night spent in an unremediated block is potentially a sleepless and fearful one, so it is important that we move at pace to fix these

[Mary Robinson]

problems. Responding to the Select Committee report on cladding remediation, the Government were clear that

“there can be no more excuses for inaction”

from building owners, and they backed up that stance with a £1.6 billion fund for cladding removal, but clear targets are still needed if those building owners are to take their responsibility seriously and fix this problem.

Since the Grenfell fire tragedy claimed 72 lives in June 2017, fire defects have been discovered in thousands of other buildings. We know that the removal of dangerous ACM cladding was far from the end of the nightmare, as inspections uncovered non-ACM cladding and other failures, including missing fire breaks and other serious defects. Again, the Government stepped in with a £1 billion building safety fund to help meet those costs, but the costs are rocketing and leaseholders are being forced to pick up the bill. Although there is agreement that taxpayers should not foot the whole bill, we should consider expanding the fund to ensure that building owners can properly manage the costs associated with remediation, and not pass them on to leaseholders. In too many cases, leaseholders have been asked to pay huge bills to rectify a problem that is not their fault. They face waking watch charges, vastly increased insurance costs, worries about external wall system certificates and a massive loss of property value. They should not be facing those costs.

The Minister made it clear to the Select Committee that leaseholders will not be bankrupted by the remediation costs, but unfortunately that is setting the bar far too high and many have already reached that threshold. We should be ready to step in and stop leaseholders being unfairly penalised by freeholders who pass on costs, and the Government should be leading the effort. We need to take the action necessary to ensure that all our homes and buildings are made safe from fire and the fear of fire.

4.37 pm

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con) [V]: I pay tribute to my constituents—the Grenfell bereaved, the survivors and the wider community. I was shocked by several of the recommendations that came out of the Grenfell inquiry in November and December, especially those relating to building products, their testing and their marketing. It is clear that there have been regulatory and corporate failures. I welcome the fact that the Secretary of State has announced a new regulator for construction products and will start a review of the testing process.

I think the whole House would agree that we need a comprehensive and speedy solution to the leaseholder situation. Leaseholders are in this dilemma through no fault of their own, and as colleagues have said, in many cases they are sitting on unsaleable properties that are potentially dangerous. I welcome the fact that the Government made available £1.6 billion for cladding remediation, and I am glad to hear in particular of the progress on ACM cladding remediation. However, I suspect that £1.6 billion will not be enough. Today, I call on the Government to put together a substantial and comprehensive package such that we can remove all dangerous cladding on high-risk buildings. I agree

with colleagues that we must ensure that freeholders, insurance companies, warrantee holders and developers pay their fair share, but I do think the Government need to put together a comprehensive package.

I was delighted that the Secretary of State and the Chancellor took time last week to hear me make the case for more Government money. I am glad to hear the Minister at the Dispatch Box say we will make important announcements in the short term. It is now three and a half years since the Grenfell tragedy in my constituency. We need to make urgent progress, so I look forward to hearing the Government’s announcements over the next few weeks.

4.40 pm

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: The Government’s handling of the cladding crisis has lacked any sense of grip or urgency. Almost four years on from Grenfell, it is heartbreaking to see the pain that families are going through. I thank *The Sunday Times* for its campaign.

Residents are facing lockdown in inflammable buildings with potentially huge bills for repair work, higher insurance, and interim safety measures such as waking watch. They are also unable to sell their flats. An estimated 4,000 residents in Hounslow alone are affected. My hon. Friend the Member for Brentford and Isleworth (Ruth Cadbury) has also supported many affected constituents. They include young couples, now with children, trapped and unable to upsize to a home big enough for their growing family.

The situation is now not just about cladding. There is also a worrying lack of transparency and speed from housing associations such as A2Dominion and FirstPort. They were slow to undertake the survey work needed on fire safety, despite residents asking for clarity a year ago. With permission, I will share part of a letter that my constituent Pamela Canales received last week from A2Dominion. It reads:

“We wrote to you in June 2020 to let you know your building needed an ‘intrusive survey’. Our fire safety contractor carried out an intrusive survey in several different areas of your building... The results showed that there are issues with timber cladding, insulation inside the masonry walls with incorrectly installed cavity barriers between flats and cavity closers”.

It goes on to say:

“If you would like to re-mortgage or sell your flat, the mortgage lender involved will probably ask for an (EWS1 form). Your building received an EWS1 rating of Option ‘B2’—confirming combustible materials are present and remedial work is required. It is likely a lender will ask for more information about what work is needed, the likely timescales and the costs of carrying out the work. Unfortunately, we don’t know that information at this stage.”

On who will pay for the remedial works, it says:

“At this stage it is too early to say. We fully understand this is a key area of concern for residents and this is a top priority for us. We do not wish to pass cost onto leaseholders and will only do this as a last resort.”

A2Dominion and others do not have a good track record on transparency of costs for leaseholders. This morning, residents told me:

“We don’t know how much this is going to cost us. We don’t know if we will have to vacate the building. It’s time for us to have answers. It’s stressful enough already with the pandemic. We can’t go on like this.”

We need a Government-led plan now to fix the cladding crisis that does not burden leaseholders with the cost. Those responsible must pay.

4.43 pm

Stephen McPartland (Stevenage) (Con) [V]: I would like to pay tribute to UK Cladding Action Group and End our Cladding Scandal for the massive work they have done, along with the Select Committee and my hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith), to raise the profile of this issue and help millions of leaseholders.

I am sorry that the Labour party, the official Opposition, has played a little bit of politics today. We are very close to having the support in the House of Commons to force our amendment into law. Sadly, the vote today makes no difference whatever to any leaseholders. However, what we can do is focus on the amendments to the Fire Safety Bill, as those votes do make a difference. I say to the Minister that we are very close to having the support in the House of Commons, and we have the support in the House of Lords to keep sending the amendments back. My hon. Friend the Member for Southampton, Itchen and I therefore urge the Minister to work with us to ensure that leaseholders do not have to pay.

I believe that the Department has been incompetent throughout this saga. It has created a whole host of problems, especially with the consolidated advice note published in January 2020. Buildings over six storeys or 18 metres were already involved in this crisis, but the note then involved any building of any height, taking the number from around 1,700 buildings to well over 100,000. On top of that, buildings under 18 metres can still be built with combustible cladding.

We must also focus on fire safety defects. I hear the Minister when he says that the Fire Safety Bill is not the right place for this, but I remind him that the Bill builds on the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which tried to clear up two ambiguities around cladding and front doors. The Fire Safety Bill also ensures that costs can be recovered from leaseholders, which puts that cost on leaseholders in law. The Building Safety Bill is not in front of us, but it will also ensure that leaseholders are liable. That is not acceptable to me, and it is not acceptable to leaseholders. We have been very clear that leaseholders do not have to pay.

The Government must provide a safety net. They must step in and help leaseholders. I will not accept loans for leaseholders. If the Government announce that, I will vote against it. We cannot have leaseholders pay 90% mortgages of £150,000 and then maybe have to repay a loan of £75,000. Building societies and banks will say that they can offer mortgages only if they are affordable, and having such a debt on a property is not affordable. I urge the Minister to work with us to deliver for leaseholders and to ensure that they do not have to pay.

4.46 pm

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): I am pleased to follow the hon. Member for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland), whose amendments to the Fire Safety Bill I have signed. I will speak on behalf of my constituents in Leeds—they include Hayley Tillotson, whose story has moved us all—who find themselves in desperate circumstances not of their making. They saved up. They

bought what they thought was the home of their dreams. It has now turned into a nightmare as the outer layers have been peeled back on each block to reveal the full horror underneath. Their homes are firetraps. They are worthless. They cannot borrow against them. They cannot sell them. They are trapped by waking watch bills, trapped by rising insurance, and trapped by the fear that they will be told they must pay to fix this, even though they are not in any way responsible.

The impact on the mental health of my constituents is enormous, because every day they wake up and are reminded of this nightmare with no apparent way out. Today's debate is so important, because we, together on both sides of the House, need to give them hope by calling on the Government to draw up a plan to sort the situation out.

Ministers know that the building safety fund will not deal with the problem. Why? Because the cost of making every home safe is way in excess of the money allocated so far, and we know that Ministers are looking at a loan scheme. I am not opposed to a loan scheme in principle, provided that leaseholders are not required to pay the loans back. After all, they did not fail to put in the firebreaks or cover the blocks in unsafe cladding, so why on earth should they have to pay?

This is a story of monumental regulatory failure and of flats being built as cheaply as possible—in many cases without even complying with the building regulations. Like the Minister, I applaud those freeholders and developers who have taken responsibility and sorted things out, but I deplore those who have tried to walk away and claim that it is nothing to do with them. Those who developed and constructed the buildings should pay, the industry as a whole should pay, and the Government should pay because they allowed it to happen. We all have a responsibility for that.

The most important thing of all, however, is that we act now to bring this crisis to an end, because that is what the leaseholders I represent and Leeds Cladding Scandal, which has done such a great job, want. More than anything else they just want to feel safe and secure in their homes once again, so that they can get on with their lives. We have a responsibility to make sure that that now happens.

4.49 pm

Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con) [V]: The coronavirus pandemic is all-consuming for many Members of Parliament, but for my constituents in Hendon, another issue is equally as disruptive: the connected problems of external cladding, demand for the EWS1 form, and the potential liability of leaseholders for the removal and replacement of fire hazardous materials in their buildings.

I have spent countless hours working on this issue. Two weeks ago, I asked the Government for a commitment to accept an amendment tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland) and for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith) to the Fire Safety Bill. The amendment would ensure that leaseholders are not liable for remedial works, and I have put my name to it. That cannot be said by everyone speaking today. Given that this issue has been largely ignored by some Members, it is astounding that this motion has been tabled today. It is as though those on the Labour Front Bench did not know about the problem and have

[*Dr Matthew Offord*]

ignored the amendments to the Fire Safety Bill. By seeking to push this debate to a vote, Labour Members are pretending to show how much they care, even though they know that Opposition-day debates are not binding on the Government, unlike amendments to the Fire Safety Bill. That is where those on the Labour Front Bench could have shown real leadership, but there has been none.

Two weeks ago I voted against the Government on an Opposition-day motion about universal credit. That was an opportunity for me to show the Government the strength of my feeling, and indicate what I want to see in the Budget in March. Today's debate is not the same. This is a cynical opportunity for Labour Members falsely to raise the hopes of leaseholders and try to gain some popularity that they think they will translate at the ballot box. My constituents are not that naive, so today I shall be abstaining if there is a vote. I will be spending the rest of my afternoon helping my constituents, and not jumping on a bandwagon.

4.51 pm

Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: I have spoken a number of times in Parliament about these issues, because Manchester Central has one of the highest numbers of private blocks that are now deemed to be dangerous. I thank the Manchester Cladiators—a fantastic committed group of residents who have been working tirelessly to raise these issues locally and nationally.

The toll—both financial and mental—facing those living in a building now deemed dangerous is heart-breaking, devastating, and simply wrong. It is a national scandal, and as we have heard, it is absolutely no fault of leaseholders. It has also created a completely broken housing market for millions more people. At a time when we are being asked to stay safe at home, living in a dangerous building has particular resonance, not to mention the added uncertainty faced by those on furlough, by the many key workers living in those flats, or by disabled residents such as Georgie Hulme in Hulme Life Buildings, who are anxiously worrying about how they might escape.

Although it is not the Government's fault that we got here in this way, their response has been inadequate, slow, and unresponsive. The ACM building fund is too small and narrow in scope for nearly all affected buildings in my constituency, including those under 18 metres, such as Hulme Life Buildings, which is unable to apply, despite its residents facing bills of £115,000 each. Buildings with non-ACM cladding or with wooden balconies or walkways, such as Albion Works and St George's Island, are unable to apply. Buildings where the cladding's exterior façade is brick effect, such as at Leftbank, and those where work has already begun, such as the skyline buildings, are also out of scope. For those buildings that do meet the tight criteria, the process is too slow and decisions are not forthcoming.

Taken together, all those issues, as well as the lack of accountability for leaseholders in the system, is leading to a broken market. Too many players have stepped away from taking responsibility for building safety, leaving millions of residents in homes that are uninsurable, unsellable, uncertifiable, and with negative equity. The fund needs urgent reform so that more buildings are

eligible, and we need a comprehensive taskforce to look at the whole range of issues such as insurance, mortgage lenders, liability and so on. We must fix this broken market and stop a whole generation of homeowners losing everything they have.

4.54 pm

Katherine Fletcher (South Ribble) (Con) [V]: Happy birthday, Madam Deputy Speaker. Turning to more serious matters, let us be in no doubt that the issue of building safety is a vital one. It emerges from a tragedy that unfolded before horrified eyes just a few years ago. ACM cladding is dangerous, unsafe, and should never have been used. I understand that through the Government's £600 million fund, work has at least started on all of the buildings whose owners have given the required information, as well as those in social housing, and interim safety measures such as waking watches are in place. All building owners should take responsibility and progress the work to put in their fund bids now.

In remediating this safety problem, knock-on issues arise, which many Members have articulately raised already. As the Minister said in his opening remarks, leaseholders should not bear the brunt of correcting these problems. I have heard from my constituents Sally Smith and Maureen Wareing, both of whom have relatives in London who are incredibly worried about facing big bills for remediating cladding in their flats. They are uncertain and worried. No one should be put in this position; I can only imagine the fear I would have felt in my 20s, or even my 30s, receiving a letter suggesting that I had a liability for tens of thousands of pounds that was not my fault. I call on owners to do the right thing, and I seek to amplify the comments my right hon. Friend the Minister made in his opening remarks.

Although this Government are putting in extraordinary efforts to make the biggest improvements in building safety in a generation, this is no quick fix, but a really integrated picture. It is technical and complex, and gets really messy quickly, with multiple types of cladding and lots of different people and organisations involved: residents, leaseholders, renters, building owners, building developers—some of which are not around or not in business any more—as well as mortgage providers and insurers. If, as a Government, we rush this, we risk not addressing the problems completely, so to my mind, the worst thing we could do is rush through a suite of measures that does not resolve the issues. What Sally and Maureen's families need is certainty. Let us get this right first time, and make sure our mantra is "never again" so that we never have another tragedy, and we have a long-term fix for all our residents.

Ultimately, our measures need to give people surety about their safety, give value back to their homes and let people get on with their lives. There should be no mortgage prisoners and no sale prisoners. Let the Building Safety Bill later this year address these points and others. Let us do it once, and let us do it right.

4.57 pm

Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab) [V]: The topic of this debate is an incredibly pressing one, and I am glad to have the opportunity to speak because it affects so many of my constituents. The ongoing scandal surrounding the replacement of cladding has two main

components to which I would like to draw attention by using an example in Poplar and Limehouse: building safety and remedial costs.

New Providence Wharf in my constituency is a development owned by Ballymore housing. The building is covered in ACM cladding—the same sort of flammable cladding that was wrapped around Grenfell Tower. Representatives of the residents’ association at New Providence Wharf have been in touch with me for some time now, but the most recent update I had from them is perhaps the most shocking. Currently living surrounded by flammable cladding, these constituents have told me that remedial work on the building has now been pushed back to May. Those who bought properties in developments such as New Providence Wharf in good faith now find themselves in a nightmare scenario. These leaseholders bought a property under the reasonable assumption that it was safe to live in, but not only are they now struggling to sell or remortgage their homes, they have been left stranded, having to foot the bill for remedial works.

The recent update I have received about New Providence Wharf is that the remediation costs are set to be between £12.5 million and £25 million. These are astronomical figures to fall on the shoulders of those living in the development. With only £5,000 offered by Ballymore, this could mean that each leaseholder would have to pay up to £50,000 in remedial costs. How can this possibly go on?

That is just one example from my constituency of the effects that this scandal is having on so many people’s lives. Residents in dangerous developments right across my constituency are not being supported by their building owners. At New Festival Quarter, leaseholders are being left in the dark about how safe their building is; at Indecon Square, residents have been charged hundreds of thousands of pounds by Galliard Homes for the cost of inspection works; and at New Atlas Wharf—constructed by Britain’s most profitable housebuilder, Persimmon—residents are facing costs of up to £66,000 per flat. But, of course, in this whole debacle buck passing has been the order of the day. The unsafe conditions that such residents are living in will only be made worse by the trajectory of outsourcing and deregulation that the Government continue to follow as they attempt to avoid culpability for the poor housing conditions that so many in this country face.

It is a disgrace that anyone should be living in the same cladding that we all saw burning on Grenfell Tower. Safe housing should not be a privilege for the few; it should be a basic right. The Government need to front up to the mistakes made in the past and work quickly to undo them. The onus must not in any way fall on those currently living in flammable buildings through no fault of their own.

5 pm

Andrew Lewer (Northampton South) (Con) [V]: I refer to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests regarding my role as vice-president of the Local Government Association.

For 12 years I served as a member of planning committees on councils, and on my election to this House I founded the all-party parliamentary group for SME house builders. Last year, the APPG produced a

report on the future of planning, which made it clear that building regulations are planning regulations’ most important partner. Building regulations maybe did not receive as much attention until 2017, and since have—for the most tragic of reasons. We need a resolution to this that protects public safety and means that we have an efficiently functioning property market regardless of property type.

Cladding has blighted the housing sector, and the concern has been illustrated by many, including the all-party parliamentary group on leasehold and commonhold reform, the all-party parliamentary fire safety and rescue group, and the all-party parliamentary group for the private rented sector, which I chair. We are well aware of the impact that this crisis is having on the sector, including on buy-to-let landlords, who have been left trapped, as a result of EWS1 forms, with properties that are not safe, not sellable and not remortgageable. Cladding will remain a standing item on the agenda of the APPG for the private rented sector and we will draw on the expertise of those groups.

As a National Residential Landlords Association quarter 4 survey outlined last year, of those respondents who were required to carry out an EWS check on their property, 42% were unable to secure an EWS report, stagnating movement on their property. Although I recognise the good intentions of these checks, a lack of availability is a problem, as Ministers are aware. Despite the Government’s hard work to rectify the outstanding issues, these forms continue to hamper the movement of property, squeezing a market already facing an uphill battle.

As the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee’s report outlined, every property agreement differs in who it allocates responsibility to and for what issues. Solutions are hard, but they are needed. Requesting that the Government front up the money first and then determine liability places a heavy burden on the taxpayer. Suggesting that leaseholders take out loans means that millions would be paying for a problem that they did not create and often cannot afford to fix. Northampton only has one 18 metre-plus tower, and Northamptonshire Partnership Homes was quick to check that everything was safe. Northampton does, however, have a number of 11 metre-plus properties, and the Government’s forthcoming measures on those will be hugely welcome and provide peace of mind. It is abundantly clear that that announcement is needed sooner rather than later for tenants, developers and the housing market as a whole.

5.3 pm

Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab): Strip away all the technical complexity, and the cladding crisis has always been about two fundamental issues: how can we identify and quickly make safe dangerous buildings; and who is going to pay for them? Both issues haunt those affected by this crisis, but in the long term it is the issue of liability that is in many ways the more terrifying, because leaseholders fear that it is they who will ultimately be forced by the Government to pay the lion’s share of a bill that is projected to rise to over £16 billion. They have good reason to be alarmed, because although we may not know the detail, the broad contours of the proposals developed by Michael Wade that Ministers are considering ahead of the Budget

[*Matthew Pennycook*]

are an open secret—minus an unknown, but almost certainly tokenistic, annual contribution from developers. He recommends that remediation is funded up front by long-term loans attached to individual sites, with the building owner or responsible person then recouping that loan from its leaseholders over a period of decades. In the brief time that I have, I want to draw the attention of the House to what that would mean in practice. First, unless leaseholders were deliberately to be protected from any form of repayment until the point of sale, they would be hit by significant service charge increases.

Even assuming an interest-only repayment model with modest interest rates—say 1% or 1.5%—on remedial works bills at the lower end of the scale, say £30,000, leaseholders would still be looking at an extra £60 to £100, or perhaps more, on their monthly bills, depending on the length of the loan period. What on earth makes Ministers think that leaseholders can manage such costs, and what do they think those additional charges will do to mortgage affordability calculations?

Secondly, the attachment of a loan to a site will immediately devalue the properties within it, instantly creating a two-tier property system and placing a significant proportion of affected leaseholders, particularly in areas of lower property values, at risk of negative equity and bankruptcy. Who is ever going to purchase—willingly—a flat with one of those loans attached, at least unless the leaseholder discounts their total liability from the asking price, with all the consequences that that implies for the housing market and mortgage lenders? The fact that Ministers are even contemplating a proposal of that kind is utterly reprehensible, given the commitments made by many Secretaries of State and Ministers of State at the Dispatch Box that blameless leaseholders in privately owned blocks would be fully protected from cladding costs in all circumstances. If the Government plough ahead with Mr Wade's recommendation or any variant that punishes leaseholders they will make a colossal mistake.

There are other solutions that can provide up-front funding to accelerate the pace of remediation and that would protect the general taxpayer as well as leaseholders. All that is required is that Ministers give them serious consideration and, more importantly, that they steel themselves finally to confront the vested interests that created this problem in the first place.

5.6 pm

Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con) [V]: I am pleased to contribute to this debate, very much remembering those who lost their lives and those who lost their loved ones in the Grenfell fire. The scale of that loss and the sorrow are still unimaginable.

In the wake of that tragedy, much important work on building safety has been done, and much ground covered, across the country and in my constituency of Eastbourne. For too many local leaseholders, however, the nightmare of towering costs still looms large and is a source of everyday stress. Up to 40 buildings in my town have been identified as being at risk. ACM cladding is part of that, but in the mix is a raft of historical safety defects that require costly remedial action that is not currently in scope. Over the past year, I have worked with residents, most recently on Friday, when one man described himself as “broken” by the experience of trying to find his way

forward. One building alone in my constituency requires works estimated at £5.1 million, which translates as £40,000 to £90,000 per flat—a sum totally beyond the reach of all leaseholders, who bought their properties in good faith many years ago.

The Government have made it clear that building owners are legally responsible for ensuring that buildings are safe, so I ask my hon. Friend the Minister, who I know shares my dismay and frustration, what enforcement action will ensue against those building owners who have rejected this duty, or who simply cannot be found. How will we ensure that developers play their part too, particularly the smaller subsidiaries of some of our most prominent housing developers?

The Government have made provision, in the form of £1.6 billion, and I thank Ministers for extending the application deadline. However, I would ask for assurances that applications from my constituency in this latter period will not suffer disadvantage in any way. There are concerns about the value of the fund, and whether it will meet the need, so I would very much appreciate assurances on that. It is not right and it is not fair that costs are passed on and that leaseholders are left exposed and vulnerable. I know that much work is going on to bring this to a safe conclusion, and I anticipate Government announcements. I recognise that it is important to get it right, but time is toxic, and I implore Ministers to move with speed so that those residents in Eastbourne still caught up in this nightmare can sleep at night.

5.9 pm

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab) [V]: The pain of the Grenfell fire was felt very deeply in my constituency of Hampstead and Kilburn. Those who died were our neighbours and our friends. Some survivors were rehoused in Camden and Brent and became part of our community. Then, one Friday night, shortly after the fire, thousands of my constituents had to be evacuated from the Chalcots estate in Swiss Cottage after it emerged that they had ACM cladding that was near-identical to that on Grenfell Tower. I ask all those on the Government Benches to consider what it must be like to live in a property that they know could face the same fate as Grenfell, and where a 24/7 waking watch patrol is required to make sure that the building is not on fire. That is the reality for many of my constituents living in the new-builds in and around West Hampstead Square, many blocks in south Kilburn and other parts of Brent, and over 70 private sector buildings in Camden that still have dangerous ACM cladding.

Perhaps the worst part of it is that the residents—the leaseholders—who had no part in creating this crisis, are being forced to pay to fix it and to pay for the waking watches, the fire safety measures and the replacement of the unsafe cladding that threatens their lives. One constituent in Kensal Rise who bought their flat using the Government's Help to Buy loan scheme wrote to me recently to say that they are being made to pay for cladding remediation works. As she so aptly puts it, it is

“a disgusting abuse that a government would aim to help so many and then bankrupt those they aimed to help by not legally protecting leaseholders from these costs”.

To add insult to injury, none of these people can sell their homes. Many others are unable to sell simply because they are being forced to wait many years for an EWS1 form. Lucie Gutfreund, a constituent of mine

who co-founded the End our Cladding Scandal campaign, told me that she and others are effectively trapped, facing crippling bills, and that the mental turmoil is ruining their lives and the lives of so many.

Grenfell was a tragedy. The Government's response has been a travesty. I am urging Ministers to do what they can and what they should have done a long time ago: make these buildings safe, shield leaseholders from the costs and make those who installed dangerous cladding pay. Anything less is unforgivable.

5.12 pm

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): Like all Members of Parliament, I have had residents raise these issues with me, and in Southend, they are particularly stressful for young couples starting out on home ownership. I say to the new Minister, who I welcome to his place: this is a complex problem that involves decisions by previous Governments of all persuasions, and a solution to it is far from easy. The whole history of freehold and leasehold has been long overdue for resolution, and I believe that the Government will tackle it. However, in the immediate term, I do agree that leaseholders should not be responsible for remedial work to identify unsafe properties with combustible materials on external walls that they bought in good faith. This includes not just unsafe cladding but a number of other deficiencies, such as unsafe insulation and combustible materials on balconies.

Leaseholders, however, should of course be expected to pay for any legitimate maintenance that is reasonable and fair. In most cases, a responsibility for paying for this remediation rests with the owner-developer. When there is a dispute or difficulty to identify the owner, I am asking the Government to make the necessary funding available, pending resolution. It is really unacceptable for people to continue to be expected to sleep safe in their beds at night while surrounded by combustible materials on the external walls of their homes—in many cases, living at some distance from the ground. However, I agree that UK taxpayers—many of whom do not even own a home and perhaps question why they should contribute—cannot ultimately be expected to pick up the costs of the remediation.

I very much support the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee's target for completion of the remedial work by June 2022, and meanwhile seek the bringing together of the RICS, the Association of British Insurers, banks, building societies and representatives from the fire safety sector. The Prime Minister was challenged on this issue last Wednesday and he said that "the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government will be bringing forward a plan very shortly."—[*Official Report*, 27 January 2021; Vol. 688, c. 371.]

I know that he will honour that. The all-party parliamentary fire safety rescue group, which I chair, and the all-party parliamentary group on leasehold and commonhold reform, chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), have worked closely together. On 25 February at 4 o'clock I will be chairing a joint meeting of the groups, attended by leading Members of Parliament, and parliamentarians will have the opportunity to question the Minister, Lord Greenhalgh, directly on this issue. I will also be supporting amendments tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith) and for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland) when the Bill is debated.

5.15 pm

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab): Happy birthday, Madam Deputy Speaker. I congratulate those on the shadow Front Bench on prioritising this debate in the absence of sufficient attention or pace from the Government. I enter into the spirit of today's debate mindful of the cross-party support for amendments aimed at addressing the issue, and in the hope that we will see that support reflected in today's vote. Frankly, everyone affected has waited far too long.

In Bermondsey and Old Southwark, more than 60 blocks of homes and thousands of people are affected. People have often bought in good faith and then been told that their home may not be safe. They have since been left in limbo. They include NHS worker Lucy Grayston, who attempted to sell her L&Q flat. A buyer was found, and Lucy, who was five months pregnant, moved out. The sale fell through due to an external wall survey issue, and she is now having to pay for two properties. They also include William Lecky, who celebrated the birth of his new baby with his wife and had plans to relocate to Scotland. They are now trapped in a one-bed property in Borough that they are unable to sell until this matter is resolved.

This could have been sorted by now, with the right political will and wherewithal, but it has not been, despite the Government's promising 15 times to protect leaseholders. My constituents are still waiting and some face extortionate costs while they do so. One block is paying £40,000 a month for a waking watch, which is well above average and in no way a reasonable fee. I have asked the Government many times about the waking watch relief fund, and I am glad that they have finally published the eligibility criteria, but I hope Ministers will now answer my other questions on the fund. When will applications be assessed, and when will those funds begin to be distributed? The people waiting for news cannot wait any longer. They cannot sell their homes, they cannot reinsure and they cannot remortgage. Some of the people affected have also lost their job due to covid. They cannot afford their existing mortgage, and speed is of the essence. For many people, sadly, all they have seen is delay, and Government guidance has even contributed to the problems they face. For example, homeowners in Sudrey Street, Leathermarket Street and Monmouth Court are all being asked to provide EWS1 forms, despite the height of their blocks not reaching the threshold.

Last year, I raised concerns on behalf of constituents affected and asked Ministers to provide new guidance or clarify existing guidance, given the misapplication of the 18-metre rule. Today, I again ask Ministers to prevent misinterpretation, to ease pressure on the system and to take many of the people affected out of coverage altogether. Today's motion would address many of the concerns of so many people affected and I hope that it is successful in the vote, to ensure that the thousands of my constituents who are experiencing these huge concerns can begin to plan their lives again.

5.18 pm

Miss Sarah Dines (Derbyshire Dales) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle), and I welcome our new Minister, the Under-Secretary of State for Housing,

[Miss Sarah Dines]

Communities and Local Government, my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes), to his place. This is a very important issue. Ensuring the safety of the individual is one of the most important functions of the state. I welcome the fact that the Government have made available £1.6 billion for cladding to be removed from buildings and that they are working closely with building owners to ensure that all dangerous ACM cladding, as found at Grenfell, is removed by the end of this year. It is also good news that the vast majority of buildings with ACM cladding have had it removed—or that the work is under way—including 100% of buildings in the social sector. It is remarkable that the Government have achieved that during the covid pandemic. It is necessary work and it must be completed as soon as possible. This Government are bringing forward the most significant building control legislation for 40 years. The Building Safety Bill and the Fire Safety Bill are an essential part of the way forward.

As more than £1 billion in public funding has been made available, there is simply no excuse for building owners not to have begun this important remedial work, or for them to be passing the costs on to leaseholders. It is good to note that the Government have introduced several measures to support leaseholders over the last year, including the essential £30 million waking watch fund. That issue prevented many people from being able to sell their homes. The Government will continue to engage regularly with leaseholders to understand their concerns and find ways to protect them at affordable prices.

I am particularly concerned that, through no fault of their own, some flat owners have been unable to remortgage or sell their properties. That cannot be allowed to continue. I have been contacted by a constituent on that issue, who is rightly concerned about a junior member of the family who finds themselves in that position in one of our major cities. The issue simply has to be resolved. It is essential that the Government continue to work closely with all parties, including lenders, for example, to resolve the challenges, ensuring that EWS1 forms are requested only where absolutely necessary, and that the number of surveyors who can complete the work is increased significantly to meet demand.

However, much more needs to be done. The remedial cost will need to be spread over those who are actually responsible. I look to the Government rightly to assist as a safety net, but a safety net only—not the first port of call to pay for everything, as the Opposition invariably do. This is a complex legal and policy problem. We need complex resolutions in a proper timeframe. I am glad that the Government have committed to providing a solution. I appreciated the comments made by the Prime Minister a short while ago, and I look forward to a proper permanent solution. I will not vote in favour of the Opposition's motion, because it is simplistic and solves nothing. The Government will solve the issues.

5.21 pm

Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab) [V]: I associate myself with many of the important contributions already made by hon. Members. As has been made clear, the Government's lack of action over the last three and a half years to tackle the building safety crisis has left

thousands of leaseholders trapped in unsafe homes that they are unable to sell or remortgage. Instead, they are being forced to pay enormous sums for remediation and interim fire safety measures such as waking watches.

The untold impact that that is having on people's lives is deeply concerning. I have heard from countless residents about the stress and anxiety that the scandal is causing, having bought their homes. Some blocks face bills of up to £3 million for replacing the dangerous cladding, as is the case for my constituents living in Norfolk House in Deptford. Then there are examples such as Aragon Tower—a 160-apartment building also in my constituency—where, following extensive testing, the fire break system was found not to be working. When challenged, the developers, Berkeley Homes, refused to take any responsibility, leaving many residents stuck and unable to sell.

Those examples are sadly not unique, as Ministers will keep hearing through the debate. I praise my local authority, Lewisham Council, and its housing body, Lewisham Homes, for their speedy response to the crisis; yet sadly, three and a half years since the tragic Grenfell Tower fire, national Government are yet to resolve these issues. One group that I fear is being overlooked in the debate is disabled tenants and leaseholders. Disabled people caught up in these unsafe blocks face additional barriers. The Leaseholder Disability Action Group—Clad DAG—has raised many concerns, from inadequate evacuation plans to reports of bullying and harassment by stressed residents who resent the extra costs of meeting access needs. That is totally unacceptable. Urgent steps must be taken to ensure that disabled people feel safe in their own homes.

The Government must get a grip of this scandal and put in the proper resources needed so that tenants and leaseholders up and down the country are not left in unsafe homes for a minute longer. It cannot be right that so many people are having sleepless nights because of a problem not of their own making.

5.24 pm

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Lewisham, Deptford (Vicky Foxcroft), who made some good points that I agree with. However, she blames the fact that leaseholders are trapped inside these buildings on the Government's actions or inactions over the past three and a half years, whereas the reality is that this has come from systemic failure over decades. That is the only thing that could have contributed to a scandal on this scale, which has included developers; cladding and insulation manufacturers, who have not been heavily mentioned in this debate; building control; and building regulations, which are the work of Governments on either side of the political divide for decades. The only way we are going to get through this is somehow by sharing the huge cost of these issues, which is potentially £10 billion to £15 billion, over that whole industry, with some possibly held by the taxpayer. I do think it would be wrong to put this cost at the door of leaseholders.

The Government have taken significant action, with the most decisive being the ban on combustible materials on the outside of high-rise buildings as soon as this tragedy struck—that was absolutely the right thing to do and it came within days of that tragedy. That was followed by the £1.6 billion of funding to remediate

these buildings, but what everybody knew—I served on the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee during a number of inquiries on this—was that the cost would be much greater. We all accept that fact.

Let me read out what one of my constituents, who lives in Borrowby, near Thirsk, but has a flat in London, wrote to me:

“This has been caused by two main factors, poor building regulations in England across decades and a lack of regulatory oversight, which led to a construction industry that took advantage, put profits ahead of safety and built buildings with combustible materials and with missing compartmentation now regarded as fire traps.”

I absolutely concur with those words, so we need a pan-industry solution, involving cladding manufacturers, insulation manufacturers, developers and installers. The situation with building owners is more difficult, because many of them do not have a contractual obligation. I hear lots about building owners, but many of them are not legally obliged to remediate. But leaseholders should not be involved here, even though they are legally obliged; I would advocate more money into the building safety fund, and a levy spreading the cost around the industry, wherever possible, but not to leaseholders.

5.27 pm

Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab): Happy birthday, Madam Deputy Speaker. I am grateful to have the opportunity to represent the concerns of my constituents in this important debate. There are a number of buildings with unsafe non-ACM cladding in Portsmouth, and I have been speaking to residents and building managers in Admiralty Quarter and Gunwharf Quays in my constituency. Residents in those buildings have suddenly found themselves in unsafe homes and potentially liable for astronomical costs from remediation. They are also unable to sell their homes. One retired resident, who is on a low income, has told me that she faces costs of £20,000 to £30,000 towards the remediation. They are also having trouble accessing the Government’s building safety fund. Delays to the implementation of the fund are preventing vital work from commencing and preventing leaseholders from moving on with their lives, and it is not clear whether the fund is large enough. In the event that they are not covered by the building safety fund, residents and responsible building owners will struggle to establish who is now responsible for the remediation, as it comes with a hefty price tag.

Health and safety must be the priority. Ministers should focus on the rapid disbursement of funds with immediacy, with a relatively low burden of proof and with recovery taking place later, as appropriate. Ministers should also look again at the 18-metre height qualification for applications to the building safety fund. If cladding is unsafe, surely it is unsafe regardless of the height of the building it sits on. Buildings in my constituency fall under that arbitrary distinction, and this is a piecemeal approach to building safety. The fund should apply to buildings of any height.

Instead of asking leaseholders and building owners to embark on a protracted search for accountability and funds, with bureaucratic and time-consuming procedures, the Government should take responsibility for safety, fund the work in full and recover the funds later, as appropriate, and get on with legislating to prevent this from happening again.

5.29 pm

Neil O’Brien (Harborough) (Con) [V]: It is a particular pleasure to see the new Minister in his place today. He is a man who has spent a lot of his life working to improve housing conditions for the poorest people in this country, so he is absolutely the right man in the right place at the right time to take forward this hugely important work.

Much has already been said, so the few additional things that I would add are as follows. First, it is important that we look at the other dimensions of fire safety as well as just cladding. I have been asking written questions about fire doors in particular. I was told that we do not hold any central data on the quality and state of fire doors in social housing blocks. I hope that the Government will audit, and get social landlords to audit, the state of those doors, making sure that they have at least the 30-minute protection that we expect, and that we will work through all the other dimensions of fire safety as well as cladding.

When it comes to cladding, may I express my hope that we will see the people behind this tragedy brought to justice? It has been absolutely extraordinary to watch the proceedings of the inquiry and to see some of what has come out. In *The Times* the other day, Dominic Lawson summarised exchanges of emails between employees at Kingspan after the Grenfell tragedy. They joked about rigging tests and about how they lied, saying, “Yes, mate, it’s all lies. All we do here is lie.” The testimony of an employee of Celotex, Jonathan Roper, said that his company had behaved in a completely unethical way. Then there are the officials from Arconic, who are refusing to testify at the inquiry, hiding behind the French blocking statute. I hope that the Government will use all the means at their disposal to put maximum pressure on the representatives of these companies to come and face the inquiry and, ultimately, to face justice for what has been done.

Finally, I encourage Ministers to keep going in their efforts to remove unsafe cladding. I welcome the £1.6 billion that is being spent on this. I welcome the progress that is being made in reducing and removing ACM cladding. The removal of ACM cladding from the social sector is great. I hope that Ministers will continue to press on with the new regulator for construction products, so that such a tragedy does not happen again. Ultimately—let me put it like this—I hope that we can make sure that those who are suffering through no fault of their own are not made to pay and that the people behind the Grenfell tragedy are made to pay.

5.32 pm

James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: I am pleased to contribute to this debate. I declare that I am a leaseholder in a block of flats, albeit not one affected by cladding problems.

When the horrific fire at Grenfell Tower struck in June 2017, I was London’s Deputy Mayor for Housing. Madam Deputy Speaker, if you had told me then that, three-and-a-half years later, we would still be trying to force the Government to make buildings safe, I would not have believed you. Yet here we are with hundreds of thousands of people across the country still living in unsafe homes and millions caught up in the wider building safety crisis.

[James Murray]

There has been a fundamental failure of leadership by the Government in resolving the question of who pays to remediate buildings, and that has been instrumental in the delay in making them safe. Two related principles must therefore be at the heart of what Ministers do next: first, there must be absolutely no further delay; and, secondly, leaseholders must be protected from the costs of the work. That is why I will be voting today for the Government to provide upfront funding to ensure that remediation can start immediately and then to protect the leaseholders and the public finances from the cost of doing so by pursuing those responsible for the cladding crisis.

The Government's failure to get a grip on this situation has left leaseholders facing huge bills, with their lives on hold while the problem is resolved. I wish to draw Ministers' attention to the plight of shared owners and leaseholders in the Central West building—a block of 69 flats completed in 2005 on Greenford Broadway in the heart of my constituency. Central West was built by Shepherds Bush Housing Association and is home to teachers, social workers, retired nurses, transport workers, delivery drivers, agency workers and many others. Central West is only just less than 18 metres, and so is not eligible for the Government's building safety fund. Leaseholders face paying for all the works to make the building safe, despite residents being unable to afford the thousands of pounds that that would entail.

I wrote to the Housing Minister about the situation faced by residents at Central West, and I have received a reply from Lord Greenhalgh, the Minister for Building Safety and Communities, in the past few days. He wrote: "it remains building owners' responsibility to address unsafe cladding on buildings of all heights...and we have called on them to do all they can to protect leaseholders from the costs of remediating historic building defects."

The Government do not have to call on others to protect leaseholders; it is within their power to help leaseholders themselves. The buck stops with them, and we expect them to act.

5.35 pm

Chris Green (Bolton West) (Con): Happy Birthday, Madam Deputy Speaker. I welcome my hon. Friend the Housing Minister to his place. He is right to point out that the current problem has built up over many decades, and he is also right to decide to resolve the problem once and for all.

Bolton at Home, which serves many of my constituents, has raised concerns with me, ranging from the status of fire doors to fire risk assessments. That indicates how much more work needs to be done on this issue. My hon. Friend the Father of the House comprehensively set out the parties that must be led or forced by the Government to act. He was right to say that it would be better not to divide the House on this motion, but instead use this debate to have the Government take note and take action.

I support the amendment to the Fire Safety Bill in the names of my hon. Friends the Members for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith) and for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland). I urge the Government to build upon it if they do not think it is suitable, in order to

deliver certainty and safety for my constituents and many others around the country. People ought not to think that this applies just to huge tower blocks; it applies to a huge range of other buildings too.

The Grenfell Tower events were horrific, but they were nearly repeated on 15 November 2019, when The Cube burned down in Bolton. The student accommodation caught fire and became an inferno within minutes. If it were 4 o'clock in the morning, rather than 8.30 in the evening, we do not know how many deaths there would have been. Would it have been Grenfell mark 2? We have to act, be decisive and comprehensive in our actions, and sort this out incredibly quickly, because this is about people's safety and physical and mental wellbeing. Many people have put their lives on hold and are waiting to move on—they may want to start a family or get a job—so we have to resolve this issue incredibly quickly.

5.37 pm

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): I am grateful for the hard work of the shadow Housing Secretary and her team, which has ensured that this issue is brought to the fore and not forgotten.

Over the past year, we have all been confined to our homes to shield ourselves and our families from a deadly virus. We have been doing what we can to protect our country, the NHS and vulnerable people. Lockdown has been tough for us all. Imagine if what is meant to be a person's sanctuary over these difficult months is the exact opposite. Leaseholders have been having sleepless nights, wondering each day whether the flammable cladding covering their homes will catch fire. The deadly combination of a pandemic and a national scandal is impacting millions across our country. Many of those constituents have worked hard to achieve their dreams of home ownership, only to have it turned into a living nightmare. Characteristically, the Government have once again been dragging their feet and are too slow to act. It has been more than three years since the horrific Grenfell tragedy, and thousands still fear for their safety in their own homes.

It must be noted that the Government knew about the dangerous cladding well before then. In my Slough constituency, we sadly have a number of blocks affected. I have been contacted by residents of Nova House, West Central, Rivington Apartments, Lexington Apartments, Foundry Court, Ibex House and Aspects Court, to name just a few. I have raised their concerns personally with Ministers in the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, of which I was a member, and with the Leader of the House on the Floor of the House. Some of those residents are paying hundreds of pounds for waking watch, and others are in lengthy communication with the property management companies to ascertain the type of cladding used and when it will be replaced. All of them just want to live somewhere they know is fire safe. In 2021 Britain, that does not seem like a big ask.

Already, an estimated £174 million a year is being spent by leaseholders on interim measures to ensure their buildings do not catch fire. This is on top of the constant fear that they will be held responsible also for the eventual remediation costs, leaving them bankrupt and homeless. This is typical of the Government's response

on this issue—inadequate action forced only after huge pressure from campaigners, charities and Opposition parties. Even their funds available for ACM and non-ACM cladding fail to address the devastating scale of the problem, potentially leaving thousands without support.

Leaseholders are being held responsible for a chain of actions with which they had absolutely no involvement. As one leaseholder told me, they are not the developers of their blocks, they did not select the building materials and they did not certify them as safe, yet they are the ones left picking up the bill. It is very simple: all dangerous cladding should be removed with up-front funding, those who are responsible for the cladding scandal must pay the cost, and measures must be put in place to ensure that this can never happen again.

5.40 pm

John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): Happy birthday, Madam Deputy Speaker. I too welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes) to his Front-Bench position this evening.

A few weeks after my election to this place in 2017, we witnessed the tragedy of the fire at Grenfell Tower. We of course remember those who, sadly, lost their lives on that terrible evening, and I welcome the action the Government have taken to ensure that the horror of Grenfell never happens again. However, there have been some unintended consequences that have resulted in some people, through no fault of their own, being unable to sell or remortgage their properties.

I want to use this debate to highlight the case of two of my constituents, Sam and Cora Younger. The Youngers moved to the Scottish borders last year, but have run into serious problems with the sale of their London flat. The purchaser of the flat in London is having difficulties with their mortgage provider, Lloyds bank. The bank became unwilling to proceed with the mortgage because of the cladding guidance. My constituents' flat is below 18 metres and has no cladding, but Lloyds has insisted that the flat falls into the ambit of the guidance, and it is therefore requiring expensive certification to say that the building is compliant.

The upshot of all of this is that Sam and Cora face having to pay two mortgages and also a stamp duty uplift as they have failed to sell their property within the required time period. This has turned into a nightmare for this young couple and their new baby, and I have a huge amount of sympathy for them. They have been put in this position as a result of the misinterpretation of the guidelines by banks and lenders, and this cannot be allowed to continue. I know the Government are working with lenders to ensure that they take a proportionate and reasonable approach to this, and there are signs that lenders are adopting a more pragmatic approach, but more need to follow suit. These are welcome steps forward, but the purpose of raising the case of the Youngers tonight is to highlight the very personal impact that this is having on individuals and families across the country.

I conclude my brief remarks by remembering those who, sadly, lost their lives in the Grenfell disaster. It is right that we sort this out to ensure that it does not happen again, but we must also protect those being caught up in the unintended consequences of these changes.

5.43 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab) [V]: Happy birthday, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I have many constituents whose lives have been thrown into turmoil by the failure of the Government to act promptly on this issue, and by what can only be described as abusive behaviour by the developers of their properties and neglect by housing associations. I wish to name one developer in particular—the notorious Ballymore Group. It is notorious for its profiteering from extortionate, ever-increasing service and insurance charges. From the start of the cladding crisis, Ballymore has lived up to its track record of failure to communicate with and consult its residents, and its continuing attempts to shirk its own responsibilities and load as much cost directly on to the residents as possible.

My constituents have submitted their case study of their experiences to the Minister. They have explained that, as leaseholders and participants in shared ownership schemes, they are being placed in extremely vulnerable positions, facing the risk of heavy cost burdens. The delay in Government decision making over arrangements to cover remedial costs has meant that many of my constituents are unsure of their safety and unsure when their properties will be made safe. Ballymore has just said not until 2023, and that items such as other safety defects revealed on inspection beyond the cladding will not be covered by the Government grant or by the company. This includes the very wooden balconies that this company installed itself. The scale of the costs will clearly overwhelm the amount allocated by the Government. That, plus the restrictions on what work is eligible for financial support, is resulting in developers such as Ballymore seeking to shift as much of the cost burden as possible on to leaseholders and shared ownership residents.

Shared owners are absolutely over a barrel. They own nothing. They cannot sub-let or sell. The clocks are ticking on short leases. The housing associations are charging premiums for lease extensions but doing nothing to help in any way, while taking a management fee on top of the developer's management fee. Shared owners now risk having to pay for 100% of remediation and the interim costs, despite owning nothing. How can that be termed affordable housing? The emotional stress on my constituents is immense, especially as many have lost their jobs or had their wages cut as a result of the pandemic.

The message from my constituents to the Government is very clear. They want an immediate assurance, with legislation, that their homes will be made safe and that the developers who caused these problems will be the ones to pay.

5.46 pm

Paul Howell (Sedgefield) (Con) [V]: I, too, wish you a happy birthday, Madam Deputy Speaker.

I would like to start by expressing my condolences to all who have been impacted by events such as Grenfell. Whether we think of the residents and their families or the emergency services involved, we need to do all we can to prevent a repetition of such events. It is clear to me that those responsible should be paying, and that the Government should provide support where that is not possible.

[Paul Howell]

In such a short contribution, I will focus on my belief that it is clear that we also need to deliver and enforce standards to prevent any risk of repetition. We need both standards and enforcement processes that provide confidence for residents that property is safe.

Like so many on the Government Benches, I speak from experience gained outside this place and a perspective gained in what many call the real world. I spent many years working in the construction sector, and I saw at first hand the frustration of many good businesses whose great products gained specification from architects only for installers or distributors to switch them to cheaper alternatives. The impact of the lack of enforcement is a clear root cause of safety risks but it manifests itself by undermining the viability of our businesses and reducing our manufacturing base. As the Building Safety Bill is finalised, we need to ensure that all products, and particularly imported products, are required to meet our standards, and that unsafe materials are not allowed to enter the UK supply chain and become incorporated into another product, missing quality standard checks. Product quality assessments should be made necessary at all appropriate stages of production.

I am delighted for my former colleagues that the Government are working on fixing the building safety system from all angles, including with tougher regulations and requirements for all construction products, a national regulator to monitor industry-wide compliance, and severe penalties for anyone flouting the rules and compromising public safety. Whether it is for safety or any other specified reason, it is important that products are installed as specified. I welcome the fact that that will support our UK-regulated businesses, and I hope it will frustrate the undermining of standards by cheap, poor-quality materials.

When it comes to the need for fire-safe products, as the son of a fireman I have an absolute understanding that we should not use materials that could unnecessarily increase the risk to any of our emergency services, never mind the people they are trying to help. I would like to express my thanks and respect for all of those who have had to place themselves at risk when things go badly wrong.

I welcome not only the fact that regulations are being prepared but that they will have some enforcement teeth, and I hope most sincerely that we never see a tragedy like Grenfell again.

5.49 pm

Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab) [V]: The cladding scandal has wrought emotional and financial devastation upon my constituents who live in affected buildings. The human impact of this crisis on leaseholders is horrendous. One constituent recently told me:

“It is pretty much all I talk and think about. I have thought about killing myself and have started counselling to try to manage the thoughts and my anxiety.”

The Government have not yet offered the scale and range of measures necessary to meet the full impact of this crisis. I hope this debate changes the dial on their approach. I wish in particular to address the issue of insurance costs, which I have raised in this House for the past year. The Islington Gates development in my

constituency saw a hike in insurance prices from £36,000 to £321,000. The Brindley House development in my constituency has the horrible honour of being the first building—in May last year—to find itself uninsured as a result of the cladding scandal. It was eventually able to secure cover, but it was being quoted prices of half a million pounds.

I have been writing to Ministers and officials at MHCLG and the Treasury, as well as the Financial Conduct Authority, ever since these issues came to light in my constituency, but to no avail. It is clear to me that the Government need to step in to sort out the insurance costs issue, because there seems to be little relationship between the interim measures that leaseholders are paying for, such as very expensive, state-of-the-art alarm systems, and the cost of the insurance premiums that they are being quoted. That has to be called out, and it is clear to me that some form of guarantee eventually needs to be offered by the Government that reflects a balance of all the risks and affordability for our constituents.

In terms of the way forward, I associate myself with the remarks made from the Labour Front Bench, but I also believe that the businesses, developers and construction companies responsible for putting these buildings up should face some consequences if they do not step up to remedy the defects that they are responsible for. Such businesses should not be able to bid for and receive public sector contracts. I think of developers such as Galliford Try in my constituency, which is failing to engage with leaseholders over Islington Gates. It is eligible to bid for projects that are part of the West Midlands Combined Authority area framework. I do not believe that anyone who fails to live up to their responsibilities and does not pay their due liabilities to wider society should get our money. It is unconscionable that ordinary people who are wholly innocent and have done nothing wrong are losing everything that they have ever worked for, and that those responsible are getting off scot-free. This House should act as one tonight, call time on this behaviour and stand with leaseholders.

5.52 pm

Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw) (Con) [V]: Many happy returns to you today, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This is an emotive subject, and the terrible tragedy of Grenfell is still in the minds of those debating this issue today. We must never allow such a thing to happen again, and it is only right that dangerous ACM cladding is a thing of the past. Righting the wrongs of the past has had unintended consequences, and I have spoken to many leaseholders who have found themselves in a terrible position with properties they purchased in good faith, where no problems were identified at the time. They now find themselves with huge bills for remediation works or waking watches. On top of that, they are unable to get insurance and are effectively stuck with their properties, as they cannot be sold. Effective steps need to be taken to remedy the situation.

I am a member of the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, and on 24 November the Committee published its report following pre-legislative scrutiny of the draft Building Safety Bill. It suggested:

“The Government must recommit to the principle that leaseholders should not pay anything towards the cost of remediating historical building safety defects, and...amend the Bill to explicitly exclude historical costs from the building safety charge.”

I welcome the £1.6 billion that is available to pay for cladding to be removed from buildings and that the vast majority of buildings with ACM cladding have had it removed, or the work is under way, including 100% of buildings in the social sector. I also welcome the £30 million waking watch fund and the reforms on EWS1 forms.

The Building Safety Bill will drive up building safety standards and ensure there is greater responsibility for the safety of all buildings, particularly high-rise residential buildings. We must also welcome the creation of the new regulator. We must be very clear that developers are expected to put things right. Although the Government must step in when that is not possible, there can be no blank cheque.

The proposed amendment to the Bill is well intentioned, and I have a great deal of sympathy with it. It covers only those premises where a fire-risk assessment has already taken place, leaving out many other buildings. Like all amendments, there can be unforeseen consequences. In this case, my concern is that some of the more technical elements could lead to delays in the Fire Safety Bill getting on to the statute book. We must also consider the amendment dealing with enforcement but not replacement.

For those reasons, although the goal is admirable, I am of the belief that this issue should be pursued through the Building Safety Bill, not the Fire Safety Bill. We must do the right thing by leaseholders. I eagerly await the Building Safety Bill, in which that can further be put into action.

5.55 pm

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab) [V]: Who would have thought that almost four years after the horror of Grenfell there would be hundreds of thousands of people still living in tall buildings at catastrophic risk from fire? Who would have thought that as a consequence of that risk many of the occupants of those buildings would be threatened with bills that will leave them penniless or bankrupt? And who would have thought that those occupants would have their lives put on hold: unable to move, re-mortgage or, in the case of shared owners, increase their stake in the property?

This is a tale of how two Governments abdicated their responsibility for Grenfell. It is shameful that the first ask in today's motion has to be to establish the extent of the risk, let alone get on with the work or protect the victims from both harm and costs. No one should have to live in a home that puts their life and the lives of their family at risk. No one should be trapped in that home because they cannot make it safe or prove it is safe.

This is basic stuff. But even if the Government had got that right, there are a whole load of other problems that they are failing to address. Social landlords have done a better job than private landlords in taking remedial action, but unless the Government are prepared to fund the costs of that, either the landlord will pay, thereby cutting off the funding for new affordable homes, or social tenants and leaseholders will pay. Government funds at present are not just insufficient—estimated at less than 10% of what is needed—but unavailable for many categories of at-risk buildings, such as those below 18 metres. Cladding is identified as the primary risk, but it is only one of many that include limited means of escape, weak fire doors and poor compartmentalisation.

We are concentrating today, and in the amendments to the Fire Safety Bill, on occupied at-risk buildings where either the design or, as at Grenfell, the modifications make them unsafe. What about those currently seeking planning approval? There is a spate of applications for tall buildings, especially in London. I have blocks from 20 to 45 storeys currently in the pipeline. I ask the developer in each case whether: there is more than one escape route, all materials and combinations are inflammable, and sprinklers are fitted in all areas, not just communal parts. The answer is invariably, “We will comply with current building regulations”. This is storing up trouble for the future when we have enough in the present.

I am currently helping residents in 14 blocks in Hammersmith with cladding issues. On average, there is a fire in a residential block six storeys or over in the borough every two months. Thankfully, the efforts of the London Fire Brigade mean they are usually extinguished quickly and without injury, but I do not want to visit another Grenfell Tower, as I did the day after that terrible fire. It is the worst experience of my 16 years in Parliament—indeed, of the 35 years I have represented my part of west London. It is time for the buck passing to stop and for the Government to act.

5.58 pm

Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con) [V]: Happy birthday, Madam Deputy Speaker. I welcome my hon. Friend the new Minister to his place.

I would first like to offer my own condolences to the families of the 72 people who lost their lives in the horrific Grenfell Tower fire, as well as to the survivors who have been greatly affected by it. Nothing can replace what has been lost, but we must ensure that such a tragedy can never happen again.

To that end, the Government have taken and are taking a number of steps to address building safety issues, including: taking forward the recommendations from the Grenfell Tower report; banning combustible materials from new buildings; introducing the Fire Safety Bill and, later this year, the Building Safety Bill; creating a new building safety regulator and a new regulator for construction products; implementing changes to fire safety regulations; and commissioning an independent review to examine weaknesses in previous testing regimes for construction products and to recommend how we can prevent further abuse of the testing system.

I welcome the fact that, to date, the vast majority of buildings with ACM cladding have now had it removed or the work is under way, including 100% of buildings in the social sector. This has been supported by an initial £600 million fund, together with a new £1 billion building safety fund to ensure that building owners have no excuse not to start this vital work. Crucially, the Government have been absolutely clear that the work must be completed by the end of 2021. They have appointed construction advisers to identify what more can be done to speed up the process. We cannot afford any delay to that process, and I urge private landlords to prioritise remedial work in the same way that housing associations have done. I would be interested to hear from the Minister about the expected timeframe for work to be completed on the last remaining buildings in the private sector, as well as what actions Ministers intend to take against building owners who fail to meet that deadline.

[Jane Hunt]

The Opposition are calling for leaseholders to be protected from the cost of this remedial work. The Government have been clear that building owners are legally responsible for ensuring that their buildings are safe, and that they must work with the contractors who provided unsafe materials, or rely on their own resources or warranty schemes to deliver that work. Those who are unable to meet the costs of the work can also access the Government funding that I have set out. There should therefore be no excuse for building owners to pass on the costs to leaseholders.

Further to support leaseholders, the Government have implemented a number of additional measures to remove the barriers from those wanting to sell or re-mortgage their homes. Those measures include the introduction of the £30 million waking watch fund, reaching an agreement with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors so that buildings without cladding do not need an EWS1 form, and where a form is required, ensuring that there are enough surveyors to complete that work. I urge the Government to continue engaging regularly with leaseholders so that we can take further action where needed.

6.1 pm

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab) [V]: Residents trapped in unsafe buildings are fed up with sympathy; they want action—certainly those in Elizabeth House, Damask Court, Capitol Way, and many other developments in my constituency do. They know that this debate should not just be about who pays. Lord Greenhalgh has admitted that the Government's building safety fund will not even cover one third of the cladding defects, and residents in Capitol Way know that this debate should not just be about cladding. This is about a whole range of fire safety defects that have turned their homes into a building site for the past three years, and threaten to do so for three years more.

The Minister started the debate by saying that the Government “absolutely expect” building owners to do the right thing. Three and a half years on—really? The Government hold developers responsible. The developers hold the construction companies responsible. The construction companies hold the building control inspectors responsible, and the building control inspectors say that the Government privatised the system of building control, creating a downward spiral of monitoring and control, as inspection became a competition about who would let the builders get away with the most short cuts. Nobody blames my constituents, yet they are now paying for all those mistakes. They are unable to move house, unable to sell their homes, and unable to get on with their lives. They are trapped in unsafe accommodation, with no end in sight.

In advance of this debate I was sent documents that show that many of the fire safety defects that exist in the Capitol Way development were not mistakes. I have reason to believe that that was known by the construction company, Shepherd Construction, by the approved inspectors, Head Projects Building Control, which is now in liquidation, and by the project managers for the development, who were from CBRE. Those defects were known about and recorded in reports that were prepared for CBRE by its quality assurance agent. Those reports were then doctored. Evidence suggests that that took place before residents were moved into those unsafe properties.

Given that there was full knowledge of the statutory breaches of the fire safety elements of building regulations, it is clear that life was put at risk. I believe that therefore constituted a criminal offence, and that withholding such information from leaseholders, who purchased their apartments in good faith, was fraud by false representation. There was a duty to disclose that information, but no such disclosure was made. In my view, that means my constituents were victims of fraud.

In July 2019, the then Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government issued a written statement to say that all cladding remediation would be completed by June 2020. Seven months on, instead of expecting building owners and the construction industry to do the right thing, the Government should wake up, impose a windfall levy on the industry, and get this work done.

6.4 pm

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC) [V]: I welcome this debate today. It is one small response to the enormous suffering of the people who died in the Grenfell disaster and those who lost loved ones, and also all those who have faced such unbearable burdens thereafter.

I agree with the hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire) that all affected homes should be made safe, the victims of this scandal should not be made to pay, and the main players are clearly avoiding their responsibilities. However, it seems that she and, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition are unaware that the only Labour Government in the UK—the Welsh Labour Government—launched their consultation on a new building regime only two weeks ago, having sat immovably on this issue for over three years. For as well as being a desperate, scandalous and unbearable burden for people trapped in their flats in England, the cladding scandal, from Atlantic Wharf in Cardiff to Victoria Dock in Caernarfon, affects the whole of Wales. People who bought their homes in good faith are being left with unsaleable properties, or face astronomical and unaffordable bills to make their homes safe, with no choice but to live in homes that could be fatally dangerous. For those who have to move because of work or family commitments, even that terrible choice is not open to them. In making his call for the UK Government to “get a grip”, I hope that the Leader of the Opposition will pass his remarks on to his very good friends down the M4.

We also heard today that the Leader of the Opposition is calling for a national cladding taskforce. I am not sure which nation he is referring to—perhaps neither is he—but this looks to many people in Wales either like shameless grandstanding ahead of our general election or just a schoolboy misunderstanding of the nature of devolution. I am sure that he joins everyone else in calling on developers to shoulder their responsibilities, and I hope that he will press for Wales to get its fair share of any funding to make homes safe. Alas, I fear that neither the Tory Government in Westminster nor the hapless Labour Government in Cardiff are at all up to the job.

6.7 pm

Nicola Richards (West Bromwich East) (Con) [V]: People in this country deserve to live in safe accommodation; I think we could all sign up to that key principle. It has been encouraging to see the Government taking forward

and implementing the recommendations of the Grenfell inquiry so that lessons are learned and we never see a repeat of the 2017 tragedy. It is true, however, that the right mechanisms and funding sources need to be in place to truly get a grip on this issue in order to give tenants and leaseholders the protection they deserve both in terms of safety and the costs involved in the Government's overhaul of building safety regulations.

Last summer, I visited Ash and Lacy in West Bromwich East—a manufacturing firm that, as part of its portfolio, manufactures non-combustible components for building exteriors and is leading the way in these innovative technologies, which often exceed industry standards. It was a pleasure to get people's thoughts on the current situation; I learned a lot that day. Creating technologies like the ones produced at Ash and Lacy will be key to the future of our country's construction industry. I am sure that the Secretary of State would be keen to accompany me on a visit to its site in West Bromwich as soon as the restrictions allow.

I have an example from my constituency casework concerning the Government's reform of bureaucracy within the EWS1 form process. My constituent's family were effectively left in limbo when attempting to gain this form in order to mortgage their property. The bureaucracy and expense of securing a form led to lengthy delays and long periods of uncertainty. I know that this is the case across the country. I am grateful that MHCLG stepped in to secure an agreement with lenders that homeowners in buildings without cladding no longer require an EWS1 form to sell or mortgage their property, so my constituent's family were able to move on with their lives. In addition, where EWS1 forms are required, the Government are funding the training of 2,000 assessors to speed up valuations to address this and are working with the industry to ensure that the highest-risk buildings are prioritised first.

I commend the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for introducing the Fire Safety Bill, as well as the consultation on it and other measures across government. I look forward to Ministers updating the House over the course of the year on further changes to make homes safer. This year we have an opportunity to completely revolutionise the country's approach to building safety, and I am backing the Government to deliver it.

6.9 pm

Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab) [V]: Three and a half years ago, 72 people lost their lives in the horrors of Grenfell Tower, and many hundreds more survivors were injured and traumatised. We must never forget them.

The aftermath of that terrible event revealed the country-wide scandal of developers ignoring building safety and creating homes that are firetraps. The Government have not collected reliable figures, but the Opposition have estimated that 450,000 people are still living in blocks known to have unsafe cladding. This is not just about ACM cladding, but other dangerous cladding, as well as flammable insulation, cavity walls without fire breakers, flammable timber balconies, inadequate fire doors—the list goes on as the costs go up. Repairs are conservatively estimated at £18 billion, which puts the £1.6 billion promised by the Government into its proper perspective. Some of the defects to be

remedied do not fall within the Government's promise of support. What the Government are offering is too little, too late, and the money has not yet been handed over to leaseholders. They need help, and they need it now.

The discovery of the cladding scandal has been followed by Government dither and delay when it comes to helping leaseholders, many of whom feel they have simply been abandoned to their fate, and whose bills are going up now. None of them is to blame for this scandal, yet they are already footing escalating bills that they cannot afford. They are ordinary people simply trying to get a home of their own, or flat owners seeking to let out a flat, suddenly finding themselves in a nightmare of unaffordable costs with no way out. They live in unsafe, unmortgageable, unsellable flats, with escalating insurance costs and skyrocketing service charges to fund expensive waking watch patrols, and they are liable to pay for all the remediation. If a consumer bought a faulty kettle, they would be entitled to get their money back, but there is no consumer protection for leaseholders, just a bigger bill. It is not good enough.

The Government must prioritise helping leaseholders with these unaffordable costs as soon as possible. The developers and rule dodgers who installed this dangerous cladding and flammable insulation—who ignored fire regulations in their development—should pay, not the blameless leaseholders. It is not as if some of these people do not have the money. Last July, the Chancellor of the Exchequer provided a £4 billion tax cut to the housing and development sector by cutting stamp duty. The Help to Buy scheme has given a huge cash boost to them, so much so that developers between them have made £15 billion in profit since the Grenfell fire, so the Government must take action to extract the costs of remediation from those who perpetrated this outrage and must not make the blameless pay. I commend and support the motion today.

6.12 pm

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab) [V]: It is astounding—no, that is the wrong word. It is shameful that we are still debating unsafe cladding on buildings. It is three and a half years since the awful scenes at Grenfell, yet far too many people are still living with the nightmare that their homes are wrapped in combustible cladding. What is incomprehensible is that despite promising that all Grenfell-style cladding would be removed by last June, there are nearly 50,000 people still living in around 165 buildings over 18 metres tall that are still covered in the same cladding found on Grenfell Tower.

However, the scale is even bigger. We know that there are other types of combustible cladding—not all the same as that used at Grenfell, but equally dangerous. There are at least 450,000 people still living in blocks with all forms of unsafe cladding. Here in Greater Manchester, there are currently 107 high-rise residential buildings that have adopted interim measures as a result of significant fire safety deficiencies, but a further 64 buildings in Greater Manchester are known to have failed the ACM test with no remedy yet, and another 75 privately owned buildings have fire safety issues that are attributable to other unsafe cladding.

I want to be constructive, which is why I support the motion tonight. I particularly welcome the call to create a national cladding taskforce, putting residents at its

[*Andrew Gwynne*]

heart, as they did in Australia. The Government's joint inspection team just does not have formal enforcement or funding powers. Somebody should urgently carry out an audit to establish the extent of dangerous materials on buildings, prioritise them according to risk, and ensure that there is enforcement against those who do not undertake the work.

We need to protect leaseholders and taxpayers by pursuing those responsible for putting cladding on buildings and recouping costs through legal action against them. We need an absolute deadline to make homes safe. The shadow Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon North (Steve Reed), suggests June 2022, which I support. We need legislation to protect residents from being passed on historical fire safety costs; enforcement powers against building owners who refuse to start work; and measures to make it easier to recover costs from bad builders.

There are other calls in the motion to help to get the housing market moving again for those trapped in this mess. We cannot afford more inaction. Tonight, we have the chance to properly act on this scandal, to take appropriate action, and to make all homes safe after three and a half years. Our constituents and this country deserve nothing less.

6.16 pm

Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab) [V]: Happy birthday, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Thousands of residents across Salford live in unsafe homes. They are families, key workers, couples and people young and old who want to be part of the vibrant city that Salford has become. Many scrimped, saved and pushed themselves to their financial limits to buy their home, and they were assured that they were safe—but they were not. Now they not only live in fear for their lives, but face financial devastation for a crisis that they did not cause. One high-rise block in Salford estimates fire-safety remediation costs of up to £100,000 per flat. Buildings even under 18 metres are failing EWS1, and many residents are being forced to pay thousands for measures such as waking watch and increased insurance premiums. Those people are at risk. They are trapped, and they cannot move, sell or even remortgage their homes.

Various Secretaries of State over the last few years have made sympathetic noises. They have even applauded cases where developers have stepped up and footed the bill. However, sympathetic noises were all they were. The Government never legislated to ensure that leaseholders did not have to pay. In fact, the draft Building Safety Bill and the Fire Safety Bill did quite the opposite, and the building safety fund is sadly inadequate and inequitable. The fund set aside only £1.6 billion for remediating buildings. It was only for cladding, despite the Government knowing that the crisis went far beyond that, and it excluded buildings under 18 metres. In reality, the total bill is estimated at around £15 billion for cladding alone.

Leaseholders did not cause this crisis. It was not they who breached safety and building regulations. It was not they who signed their buildings off as safe, and it should not be them who pay for this scandal. The Government have a moral duty to support today's motion. They have a moral duty to agree to legislate within the Fire Safety Bill for the principle that leaseholders should

not pay for historical fire safety defects. They have a moral duty to lead an urgent national effort to carry out fire safety remediation by June 2022, to forward fund that work, and to reclaim the costs from those responsible, or via a levy on new development.

The Government's first priority must always be the safety and welfare of their people. In the words of one of my constituents, "I just wish the Government would step up and act."

6.19 pm

Gareth Bacon (Orpington) (Con) [V]: Many happy returns, Madam Deputy Speaker.

This is an extremely important and highly complex issue, and it is important to note at the outset what the Government have done so far. A £1.6 billion building safety fund has been provided to remove cladding from residential buildings 18 metres and over, and there is now a requirement for the installation of sprinkler systems in all new blocks of high-rises over 11 metres. The MHCLG already publishes monthly data on all identified high-rise residential and publicly owned buildings where remediation works have taken place or are in progress. The EWS1 form process has been tidied up to a degree, with agreement reached with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors to confirm that buildings with no cladding do not require a form. In addition, funding has been provided to train assessors to speed up the valuation process, leading within six months to 2,000 additional assessors to help unlock the housing market. Those things are a step in the right direction, but they are not the end of the journey, as the Government have made clear.

Much of the Government action so far has been aimed, understandably, at buildings above 18 metres in height. However, up and down the country, including in my own constituency of Orpington, leaseholders are living in buildings under 18 metres that have cladding on them. Under the current EWS1 process, people living in such properties are faced with the nightmare scenario that they cannot remortgage, they cannot move home because lenders will not finance mortgages for would-be buyers, and Government support for remediation is aimed at taller buildings.

In my constituency, I have been contacted by constituents living in Cray View Close, the Village Hall flats, and the flats above Orpington's Tesco. As I have said before in this House, my constituents are trapped and unable to move on with their lives. Indeed, as a result of fixed-term mortgages coming to an end, I note that at least one of my constituents has been moved on to a higher tariff due to the presence of cladding, even though the building concerned is not a high-rise block. In addition, the freeholder at Cray View Close is a local housing association, and it has confirmed in writing to several of my constituents that, all things being equal, costs for future remedial work will fall on the leaseholders. That is devastating news for my constituents, so I warmly welcome the previous comments of my right hon. Friend the Housing Minister that leaseholders should not have to worry about the cost of fixing historical safety defects that they did not cause.

RICS is due to publish the final EWS1 guidance at some point later this month, and it is vital that it gives much greater certainty for lenders. It needs to state very

clearly whether an EWS1 form is required for buildings under 18 metres, and if one is, the Government will need to be very clear in the forthcoming building safety Bill about how leaseholders will be protected. It is crucial that the Government get this right and get it right first time.

6.22 pm

Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD) [V]: It is three and a half years on from the Grenfell tragedy and, as time ticks on, the promise of “Never again” is starting to sound incredibly hollow. The daily stress of living in a building that could go up in flames is bad enough, but the Government’s failure to act and to protect people from both the fire risks and the inordinate cost of fixing them is a disgrace. Suicide, bankruptcy, the threat of professional qualifications being revoked, life savings lost, futures destroyed—that is what tens of thousands, if not millions, of people are facing right now.

In November last year, many of my constituents thought that they may face rising service charges, upwards of £50,000 each, but now they have been given an initial estimate to ameliorate the cladding on just one block of flats, and it is £7 million. That is between £150,000 and £200,000 per flat in one block. Imagine how they feel when Ministers try to spin this issue, repeatedly claiming that 99% of Grenfell-style cladding has already been removed while failing to mention that that does not account for other types of cladding that are potentially just as dangerous. Imagine how it feels when Housing Ministers tweet outrage that leaseholders are being treated badly by building companies and insurers but then fail to legislate to protect them. Imagine how it feels when the Government’s cladding adviser sits on a Zoom call and tells desperate leaseholders, whose flats are now worth nothing, that his only idea is to give them, on top of their mortgages, long-term loans that they will never be able to pay off.

I have now asked the Government three times to ensure that the House is given sufficient time to debate and vote on amendments to the Fire Safety Bill that could prevent costs from being passed on to leaseholders—amendments tabled by Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative MPs. If the Government think those amendments have technical problems, they should bring forward their own versions. I urge every Conservative Member to vote with Opposition parties today to show that they are serious about standing up for cladding victims and to put the Government on notice that if they fail to bring forward their own solution, Members of this House will work cross-party to force the Government’s hands.

The human cost is too high. Cladding victims cannot wait any longer. This cladding scandal has to stop.

6.25 pm

Julie Marson (Hertford and Stortford) (Con) [V]: No one will ever forget those awful images of Grenfell Tower ablaze, or black and smouldering, nor will we forget the individual stories of suffering and loss, or the pain of the local community. The legacy of Grenfell looms large for all of us this evening, and it is something that occupies daily all those charged with this responsibility in government. I thank the Minister for Housing for setting out very clearly the fact that this is a priority for

the Government and the decisive steps that they have already taken. I welcome the very significant amounts, totalling £1.6 billion, that Government have allocated so far to pay for cladding to be removed, and I am thankful that the vast majority of ACM cladding has either been removed or that work is under way to do so.

The fact that work has been completed on buildings in the social sector is a good example for others to follow. Of course, the Government recognise that other cladding needs to be removed in all types of buildings, and that, too, is their focus and objective. The Minister was very clear when he held the House that it was the responsibility of building owners to make buildings safe and that the Government would work with owners to fulfil their obligations and protect leaseholders, using both carrot and stick.

The related issues along the way are also being addressed in what I view as a pragmatic and effective way: a £30-million waking watch fund to help ensure that these measures are truly temporary; and work with RICS to address the mortgage issues arising from EWS1 forms. I particularly welcome the independent review commissioned by the Government of how some players in the construction industry were able to game the system and play fast and loose with people’s safety, abusing the testing system and shaming reputable companies in the sector. There is indeed much work to be done, but we are making progress towards completion of the vital effort to right the wrongs of the past and to look at what improvements need to be made in the future.

The events of June 2017 shook this country to its core and fundamentally changed the way in which we think about safety standards. I welcome the Government’s determination to protect leaseholders in both the long and short term. I know how important it is to help to restore that feeling of safety and security for those affected, and I do not doubt the Government’s commitment to completing that herculean task.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Thank you, Julie. There was a seamless changeover of the Chair during your speech. I call Florence Eshalomi.

6.28 pm

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: This debate is long overdue. I thank my Labour colleagues for bringing it to the House, and I thank all Members who have made a contribution today, for this truly is a national scandal. Many colleagues have rightly reminded us of the horror and tragedy of Grenfell. They have also spoken about the Government’s slowness to recognise the breadth and scale of the issue, their reluctance to get things moving, and the hollowness of their repeated promise that no leaseholder should have to foot the bill.

My constituency of Vauxhall is only a few miles from Grenfell, but today we still have hundreds of unsafe buildings. I have been contacted by over 200 leaseholders living in more than 26 different housing developments, some with multiple high-rise blocks. Each and every one of those leaseholders is now spending their third lockdown in a home with serious safety defects, not knowing when their building will be fixed or even how they will pay for it—or why they should pay for it. In the meantime, they have to pay eye-watering costs to put interim safety measures in place. One block in Vauxhall

[*Florence Eshalomi*]

has to pay over £10,000 per flat just to install a 24-hour waking-watch system. Another block paid £130,000, before spending an additional £40,000 on an alarm system. These interim costs alone are causing so many leaseholders to become bankrupt, not to mention the additional stress and anguish. That is why one of our demands today is for a waking watch fund to be fast-tracked to leaseholders as a matter of urgency.

There is so much more that the Government can and should be doing to right the wrong that is the national cladding scandal. They have the opportunity in the forthcoming Fire Safety Bill to support amendments from Members across the House. I urge all colleagues to show their support, and to care and stand up for their constituents, by voting in favour of today's motion.

6.30 pm

Elliot Colburn (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con) [V]: We all remember the horrific scenes at Grenfell, and we can never allow that to happen again. For me, this comes down to one simple fact: leaseholders across the country are currently trapped in homes—for many, their first home—that they cannot sell, rent or otherwise financially dispose of. Many are being asked to pay extortionate costs for remedial works or temporary solutions such as waking watches. Sadly, some have already been forced to take what they see as the only way out: financial ruin through bankruptcy.

It cannot be right that anybody is trapped in a home that they cannot financially dispose of, able to escape only through bankruptcy, especially when the reason behind it is not their fault. If this trend continues, many more—potentially thousands—could be forced into bankruptcy, with thousands of homes sat empty across the country that, accordingly to lenders, are financially worthless. I completely accept that the solution is going to be far from simple, and that the reason these blocks are facing these terrible circumstances are many and complex. Time prevents me from going into them in any great detail, but they are part of the reason why I support the amendments to the Fire Safety Bill tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland) and for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith).

I want to raise a particular example of leaseholders in my constituency of Carshalton and Wallington. I do not want to name the block specifically, because my constituents are currently going through legal proceedings and I do not want to prejudice the case. Like thousands of others, these leaseholders live in a block that is under 18 metres in height and has some cladding on it. We have had difficulty communicating with the builders and the owners, and the lenders are refusing to budge, leaving the residents trapped in homes with what has now been revealed to be a fraudulent EWS1 form. Many sales have fallen through, the mental health of residents is deteriorating, and some are already facing the terrible prospect of bankruptcy.

There are stories like this from all over the country and especially here in London. This is not about apportioning blame, and I welcome the support that the Government have put in place so far. Blocks such as the one in my constituency sadly have not been eligible for any specific support so far, and it is clear that developers, lenders, freeholders and so on are not stepping up to

their responsibilities so far; they are hoping that the Government—[*Inaudible.*] They certainly did not cause this problem, and neither did leaseholders. Sadly, it falls on us to find a solution. I welcome the steps that the Government have taken and I urge them to move at pace to ensure that constituents such as mine are not left behind. In all this, charging remedial costs back to the leaseholders or using a system of loans is not the answer. My leaseholders in Carshalton and Wallington did not cause this problem, and they must not bear the cost of fixing it.

6.33 pm

Ian Byrne (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab) [V]: I thank the shadow Front Bench for this incredibly important debate. My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Kim Johnson) also wanted to speak today, and I want to put on record the excellent work she is doing for our city on these issues—in particular, in challenging the obscene service charge hikes of tens of thousands of pounds that are being passed on to leaseholders. In Liverpool, an estimated 8,000 people are affected by unsafe cladding, and the distress and anguish felt in our community as a result is difficult for me to do justice to. People are living and sleeping in fear, and when they wake up they feel threatened by the financial costs.

Rituparna Saha from the UK Cladding Action Group told the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, in a heartbreaking evidence session, that

“I would summarise my life as pretty much a living nightmare. I have spent every single waking moment when I am not working my day job trying to figure out how to make my home safe without going financially destitute. Unfortunately, my experience is not an uncommon one; it is shared by thousands of people just like me... We are constantly anxious, both for the safety of our families living in these dangerous buildings and also the pretty much blank cheque that we are being forced to write to fix defects that were not of our making.”

The HCLG Committee's November report on the draft Building Safety Bill recommended:

“The Government must recommit to the principle that leaseholders should not pay anything towards the cost of remediating historical building safety defects, and, in order to provide leaseholders with the peace of mind they deserve, amend the Bill to explicitly exclude historical costs from the building safety charge.”

I urge the Minister to take on board the many powerful contributions that we have heard in the debate and take up the actions contained in the Opposition's motion. How can the Government sleep easily in their beds knowing that thousands of tenants and leaseholders cannot sleep at all?

6.35 pm

Angela Richardson (Guildford) (Con) [V]: We have all heard the adage “An Englishman's home is his castle”. I am sure that there must be a more gender-inclusive update of that saying, but nevertheless, it is as true today as it has always been, which is why so many aspire to be homeowners. But it goes deeper than aspiration: it is about meeting our fundamental needs as human beings. Abraham Maslow identified with his hierarchy of needs that housing is vital for shelter, security and stability, and is a place to love and nurture our families and a way of being rooted that gives us a feeling of belonging to our communities. I was pleased to hear the Minister for Housing recognise that in his opening remarks.

So when an event as devastating as Grenfell happens, for all those who sadly perished, those left behind and the scars etched on the community, it is right that we move as swiftly as possible with inquiries and implement lessons learned. I am pleased that from conversations I have had with the Housing Minister, he is very mindful of the need to bring forward legislation, but that the complexities of cladding on buildings and all the sectors involved in remediation requires it to be done in a comprehensive and thoughtful way.

While the subject of the debate today is not a widespread issue in Guildford, I speak on behalf of my constituent, Jasmin. Jasmin is a single mum who, through a change in her personal circumstances, bought a flat through a shared ownership scheme and works hard with a dream of fully owning it and having something to pass on to her daughter one day. The four-year-old building that she lives in has failed to receive a EWS1 form because of insulation under the cladding. She is very concerned that all the time, energy and effort she has put in could leave her bankrupted if she is presented with a bill for remediation and stuck if she is unable to be sell. This has been made more difficult by the fact that the housing association has been silent and the developers have refused responsibility for remediation.

I thank the Minister for the understanding that he has shown of how much this wide issue impacts on lives and urge him to continue to speak to all the sectors involved, so that a solution can be found for my constituent and many like her in the country. However, it is not just for Jasmin that I speak; I am mindful of new developments proposed in the heart of Guildford that will be built upwards. I hope that it will be reassuring for my current and future constituents to hear of the announcement of a building safety regulator and a construction products regulator. It is right that we desire to build beautiful, but it is a must that we build safe.

6.38 pm

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab) [V]: In British history, Grenfell is a tragedy that will never be forgotten. It highlights the horror of a significant building development error that cost so many people's lives before their time. Despite the Government's promise to get rid of all Grenfell-style ACM cladding by June 2020, not only has that not happened, but the Government still do not have reliable data on the number of blocks of flats with unsafe cladding. Labour's latest estimate is that there are at least 450,000 people in homes with unsafe cladding. That is a resounding number of people. If life is so valuable, why has so little action been taken by the Government to remedy this?

Those living in potentially dangerous situations are everyday people. Many have been working tirelessly during the pandemic. Some are food bank volunteers, administrators and other key workers. They are retired people, families, first-time buyers, shared homeowners and so on. Millions of homeowners are unable to move, remortgage or rent. The Government's dither and delay has left innocent leaseholders feeling trapped. What was once their dream home has become a recurring nightmare.

The Government have the power to end that nightmare. The vote today is to ensure that the costs are not passed on to residents and that those responsible for the cladding scandal are pursued. While leaseholders wait for the

Government to act, some are becoming bankrupt. There are costs that residents should not have to pay, including waking watch and huge insurance rates.

My constituent Paul is completely despondent. He told me:

"Builders took shortcuts. Regulators failed to regulate. Freeholders are not doing the right thing. As expected, they are passing potentially ruinous costs on to leaseholders. In addition, some leaseholders must bear the emotional and psychological burden of living with waking watch while trapped in unsaleable properties."

Twenty residents so far from the Parkside estate in my constituency have reported being unable to sell or mortgage their flats for the same reasons. I pay special tribute to James, who leads the residents association at Parkside, and Lewisham Council for its dedication to working with residents and holding the housing association and developers to account. Labour has a plan to end this crisis and lift homeowners and renters out of danger. It is time that the Government listened, prevented delay and made people safe by ending this nightmare for residents.

6.41 pm

Tom Randall (Gedling) (Con) [V]: This debate is taking place in the long shadow cast by the Grenfell disaster. Anyone who has seen that charred edifice silhouetted against the sky will understand why it is so important that nothing of that kind happens again. At the time of Grenfell, I happened to be living in a block of flats, and came home one evening to find fire watchers in the street patrolling the blocks. Such a sight outside the building where I lived and slept at night was very disturbing.

This debate is timely. It is important to remember, of course, that Opposition day motions such as this offer only non-binding resolutions, but I understand why the Opposition would seek to secure a debate on this subject, and I understand the feeling of urgency.

This is a complex matter. It affects those who try to do the right thing by saving up to buy their own home, and those who face possible costs or feel that they cannot move. Many of my constituents, although they are not directly affected, have written to me movingly about family members who are. This matter also affects the construction industry, the mortgage industry and many other sectors. Although action is required, I hope it will be understood that the Government must act quickly but correctly; it is important to get this right. I am reassured that Ministers understand the importance of this issue and are working quickly to resolve it.

It is important that new buildings are safe. The Building Safety Bill will raise building safety standards, particularly for high-rise buildings. That legislation, the Fire Safety Bill and other measures across Government will mean that high-rise buildings are safer. I am also pleased to see the creation of a building safety regulator, which will implement a tougher regulatory regime for high-risk residential buildings, with enforcement action against building owners who do not ensure that their buildings are safe.

We also need to ensure that existing buildings are safe. I am pleased that the Government have created a building safety fund with £1 billion of funding to cover the cost of removing unsafe cladding on buildings over 18 metres. I understand that the application deadline for that funding has been extended, which will hopefully increase the number of buildings that will have their cladding removed. The Government have also taken

[Tom Randall]

steps to remove aluminium composite material cladding, which was used on Grenfell, as a matter of urgency. A £600 million fund has been made available to remove ACM cladding from all types of buildings over 18 metres. Working with building owners, the Government have made good progress in removing that, including in the social rented sector.

There is a lot of work to be done on this issue, and I am sure it will be considered at greater length when the Fire Safety Bill comes back to this House. I look forward to further statements from the Government on this very important matter in due course.

6.44 pm

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): For some hours now, we have been hearing accounts of those whose lives have been ruined by an appalling situation caused by a mixture of deregulation by Government, the greed of some developers and their failure to take responsibility and then continued inaction by Government to address the situation.

In my almost six years as an MP in a city that has seen much new house building, these failures are, sadly, all too common. It is not just the cladding issue, serious though that is, but the abuse of leasehold that sees people trapped with unexpected and inexplicable charges and the frankly dreadful standards of some construction. I was staggered to visit a very expensive property in the centre of the city a few years ago which had to be completely rebuilt twice because of basic and fundamental errors in construction, causing huge heartache and distress to the owners, made worse by the almost sure knowledge that adjoining properties were likely to be no better, but their owners could not face the huge battle to try to get redress. All this came against a backdrop of huge profits and fantastic so-called bonuses for individuals at the top of some of these companies. It also came against a backdrop of deregulation of building control and inspection that creates the perfect environment for such abuse to flourish, and all this under the watch, or lack of it, of a Government happy to take political donations from these people. Frankly, it stinks. People in that sector need to think very hard about their responsibility.

We have heard much about the cladding issue and we know that it has left people marooned and trapped, unable to sell, unable to move, their lives put on hold, often with a spectre of endless bills to pay, for faults not of their making. In Cambridge, I have had numerous representations from residents of the Kaleidoscope estate who rightly tell of their own circumstances. There are the young mums whose dream homes have turned into a nightmare. Sadly, it is not the only development. There is the flagship Belvedere that has been a problem since Grenfell; Pym Court; and the Grand Central development. I am afraid that I do not have time to list all the problems, but the problems have been made worse by the abject failure of the NHBC guarantee and the consistent failure of developers to take responsibility. If it were not for Brexit and covid, my guess is that this national scandal would have got the attention it deserved earlier. The leader writer in *The Sunday Times* had it right yesterday, when they said:

“Those who created this problem—the builders and their suppliers, some of whom have shown a blatant disregard for

public safety—should be made to pay for it. The blameless leaseholders should not. The government has to use its muscle, and not be influenced by whether some of these businesses are Tory donors. If not, more than 4.5 million affected leaseholders will know exactly who to blame.”

That is not Labour speaking; that is *The Sunday Times*. Today is the start of shining the light on those who are responsible.

6.47 pm

Dr Liam Fox (North Somerset) (Con): I welcome the Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes), to the Dispatch Box. I always think that there is nothing like a baptism of fire for a new Minister.

Portishead in my constituency of North Somerset is one of the best examples in the United Kingdom of the development of a brownfield site, taking an old power station and turning it into a world-class marina. It is an attractive and desirable place to stay, the consequence of which is that large numbers of people have invested considerable sums to be able to live there.

We all welcome the response of Ministers that it cannot be right that leaseholders have to worry about the cost of fixing safety defects in their building that they did not cause. We welcome the more than £1.5 billion that the Government have put into this, but it cannot be right that all the burden for remediation falls on taxpayers. Where a problem arises from regulatory changes made after construction, assuming that the proper standards were met, it is reasonable for public money to be used, but that in no way absolves the construction industry or the NHBC of their responsibilities. For example, at Ninety4 on the Estuary in Portishead, a survey carried out to the external façade in July last year identified “combustible materials which are not only non-compliant with current building regulations but might not have been compliant with regulations in force at the time of construction.” It would be outrageous if taxpayers’ money were to be used in this circumstance.

Those who have built substandard dwellings need to be held to account, because these underlying issues give rise to others. Insurance, reselling and property values and the availability of mortgages are just three. Can my hon. Friend tell me what talks the Government have had directly with the big banks, the Council of Mortgage Lenders, the Association of British Insurers and NHBC? Will he take account of the fact that there is some sharp practice going on, especially in relation to surveys. Extortionate amounts are being paid by tenants for these surveys in relation to EWS1. I have one in front of me, which talks about incorrect height information, 24-hour monitored CCTV when there is none, timber decking to balconies when the balconies are composite decking and stacked balconies when they are open balconies—the list goes on and on.

In formulating the response to the consultation, which we look forward to hearing, may I say to my hon. Friend the Minister that this is not just about buildings? In fact, it is not about buildings; it is about people. It is about their hopes and their fears, their savings and their future. All the Government’s instincts on this issue have been right and the amount of money put aside is generous. What we now require is not good intentions, but delivery.

6.50 pm

Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab): I am glad to be able to speak on this important subject, although to call it a debate might be to slightly over-dignify it. Labour's argument that dangerous cladding must be addressed urgently with up-front funding and money sought from those responsible for building unsafe properties is so indisputable that the Government are not planning to oppose it today, but nor are they willing to accept it and turn it into action to actually help leaseholders and people living in potentially dangerous flats.

We all have examples in our constituencies, and constituents worried about their children trying to get on to the housing ladder elsewhere. The hon. Member for Gedling (Tom Randall) underlined the importance of getting it right, saying that this accounts for the delays we have seen so far, but our constituents deserve better than the lack of action in the three and a half years since Grenfell. It is not nearly good enough. If anything, residents' worries have grown even more acute during the pandemic, when so many people will have been forced to stay at home day after day, week after week. This has had huge impacts on mental health for everybody, but how much worse for those worrying about the safety of their own homes and the financial impact that this also threatens?

The situation is clear: tenants should not have to stay in homes that are unsafe, leaseholders should not have to pay for remediation for conditions that they were assured met appropriate standards and the Government have it within their power to take steps now to end the misery that has beset so many people for the last few years. They should support this motion and act now.

6.52 pm

Suzanne Webb (Stourbridge) (Con) [V]: I, too, welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes) to the Dispatch Box.

I do not think any of us can ever forget that morning, waking up to see the tragedy unfolding before our eyes at Grenfell Tower—a tragedy that must never happen again. People must feel safe in their homes, and we must make it a priority to ensure it never happens again and what steps are taken need to be right. Since the tragedy, £1.6 billion has been made available to pay for cladding to be removed for those living in potentially dangerous buildings. Alongside this, we are delivering the biggest changes in building safety in a generation, introducing new laws to ensure people's homes are always safe, and this vital work has continued throughout the pandemic. These commitments will drive up building safety standards and make people's homes safer, while protecting those least able to pay from having to foot the bill.

I welcome the news that removing dangerous ACM cladding from every building in the social sector has either now been completed or is under way with clear timeframes in place. This Government have been very clear that they will not accept dangerous ACM cladding being on buildings. There is also a timeline of not beyond the end of this year, with enforcement action against building owners that fail in their duty to do this by the deadline that has been to set. While £1.6 billion has been made available from the Government, this vital work can be funded from other sources, including warranties, building owners and developers, and the industry needs to pull its weight to make this happen.

Although there are many lessons from the Grenfell tragedy, a deep concern has been that a small number of companies in the building and construction sector have been recklessly gaming the system, resulting in unsafe materials being used on new buildings. I am also hearing that there are those in flats bought on a leasehold basis who have faced several additional unforeseen costs that have risen because their building contains cladding, such as waking watch costs. I am shocked by the scandal of these waking watch fees.

I am pleased to hear that 201 households from Grenfell Tower and Grenfell Walk have accepted an offer of accommodation, with over 95% of these being found new permanent homes. That is deeply reassuring, but there is deep frustration that a very small number of building owners are still yet to start this process, recklessly putting lives at risk. I am sure every single one of us agrees that we must never see this tragedy again. We must prevent this from ever happening again. We must give people the peace of mind that the places they call home are built with safe materials and that the place people call their home is their safe haven.

6.54 pm

Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab) [V]: Shortly before Christmas, residents in the Wicker Riverside complex in my constituency got a knock on the door one evening and were told to leave their homes immediately, with no indication given as to when they could return, because of multiple building safety failings. I am grateful for the quick response I got from the building safety Minister Lord Greenhalgh and for his help in getting residents back before Christmas, but their problems remain, as is the case in respect of many buildings across Sheffield. We are talking about ACM and other unsafe cladding, compartmentalisation problems, and issues with materials used on balconies, all of which are making homes unsafe. These problems were not created by the residents but they are being expected to pick up the cost for them. Clearly, that is the central issue we are facing today.

These people have stretched their finances to the limits to buy their home—often they are at the start of their working lives, although some are nearing retirement—and now they face unaffordable bills to make good the mistakes of others. These costs will break them, and this is taking an appalling toll on their health, as they face losing their homes and bankruptcy. These are lives destroyed by the actions of others—irresponsible developers, often those who have collapsed their companies having walked away with the profits—and inadequate building inspections. These leaseholders are the victims of comprehensive regulatory failure, which is why it is the responsibility of government to step in, own the problem and resolve it, without any of the costs falling on leaseholders, either now or in the future, through the loan schemes that we understand have been considered.

In addition, the Government must act now on building insurance, both to keep down escalating costs and to make sure that proper cover is in place in the small number of cases where buildings are uninsurable. Using the full resources of the state, backed by any new laws that are needed, the Government must then recover the costs from those responsible for the misery they have inflicted on leaseholders. That is the way to end the cladding scandal.

6.57 pm

Ms Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab): My constituents will be absolutely furious that the Government appear to be rejecting not only our amendments, but those of the hon. Members for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland) and for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith). My constituents have been constantly told that they will not be made to pay for fire safety problems they are not responsible for, but leaseholders are already paying for them, with huge bills for waking watches, outrageously inflated insurance premiums and eye-watering variable mortgage payments. My constituents are paying through the nose now. These costs are inescapable, and they are taking a real toll on already stretched finances and on the mental health of my constituents—lives are on hold. This is the result of a crisis my constituents did not create.

Let me again raise with the Minister one of the biggest cases in my constituency. Stratford East Village, the former Olympic park, has fire safety risks that go way beyond cladding: defects that violated fire safety regulations in place long before the Grenfell tragedy. The Olympic park contractors were working for the Government, and they should not expect my constituents to pay for it, but they are doing so through huge insurance premiums and watch costs. In one case, the cost of insurance has been raised sixfold in a year.

However, the Olympic park is far from the only area affected in my constituency. In West Ham we find problems no matter where we look, and the same is true in Canning Town. I have been asked to make representations to housing associations so that they understand the impossible circumstances residents are in and to ask them to be flexible. They have to look at their policies on staircasing, sub-letting and buying back from the leaseholder. It is really important that Ministers do not forget how over-extended my constituents already are. London is different—I am sorry, but it is—simply because of the cost of housing here. In 2019, the median house price in Newham was 13 times the median earnings of residents; in 2017 and 2018, it was even higher. It is the legacy of utterly unaffordable housing. When we add in the recession and the financial impacts already experienced, threatening leaseholders with further costs just is not fair. It is cruel.

7 pm

Nickie Aiken (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con) [V]: This debate and this whole issue is about people. It is about what they hold most dear—their homes. Our home is where most of us feel safest; it is our haven, and so often our financial security. I know the misery that so many leaseholders in my constituency are going through because of this crisis. It is important that leaseholders should not be made to pay for the remedial safety works required, and that they should be helped out of the nightmare that they find themselves in through no fault of their own.

One of my defining moments as leader of Westminster City Council was in the aftermath of the Grenfell fire, when I saw at first hand the devastating effect that that fire had on so many lives. Seventy-two people lost their lives and paid the ultimate sacrifice, and we must never forget that. Having spoken to Ministers, I know that they are determined to ensure that such a tragedy never happens again, but we must support all leaseholders to be able to draw a line under this torrid time.

I appreciate that the vast majority of buildings with ACM cladding have now had it removed, or the work is under way, including 100% of buildings in the social sector. I certainly welcome the £1.6 billion in Government grants that has helped towards that, and I hope that we see more help moving forward. It is beyond me why building owners and property developers think it is acceptable to expect leaseholders to pay for remedial work such as cladding replacement when leaseholders bought their homes in good faith, in many cases many years ago. I will continue to fight on leaseholders' behalf to ensure that building owners and developers are held to account.

I look forward to hearing the Government's plans to introduce the Building Safety Bill and other legislation that is obviously needed. I understand that the Government are working to introduce that Bill very soon. I hope that they will introduce building safety measures and new laws to ensure that people's homes are always safe and can be relied on.

I reiterate the issues with mortgages and ensuring that people can sell their homes and remortgage. It is unacceptable that people find themselves in this dreadful situation. I understand that work has now been done on the external wall fire review forms—EWS1 forms—and that the Government have put £700,000 towards training more assessors so that we can do more of the surveying that is required to get the housing market moving.

Let me conclude by saying that leaseholders should never have been put in this position. These building materials should never have been allowed to be used on these buildings. I welcome the opportunity to debate this subject today, and I really hope that the Government continue to listen and will bring in fire safety measures as soon as possible so that the dreadful tragedy of Grenfell can never happen again.

7.3 pm

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: We have today heard a long list of residences that continue to have cladding on them and people stuck in them, not able to sell and without enough resources to fix the problem. I have two serious cases here in my constituency and many more minor cases—Royal View and Grand Ocean to name a few.

One of the big problems is the arbitrary limit on size that the Government have introduced, meaning that while hundreds of flat owners in taller blocks may receive some support, those in shorter blocks, which may still have decent safety concerns, may not be able to sell their houses or get mortgages. They are stuck. It is not right that any leaseholder should have to pay for these mistakes. These were mistakes of deregulation and of not allowing independent assessments, in which multiple Governments took part. We, collectively, must now ensure that we fix that. We will do that by making sure, irrespective of what party holds the reins at the time, that our nation's Government step in.

What is government for? It is to ensure that our people are safe from external and internal threats, but currently they are not safe when they live in these buildings. Their finances are not safe. The Government must act as the underwriter in this case. Of course they must protect public finances and, using the courts, legislation, levies and other means, they must get the money back. They must ensure that no individual is harmed. It is not good enough just to say that leaseholders should not pay.

There is a popular method of organisation whereby leaseholders have a share of the freehold, including in a number of blocks in my constituency. But they were not the builders. They were not the contractors. They were not the people who made this mess. They got their surveys done, and they bought in good faith. Often they bought to the limit, because they wanted to get on that ladder. We now have insurance issues, and we know that wider leasehold reforms are needed, but it is not right that the Government allow people to suffer as they are at the moment. Opposition day motions used to be binding, at least morally, on the Government. Let us do the right thing now and support our leaseholders.

7.6 pm

Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab) [V]: Just as with covid, the Government are too slow to deal with the unravelling building safety crisis. Three and a half years on from the devastating Grenfell tragedy, hundreds of thousands of people still live in unsafe homes, and millions are caught up in the wider building safety crisis. Government inaction has left innocent leaseholders facing lockdown trapped in flammable homes and paying colossal bills for repair work—in some cases leading to bankruptcy—as well as hundreds of pounds per month on interim safety measures such as waking watch.

Fifteen times, Ministers promised to protect leaseholders, and today a vote will be forced in Parliament to ensure that costs are not passed on to residents, and that those responsible for the cladding scandal will be pursued. The motion is a good one. It calls on the Government to establish a proper audit of the risk, to provide up-front funding, to protect leaseholders from costs by pursuing those responsible for the cladding crisis, and to get the job done.

I have constituents in London and Quadrant apartments, including West Point and Saxon Chase. Those people cannot sell their homes because fire safety inspections have not been carried out or an EWS1 completed—the Minister referred to that point, which I thank him for. I look forward to the RICS survey and its outcome. Residents in properties in Wood Green have been asked by their freeholder to pay £10,000 between them for a fire risk assessment. One states:

“If I cannot pay the bill for remedial works, the freeholder can bankrupt me and make me forfeit the lease, making me homeless in retirement. I worked for over 45 years paying Income Tax, National Insurance, mortgage payments, service charges, council tax and other housing costs, yet I now face possibly losing my home because the Government decides that leaseholders should pay for the failings of builders, freeholders and Government regulations.”

Residents in the Clarion property 1 The Roundway have not been able to sell or remortgage following an EWS1 assessment in 2019. Furthermore, some residents in Muswell Hill are living in a new block where internal fire safety protection was not put in properly and is incredibly costly to put right. The residents are making a claim to the NHBC through a solicitor, but are worried about what the outcome will be.

We are all aware of the immense stress of coronavirus and the public health crisis, but let us today not add more pressure to people already under strain. Let us vote for the motion and get this done.

7.10 pm

Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab) [V]: As, I think, the 73rd speaker in today's debate, I do not think I will be making any unique points, but I am pleased to have the opportunity to add my voice to those calling on the Government to act: to act to ensure that all my constituents are safe, and to act to protect our constituents from unfair charges.

I have been contacted by numerous leaseholders who are facing unacceptable pressures. They describe panic attacks, sleepless nights and tears, living in fear of fire and in fear of looming bankruptcy. For example, constituents tell me that their building, a recently converted office block, may qualify for a proportion of the non-ACM cladding fund, but that it is also fraught with myriad other problems, including missing cavity barriers and substandard fire doors. They already face bills for waking watch costs and survey work. They anticipate that their building insurance will increase by 200% to 300% this year. One says:

“This is weighing heavily on my and my wife's minds...I purchased a newly converted flat. I had a survey. I did the due diligence.”

My constituents did nothing wrong, yet now they face crippling upfront charges.

Of course, my constituents are not the only ones whose dream home has become a nightmare through no fault of their own, yet developers and property owners seem to be getting away with it. Those leaseholders need your help, Minister. The Government should and could pay the upfront costs, and ensure that developers and building owners are held to account and pay for the remediation measures needed. That is what is needed. That is what this motion seeks to do. I hope that all those who want to protect leaseholders will support the motion tonight, as I do.

Minister, I look forward to your response and I know that my constituents are listening to you, too, in this debate. They know that the only hope of their getting out of an impossible situation is for the Government to act, and to act quickly. I hope you will take the opportunity to do so.

7.12 pm

Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab): I welcome the new Minister, the hon. Member for Walsall North (Eddie Hughes), to his place. I look forward to working together constructively over the coming years.

As we have heard this afternoon, nearly four years on from the Grenfell fire in which 72 people tragically lost their lives, hundreds of thousands of people the length and breadth of our nations are living in buildings wrapped in flammable cladding, constructed without fire breaks and insulated with inappropriate materials, paying thousands for the round the clock waking watch schemes, with insurance premiums going through the roof. This is the nightmare that is the cladding scandal, a nightmare magnified by the need to seek sanctuary in our homes during the pandemic and successive lockdowns.

Listening to the debate today and the insightful contributions from 71 right hon. and hon. Members from across the House, two questions come to mind. First, are buildings and, very importantly, the people living in them markedly safer since Grenfell? The answer is clearly no. Secondly, has the Government's response been extensive and at pace? Certainly not.

[Mike Amesbury]

My right hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) highlighted the tragic case of Hayley. She had a dream of home ownership and she had a brand-new flat, and then: welcome to the nightmare that is the cladding scandal. She has now declared bankruptcy, and that point was highlighted by the BBC only yesterday.

My hon. Friend the Member for Lewisham West and Penge (Ellie Reeves) referred to the heart-breaking case of a young couple in her constituency who are now unable to sell their flat and move on with their young family because they are trapped by the EWS chaos and the Government's advice note 14. That affects 16% of households, and that needs to be fixed, certainly in substance. I hope the new Minister brings that to his post, rather than a ministerial press release.

The Father of the House, the hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley), rightly highlighted the nightmare of insurance premiums going up at astronomical rates. My hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Ladywood (Shabana Mahmood) also referred to that. One such case in her constituency, Brindley House, has seen a 1,300% increase in insurance premiums. Only yesterday I had constituents in Weaver Vale contacting me about that issue, and my hon. Friend the Member for Halton (Derek Twigg) referred to a 1,000% increase at The Decks in Runcorn. Those are some of the many aspects of the cladding crisis with which Members from all parts of the House are very familiar.

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): A number of constituents have contacted me about the problems they have been facing having to pay for the removal of dangerous cladding. They have put their lives on hold. They have not been able to get out of dangerous relationships. Does my hon. Friend agree that it is down to the Government to take more action to ensure that those responsible actually pay for the removal of cladding?

Mike Amesbury: I agree with my hon. Friend. It certainly is time for the Government to get a grip. It would be remiss of me not to highlight and thank those campaigners who will keep on pressing for justice and change: Grenfell United, the End Our Cladding Scandal campaign, the all-party parliamentary group, the Select Committee, *Inside Housing*, *The Sunday Times*, the *Mail* and the *Mirror*. All have highlighted stories bringing alive in this Chamber and beyond the hundreds of thousands of voices of those trapped in thousands of buildings up and down this land.

Three and a half years on from Grenfell, the Government still do not know the number of buildings truly at risk, because they have failed to this day to draw up a risk register or a priority list, as our motion calls for today. Building safety needs to be turbocharged by a national cladding taskforce.

What created the building safety or cladding scandal in the first place? First, I suggest it was the regulatory regime of the past and, secondly, as highlighted by many Members, it was some in the industry whose purpose was to maximise profit margins to such an extent that the moral compass of humanity—the safety of people and their quality of life, or even the right to life itself—was not even an afterthought, as illustrated by the evidence presented so far to the Grenfell inquiry.

This crisis certainly is not the responsibility of innocent tenants or the millions of leaseholders now living in flats valued at zero, who are mortgage prisoners as a result of this scandal. That point has been made time and time again by Members from all parties today. Leaseholders cannot pay, and they should not pay. Our motion is a clarion call to all Members and would enshrine that principle in the building safety landscape.

The Government's response so far to the crisis has been one of dither and delay. We have legislation coming down the line and a building safety fund as a reaction to determined campaigners and strong voices in Parliament, but the size and scope of the fund is nowhere near sufficient, and the remediation of buildings has been carried out at a snail's pace. Despite the recent spin from Government Ministers, nearly 60% of private sector buildings identified with Grenfell-type cladding are still wrapped in ACM.

Turning to the building safety fund, 2,820 applications have been made, with only 405 proceeding with an application for funding so far. The funding will cover only around 600 buildings, and only those that are 18 metres or above—a system of first come, first served, with gagging orders and chaos hard-wired into it. I say to the Minister that nobody will be silenced; the chorus for justice will get louder and louder.

Mr Dhesi: I thank and commend my hon. Friend the shadow housing Secretary and, indeed, the Leader of the Opposition for having a clear plan, because at this point in time, the Government have not even ascertained the extent of the problem. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Prime Minister, who has been conspicuous by his absence, needs to issue a statement and show a clear plan, because this crippling cladding crisis is having a debilitating impact on millions of our constituents?

Mike Amesbury: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, and I certainly do agree.

Over the past few months, Ministers have started publicly to row back on their previous promises to protect leaseholders from historical remediation costs—statements made at least 15 times in the public domain. They now refer to affordable, reasonable and fair costs, as pointed out by my hon. Friend the Chair of the Select Committee. At the same time, their appointed adviser, Michael Wade, has been devising yet another way to pile the costs on hard-pressed leaseholders, through a 30-year loan costing thousands of pounds a year—a mini mortgage on top of existing mortgages, waking watch, and astronomical insurance costs. Welcome to the cladding tax.

The draft Building Safety Bill even attempts to enshrine a building safety charge in law, through clauses 88 and 89. The proposal to impose a charge on leaseholders has met considerable opposition on both sides of this House, in the form of amendments to the Fire Safety Bill and undoubtedly to the Building Safety Bill in future. The Opposition will be supporting the McPartland amendment to the Fire Safety Bill.

Members across this House have the opportunity today to come together, stand up for their constituents who happen to be leaseholders, and protect them with deeds in the Division Lobby, not just words—to send a message to the Prime Minister and the Housing Secretary to change track, turbocharge building safety with a national cladding taskforce, fund works up front, and

then recover from those who are responsible for this mess. The polluter pays. They should set a hard deadline of June 2022, and pursue those responsible relentlessly. This is the way that we create pace; this is the way that we protect the public purse and leaseholders; and this is the right thing to do: support this motion.

7.23 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Eddie Hughes): Mr Speaker—sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker; I fell at the first hurdle! Let me begin by thanking right hon. and hon. Members from across the House for their contributions to today's very important debate. For my part, it is 410 days since I was last called to contribute to a debate in this Chamber, and I would never have thought then that it would be to speak from the Dispatch Box, responding to a debate on behalf of the Government. My parents would have been very proud.

It is a privilege to respond to this debate. There have been some comments on social media about the fact that I have only been a Minister for 15 days, and therefore perhaps do not deserve the opportunity to do so. To that I would say that in the time I have been in the House, building safety has been incredibly important to me. I presented a ten-minute rule Bill that sought to tackle what I described as the “invisible killer” of carbon monoxide poisoning. In many ways, that description could also apply to ACM materials, as we have discussed this afternoon. I could not agree more with the frustrations that have been expressed by Members on both sides of the House.

During the debate—and unfortunately I will be partly guilty of this too—there has been lots of talk about the tens or hundreds of thousands of people who have been impacted, and the millions, if not billions, of pounds that the Government are applying to solve the problem, but let us remember that this issue comes down to individuals. In the opening speech, the hon. Member for Bristol West (Thangam Debbonaire) mentioned Hayley's story, and others did too. The hon. Member for Glasgow East (David Linden) mentioned Sophie, and the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) mentioned the Youngers from his constituency who had bought a property in London. This is all about the plight of individuals, and I feel that personally in my responsibility as Minister. Perhaps I felt that strongest when we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan). I had been an MP for only a matter of weeks when the terrible Grenfell tragedy occurred. I am grateful for the work that she has done, picking up the role of working with the families of survivors of the tragedy to press their case. She does that assiduously, not just with Housing, Communities and Local Government Ministers but with the Treasury.

Yes, some developers and building owners have taken responsibility for correcting defects. That applies to more than half of the high-rise private sector buildings with ACM. Warranties have been honoured, and legitimate cost recovery by the original contractor has happened. That is as it should be, but it is far from the whole story. Some contractors have dragged their feet, and we have heard shocking testimony given to the Grenfell inquiry about manufacturers of safety-critical materials gaming test systems, selling products that do not perform as

advertised, and refusing to take responsibility. I am grateful to Members, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake), for raising that matter.

I hope the House will understand that there is a limit to what I can say about the inquiry. For their part, the Government have a very clear position. Putting lives at risk, ignoring safety regulations and shunning those responsibilities is not acceptable in any way, at any time. No contractor should ever feel safe engaging in that disgraceful behaviour. No one should ever feel unsafe in a high-rise home as a result of contractor error or malpractice. That is what the Government are determined to achieve.

We have taken concrete steps, not only to hold those responsible to account, but to fix the problems that have come to light as effectively as we can, as fast as we can. That is what our building safety programme is designed to do. It was established within days of the Grenfell Tower fire, and it is about making homes safer as quickly as possible, focusing on the most unsafe homes first; ensuring that residents of high-rise blocks of flats are safe and feel safe now and in future; and ensuring that a tragedy like Grenfell never happens again. This is a matter of the highest importance. It is not a matter of party politics.

During the debate, several Members, including the hon. Members for Bristol West, for Hampstead and Kilburn (Tulip Siddiq), for Slough (Mr Dhesi), and for Salford and Eccles (Rebecca Long Bailey), mentioned the waking-watch fund. Some of them were grateful for the £30 million that the Government have provided, although the hon. Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) asked when the funds would be available and applications would be open. My understanding is that the Government have worked collaboratively with Mayors across the country in many combined authority areas, but that the Greater London Authority has yet to reach an agreement, so there will be a delay from the GLA. I ask him to put pressure on it to make sure that it comes to an agreement with the Government very soon so that we can continue with the assessment of those applications and the issuing of funds. I ask him to put pressure on it to make sure that it comes to an agreement with the Government very soon so that we can continue with the assessment of those applications and the issuing of funds.

Several Members referred to the EWS form. My right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) mentioned sharp practices in the provision of those forms, and gave us an example of that. I am therefore delighted that the Government are providing £700,000 to allow us to train up to 2,000 people who will be capable of producing these forms to make sure that they are more accessible.

Conservative Members and, towards the end of the debate, Opposition Members made reference to the Fire Safety Bill and the amendment that has been tabled by my hon. Friends the Members for Southampton, Itchen (Royston Smith) and for Stevenage (Stephen McPartland). Personally, I was delighted to hear that my hon. Friend the Member for Bassetlaw (Brendan Clarke-Smith) agrees with me that the Fire Safety Bill is not the appropriate vehicle for that amendment and the Building Safety Bill is obviously the correct place for it. Trying to shoehorn the amendment into an inappropriate Bill will serve

[Eddie Hughes]

only to delay the progress of a very important piece of legislation, so I hope that my hon. Friends will decide to find another place for it.

Perhaps the most significant issue that Members have been considering is the question of who pays. In many cases, leaseholder agreements allow building owners or their managing agents to pass on significant remediation costs to leaseholders. This could result in leaseholders being faced with unaffordable costs. I think there is consensus across the House that this would be completely unacceptable. For that reason, the Government have been accelerating work on a long-term solution to this problem. We are working at pace to develop a financial solution to protect leaseholders from unaffordable costs. It is important that we get this right. I can assure Members that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State will be making an announcement on this important work at the earliest opportunity.

In conclusion—

Mr Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne East) (Lab) *claimed to move the closure (Standing Order No.36).*

Question put forthwith, That the Question be now put.

Question agreed to.

Main Question accordingly put.

The House divided: Ayes 263, Noes 0.

Division No. 224]

[7.32 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Antoniazzi, Tonia
Ashworth, Jonathan
Bardell, Hannah
Barker, Paula
Beckett, rh Margaret
Begum, Apsana
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Black, Mhairi
Blackford, rh Ian
Blackman, Kirsty
Blake, Olivia
Blomfield, Paul
Bonnar, Steven
Brabin, Tracy
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
Brennan, Kevin
Brock, Deidre
Brown, Alan
Brown, Ms Lyn
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Callaghan, Amy

Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Chapman, Douglas
Cherry, Joanna
Clark, Feryal
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, Rosie
Cooper, rh Yvette
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Cowan, Ronnie
Crawley, Angela
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith
Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
David, Wayne
Davies, Geraint
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
De Cordova, Marsha
Debbonaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doogan, Dave
Dorans, Allan
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Dromey, Jack

Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, Maria
Eastwood, Colum
Edwards, Jonathan
Efford, Clive
Elliott, Julie
Elmore, Chris
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Evans, Chris
Farron, Tim
Farry, Stephen
Fellows, Marion
Ferrier, Margaret
Fletcher, Colleen
Flynn, Stephen
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Glendon, Mary
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Gray, Neil
Green, Kate
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Haigh, Louise
Hamilton, Fabian
Hanna, Claire
Hanvey, Neale
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendrick, Sir Mark
Hendry, Drew
Hill, Mike
Hillier, Meg
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Dan
Johnson, Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
Jones, Gerald
Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Jones, Ruth
Jones, Sarah
Kane, Mike
Keeley, Barbara
Kendall, Liz
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kyle, Peter
Lake, Ben
Lammy, rh Mr David

Lavery, Ian
Law, Chris
Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Lloyd, Tony
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
MacAskill, Kenny
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Mahmood, Shabana
Malhotra, Seema
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCabe, Steve
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonagh, Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGinn, Conor
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
Moran, Layla
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Murray, Ian
Murray, James
Nandy, Lisa
Newlands, Gavin
Nichols, Charlotte
Nicolson, John
Norris, Alex
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Onwurah, Chi
Oppong-Asare, Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate
Oswald, Kirsten
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Phillips, Jess
Phillipson, Bridget
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Lucy
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reeves, Rachel
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie

Rodda, Matt	Thomas, Gareth
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd	Thomas-Symonds, Nick
Saville Roberts, rh Liz	Thompson, Owen
Shah, Naz	Thomson, Richard
Sharma, Mr Virendra	Thornberry, rh Emily
Sheerman, Mr Barry	Timms, rh Stephen
Sheppard, Tommy	Trickett, Jon
Siddiq, Tulip	Turner, Karl
Slaughter, Andy	Twigg, Derek
Smith, Alyn	Vaz, rh Valerie
Smith, Cat	Webbe, Claudia
Smith, Nick	West, Catherine
Smyth, Karin	Whitehead, Dr Alan
Sobel, Alex	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Spellar, rh John	Whitley, Mick
Starmer, rh Keir	Whittome, Nadia
Stephens, Chris	Williams, Hywel
Stevens, Jo	Wilson, Munira
Stone, Jamie	Winter, Beth
Streeting, Wes	Wishart, Pete
Stringer, Graham	Yasin, Mohammad
Sultana, Zarah	Zeichner, Daniel
Tami, rh Mark	
Tarry, Sam	
Thewliss, Alison	

Tellers for the Ayes:
Bambos Charalambous and Neil Coyle

NOES

Tellers for the Noes: **Jeff Smith and Matt Western**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House calls on the Government to urgently establish the extent of dangerous cladding and prioritise buildings according to risk; provide upfront funding to ensure cladding remediation can start immediately; protect leaseholders and taxpayers from the cost by pursuing those responsible for the cladding crisis; and update Parliament once a month in the form of a Written Ministerial Statement by the Secretary of State.

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 Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): We are going to suspend for three minutes to allow for the safe exit and entrance of Members, and the sanitisation of the Dispatch Boxes.

7.43 pm

Sitting suspended.

Covid Security at UK Borders

7.46 pm

Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House calls on the Government to immediately introduce a comprehensive hotel quarantine system for all arrivals into the UK, thereby securing the country against the import of new strains and maximising the effectiveness of the country's vaccination programme; to publish the scientific evidence which informed the Government's decision not to introduce a comprehensive hotel quarantine regime to flights from all countries; and to announce a sector support package for aviation focused on employment and environmental improvements.

I am grateful to the Minister for coming to speak in today's debate. I think it is the first time that I have appeared opposite her in one of these debates.

Last week, the country passed the heartbreaking milestone of 100,000 deaths as a result of this awful pandemic. I know that everyone across the House mourns all those lost, and we think today of all the families up and down the country for whom life will never be the same again.

Our United Kingdom is a country of incredible resources and many of the world's finest scientists. It has the dedication and brilliance of our wonderful NHS and care workers—indeed, all our frontline workers—and yet we have still ended up with the worst death toll in Europe and the worst economic hit of any major country. We have to learn the lessons fast. More than 50,000 people who died as a result of this awful virus in the UK died since 11 November. We have to ask why the United Kingdom has fared so badly, not as some sort of academic exercise, but to save lives.

In recent days, the Government's chief scientific adviser said:

“You've got to go hard, early and broader if you're going to get on top of this. Waiting and watching simply doesn't work.”

That is the lesson that he is advising the Government to draw: to go wider when they can. But are Ministers really learning that lesson?

We are an island country. Our border protections should have been one of our strengths throughout this pandemic, unlike countries that have very long land borders that they would have had to police. Instead, it has been one of our greatest weaknesses. Our country's doors have been left unlocked. First the virus and then its mutations have been imported to our shores. The lesson is that failing to act quickly and decisively leads only to greater pain further down the line.

From 1 January to 23 March last year, only 273 people from four flights were formally quarantined, when over 18 million people entered the country by air. That came at a time when we all saw the terrible scenes in northern Italy of hospitals being overwhelmed, when our constituents were contacting us questioning why there were not better and more effective controls at our airports, and when our own chief scientific adviser to the Government said

“a lot of the cases in the UK did not come from China”

and that they

“came from European imports and the high level of travel into the UK”

at that time.

I wrote to the Home Secretary in April to ask her to learn the lessons from that, but still the UK remained an international outlier. In May 2020, the UK stood

[Nick Thomas-Symonds]

with only Iran, Luxembourg and the US Virgin Islands in having no border protection measures in place. In that first national lockdown, 446,500 people—nearly half a million—arrived in the UK. It was not until 8 June last year that formal quarantining was introduced. Even when border testing was made compulsory, which was only this month—10 months after the first lockdown began—the Government still had to delay the implementation as they could not get the necessary systems in place. Where has the proper strategy on border testing been? This essential and vital strategy would have made such a difference.

Rather than careful planning, we have experienced chaotic scenes at Heathrow, even in recent weeks. Covid is not going away. We need this strategy, and we need it now. The Government border policy has lurched from one crisis to another devoid of strategy, and we have seen that only in recent weeks with the announcement of the Government's latest proposals on hotel quarantining. Limiting restrictions to just a small number of countries means that the protections do not go anywhere near far enough, with the threat of new variants coming in from other countries not on the red list. In the words of the Government's chief scientific adviser, are they really going "hard, early and broader"? Absolutely not. Again, it is too little too late. Even when Ministers made the announcement, they had no date for bringing it into effect.

Our vaccine roll-out is a source of great hope for the whole country, and great credit must go to our scientists and all those involved in the vaccine programme, but the biggest threat to the vaccine programme is from mutant strains of the virus. We know where some mutant strains have emerged because of the advanced genome sequencing that detected them, but too few countries have that expertise. We know the virus will mutate further, and we cannot risk one of those mutations undermining our vaccines. Back-Bench Conservative MPs who do not support this motion today are sending a message that they are willing to take that risk.

The hard truth is that we have no certainty about where the next more dangerous strains of Covid will emerge. We have been warned that new strains are already potentially threatening vaccine efficacy, and yet we still have around 21,000 visitors entering the country daily. It will make no sense to people that Britain's borders are still open while the country is locked down. That is why Labour is calling for decisive action today through a comprehensive hotel quarantine policy, and that would mean a policy of enforced quarantine restrictions on arrivals. Of course I accept that there would need to be exemptions, especially in areas such as haulage to keep the country functioning, but our starting point must be a comprehensive policy. Failing to adopt that policy risks undermining the huge gains that have been made by the vaccine roll-out, threatening life and hope.

The existing quarantining system is not working. To see that, we have only to look at the Government's own figures, which show that just three in every 100 people have been successfully contacted for quarantine compliance—yet another Government failure. Other figures suggest that just one in 10 passenger locator forms is checked at airports. None of that is good enough, and it has happened because the Government have failed in their

duty to properly drive a consistent strategy and high performance through our measures at the border and the checks of the isolation assurance service.

Yet those inadequate measures are still our protection against the virus for all but a limited number of countries on the red list. Devoid of strategy, the Government continue to be behind the curve, hoping for the best. It is little wonder that there seems to be such confusion and unedifying counter-briefing among the Cabinet on the policy, because frankly, it makes no sense. We do not even know at the moment when the policy will be introduced and whether the Government propose legislation for it, as has been speculated.

I have great respect for the Minister, as she knows, and it is great to see her present for the debate, but I note that the Home Secretary is not participating in it to defend Government policy, which after all is part of her departmental responsibilities. Frankly, she has every reason not to be present, given that the Home Office has lost 400,000 police records and she still has not explained what has been lost, let alone how she will retrieve it. We also know what her personal view is of Government policy. There has been alleged briefing to newspapers that she does not agree with Government policy, but if there was any doubt about what her view was, we can all watch the video of her telling Conservative party members that she advocated for the borders to be closed back in March last year.

We know that the Home Secretary does not support, and has not supported, the Government policy on the borders that she has had to defend in public, so who does support it? The Health Secretary, who was said to be opening the debate instead of her, is not present either. It is said that there have been briefings to newspapers that he is another Cabinet Minister who does not agree with the policy. Perhaps the Minister can outline and promise to publish the full scientific data that underpins the Government's decision to create a so-called red list of countries, and set out not just the commencement date but what she envisages the exit strategy from the measures to be.

How on earth can the Government be assured that the measures will prevent emerging strains from countries outside those on the red list? The truth is that the Government cannot answer that question. As a result, the policy is fatally flawed. A comprehensive quarantine policy would give us the best possible chance of preventing a new strain from undermining the astonishing collective sacrifice of the British people. It cannot be right that, with the ineffective quarantine system that is in place, 21,000 people continue to enter the country on a daily basis.

I recognise, of course, the huge challenges to the aviation sector and its supply chains, the impact on the tourism and hospitality industry, and the number of jobs that it supports. I have heard about it in my own discussions over the past year, and when I have been able to visit our airport frontline. Let me also pay tribute to Border Force, the police and our wider law enforcement community. They have worked heroically, but the gaps in our defences that have existed and do exist are not their fault, but the failure of Ministers.

That failure also extends to economic support. It is why the Government must come forward with the long-promised sector-specific support deal called for by my hon. Friend the shadow Transport Secretary, saving jobs

and ensuring that there are environmental improvements as set out in this motion. Let me be clear: we need to see this support package, and the money needs to be properly targeted to meet its aims. We have seen appalling fire and rehire tactics, which should be outlawed. That practice has no place in our country and it is an insult to workers. Staff salaries should be protected with a clear commitment to workers' rights, and let us see a commitment to cleaner fuels and other cutting-edge low or zero-emission technologies. Companies' tax bases should be in the UK, and there should not be dividends paid until a company is commercially viable. UK-based suppliers must be the priority, and operators must comply with consumer rights regulations. The Government have known the need for this for months, and inaction and continuing inaction is not the answer.

As hon. and right hon. Members cast their votes today—indeed, whether or not they choose to cast votes at all—I ask them to think back and learn the lessons. If we had introduced quarantining for high-risk countries only a year ago, what would have happened? As one Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies member, Sir Jeremy Farrar, put it:

“We need to learn the lessons from 2020...If we'd imposed restrictions in January and February last year we would probably have imposed them on high risk countries—China maybe. But almost all the virus that arrived came from Europe.”

There is no point, either, in offering a false choice or a bogus dilemma between protective health measures at the border and the economy. Our best chance of breathing life back into the UK aviation and tourism industry is to be able to lift as many restrictions as possible here at home as soon as it is safe to do so with the vaccine roll-out.

Crucially, that would all be put at risk if a new strain took hold that is resistant to the vaccine, yet the quarantine policy as it stands does precious little to stop that. It cannot predict where the next strains will emerge, and in its current form it cannot stop arrivals in the UK breaking quarantine rules. The existing quarantine system just is not effective. The Government have created an Achilles heel that undermines the heroic efforts of the British people in tackling this virus. Members across this House believe that as well—perhaps even members of the Cabinet. Now is the time to act. Lives will depend on it and our futures depend on it. I commend this motion to the House.

8.3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jo Churchill): I welcome today's debate on a matter that is rightly of huge public interest. As the hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) said, we have had a challenging time, but I know that everybody across the House will be cheered by the news of the vaccines, and the number rolled out over the weekend—nearly 1 million, at 931,204—is quite staggering. As of today, over 9.2 million people have now received the jab, and every elderly care home resident in England has been offered the vaccine. The roll-out will accelerate in the coming months, and with the combined news that the UK today has secured another 40 million extra doses of the Valneva vaccine, in addition to the 60 million we already had on order—taking our national total to over 400 million vaccine doses—we know that, with each jab, we have clearly moved that step closer to

the more normal life that people crave. It is our strong vaccine portfolio that offers great hope not only to the people of this country, but across the world, because unless we are all safe, no one is safe.

As hon. Members recognise, however, the challenges posed by covid-19 are still here today and we must continue to make the difficult decisions to protect the whole population. There is no question but that new variants pose new threats—threats that we must overcome to protect the progress of the vaccine programme and, of course, to protect the sacrifices that everybody has been making for many months now. It has meant that we have had to take tough action at our borders, which we have done. Earlier in the pandemic, border restrictions were about stopping the onward transmission of infections from countries with higher infection rates, but the new variants from abroad pose a different and new set of risks, and we do not yet have a full picture of those risks.

Of particular concern is a risk of having a variant that escapes the vaccine. We have a high degree of confidence in the vaccines, and confidence that the vaccine will work against the variant that was first identified in the UK, but we have also begun studies on the variants that were first identified in South Africa and Brazil in four laboratories. We will continue to work with our scientists and the UK vaccines taskforce to understand how quickly a new vaccine could be rolled out if needed.

We have also launched our new variant assessment platform, working in partnership with the World Health Organisation, which offers genomic expertise—something we lead in—to help other countries across the world, because, as I have said, we are only safe when everyone is safe. Much of what the hon. Member for Torfaen suggested sounded a little like he wanted to shut down against the entire world. Only a few months back, he, the hon. Members for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon) and for Wigan (Lisa Nandy) and the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) asked us when we were going to lessen quarantine. We have to have a flexible programme, where we build a response.

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I am very grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way on that point, because it is absolutely right that I mentioned the blunt tool of a 14-day quarantine back in June last year. That was because the Government did not have their own test, trace and isolate system up and running to avoid the blunt tool of a 14-day quarantine. The point was about the failure of the Government, not the inconsistency of the Opposition's position.

Jo Churchill: As with all science, we are learning more but, as we do, we must continue to do all we can to protect this country.

It is right that new border restrictions are tougher. On 18 January, the UK temporarily closed all travel corridors and added a requirement for anyone coming to this country to have proof of a negative covid test taken in the 72 hours prior to departure. All travellers have had to complete a passenger locator form, which must be checked before they board and then self-isolate on arrival for 10 days. Our stay-at-home regulations are clear: it is illegal to leave home to travel abroad for leisure purposes. Going on holiday is not a valid reason for travel.

[Jo Churchill]

We have also banned all direct travel from over 30 countries where there is a risk of known variants, including southern Africa, South America and Portugal. This is a ban on entry for all arrivals, except British, Irish and third country nationals with resident rights in the UK, who have been in the travel ban countries in the past 10 days. But as the Prime Minister said on 27 January, we must not be afraid to go further if necessary, and on the 27th, my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary outlined the further steps that we have been compelled to take, and I will lay them out.

With regard to those entering the UK, first, the police have stepped up checks and are carrying out more physical checks at addresses to make sure that people are self-isolating. Secondly, we are continuing to refuse entry to non-UK residents from the countries already subject to the UK travel ban. Thirdly, we are introducing a new managed isolation process in hotels for those who cannot be refused entry, including those arriving home from countries where we have already imposed international travel bans. They will be required to isolate for 10 days, with very few exceptions and only where strictly necessary.

With regard to those travelling out of the UK, first, we have increased our enforcement of the existing rules, because people should be staying at home unless they have a valid reason to leave. We will introduce a requirement for people to declare their reason to travel, which will be checked by carriers prior to departure and again at the border. Secondly, we are increasing police presence at airports and ports, and those without a valid reason for travel will be turned around and sent home or face a fine. Thirdly, this week we are again reviewing the list of exemptions from isolation so that only the most important and exceptional reasons are included. I am clear that our approach must be firm but flexible, and not the one-size-fits-all approach advocated by the hon. Member for Torfaen.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): The Minister referred to police checks. The data published last week showed that, when the police are doing these very minimal checks at the moment, if they find that nobody is home—so clearly nobody is self-isolating at that address—they take no further enforcement action at all. Does she not think that is crazy?

Jo Churchill: And that is why we are working as quickly as possible across Government and using everything at our disposal to ensure that we have an efficient method of ensuring that people are doing what the vast majority are doing. We not only have the police stepping up; we also have the isolation assurance service. The number of people sampled per day for calls is 1,500 out of those who arrive. We make a total of 3,000 IAS calls a day and send another 10,000 texts. These are repeated contacts with individuals, and it is a considerably different picture now from the one that may have been the case back in the middle of last summer. As I say, we have started, and this is a flexible, firm approach that can be stepped up and down.

The hon. Member for Torfaen spoke about a blanket ban across all countries and for all things, but actually, with regard to making sure we are safe, it must be firm and flexible so that we can ensure not only that we keep

ourselves safe in this country but, as the pandemic takes its course, that we can respond appropriately. This blanket ban from all countries that he is talking about—

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): It's not a ban; it's a quarantine.

Jo Churchill: I apologise—the hon. Member for Torfaen is talking about a blanket quarantine from all countries. He mentioned an exemption for hauliers. What about other exemptions? What about elite sport, or medical emergencies, or the plethora of other issues, particularly around security, which I know he is extremely exercised about? He also knows, as I do, that there are specific minute details that this blanket ban—

Nick Thomas-Symonds: Of course we would need exceptions, but surely the Minister must agree that the starting point has to be a comprehensive position, and that that is what will secure our borders.

Jo Churchill: No, the right point is to work as quickly as possible across all the different Government Departments that are involved to ensure that we have the correct policy so that we are doing the appropriate thing, rather than having a blanket ban and then repeatedly coming back and saying, "What about this. What about that?" We need to ensure that we have an appropriate system that has been reviewed and thoroughly looked at by all the different Departments involved—the Home Office, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Transport, the Cabinet Office and others—so that everybody has made sure that there are no gaps in the system.

This is not just about what the Government are doing; it about what we are all doing. In so many ways, our efforts begin not at the border but at home, with the actions we take to stay at home. The hon. Gentleman spoke of how we can protect the NHS in order to save lives, and in that respect every one of us plays a vital role in driving the rates of the virus down and denying it the opportunity to mutate and give rise to new variants.

As we take the necessary steps at the border, we recognise the challenges they present to industry. We continue to support our air transport sector, including airlines, airports and related services, and by the end of April the sector will have received some £3 billion of support through the covid corporate finance scheme and the job retention scheme. I am sure the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts) will talk more about this, but last Friday we launched our airport and ground operations support scheme, which will support eligible businesses through this difficult time, with airports and ground handlers in England eligible to receive up to £8 million each. That will help them to continue to prepare for a future when international travel is ready to take off again, because we must have a system that fits our playing our part in the world.

It sounds to me that by working out a policy that expects quarantine from everyone, far from looking at ourselves and far from being outward looking, Labour is proposing that we close our doors. That cannot be right if we are all going to walk together and beat this virus. I want to reflect that the Government and indeed the whole country take pride in our being global Britain,

a place with a history and culture of being open, outward looking and supportive. Even as we are compelled to take tougher steps at our borders, that spirit lives on, through our leading role in COVAX, boosting global access to covid-19 vaccines; through our new variant assessment platform, bringing British expertise to the world; and through that vast, powerful network of medical and scientific communities collaborating on a worldwide scale so that we can overcome this global challenge. The hon. Member for Torfaen and I agree that medical science can bring so much to helping people in this country. We have spoken about it before, but actually the challenge is bigger now and if we are to meet that challenge, we must remain open and outward looking, while having a proportionate and measured approach to ensuring that the right restrictions are in place for people quarantining.

Finally, even though the perilous situation we face today means we must put so much of our international travel on hold, there is no brake on our ambition to help the world become safer or to do what is our first duty: to safeguard public health, protect the NHS and keep people safe here at home.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Before I call Stuart C. McDonald, let me remind everybody who follows him that there is a three-minute limit on contributions. For those who are delivering theirs outside this place, there is a clock in the bottom right corner of their monitor or device. Please could you keep one eye on that, so that you are not going to be cut off. For everyone who makes a contribution in the Chamber, the usual clocks will be in use.

8.17 pm

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP) [V]: If the Government do not learn from mistakes they make during this pandemic, those mistakes will be repeated, with the same terrible consequences. Let us be clear: this Government have made significant mistakes on covid security at the border. I accept that some of those mistakes are easier to see now with hindsight, but others should have been and were apparent at the time. Indeed, the UK approach to borders stood out like a sore thumb for significant parts of last year, compared with the actions taken by even neighbouring countries. It is not just me saying that, because the Home Affairs Committee has said it. My hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) has repeatedly pointed out the flaws in the Home Office response over the past year, as one would expect from such a distinguished and knowledgeable home affairs shadow. I pay tribute to her for that work and look forward to maintaining the challenge she posed to the Home Office on this issue and on many, many others.

Of course, the Home Secretary herself has accepted that the Government got it wrong, saying that she argued for border closures last March. That raises questions about why she stayed in post when she was overruled, rather than arguing for essential border closures from outside the Cabinet. Last week, she accepted that there were “still too many people coming in”—[*Official Report*, 27 January 2021; Vol. 688, c. 406.]

to the country. That is a stark admission so far into a pandemic. The new measures announced last week by the Home Secretary just about amount to a step in

the right direction, but, as is typical of much of the Government’s response to this crisis, it is not a decisive step; it is a hesitant half-measure, when what we needed was bold action.

The Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, has said that the Scottish Government and the SNP believe that “a comprehensive system of supervised quarantine is required”.

“Comprehensive” is certainly not how we would describe the very limited scheme that the UK Government have drawn up, so we support the Opposition motion. If the Government really want to persuade us that this tentative hotel quarantine policy will genuinely make a difference, Ministers must tell us what estimates they have made of the numbers who will be impacted by these new requirements? How many hotel rooms do they believe will be required? On the other hand, how many thousands of people will continue simply to pass straight through the airports, and out on to public transport and into our towns and cities?

Put simply, we support a more comprehensive scheme because that is what the evidence points to. Professor John Edmunds of the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine told the Home Affairs Committee:

“The places that have had very effective quarantine measures do not ask people to quarantine in their homes.”

So why is the UK not learning more quickly from international best practice? Instead, the UK has offered a half-baked measure that does not bring comfort to the disastrously impacted aviation industry; nor is it decisive enough to appear capable of making any real difference to covid in this country. The Government have tried to operate a timid middle-way compromise, and instead have helped neither public health nor industry. In relation to the South African strain, the stable door was closed half-heartedly, and only after the horse had well and truly bolted.

Both the Scottish and Welsh Governments have expressed concerns that the measure does not go far enough. Although public health measures can take the devolved Governments so far, with border powers and passenger data in the hands of the Home Office, co-operation is required. The preference would be to have strong and consistent quarantine rules across the UK, so I ask Ministers and the Home Secretary to listen and engage very carefully; as and when the devolved Governments seek to go further than the half-baked UK measures, I hope that they will co-operate and provide support.

We need a more comprehensive scheme to protect from covid arrivals at the border. At the same time, we need a bespoke and comprehensive package of support for the aviation industry. From the outset of the pandemic, it was clear that one of the sectors that would be most impacted was aviation. The UK Government clearly felt the same and promised sector-specific support, but the one Government who jumped into instant action to support the sector were the Scottish Government, who provided 100% rates relief for a full year, which has now been extended by at least three months, with the aim of extending it longer. It took the UK Government six months to do anything similar.

With the vast majority of flights grounded, the situation facing the sector is still absolutely dire. Tens of thousands of jobs have gone in the sector, and many that remain have been forced to accept lower terms and conditions. I ask the Government again to support the Employment

[Stuart C. McDonald]

(Dismissal and Re-employment) Bill of my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands) to outlaw that practice. The sad truth is that, without further support, tens of thousands more jobs will go, so the Chancellor must deliver urgent help, including: action on furlough extension; reversing the decision on tax-free shopping; extending rates relief; and much, much more.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that all these issues will be of increasing importance in the months ahead. As we look forward, with some guarded optimism, to getting cases back under control and as vaccines are rolled out, declining domestic transmission means that preventing transmission from international arrivals becomes more important, not less—if we really are serious about suppressing this virus. I dearly hope that the Government are serious about that. If so, they should support this motion.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): There will be a three-minute limit on all contributions from now on, apart from the Front-Bench contributions at the end of the debate.

8.23 pm

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to speak in this debate. I am very disappointed with the Labour Front-Bench position on blanket hotel quarantine. Over the last year, I have worked quite collaboratively through the Transport Committee with all Opposition Front Benchers, and this seems a strange turn of events. I hope it is not based on sample opinion polling in certain seats that the Labour party lost, because it does not make any sense or feel consistent. I have a great deal of respect and time for the shadow Home Secretary, but I appeal to him to think again. The measure would decimate the aviation industry. In my couple of minutes, I want to highlight why I believe it would be so difficult.

First, let me say that the answer is what we are doing already: vaccination. By mid-February, we should have vaccinated all the people in this country who represent 90% of the mortality risk. If things go to plan, and they seem to be, we should have taken that to 99% by a couple of months later. That is how to deal with the coronavirus situation: to vaccinate and keep everybody safe in this country, rather than trying to draw a ring of steel.

I am concerned about the ring-of-steel argument. As the shadow Home Secretary said, there would have to be exemptions. Our hauliers, for example, would have to be exempt, and the list would be longer. As soon as we have breached that ring of steel, then, arguably, what is the point of having it in the first place? That is why we are not like New Zealand or Australia. It is much harder for us, with our position in Europe, to be able to keep our borders as secure as the shadow Home Secretary would like.

The other point about a secure international border policy is that it could lull us into a false sense of security. In New Zealand, for example, the vaccination programme will not reach the general public until July. Compare that with this country: we have not tried to shut our doors, but left them partly open, and then started to vaccinate our people to make them safe.

I am really concerned about what this policy would do to the aviation industry. What has become clear from New Zealand and Australia is that, once we bring in this policy, it would be difficult to move away from it. Those countries have no plans to do so for this year. The aviation industry is on its knees. This is the last thing that it needs. We look like we will come through this situation with our great vaccination programme. I urge that we do not bring in blanket approaches such as this, but keep the nuance and look at the rules depending on the risk, which is what we have done very well so far.

8.26 pm

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman), a fellow Select Committee Chair, although I take a very different view from him, based on the evidence that the Home Affairs Committee has heard. This debate is urgent. We need to protect the vaccine programme from new variants, such as those from South Africa and Brazil. Ministers have rightly said that border measures are needed to stop the spread of those new variants, but with news today of the increase in the number of new South African variant cases in the UK, it is clear to us that those measures are not working. The Government have not done enough and we have not learned sufficient lessons from abroad and from the first wave. I urge Ministers to do more.

For a month after the South African variant was found, the only focus was on direct flights, even though our Committee report showed that direct flights were not an issue in the first wave—only 0.1% of cases came from China, but 62% came from France or Spain where there were no restrictions in place. Even now, people returning from high-risk countries are not tested on arrival, still do not have quarantine hotels to go to, and can still go straight onto the tube or train at Heathrow. The promised new plans from the Government still have big holes. The majority of travellers will not be covered by quarantine hotels and, again, they will not be tested on arrival, even though they could have been on long and crowded journeys since their last test several days ago. All the additional police checks in the world will not make a difference if, when the police find that there is nobody home, no further enforcement action is taken.

The UK got things badly wrong the first time round: barely any quarantine; no testing; and all restrictions inexplicably lifted on 13 March so thousands of covid cases were brought back into the country, accelerating the pace and scale of the pandemic. The countries that have controlled covid best—New Zealand, South Korea, Australia, Singapore, and Taiwan—are those that took early firm action at the borders to try to stop any covid cases at all. They are global trading nations, but they took early action and, as a result, kept schools, businesses and communities open and saved so many lives.

There are two ways that the Government could be learning from those countries now: extend quarantine hotels to cover far more travellers, as New Zealand and Australia did, or follow the South Korean approach, which combines additional testing on arrival with a mix of quarantine hotels and designated quarantine transport, much stronger checks on home quarantine, and no trips on public transport. South Korea has lost 1,400 people

to covid; we have lost 100,000. If we had our time again in the first wave and had the chance to take much stronger border action to save lives and keep our communities open, we would have done so in a shot, so please let us learn those lessons now as we deal with the new variant.

8.28 pm

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con) [V]: The past 12 months have been devastating for many people in my constituency and around the economy in different sectors—in hospitality, events, and entertainment. Jobs have virtually disappeared overnight. What has been particularly striking to me over that time is how many of the people in my constituency had been dependent on the travel sector for their job or their business. In a year when international travel has virtually ground to a halt, and it has by comparison with where we were before, their predicament is dreadful. While for many businesses there is some light at the end of the tunnel as the vaccination programme brings forward the day when lockdown restrictions can end, the same cannot right now easily be said for the travel sector. The issue is not about whether we can give people the chance to sun themselves on a beach; it is about the future of a sector that is crucial to our economy and that simply cannot cope with the loss of a second summer season in a row. This impact on a crucial sector is why the motion today is so poorly thought through.

I have to say, reluctantly, that I support the measures the Government have taken to restrict access to the UK from countries most at immediate risk from the new variants of the virus. Of course it is not desirable, but it has to happen. It is right to take a precautionary approach, but imposing these kinds of border restrictions on a blanket basis would have the effect of destroying even more jobs both here and elsewhere for no apparent reason, because the reality is that virus rates are higher here than in many of the countries people are coming from.

The challenge now is to ensure that the restrictions are as short-lived as possible and that we can reopen travel for this vital summer season without the risk of generating a resurgence of the virus in doing so. A solution to this, in my view, is before us and the Government must now take it. Last week, the Health Secretary told me that he was confident that lateral flow tests were a fit and proper way of preventing infection being imported into nursing homes, so why are they not the cornerstone of our strategy to open up airports and other means of travel, not right now, because the current restrictions are necessary, but as part of a plan to reopen the sector properly later this spring? Test people before they depart and test people on arrival. That way, we should not need to quarantine people. If a test result can show infection at the point of arrival and we can back that up with a properly policed quarantine system, there really is no reason why travel cannot reopen later this spring for a proper summer season.

If we do not do that, the result will be waves of job losses in a sector that is vital to the future for all of us. That is why the Opposition are being so thoughtless, in my view, when they call for this blanket lockdown. The consequences will be more businesses going bust and more jobs lost. That we cannot afford any more of than we absolutely have to for health reasons.

8.32 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab) [V]: From the outbreak of the pandemic, I have taken an extreme precautionary approach, encouraging early, longer and more severe lockdowns. That is why I support the motion before the House today. With 100,000 dead we need decisive action. But yes, we also need the aviation strategy that the Chancellor promised us over nine months ago and that we have yet to see.

To ensure that any system of border control operates effectively at our airports, we need a sufficient number of well-trained professional staff at the immigration passport control points. The team at border control at Heathrow is known for its professionalism and commitment to high standards of service delivery. Many of them are my constituents; in fact, many of them are my neighbours. They have worked throughout the pandemic with some risk. Members may recall that some months ago, tragically, a father and daughter working in this role lost their lives.

Just at a time when we need these staff most and should respect the role they are playing, the management within the Home Office is provoking a strike. The Home Office management has decided, extraordinarily, that this is the time to rush through an imposition of new working rosters that are making it impossible for many staff to work effectively, especially those with disabilities and caring responsibilities. Staff who have been working on the new roster are all reporting that it has been chaos. It has put the operation at risk and made social distancing difficult. There are multiple examples of covid-secure bubbles being breached by managers because of a lack of staffing and the poor organisation of the new fixed rosters.

The Public and Commercial Services union, which represents the staff, has balloted its members. On a 68% turnout, 96.4% voted for strike action. That is how angry they are. The union will now seek a return to the negotiating table to try to resolve the staff issues. No Government should be sanctioning actions by its departmental managers that force their staff to resort to industrial action in this way, especially not in the crisis we now face. I urge the Minister to look into this matter again and intervene to resolve the dispute, so that these dedicated staff can continue to provide the vital service we need to protect our community, especially as the Government, and the Opposition proposals that we are debating, require staff to work effectively and supportively, and to be respected.

8.35 pm

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab) [V]: It is 12 months since the first cases of covid-19 hit our shores. Back then, I doubt whether many of us could imagine how the virus would affect our lives throughout 2020 and 2021. It has tested our approach to a global pandemic to the full. It has brought out the best in our NHS, our carers and our public services, and in our sense of community, with the many heroes who have stepped up to help others. I get that the situation is unlike anything that Governments have had to deal with in modern times. Decisions are a matter of life and death, and every country has adopted different strategies to deal with covid-19.

[Andrew Gwynne]

It is easy to criticise, and we have got some things right. The approach to trialling and procuring vaccinations, and upscaling roll-out very quickly, is a real success. However, I cannot help but think that we failed to learn from others earlier in the pandemic, and their best practice. I serve on the Home Affairs Committee, and last year we took evidence from officials in Hong Kong, Singapore and New Zealand—three common law jurisdictions that took different, tougher public health approaches early on. They were much quicker at locking down than us, and they all placed strict restrictions on their borders, with enforced quarantine. We knew back then that it was working, which prompts the question why a similar approach was not taken here. For months, our borders have effectively remained open.

We have been lucky so far. The new strains that have been identified still react to the vaccines, but a future strain might not do so. Until we have some control over international spread and global immunisation there remains a risk here in the UK. Life in New Zealand is nearly back to normal: people can gather, kiss, hug, go to pop concerts, fill stadiums, and enjoy life. Our southern hemisphere cousins called it right: tough—very tough—measures at the start; and strict controls at the border to help control the virus in the country and get back to ordinary life more quickly.

We opted for looser lockdowns, polite requests to self-isolate, allowing international travel to continue in large part, an endless cycle of local restrictions, tiers and national lockdowns—but never getting the virus down sufficiently to stop it bouncing back. Tragically, there are over 100,000 dead, each number a real person. The vaccine offers the first ray of light in over 12 months, but it is still not too late to tackle the border issue, alongside a sectoral support package for aviation. The cross-infection of a new mutant strain will set back any progress that we have made in defeating the virus, and that is why I support the motion.

8.38 pm

Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (SNP) [V]: Sadly, there are no shortcuts to dealing with covid. Between June and August 2020, Scotland almost eliminated covid, with minimal community transmission. At the same time, England and Wales were also doing well. That was a real opportunity to consider the impact of the slow response, such as in Italy, and what had worked across the world, including approaches in Asia-Pacific and New Zealand, which had experience of managing similar pathogens in the past. It was also an opportunity for cool heads and collaboration, and for dealing with issues such as the £45 billion allocated early on for testing—that testing, however, was slow to materialise. We know that only 30% of people who should self-isolate do so, given the financial implications of doing so. That amplifies community transmission, and people do not have the financial means to self-isolate. Instead of having porous borders, we could have spent time improving our border biosecurity. That was an early lesson from our friends in New Zealand.

Because we did not do that, we imported a soup of different strains, with limited transmission suppression across the country, which is precisely why new variants are emerging. That is how viruses mutate. Last week's

announcement by the Home Secretary was welcome, but those tougher measures at the UK's external borders are months overdue and reflect what many other countries have had in place since the beginning of the pandemic. Despite having responsibility for public health, the Scottish Government cannot unilaterally close the border in Scotland.

That brings me to vaccine nationalism, which has been an emerging discussion point in recent days. Fourteen per cent. of the world has 83% of the vaccine stock. We urgently need to correct that, not just because it is unjust, but for the long-term management of covid, without which there will be no long-haul holidays and no meaningful aviation recovery, and while the JCVI and Governments across the UK work on vaccine deployment, that will be for nought if our borders remain porous.

On test to fly, many lateral flow test devices are insufficiently sensitive. That is accepted by the Scottish Government, but not by the UK, and it is a mistake in the making. The PM's bulldog optimism has not stopped covid. Only by learning from others across the world, deploying corrective measures at our borders, and working to distribute vaccines equitably will we beat covid. The burden and the solution are shared across the world.

8.41 pm

Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con) [V]: When I saw the motion tabled by the Labour party on covid security at the borders, I was surprised, given the party's remarks on the subject not so long ago. Only last summer, members of the shadow Cabinet were arguing for the Government's quarantine measures to be lessened, and they later claimed in the House that those measures were a mere "blunt tool". Their flip-flopping is a further example of their hollow opportunism, and Labour Members have relied on hindsight in their public statements throughout the course of the pandemic.

Let us look at the facts regarding the Government's actions. Everyone arriving in the UK is required to isolate in either a hotel or at home. The Government are taking steps to ensure that those returning from high-risk countries do so in compliance with the isolation measures. Those include greater physical checks to ensure compliance during the mandatory isolation period. That was introduced hand in hand with the requirement for each and every passenger from abroad to present a negative covid-19 test result before departing for England. Furthermore, the suspension of all travel corridors is evidence to my constituents of the far-reaching steps being taken to tackle the threat of newly found and ever more infectious variants of the coronavirus.

Let us be clear about the nature of this threat. These measures, which I believe are far-reaching, are vital to tackle that threat, which risks undermining the roll-out of our vaccine programme. Given the world-leading success of our vaccination programme, we must do all we can to protect it. The Government continue to do that by using some of the strongest measures in the world. Those measures have allowed us to deliver a vaccination programme that delivers more than 250 jabs a minute—a daily rate that is higher than anywhere in Europe—and a programme that will have offered everyone in the top four priority groups a jab by the middle of this month. Why would we want to undermine that success?

The United Kingdom is a world leader in so many areas, and we should take pride in our ability to create and manufacture the world's first coronavirus vaccine, which has already been given to more than 8 million people. Let us work together in the spirit of cross-party co-operation, without party political positioning. We need to move forward with pride in our nation, build back better, and see the global Britain that we have long awaited.

8.43 pm

Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab): A year ago, when we first became aware of the novel coronavirus emerging from Wuhan province, countries across the globe had the opportunity—indeed, the responsibility—to plan how they might have to address such a contagious virus. The UK had a number of advantages, as one of the wealthiest states in the world, and with our scientific expertise and irreplaceable NHS, with its committed, albeit overworked and underpaid, staff. Yet our death rate has become among the very worst in the world. Some day we will have a full inquiry into what mistakes were made. The Government do not seem to want to learn any lessons until the pandemic is over, but one among the litany of measures that were introduced too slowly to be effective, or not at all, will surely be that we squandered the advantage we have as an island nation in properly controlling our borders. Last week, I asked the Home Secretary why we could not have followed New Zealand's example of establishing early, strict border and quarantine measures. She gave no good answer. We recently passed the tragic total of 100,000 deaths, while New Zealand has had a total of 25 and none since September. In addition to that protection, the public in New Zealand have had the freedom to live their lives in ways we can only watch with envy from our lockdowns, dealing with correspondence from increasingly distressed and depressed constituents in lockdown 3.

Our Government did not take early and decisive action like fellow island nation New Zealand. At every stage, they have acted too late and too weakly. I understand the dilemma that Ministers wrestled with—health versus the economy—but that was always a false choice. Just as we have suffered one of the world's worst covid mortality impacts, so we have been dragged into one of the worst economic consequences. Half measures have helped neither our health nor our wealth.

As a member of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and a proud trade unionist, I find concerns raised by Government Members about the impact on the travel sector to be somewhat disingenuous. The consequence of not acting is to condemn every single other sector to the chaos and continuing misery of indefinite rolling lockdowns and the risk of a new variant that takes us back to square one, rendering their sacrifices worthless. We can give the travel and aviation sectors targeted support, which the Government have failed to provide, as well as biosecuring our borders.

Labour's motion today calls for decisive action—for closing the stable door before the horse has bolted for a change and introducing a comprehensive hotel quarantine system for all arrivals into the UK, rather than waiting for fresh variants to be identified and then applying measures to those countries once it is too late, or leaving the door open for people to make their journeys via countries without such restrictions in order to get around the measures.

8.46 pm

Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con) [V]: I am pleased to be able to make this speech, because the Opposition motion would have us treat people from countries where there is virtually no covid in the same way as those from countries with very high levels. It makes little sense to me to place people from New Zealand in hotels. Any threat created by their travel, for example, can be dealt with by a period of self-isolation. I applaud the Government's logical and proportionate approach. Of course, as with all things associated with covid, we need to keep every measure under continuous review, but right now the logical approach is to ban flights from areas of very high covid levels and for hotels to be required where appropriate.

The Opposition motion also lacks logic. The literal wording of the motion has clearly not been thought through. It requires "all arrivals" in the UK to quarantine in a hotel. It actually states:

"That this House calls on the Government to immediately introduce a comprehensive hotel quarantine system for all arrivals into the UK"—

not some, but all arrivals. The shadow Minister said there would be exemptions for hauliers. That does not change what we will actually vote on. The motion provides for no exemptions, so this measure would have to include pilots, air cabin staff, and any engineer working in aviation or in the channel tunnel. The motion would entail all those people, when they arrived in the UK, going into a hotel for 10 days. It mentions no exemptions—not even for people bringing the Pfizer vaccine to the UK from Belgium.

Either the Labour party supports the literal wording of the motion and wants to stop every person coming to the UK whatever the circumstances, or it does not and the motion is just worded for political effect, highlighting the ridiculous nature of Opposition day debates now. It has to be one or the other. We are asked to take Opposition day debates seriously. Labour has tried to change what we are voting on, and only nine of its Back Benchers applied to speak in the debate. It clearly does not take its own debates very seriously.

We therefore cannot support this motion. The current measures are logical and proportionate. I believe it is right that we check why passengers are travelling to avoid unlawful and unnecessary trips. We have been criticised on one occasion for being too strict, and on another for being too lax. This virus is a moving beast and we need to be flexible too.

Anyone can play party politics with this virus, but what is needed is a constructive approach. It is positive that hotels are being used in this way, given that they are not being used very much at the moment. We must also bear in mind the impact on our aviation industry, so I welcome the measures that are being brought in there, but I do not welcome this motion.

8.49 pm

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab) [V]: It is a great pleasure to speak in this important debate. I heard the Health Minister's contribution. It is very interesting that this is a Home Office Opposition day, but we do not have anyone from the Home Office ministerial team responding to it. I think that is very telling. Just a few days ago, the Home Secretary claimed that she is an

[Mr Toby Perkins]

advocate of tougher restrictions than those that her own Government introduced in March. I suspect that the reason that there is not a Home Office Minister responding to a shadow Home Office Opposition day debate is that they could not find one willing to speak up for the Government's policies. The Home Secretary knows that it is her responsibility to protect our borders and keep people safe, and I suspect that she did not want to speak up for the Government's policies in this area.

The Health Minister said that the Government need to do everything they can to protect people, but they have failed to do that. Britain has the worst death rate in the world. It has the worst death rate per capita of any major country over the course of the virus. My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Charlotte Nichols) was absolutely right to say that, as an island nation, we should have had a huge advantage over our European counterparts, but it has been wasted by the Government's policies.

Going right back to the start, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer) has said consistently, the Government have been too slow to lock down and too slow every step of the way. Two weeks before we went into lockdown, we were inviting thousands of football supporters from Madrid to a packed stadium in Liverpool. We had people coming from all kinds of countries that we knew had very serious covid rates, with no checks and balances whatever.

The Government should not expect anyone to trust them when they say, "We're taking a proportionate approach. You can believe that things will be okay if you leave it with us," because every step of the way, things have not been okay when we have left the Government to pursue things as they want. I very much welcome the motion introduced by my hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary, and I will be supporting it with great enthusiasm.

8.52 pm

Mr Richard Holden (North West Durham) (Con): Everyone in this House, I hope, is clear that we have one common aim: to get the virus under control, and in doing so get back to normal as quickly as possible and save as many lives as we can. For every quarter of a million vaccinations, about 1,000 lives are saved. Every day sooner that we get the economy back open saves us about £1 billion, and crucially jobs and businesses will be saved up and down the country.

We achieve that by doing two things. First, we must vaccinate the people—the most vulnerable first—and drive down the number of deaths and hospitalisations. Secondly, we must control the movement of people and stop the virus spreading. We have done a huge amount in the UK to limit the spread, and I know that many people are very frustrated by some of the restrictions, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. We also have to control the spread from elsewhere. I welcome the measures to ensure that those from red flag countries stay in hotels, but in truth they are just building on what is already in place. For many months, anyone from any country has had to quarantine. Now, given the new variants, it seems sensible that those from the most at-risk countries need to quarantine in hotels.

What irks me is the way the Opposition are behaving. The Leader of the Opposition, when in the shadow Cabinet of the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn), said at the Dispatch Box:

"Why would we want to be outside the European Medicines Agency"?—[*Official Report*, 31 January 2017; Vol. 620, c. 827.]

It was a rhetorical question from a learned Member used to rhetoric in the courtroom. Why indeed? Last year, the shadow Europe Minister, the hon. Member for Hornsey and Wood Green (Catherine West), suggested that opting out of the European vaccine system would be akin to acting like "dumb and dumber". The Leader of the Opposition posed too clever by half, seemingly unanswerable questions, but now we have a clear answer. Out there in the country they can see why. Britain avoided a bumbling, bureaucratic living nightmare of an EU scheme. Britain's vaccination rates are four or five times the EU average. Now the Leader of the Opposition pretends he never wanted to be in any EU vaccine scheme, but the public will decide on the facts.

Today, the shadow Home Secretary comes here to attack the Government, yet he said in a Labour press release on 7 June last year that we must have a

"more targeted approach that allows the blunt tool of 14-day quarantine to be lifted".

Today, Labour Members have tried to say that it is not hard enough, and that that has always been their position. It is like Labour is trying to conduct a thought experiment with the British people. Schrödinger's cat has become Starmer's policy. The British people deserve straight answers at a time of national crisis. That is what they are getting from the Government, and it is a shame that Her Majesty's Opposition keep flip-flopping all over the place.

8.55 pm

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC) [V]: It has taken over a year for the Government eventually to implement a limited form of quarantine at the borders—a glacial pace of decision making that we can ill afford as the pandemic continues. The recent announcement was yet another half-measure and an all-too-familiar fudge of a thing—half-done, and that badly.

The evidence, of course, speaks for itself. Countries that locked down comprehensively and promptly have so far had better covid-19 outcomes. The Prime Minister's "softly, softly" approach prompts the question: whose interest does this Government serve? His alignment with select business interests has distorted public health efforts from the start, from the billions spent on dodgy private procurement contracts to the ill-fated eat out to help out scheme, which helped to raise the tide of the pandemic into the second wave.

Despite the great effort of the people of the four nations to endure another testing lockdown, the Prime Minister sees fit to allow most travellers to enter the UK without undergoing strict quarantine measures, overruling in the process the wishes of both his Home and Health Secretaries. This policy ignores the risk posed by people arriving from overseas while carrying existing variants from non-high-risk countries, and there is no guarantee that this approach will safeguard against other variants emerging in non-high-risk countries.

Not only are the new measures weak in their practical application, but they are morally weak as well. It was of course Edmund Burke of the Conservative party who

first coined the phrase “geographical morality” to describe the impunity with which the British elite acted abroad in countries under the yoke of the British empire in the 18th century. Under the new broader measures, that concept has been reversed. It is now business leaders and the rich from both home and abroad who can act with relative impunity, free to travel in and out of the UK while the majority of us live on under strict lockdown. The Government cannot shake their commitment to the ideology of hyper-individualism. Whenever possible, they prioritise the liberty of predominantly wealthy individuals above the common good, stubbornly ignoring the truth that covid-19 has laid bare for all to see: the deep interconnectedness of our society and the planet.

As has been the case since the beginning, these measures are part of a wave of blinkered wishful thinking set once again to come crashing down on the rocks of reality. That reality being that the virus has no interest in notions of individual liberty, and these futile attempts to apply quarantine measures selectively equally mean nothing to the virus. Only strict quarantine for all arrivals and proper support for hospitality and business will see us safely through.

8.58 pm

Kate Osborne (Jarrow) (Lab) [V]: The Government must finally act on securing our borders by introducing a comprehensive plan to protect the country against the import of new strains and maximise the effectiveness of the vaccination programme. With that in mind, however, it must not be overlooked that increased border measures come with increased pressure on the aviation industry and staff in the sector.

Earlier in January, the Home Office imposed a fixed roster on the Heathrow primary control point in what is widely viewed as a rushed implementation that has led to equality concerns, with many staff with disabilities and caring responsibilities unable to work to the new roster. As outlined by my right hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell), that led to officers processing passengers at Heathrow passport control points to vote overwhelmingly for strike action over the imposition. Feedback from PCS union members on the primary control point has described the newly introduced fixed roster as a “shambles” and “chaotic”. Additionally, Border Force is currently only spot-checking 10% of all passenger locator forms, which provide the necessary information for quarantine compliance. The Government must ensure that sufficient support and resources are made available so that border staff are able to do their jobs properly.

Alongside this, the Government must announce a sector-specific support package for aviation. The largest aviation union, Unite, suggests [*Inaudible.*] already lost their jobs. It is about time that the Government stepped in to put in place a sectoral deal, like they promised, and protect those jobs. The Government must make good on their promises, act fast, and step in where necessary to protect employment and our economy across all sectors. However, this must not be an unconditional bail-out for companies. Tackling climate change needs to be central to this support, both for the aviation sector and for building back greener across our whole economy. I hope everyone across this House will support this motion to ensure a robust plan is in place to protect jobs and set clear commitments to help tackle the climate emergency.

9.1 pm

Miss Sarah Dines (Derbyshire Dales) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Jarrow (Kate Osborne). It is a shame that so few Labour MPs applied to participate in their own Opposition day debate: there are only nine on the list, and that is sad. I wonder whether their heart is not really in it.

The subject of this debate is a matter that affects the constituents of Derbyshire Dales, who have raised it with me on numerous occasions since the commencement of the pandemic. We want proportionate border control: that is essential. The United Kingdom already has some of the strongest measures in the world to prevent new strains of coronavirus from entering the country. At this stage, the restrictions are well balanced and sufficient; they are firm, thought through, and nuanced.

The Government are focused on protecting the UK’s leading vaccination programme—a programme that we should all be very proud of—and reducing the risk of the new strain of the virus, or any new strain, being transmitted by somebody coming into the UK. That is why the Government announced further action to strengthen these measures. They are also looking at health measures, reducing passenger flow, increased police enforcement, and ensuring that anyone returning from a red-list country completes their quarantine at a designated hotel. This was further improved on 18 January, when all travel corridors within the UK were suspended, meaning that all international arrivals who have departed from, or transited through, any country outside the common travel area in the previous 10 days will be required to self-isolate immediately for 10 days on arrival. This includes British and Irish nationals.

I am concerned that Labour’s position on borders has swung from one extreme to the other. First, the Opposition criticised the Government for imposing stricter border measures in the summer, then called for quarantine to be ceased, and then claimed that our measures are not strong enough. Once again, Labour is playing politics at a national level—it is good opportunism, but I believe the public see through it, and that they see the flip-flopping on this issue.

I am concerned by the Opposition’s suggestion that there should be a blanket provision that all arrivals to the United Kingdom should quarantine. Being a lawyer, I look at the words, and this is clearly an ill-thought-through suggestion. There is no mention of exceptions in the wording. There is, of course, a limit on suitable hotels and accommodation, and if the Labour proposal were taken forward, the cost would be very high. Are the Opposition really saying that only those of our citizens who can afford to stay in a hotel can return home? I do not think they have really thought this through. Also, if there are very low-risk countries, are we saying that arrivals from those countries should needlessly spend that time and that money in hotels? There needs to be a sense of proportion.

The Government have acted swiftly in providing increased support to the genomics industry to help identify new covid variants abroad, for the benefit of mankind as a whole. We are an outward-looking nation—a trading nation—and we are helping the world through this work. It would be inconsistent with this global assistance to impose an unfocused blanket ban, so I will not be agreeing with the motion.

9.4 pm

Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab) [V]: Time and again during this pandemic the Government's incompetence has cost lives. They have been too slow to lockdown, too slow to build an effective test-and-trace system, and too slow to secure our borders. Despite the UK tragically passing the covid death toll of over 100,000 people, the highest in Europe, the Government still have yet to learn the lessons. We must make sure that our borders are secure with a comprehensive hotel quarantine system for all arrivals to the UK. That is why I support the motion.

The Government have belatedly introduced a partial quarantine system, but that includes only 33 countries. We need a hotel quarantine regime that goes further and covers all countries. The police force is stretched and lacks the capacity to check that travellers are quarantining at home. Since quarantine requirements were introduced on 8 June, only 332 fines have been issued in England to travellers failing to self-isolate. Last November, Sky reported that the police took no action against 1,400 overseas travellers who may have broken quarantine rules. That just goes to show the challenge that the police face in taking enforcement action without a more effective quarantine system.

We need to learn from other countries on how they have tackled the pandemic and how they have managed to reduce the infection rates and save lives, ranging from Australia and New Zealand to Taiwan, Singapore and Vietnam. Even developing countries have a more effective quarantine system using hotels and other facilities, so the idea that we cannot do this because we do not have the resources is ridiculous and needs to be addressed. As many hon. Members have stated, there are new variants that put the vaccination effort at risk. This month the Health Secretary said:

“The new variant I really worry about is the one that is out there that hasn't been spotted.”

Our biggest defence against these new variants is strict border controls through effective hotel quarantine regimes.

Throughout this crisis, the Government have been one step behind. It is time they took the advice of the chief scientist, who says that the lesson is to go earlier and act fast. It is vital in order to protect the vaccination programme we have set up that we ensure that our borders are secure. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to the scientists, the innovators, the NHS workers and all the volunteers who are vaccinating the population right now. We cannot afford for that work to be undermined by not securing our borders. The Government must act; they should adopt this motion. That is why I support the motion.

9.7 pm

Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con) [V]: It is extraordinary to be taking part in an Opposition day debate that is so poorly attended by the official Opposition. This is their opportunity to hold the Government to account on covid security at UK borders, and only nine of their MPs have turned up—nine out of over 50 Back-Bench speakers. I suspect that it is because they know that their leadership does not really have a policy on this issue. In the summer, Labour said that there was too much covid security at the border. In the words of the hon. Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon):

“Labour—like families and businesses up and down the country—are keen for the government's quarantine measures to be lessened”.

The shadow Home Secretary said that the Government should be

“putting in place a more targeted approach that allows the blunt tool of 14-day quarantine to be lifted safely and quickly.”

But now there is too little covid security at the border. Far from quarantine being a blunt instrument, more of it is needed. The Opposition are the Goldilocks of border restrictions, swinging between too much and too little, depending on which they believe will generate the most favourable headlines.

In contrast, this Government have a strong package of covid security measures at the border. We require everyone to present a negative covid test on arrival in the UK. Everyone who travels to the UK must self-isolate for up to 10 days. We have banned flights from the highest-risk areas. British citizens travelling back from these countries will need to self-isolate in a hotel. We are checking the reason for travel at the border. We are increasing enforcement there and increasing physical checks by the police on those self-isolating at home.

We know that we must act fast to contain new variants, whether they are home grown or from overseas. That is why we saw surge testing rolled out today in areas of the country where the new South African strain has been detected, though I note that none of those found to be infected have travel links to the area. That is why we have thrown the kitchen sink, table, chairs and all the utensils at the UK's vaccine programme, which is powering on at pace, having to date vaccinated nearly 9 million people.

There you have it, Madam Deputy Speaker: the Government are working hard to protect their citizens. The Labour party does not know what to do. It does not have a coherent border policy. I know it, the public know it, and even its own MPs know it. That is why so few of them showed up today.

9.10 pm

Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD) [V]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for the opportunity to take part in this most important debate, as the Minister called it. The Liberal Democrats will support the official Opposition at its conclusion. We agree with the motion, and we welcome the limited steps that the Government have announced, though of course it is, yet again, too little, too late. I would say in passing that there must surely be a limit to the number of times we can hear Government Ministers “welcome this most important debate”—we have had two already today—and then see them decline to put their MPs through the Division Lobbies at the end of it. If it is that important, they should surely take part in the Division at the end.

It was unfortunate that we did not get to hear from the hon. and learned Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry), who was originally on the call list to speak. She has apparently been given the opportunity to spend more time with the national executive committee of her party. Time will tell whether it is an astute move of party management to give her time on her hands, but I am sure that those of us who regularly take part in such debates will miss her contributions from the Front Bench.

All around the world it is there for anyone who cares to look to see that those who are most successful in tackling the spread of the virus are those who crack

down hardest and earliest. Unfortunately, in this country we have a Government that can always be relied on to do the right thing, but only once they have tried everything else. We hear today the news that the South African variant of the virus is now to be found in several United Kingdom communities. It is already too late to keep it out, but it not too late to stem the flow and to mitigate its worst effects.

The frustration that I have, and that I hear from my constituents time and again, is that the Government are prepared to spend eye-watering sums of money, but then undermine the effectiveness of that by trimming at the edges. If ever there were a case of the ship being spoiled and lost for a ha'p'orth of tar, it is seen in the way in which the Government act. We know—this is the biggest frustration of all—that in a few weeks' time we will be back here when the Government will do exactly what the Opposition parties are asking them to do today, but by that time we will see the consequences of their misjudgment, which will be measured in lives that have been lost unnecessarily. That, surely, is a tragedy for us all.

9.13 pm

Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab): The failure of the Government to fully secure our borders against covid-19 from the start of the pandemic has undermined the effectiveness of the UK's public health measures. I support a hotel quarantine system, but it will not be effective in preventing the spread of covid-19 unless it encompasses all arrivals into the UK. The limited quarantine restrictions imposed on travel from only 30 or so countries have come too late and, with 21,000 travellers currently entering the UK every day, are just not sufficient to safeguard the advances being made by the vaccine roll-out.

We are at a critical point in the vaccination process, and we cannot risk importing covid-19 cases and variants that are resistant to the vaccine.

While public health must be the priority, alongside greater public health restrictions must come greater economic support for airports. The Australian and New Zealand Governments have backed up aviation shutdowns with thorough aviation-specific support packages, but here in the UK, the Government's sector support package is half-hearted. Luton airport in my constituency has been hit hard by the pandemic, and the impact is having a cumulative effect on our local and regional economy, as the airport supports more than 10,000 jobs in supply chain businesses.

As it is owned by Luton Borough Council, significant income from the airport is used to directly fund local services and voluntary organisations. However, Luton airport is only eligible to apply for around £5 million from the recently announced airport and ground operations support scheme, which equates to only 6% of its annual fixed costs—a drop in the ocean. The meagre support offered smacks of a Government who do not fully understand the aviation business cycle and the current precarity of the sector, given the extent of the fixed costs. As the Airport Operators Association states:

“With airports effectively closed again by the Government's travel restrictions, much more significant support is now needed.”

Aviation needs Government to commit to extending the business support and job retention schemes, to extending the airport and ground operations support

scheme to cover 2022 and to alleviating airports from regulatory and policing charges for 2021-22. To help airports bounce back, there needs to be phased support while commercial activity is rebuilt—support that facilitates the protection of jobs and provides an ideal opportunity to accelerate the transition towards green technology.

On a final note, with the recent announcement that Public and Commercial Services Union members working for Border Force at Heathrow have voted for industrial action against the imposition of fixed-term rosters, I urge the Transport Secretary to work with the Home Secretary to ensure that the pandemic is not being used as a cover to force through new working arrangements.

9.16 pm

Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con) [V]: One of the great pleasures of recent weeks has been to see lines of people queueing up outside in Market Harborough and up in Oadby to get their vaccines against the coronavirus. It has been an inspirational effort, involving everyone from Britain's amazing scientists to NHS workers—the doctors and nurses who are rolling out the fastest vaccination programme anywhere in Europe. We have now managed to vaccinate more than France, Spain and Italy put together. It is a fantastic effort, where we really are among the world-leaders.

With that inspirational background in mind, and that success that is bringing us closer every day to getting back to normal—[*Inaudible.*] Of course there must be support for people in the transport sector who are badly affected by this, and I welcome the fact that somewhere between £2.5 billion and £3 billion of aid has been given to the air transport sector alone, but we are right to tighten the borders to protect the effort we have made on vaccinations.

It is right that we are bringing in the new 10-day quarantine, with the option to go to five if people—[*Inaudible.*] I welcome the extra policing—[*Inaudible.*] I encourage Ministers, in all the different things they are doing, to get things in place and stand ready to go further as appropriate—[*Inaudible.*] I think that the red list and the hotel quarantine is an excellent idea, and I commend what Ministers are doing there. We are learning from the—[*Inaudible.*] All have had in common strong health borders, so it is great to see that Ministers will stand ready and will, I am sure, add to that list and tighten that regime further if necessary.

It is also very good to be bringing in the new requirement that people have to have a negative test within three days of travelling to the UK. Again, let us bring that in—it is an excellent measure—and stand ready to tighten the nut further if necessary. That could perhaps be through, in countries where it is possible, adding a lateral flow test or doing other things to add to the health border.

Overall, I congratulate Ministers on the decisive steps they are taking. I think it is good to be bringing in these health borders as Britain, now leading the world in vaccinations, tries to get back to normal in a safe way, protecting lives. We have seen today the new South African variant arriving in the UK. That is a warning to us all and shows just why these measures are so desperately needed. I support what Ministers are doing, and I stand ready to support them as they go further and tighten the nut.

9.19 pm

Richard Thomson (Gordon) (SNP) [V]: The covid-19 pandemic has heralded a challenging period for the aviation sector, and the new increased measures announced for the UK border last week will only make this situation more challenging for businesses and jobs in the weeks to come. There is a very clear and pressing need to increase the level of business support for aviation and aerospace companies to help them survive this pandemic. The Scottish Government have provided support to the sector within their available powers. However, the UK Government can and must do a lot more both in helping to strip out the fixed costs for the industry and in allowing the industry to invest and plan for the future.

My party has been consistent in calling for tough measures to be taken at the UK border in recent months. We now know that UK Ministers are planning to set up a hotel quarantine scheme for people arriving in the UK from 30 red list countries, yet the Home Office has still to provide full detail of the criteria that will be used either to add countries to or to remove them from its list, or of how passengers can be prevented from flying into the UK via a third country to get round the quarantine requirement. This matters. Last May, Sir Patrick Vallance told the Health and Social Care Committee:

“One of the things that looks clear is that early in March the UK got many different imports of virus from many different places”.

All too often throughout the pandemic, the UK Government have been susceptible to magical thinking, taking the path of least resistance only to pay a much heavier price later. With mutations in the virus, there are huge dangers inherent in only partially closing the door, as the UK Government propose. We desperately need to get ahead of this virus with supervised quarantine to allow the vaccination programme to do its job of saving lives. The lesson that we should have learned through this pandemic is that the best way to save lives and to protect jobs is to act early and to act decisively. The SNP has a strong preference in that regard for our having quarantine rules that work right across the UK.

The Scottish Government cannot unilaterally close the border, but believe that a comprehensive system of supervised quarantine is required. We are acutely aware that any measures taken that are significantly out of line with the rest of the UK might risk displacing travel to other airports, so we very strongly take a four-nations approach. However, we cannot get away from the fact that the UK Government have so far failed to go far enough in closing the door to further infections from overseas, and if the UK Government will not act, then the Scottish Government must. I look forward to hearing tomorrow about the tougher supervised quarantine measures that we judge are necessary to protect public health in Scotland. As so often in the past, where the Scottish Government have led, the UK Government eventually follow. I hope that, in the interests of us all, they are not far behind in doing so.

9.23 pm

Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab) [V]: I welcome the news today that the vaccine roll-out to care homes has allegedly been completed. It is a shining light in an otherwise bleak landscape of failures by this Government to get on top of this pandemic, support the NHS, protect livelihoods and save lives.

The delay by this Government in implementing effective track, trace and isolate for those travelling to the UK from abroad has left gaping holes in our defences against the virus. These holes risk undermining the progress we have made with our vaccine roll-out. Limiting protective measures to travellers from just a handful of countries undermines the huge sacrifices our communities have made by risking exposing us to potentially vaccine-resistant covid-19 strains as they emerge around the globe. Recent statistics show that about 21,000 people are entering the UK every day, each one risking the introduction and transmission of a dangerous new variant. Under the current policy, by the time new strains emerge, it will already be too late to take action to protect ourselves. This approach has no clear basis in science, and I call on the Government to heed the warnings and expand their quarantine programme to include all travellers from abroad before it is too late.

I want to take this opportunity to ask the Home Secretary what steps are being taken to resolve the Department's industrial dispute with Border Force staff at Heathrow airport. They have just voted for strike action, and I would like to state my solidarity with their cause. This action risks further disruption to covid security and protections, and I urge the Home Office to resume negotiations with the PCS to find a resolution to protect our workers and travellers.

Last month, the National Audit Office found that the £22 billion test and trace scheme had failed to reach enough contacts and that only 40% of tests were returned within 24 hours, which is well below the Government target. The current quarantine checks, which have been outsourced to Sitel, are reaching just 3% of UK arrivals, leaving us effectively completely unprotected and exposed to worrying new strains of covid coming in from overseas. Can the Minister explain exactly what has led to this failure by these companies, what action the Government are taking to penalise those contractors that have not met their responsibilities and what the Government intend to do now to improve these dire statistics? Sitel and Serco have been had millions of pounds out of the public purse.

The Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies—SAGE—has warned that our so-called world-beating test and trace system has had only a marginal impact on reducing the spread of the coronavirus. Rather than mobilising existing and effective public health expertise, the Government have chosen to put dogmatic ideology over public health. They have now spent a budget larger than those for our policing and fire services combined, handing out multimillion-pound contracts to big private outsourcing firms that have failed time and again to deliver. We must limit international travel, alongside introducing a support package for the aviation sector focused on employment and environmental protections.

9.26 pm

Laura Farris (Newbury) (Con) [V]: We have heard a number of criticisms from the Opposition tonight. In opening, the hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) said that we had left our country's doors unlocked. He pointed to the border controls between 1 January and 23 March, when only 273 people were formally quarantined. What he did not say was that, at that time, neither the World Health Organisation nor the chief medical officer or the chief scientific officer

were giving any advice to the contrary. In fact, when Professor Whitty appeared before the Health and Social Care Committee on 9 December, he said that he could not have done anything different. He said that the “data streams were incomplete” and that

“we did not realise how widespread it was in Europe, because there wasn’t testing in many of the European countries. We knew it was in Italy, but we did not realise how extensive it was in Spain and France for a while. That is an example of lack of information.” So quite what sort of a crystal ball the Opposition think we should have been using has never been made clear.

When the Government imposed quarantine, the Opposition laid into us again. On 3 June, the shadow Secretary of State for Transport asked the Home Secretary: “Can the Home Secretary explain the evidence she has seen that underpins her decision to introduce a blanket 14-day quarantine?”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2020; Vol. 676, c. 878.]

Another Opposition Member put it this way to the Home Secretary:

“The horse has bolted...She will not be able to screen people at ports, she cannot track them when they leave the airports, she cannot enforce quarantine when people get to their homes...so she will not be protecting anybody.”—[*Official Report*, 3 June 2020; Vol. 676, c. 876.]

Today, when we are taking a targeted approach and enforcing quarantine by placing arrivals from high-risk countries in hotels, we are under attack again. Labour Members say nothing about whether they agree with our policy of requiring all arrivals to produce a negative covid test or our policy of increased police enforcement. They say nothing about what scientific evidence they are relying on to say that we are choosing the wrong strategy.

At every stage of the pandemic, Labour’s approach has been to look at the Tories and suggest something different. When something goes wrong, it is a Tory failure, and when something goes right, anyone deserves praise but the Tories. To illustrate this, the hon. Member for Torfaen tonight praised the scientists and the many other people responsible for the vaccine programme. Whether the Opposition like it or not, it was Tory decision making, a Tory procurement exercise, a Tory logistical operation and a Tory vaccines Minister that have enabled 9.2 million vaccinations to get into the arms of some of the most vulnerable citizens in this country in a vaccination exercise that has been as moving as it has been magnificent, and this Conservative Government can rightly feel proud of that.

9.28 pm

Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD) [V]: I welcome the recent announcements by the Home Secretary to implement additional public health measures at our borders, as recommended to the Government by the all-party parliamentary group on coronavirus, which is chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran), and of which I am a member. However, the Government’s announcement last week was, as we have seen time and again throughout this pandemic, too little, too late. It did not go far enough. The APPG recommends that quarantining at regulated locations should apply to arrivals from all countries, and that testing should be done on arrival at the airport and subsequently. Such measures have proved successful for countries such as Taiwan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand—just compare their case and death rates with those of the UK.

On arrival at the airport, the myriad private options for testing are confusing and the rules are perverse. Just this weekend, I received an email from a Whitton resident who had chosen not to participate in the test to release scheme, because of the prohibitive costs of a private test, and to self-isolate at home for 10 days instead. She was subsequently offered an NHS test as part of a research programme, yet was told that an NHS test delivering a negative result would still require the full 10-day isolation but that exactly the same test provided privately, at great expense, on day five would result in immediate release if negative. I would be grateful if the Minister would comment on whether that policy is based on scientific or medical advice.

Although the NHS should be praised for making excellent progress with the vaccination programme roll-out, without much firmer controls at our borders it is like having the heating on with the windows open. Today’s announcement is testament to that, and the costs and sacrifices of lockdown are immense, so let us not squander those gains. We will be able to emerge safely from lockdown only with a combination of tougher controls at our borders, a functioning test, trace and isolate system, and vaccination.

Having a constituency so close to Heathrow, I must make a few remarks on support for the aviation sector, which needs to come with clear environmental conditions. Many of my constituents work in the aviation and travel sectors, and have lost their jobs or been at risk of losing their jobs under draconian fire and rehire schemes, which ought to be outlawed, but which the Government have refused to take action on. The airport and ground operations scheme provides limited welcome relief but does not go far enough and was finally implemented only last week. It is clear that the aviation sector will probably never fully recover, and even then it will take a long time to partially recover. A sector-specific package is needed, with strong green environmental strings attached, alongside a comprehensive programme of retraining and reskilling, and investment in green transport and infrastructure.

9.32 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP) [V]: This issue means a lot to the representatives in Northern Ireland, not simply from the aerospace industry and tourism angle, but because of the very concept of border security. I represent a constituency that has been affected and devastated by the lack of security on the border. Although this is a different battle, the stakes are the same: the preservation of life. Over the weekend, we have seen at first hand the need for this House to regulate our security, safety and access to medication, after the threats of Europe to the supply of vaccines to Northern Ireland. That is not a surprise to me; I have warned in this House before about passing the Northern Ireland protocol, and this is why my colleagues and I voted against it. I am aware that today we must and should focus on health and borders in respect of a different remit, but I could not let a debate that mentioned the UK border take place without crying out for UK parity, and for a redress of the wrongs perpetrated against the UK, and specifically Northern Ireland, by the Northern Ireland protocol. I urge every Member of this House to take responsibility and join us in urging immediate change.

[Jim Shannon]

When the decision was made to impose UK-wide travel restrictions, I understood and agreed with the rationale, and I joined the queue of MPs frantically contacting the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, as it was known at that time, to get constituents home. I understood the need to provide protection as best as we could so as not to overwhelm the NHS. However, we must also determine restrictions on an individual country basis. It is clear that we must support aviation and aerospace companies now if more strict measures for the border are implemented, which all but close the aviation sector. Airlines will not have the capital to invest in new aircraft, making the road to recovery for the UK aerospace sector harder and longer without Government support. So to help companies plan long-term investment—the Minister referred to this earlier—in the next generation of greener aircraft in the UK, the Government need to present an exit strategy or a road map for the measures at the border limiting overseas travel. We need the Government to back the sector with specific support now or risk the sector falling in the UK.

We have also been making clear the need for greater co-operation on travel logs from the Republic of Ireland. Although indications have arisen only in the past week that the information will finally be shared, this brings me back to the concerns I have about the traffic flow, which has allowed those with all kinds of variants of covid to cross the border on the Irish side. Although I understand that the Garda Síochána will decide to prosecute those over the border, what has been made abundantly clear is that there is a border that can be enforced when it suits, and safety and the isolation of covid is needed by us all. I ask the Home Office to establish more formalised rules regarding the Irish connections through Shannon and Dublin. If a British person from Newtownards can be questioned for travelling to the mainland for a family funeral, there is a necessity that the same safety measures are in place to stop anyone arriving internationally from Dublin and coming to Northern Ireland.

I have two requests to make to the Home Office: secure the Northern Ireland border, as it is securing mainland GB; and further, work with other Departments to ensure a thriving aerospace and tourism industry post-pandemic. They are not easy asks, I know, but they are absolutely vital.

9.35 pm

Saqib Bhatti (Meriden) (Con) [V]: My constituency is home to Birmingham airport and there is nothing that I would love more than for people to be able to go on holiday, for things to return to normal, and for the airport to be the bustling economic heart of the region that it was before covid. However, that is not the reality that we are in.

Throughout the pandemic, the health of our country has been at the heart of the Government's decision making. During the last 12 months, in my view, the Government have taken robust action. I speak of the Government restricting travel from a list of countries in February. In March, the Prime Minister told people to stay at home and to travel only for essential purposes. In May, we experienced further measures, which included a 14-day period of self-isolation for those who travelled back to

the UK, passenger locator forms and fines for those who broke the rules. In July, we saw travel corridors introduced, which were kept under constant review. In short, our approach evolved as the scientific data and the global understanding of the pandemic evolved.

As we continue to move forward towards vaccinating the entire British public, we must take difficult decisions that require tough measures. That is why the latest measures of restrictions were announced, and I support them. It can only be a positive step forward that the police have increased checks to ensure that travellers are complying with self-isolation rules, but the UK continues to refuse entry from a number of countries subject to the travel ban and has introduced of a managed isolation process for those who cannot be refused entry to the UK. This new process, which uses hotels, will require individuals to self-isolate for 10 days. I welcome these new measures, as I believe that they will go a long way to securing the public health of our country.

As we approach the final days of this pandemic, we must continue to be vigilant against the new strains and rising infection rates. The news of over 9.2 million people having received their first vaccine is extremely encouraging. We simply cannot allow the progress of our world-leading vaccination programme to be hindered. I am sure, however, that Ministers have taken these decisions after much wrangling and it has ultimately been in our national interest. In my view, the Government have taken the right decisions at the right time. Protecting our people and preserving our aviation industry has been paramount, and I will continue to work with the Government as we embark on our path to recovery.

9.37 pm

Julie Marson (Hertford and Stortford) (Con) [V]: It is right and proper that, at a time when new variants are emerging across the world, we act to shore up our defences and maintain an agile approach that can react to changing circumstances, particularly in the light of the news today on the South African variant, which is affecting part of my constituency.

Suspending all travel corridors two weeks ago was a painful decision to take. We are a truly international nation, a travel hub, but it was the right decision. We are making huge progress through the vaccination programme, and I commend the work of the Minister for vaccine deployment—the Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi)—particularly today, when the new Avanti Meadows vaccination centre opens in my constituency to add to the fantastic work already under way at Bishop's Stortford football club.

With herculean efforts and brilliant progress being made each day, we must not on any account become complacent now, but as I said, this decision and others like it come at a cost for the aviation sector in particular. I hold the ambition to safely open the airways as soon as possible. I am particularly keen to support Stansted airport, where a number of my constituents work. To enable that, though, the support that the Government have offered to the aviation sector is crucial: a potential £8 million for every airport, the new global travel taskforce to support the industry, and the many billions of pounds of support through schemes such as the furlough and business interruption loans.

We have a secure strategy in place to mitigate the risk of new variants entering the country, and this has been built from a solid platform that has protected our borders for many months. With the way in which these measures are now described by some Opposition Members, though, I would forgive the public for believing that we have a great big sign on the door saying, “All welcome—no matter what”, but that could not be further from the truth. We are requiring all passengers from abroad to present a negative test before departing for England; we are enforcing mandatory self-isolation periods for arrivals; we have suspended the travel corridors; we are introducing isolation in hotels for British citizens coming from red list countries; and we are increasing police checks, which will be helped by the extra police numbers in my constituency. We will also all continue to act on advice and take all factors into account.

The Opposition’s motion is yet another mix of hindsight and shadow boxing around Government announcements, so I certainly will not be supporting it. I back the Government’s strategy and fully support the agile approach they are taking, which allows us to react quickly in a perpetually changing environment.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I am sorry that we have not been able to get everybody in. The last Back-Bench speaker will be Ben Everitt.

9.40 pm

Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con): It is a pleasure to be called, Madam Deputy Speaker. I believe they call this the headline slot, so thank you very much.

I am old enough to remember the Labour party’s position on free movement, so I am excited to speak in this Opposition day debate on our borders. The motion calls on the Government to

“immediately introduce a comprehensive...quarantine system for all arrivals into the UK”,

which does not seem to fit entirely with the free movement of people that we know and love from Labour policy.

There are two things that I want to major on in the short time I have to address the House tonight: the practicalities and the politics of the motion before us. I will start with the practicalities. Milton Keynes, as the House will know, was host to one of the coronavirus repatriation centres when, almost this time last year—time has flown—repatriations were taking place for British nationals and their dependants from Wuhan over to the UK. Quite frankly, it is a bit of a palaver getting people into converted hotel accommodation safely, given what we knew then and what we know now about the virus. I wonder whether Her Majesty’s official Opposition have clearly thought through how we get arrivals from overseas into hotel accommodation in the UK safely and in a covid-secure manner, because what they are suggesting is quite a logistical exercise.

Moving on from the practicalities, I turn to the politics. I mentioned that I was old enough to remember Labour’s last policy on borders, and I am old enough to remember the last time that an inadvertent policy position threatened the Northern Ireland protocol. Perhaps the Opposition Front Benchers might want to clarify how the common travel area between the UK and Ireland would be affected by their proposals. Would this be another EU diplomatic incident moment? Are they riding roughshod over the Northern Ireland protocol?

Quite frankly, I think we have some of the strictest measures in the world to prevent new strains of coronavirus from entering the UK. We have pre-departure testing, passenger locator forms, quarantine on arrival for at least 10 days, and a complete ban on flights from the highest-risk countries. What are the Opposition offering that is better than that?

9.43 pm

Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab/Co-op): I thank all Members who have taken the time to speak in this debate at this critical moment for our nation. We have heard a great number of insightful contributions. I refer particularly to the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee, my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), who was very clear that, from the start, not enough has been done; we have not learned the lessons. Even now when people are told to self-isolate and have a visit from the police, if there is no answer, there is no follow-up. We cannot keep the country safe if we cannot ensure that people are following the rules. My right hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) talked about the professionalism of the UK Border Force staff at Heathrow, many of whom are his constituents. This is not about the quality, experience and dedication of our frontline workers; fundamentally, this is about the Government’s failure of policy and failure to take action.

We heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) the repeated feeling that the Government just have not learned the lessons. The most important lesson, surely, is that we have to take swift action at the right time. The opportunity is here. This is not hindsight. We are looking ahead. We are seeing new strains coming across the world and we are saying that our vaccination roll-out could be affected if we do not get a grip. This is looking ahead, trying to help the Government to avoid what could well follow, because none of us wants that—none of us wants to risk the vaccination roll-out.

My hon. Friend the Member for Warrington North (Charlotte Nichols) quite rightly said that this is not a false choice set up in the way the Government want, whereby we have to choose between a health intervention or an economic intervention. They go hand in hand. If we are to have a health intervention, which is the right thing to do because this is a health crisis, then we marry that with an economic intervention, such as financial support for the aviation industry which has been devastated now for a year because of different lockdowns and the Government’s failure to have a coherent forward-looking strategy. It is crying out for more support and the Government have failed to provide it at every opportunity.

My hon. Friend the Member for Chesterfield (Mr Perkins) rightly asked the question: where on earth is the Home Secretary? This debate was secured by the shadow Home Secretary. Where is the Home Secretary? We looked in the Aye Lobby just in case she was waiting to vote, but she is not there either. I am not sure where she is. Maybe she does not want to be her own hypocrite by having a view completely in line with the motion down for debate and voting on, while having to stand at the Dispatch Box. Perhaps she values her job more than the public interest.

[*Jim McMahon*]

My hon. Friend the Member for Jarrow (Kate Osborne) talked about financial support being contingent. The Government talk a lot about the £3 billion support for aviation. That is correct—although, by the way, it is a fraction of the overall value to the UK economy—but it has come with no conditions: no conditions on jobs, no conditions on the supply chain, no conditions on UK taxpayer status, no conditions to rule out the payment of dividends. These are all the very basic measures we need.

Then, of course, there is our green recovery. How can we really build back better and rebuild this country to a vision we can be proud of? My hon. Friend the Member for Bethnal Green and Bow (Rushanara Ali) rightly said—this was a theme throughout most of the contributions—that the Government are always one step behind. There is a danger now, when we feel as though we are getting closer and closer, and vaccinations are being rolled out, that our amazing NHS staff, local government workers and our armed forces on the ground making a difference could be undermined if we fail to take action at this point.

My hon. Friend the Member for Luton South (Rachel Hopkins) again pointed out that the Government failed to take action. We have seen tens of thousands of people in aviation losing their jobs. We see more who have been threatened with fire and rehire. These are real-life consequences where people are not just facing a health pandemic and a health crisis, but are worried about how they are going to pay the mortgage. And where were the Government when the people of this country asked for help? They were nowhere to be seen when it came to aviation. It was a drop in the ocean. Aviation has a long way to go before it can rebuild.

My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, Riverside (Kim Johnson) talked about the track and trace system. Is that not the crux of why we are even having this debate in the first place? The track and trace system, which should have been world beating—God knows we paid for it—failed this country. It failed to keep tracing in place, so we cannot rely on it. Every intervention has to make up for a system that is fundamentally broken. We always have to go that bit harder because what we were promised has not been delivered.

We heard from Conservative Back Benchers. If we tot up their years of service, I am quite sure the Father of the House has given more service than the lot of them put together. These are all the new intake desperate for promotion. By the way, I hope they get the promotion they have auditioned for today, but I am afraid it is a failure of leadership that ignores the fact that we are in a very different position today than we were even last summer. Today we have a number of new strains of the virus that could undermine our vaccination roll-out. When we have the end in sight, there is also the threat that it could be undermined. That is the real danger.

We have no idea where the new strain might come from that would undermine all of this. It could come from anywhere in the world. When we talk about nations being on a list, we of course need to bear in mind that some nations have higher infection rates than others, not least the UK. The truth is that it is individuals

who carry the virus—not nations. If we do not have a programme in place to manage incoming passengers—individuals who may be carrying the virus—we cannot control it in the way we need to.

What is more telling in a sense is that the Government almost nod to the fact that their 10-day self-isolation system does not work. They compare the 10 days of self-isolation—by the way, they reach only 3% of contacts in that scheme—with hotel quarantine. If someone is told to self-isolate at home for 10 days and they do so, what is the real difference if they are self-isolating in a hotel? The Government know that many people do not adhere to the rules that are there to protect us all.

We see amazing work from our frontline heroes as vaccination continues to roll out. They have shown us what we have always known them to be: our NHS workers, the armed forces and local government are the very best of us, and they prove it day in, day out. We must not put that at risk. We must not allow such a poor system to risk undermining that gallant effort. The public are aghast, and the Government are on the wrong side of the public. How can we have a policy that says that the door to a local school is shut, but the border is open? It defies logic. People want to know that the Government have a coherent plan that will get us through to the other side.

We recognise that every health intervention needs to be accompanied by an economic intervention. We fully recognise that doing the right thing to protect our country will have an impact on aviation and jobs, so what we are saying is, “Marry the two together. Do the right thing for a health intervention, but make sure there is financial support.” The Chancellor promised a sectoral deal a year ago. That is what we are calling for—we are entirely in agreement with him, but he is taking time to deliver on his promise.

We have made it very clear that any financial support must come with clear conditions. It cannot just be a bail-out. The Government need to listen to the debate. The country is calling for leadership to look forward and get us through to the other side. The Government must not put up barriers on this. They should come with us, do the right thing and get ahead of the virus.

9.52 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Robert Courts): Let me begin by thanking all hon. Members who have contributed to today’s debate. We must keep this horrendous virus under control so that we can roll out the vaccines as quickly as possible and get back to our normal lives. I do not doubt that the whole House, whatever Members’ views, is united behind and resolute about that common goal.

The Government have always sought to steer a protective but practical course through this crisis based on scientific advice. In the face of a lethal enemy, we will continue to act in the best interests of the British people. We will continue to protect lives. We will continue to distribute our world-leading vaccine programme, because that is what will defeat the coronavirus. We will do everything to ensure that we can support an economic recovery that is as strong as it is safe.

The delivery of an effective vaccine, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) has noted, is the best way to protect the most vulnerable

in our society, to save thousands of lives, and ultimately to support the easing and removal of restrictions so that we can return to an era of safe international travel, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Epsom and Ewell (Chris Grayling) and my hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Saqib Bhatti) have said.

The whole country owes a debt of gratitude to the incredible health workers who are administering the jabs, as the hon. Members for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) and for Warrington North (Charlotte Nichols), among many others, have said. Vaccines have already been administered to 9.3 million UK residents and key workers—that is more than in the rest of Europe combined. As my hon. Friends the Members for Harborough (Neil O'Brien) and for Newbury (Laura Farris) have noted, that is due to the decisions that this Government have taken.

However, we cannot rest while the vaccines are being rolled out, and we have to take measures to protect our health and safeguard the NHS. That includes taking firm action to address the risk of new variants of the virus entering the UK and spreading through the population, potentially hampering that vaccine effort. There is no single measure that mitigates that risk entirely—it is the layers of actions that we have discussed today, in combination with the vaccine programme, that will turn the tide on the coronavirus.

As the Home Secretary set out last week, in the light of increasing concerns around new variants, mandatory quarantine measures for those arriving from high-risk countries are an essential next step to safeguard public health, and I assure the House that we are working urgently and will share those details shortly. But I stress that this essential step is just one part of a wider co-ordinated strategy to protect the nation. From the start of this pandemic, we have taken a robust approach to prevent imported cases of covid-19. That has included self-isolation requirements and the use of travel corridors to manage entry from high-risk countries. We have kept that approach under regular review, and changes have been made when the scientific evidence demanded it.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Robert Courts: I am sorry, I will not, because I am so short of time.

That is why we acted quickly to suspend all travel corridors following the surge in cases this winter; it is why we recently introduced pre-departure testing requirements, whereby passengers require a negative test before being allowed to travel to the UK, to further protect against imported cases; and it is why all international passengers arriving in the UK are required to complete a passenger locator form.

On enforcement, recent statistics show that enforcement action and the hard work of border officials has resulted in almost full compliance from those entering the country. Border Force has made 3 million spot checks, and it now aims to achieve 100% checks to tackle PLF and PDT non-compliance at the border, along with 100% covid compliance checks.

Yvette Cooper: Will the Minister explain what he means by 100% compliance checks? Does he just mean people filled in the form, or does he mean they were actually

checked to see whether they were self-isolating at home? If it is the latter, how does he explain the police figures from last week, which found a whole load of people who had been at home where no enforcement was taken?

Robert Courts: The right hon. Lady misheard me. I said that Border Force is working towards achieving that 100% check.

However, there is no room for complacency. We have taken additional steps to limit new covid-19 strains entering the country through the use of travel bans. We have banned travel from southern Africa, Brazil, South America, Portugal and the United Arab Emirates. We will be stepping up police enforcement, making sure that only those who absolutely must travel are leaving the country and checking that those who return are complying with the rules.

We can be clear that we already have in place a system of great robustness, as was noted by my hon. Friends the Members for Morley and Outwood (Andrea Jenkyns), for Derbyshire Dales (Miss Dines), for Rushcliffe (Ruth Edwards) and for Milton Keynes North (Ben Everitt). That includes pre-departure testing, a passenger locator form with enhanced enforcement, and 10 days' isolation—all assuming someone is not coming from one of the red list countries from which travel is banned, remembering that travel corridors are currently suspended.

In the time that I have remaining, let me deal with the main topic—why not a full travel ban? We have taken the robust but balanced approach that I referred to earlier. We have carefully considered all available options, including applying blanket restrictions, but they are not appropriate for our current situation. We are an island nation yet a global hub, and we are different from Australia and New Zealand, as my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle, among others, noted. It is critical that we allow freight to keep moving, and at present 40% of it arrives in the belly of passenger planes. That is the food on our tables, the PPE in our hospitals, the online goods that people order, the supplies that people working at home use.

No one should be fooled that a blanket approach, as we are having urged upon us today, would work. We have to look at what it would achieve. We have only to look at the United States, which closed its borders entirely in the early stages of this crisis and now has one of the worst pandemic experiences in the world, to see how vain that hope could be. Nor is it clear, as the Chairman of the Transport Committee said and as New Zealand and Australia have seen, how borders, once closed, will ever open up again. I therefore disagree with the right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) that we should follow that approach.

Mr Nicholas Brown (Newcastle upon Tyne East) (Lab) *claimed to move the closure (Standing Order No. 36).*

Question put forthwith, That the Question be now put.

Question agreed to.

Main Question accordingly put.

The House divided: Ayes 262, Noes 0.

Division No. 225]

[9.59 pm

AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie

Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir

Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, Jonathan
 Bardell, Hannah
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Black, Mhairi
 Blackford, rh Ian
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bonnar, Steven
 Brabin, Tracy
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Ms Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Callaghan, Amy
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Day, Martyn
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Debonnaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doogan, Dave
 Dorans, Allan
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Eastwood, Colum
 Edwards, Jonathan

Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fellows, Marion
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fletcher, Colleen
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Gray, Neil
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hanvey, Neale
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hill, Mike
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lake, Ben
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Chris
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David

Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Newlands, Gavin
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Nicolson, John
 Norris, Alex
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin

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

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Bambos Charalambous and
 Neil Coyle**

NOES

Tellers for the Noes:

**Matt Western and
 Jeff Smith**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House calls on the Government to immediately introduce a comprehensive hotel quarantine system for all arrivals into the UK, thereby securing the country against the import of new strains and maximising the effectiveness of the country's vaccination programme; to publish the scientific evidence which

informed the Government's decision not to introduce a comprehensive hotel quarantine regime to flights from all countries; and to announce a sector support package for aviation focused on employment and environmental improvements.

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.

Cultural Centres and Sporting Facilities: North West Durham

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*David T. C. Davies.*)

10.9 pm

Mr Richard Holden (North West Durham) (Con): It is a pleasure to be here with you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker.

In January 2020, after 18 months of work, Durham County Council—Labour-led for 102 years—produced its plan “Leisure Transformation”. Well, they say, hide it in the title if you can. All North West Durham gets from that £63 million is “refreshing the existing offer” at two leisure centres—no new services or facilities, but perhaps a bit of corporate signage.

Ninety-five per cent. of my constituents who responded to my survey on the issue say that the situation is totally unacceptable. It is a particular slap in the face for the people of Crook, who in 2011 had their swimming pool closed and demolished within weeks. Their town is not even mentioned in the 38-page executive summary that was presented to the Labour council cabinet. It is also a slap in the face for Consett. Five years ago, it had a new leisure centre built, but it is now closed, due not to covid but to terrible contracting and oversight by Durham County Council.

I would like to read a couple of the comments that people made on my survey. One said:

“If Crook Leisure Centre ever gets a pool, do whatever you can stop DCC from taking it over—I work at another DCC leisure centre, and their management is absolutely appalling.”

Another said:

“what is unacceptable is that 5 years after”

the leisure centre in Consett opened

“it should need to be closed for structural repair, this highlights a lack of due diligence”

in the entire process.

As the Secretary of State said in the House last week, Labour-run Durham County Council is in the process of building a £50 million new county hall on a floodplain. Even during the pandemic, Councillor Tinsley of Willington led a committee that approved a 3,500 square feet roof terrace to be added to it.

My constituents are fed up of being ignored by a Labour council and some faux-independent hangers on. They just want a reasonable cut of the cake when it comes to local leisure facilities. Often in spite of the council, my communities really come together when it comes to local leisure and sport. Aside from the pandemic, which has been a huge issue locally and has really knocked the sector for six, in general it has been thriving. We have four great football clubs: Willington, Tow Law, Crook and Consett. The juniors at Consett and Crook are going from strength to strength.

I have a fantastic local rugby union club, which I have visited on a couple of occasions, including one of its rather boozy social events. Up in the dale, we have some superb facilities and teams, including Durham Dales Hockey, which is desperately in search of a pitch. I will make a pitch for one to the Minister at another time. We also have some superb cycling and walking locally across the

[Mr Richard Holden]

north Pennines, in the beautiful area of outstanding natural beauty. We have some great gyms that provide a huge local services, and many other things.

Covid has knocked so many of those facilities and sports clubs for six. I appreciate some of the support that the Minister has given, but they are essential to people's mental health and wellbeing, so I really encourage him if at all possible to put that sort of activity right at the forefront of reopening. The truth is that many of those community clubs might get a few crumbs from the council's table, but they are not really getting a look in when it comes to proper capital support.

People in North West Durham feel left behind not just in leisure, but in cultural spending. For the county as a whole, the closure of the Durham Light Infantry Museum was a real hammer blow. There is some support from the council, which runs the Empire theatre in Consett—currently closed not due to the pandemic, but because it needs massive repair work—and some excellent investment is going in, but we need to ensure that this cultural hub can drive the town centre regeneration that so many of us want to see.

Central government and the lottery have stepped up during the pandemic. The heritage emergency fund has supported Ushaw College, the Durham Wildlife Trust, and the Weardale museum. Unusually for me, I will praise the national lottery rather than call it into question, because it did provide some excellent support for those community organisations. The cultural recovery fund has delivered over £1 million for our local music education hub, our local cultural entertainment centre based at Stanhope and, again, Ushaw College, which I visited just a few weeks ago to see its fantastic light display.

Again, culture is driven and sustained largely by local groups and local people. I visited Jack Drum Arts with Baroness Barran, and it does get some council support, but compared with what is going to other parts of the county, particularly the City of Durham and some of the projects the council see as the flagships, it really is pennies on the dollar.

Over in Leadgate we have some really good community projects, such as the Roxy. I have already written to the Secretary of State about it, and I urge the Minister to visit as well. Some fantastic work is going on there to turn things around and bring it to public view through the community investment company. It is a superb facility, which David has basically been working on by himself and raising money for locally, and I would really like some extra support. I had a recent meeting about it with one of the Minister's colleagues, but what is happening on the ground needs to be seen to get a feeling for it because, again, it is not really getting support from the council. Down at Crook, a local group is trying to revive the Empire Electric Palace, but the council is not stepping up to support it. The open-air swimming pool in Stanhope, which has faced real difficulties during the coronavirus pandemic, is another local institution that I will be fighting for over the coming years.

I have some asks of the Minister. When central Government cash is being distributed, wherever possible please put it in the hands of local communities and local organisations rather than in the hands of the council. The cultural recovery fund has been excellent

in my area, but I urge the Minister to consider extending it if possible. The fantastic Weardale Adventure Centre is probably the largest local employer at the top end of Weardale, but it cannot currently apply for cultural recovery fund money and it would really benefit from support—the team there is fantastic, and I have visited several times. Anything that the Minister could do to ensure that support can be accessed by more institutions would be really appreciated. I would love a visit from the Secretary of State or from the Minister just to see some of the great local community work that is going on both in local community sports and in the local community groups that are trying to revive the local area.

For too long, North West Durham has been left out on a limb. If the county council is spending £50 million on a new county hall with a roof terrace and £63 million on local leisure with none of it coming to my area, we have to look elsewhere for support, and that is what I am calling for today. Please ensure that funding goes straight through to local community groups in the towns and villages of North West Durham.

Finally, my constituents are a proud people who are fizzing with creativity, which can be seen in some of the great work of the Glass & Art Gallery on Medomsley Road in Consett, which is just up the road from my office. The lady there has worked on stained glass windows for churches across the globe. Some great young artists are doing fantastic outdoor painting and works, including on some of the shopfronts and at the Duke of Wellington pub, which is just down the road the other way from my office. There is real local enthusiasm, and local champions are pushing things from kids' sports and activities all the way through to the Weardale museum.

It is clear that the sectors of leisure and culture have been hit by covid, but it is those sectors that, crucially for communities such as mine, will really help to drive us out of it, particularly for the hospitality sector, which relies on the footfall from those people. Minister, please hear our pleas. Please ensure that that funding goes straight through wherever possible, and do not allow us to be constantly hamstrung by a county council more interested in itself than in local people.

10.20 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nigel Huddleston): I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for North West Durham (Mr Holden) for securing the debate. Sport and physical activity are more important than ever as we continue to fight against covid-19. I appreciate the passion with which he advocates for the provision of sport and leisure facilities in his constituency and, indeed, the broader issues that he raises about cultural investment in his constituency.

My hon. Friend's constituents are lucky to have him championing their cause. We have spoken many times about the issues and, indeed, the opportunities within the remit of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in his constituency—from sport, to heritage, culture, tourism and, indeed, gambling. I would be delighted to take him up on his offer to visit his part of the world in the near future and see at first hand some of the entities, institutions and people he proudly mentioned.

As hon. Members will be aware, on 4 January the Prime Minister announced the third national lockdown and asked people to stay at home to control the virus, protect the NHS and save lives. As a result, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, including swimming pools and leisure centres, have unfortunately had to close. Sport and physical activity are crucial to our mental and physical health. They are a powerful defence against the covid-19 pandemic, and we will need to raise levels of fitness among the population as we prepare to return to our normal lives, now that the vaccination programme has begun. Our local authority leisure and sports facilities will play a key role in enhancing our national health.

My hon. Friend focused particularly on the provision of swimming facilities. Of course, swimming is a wonderful way to exercise and a popular choice for many people to be active, including of course in County Durham. In Parliament, we are fortunate to have a very active all-party parliamentary group on swimming, which I have had the pleasure to meet on several occasions since the pandemic began. Swimming has a wide variety of benefits, including reducing stress and anxiety, improving health and wellbeing, building endurance and muscle strength, and improving cardiovascular fitness.

Furthermore, we all know that learning to swim saves lives, which differentiates it from many other sports, important as they are. Saving lives is a really important part of why swimming is so important. That is why swimming pools were one of the first sports facilities to be reopened following the initial lockdown, and were able to stay open in local tiers 1 to 3. The report “The Importance of Pools Post-lockdown”, published by Swim England back in May last year, highlighted how a 25-metre pool on its own can generate about £7 million of social value in the community and save the NHS and social care systems more than £1.2 million.

It is therefore no surprise that my hon. Friend is advocating for a swimming pool in his constituency. Before the lockdown, around 14 million adults in England went swimming each year, with more than 1 million children learning to swim outside of school through Swim England’s “Learn to Swim” programme, so it is a pleasure to hear him champion swimming in his constituency and, I understand, express disappointment in the current levels of provision there.

Support for sports facilities in north-west Durham has been taken up with Sport England directly. It is the arm’s length body with responsibility for activity levels and sport for DCMS, and I know that it would welcome further discussions with the council and my hon. Friend to develop a more robust assessment of the area’s strategic leisure needs. This will not be a standing start: since 2016, Sport England has invested over £425,000 of lottery and Exchequer funding in the North West Durham constituency, and since 1995, over £4 million. This includes £313,000 to Consett YMCA and over £80,000 to the Crook community leisure centre to support multi-sports facilities and to increase participation.

On the arts and culture side, which my hon. Friend also mentioned, through the £1.57 billion culture recovery fund there have been several awards to date in North West Durham—he mentioned some of them—totalling over £1 million in funding and including such entities as the Durham and Darlington music education hub, the

Association for Cultural Enterprises, and the St Cuthbert’s Society. That funding goes directly, as he requested, rather than via the local authorities.

More broadly, to support the return of grassroots sports, including swimming pools, once restrictions can be reduced, the Government have provided unprecedented support for businesses through tax reliefs, cash grants, employee wage support and a whole variety of other measures. We developed a £100 million support fund for local authority leisure centres. This national leisure recovery fund seeks to support eligible public sector leisure centres to reopen to the public, giving the sport and physical activity sector the best chance of recovery to a position of sustainable operations over the medium term. A total of £100 million is available as a biddable fund to eligible local authorities in England, and it will be allocated in a single funding round. My officials are currently in the process of assessing bids for the fund, and funding decisions will be communicated shortly.

This is all on top of the funding that Sport England has provided, which has comprised over £220 million to directly support the sport and physical activity sector, with £35 million set aside as a community emergency fund for our very important sports clubs and exercise centres. On 26 January, Sport England published its 10-year strategy, “Uniting the Movement”, and it also committed an extra £50 million to help grassroots sports clubs and organisations affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The Government, both with direct grants and through their ALBs, are doing what they can to help local councils and institutions to sustain their sporting and cultural offerings. My hon. Friend makes a compelling case for his constituents to get their fair share—or fair cut of the cake, as he described it—of any local and central Government investment. I hope that his local council is listening to his pleas, because he seems to be expressing some frustrations with its resource allocation decisions of late—frustrations that some of his constituents apparently share.

In terms of sport provision, as Sports Minister, I hope that councils always endeavour to provide access to facilities for as many people in their area as possible. One of the key drivers of increasing activity levels is of course easy access to sport and leisure facilities, and we rely on councils for that. Indeed, I praise councils for prioritising leisure facility provision, but it is not just a matter of how much they spend on sport and leisure, but where they spend it. This is a debate to be had locally rather than for me to dictate here in the Chamber today. I hope that my hon. Friend can and will have constructive discussions with his local council. No doubt this will be a political issue in the upcoming local elections, where I am confident that the local Conservative team will have a particularly compelling manifesto for his constituents to consider.

The past year has been like no other, but I really appreciate the collaboration we have had with all DCMS stakeholders at national and local level. I am determined that the sports and cultural sectors emerge from the pandemic stronger than ever, and I look forward to working with my hon. Friend and others in achieving just that.

Question put and agreed to.

10.28 pm

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	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nigel Adams (Selby and Ainsty) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Imran Ahmad Khan (Wakefield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Nickie Aiken (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Saqib Bhatti (Meriden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Tahir Ali (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kirsty Blackman (Aberdeen North) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mr Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con)	Chris Loder	Steven Bonnar (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Stuart Anderson (Wolverhampton South West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell
Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Edward Argar (Charnwood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Sarah Atherton (Wrexham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Suella Braverman (Fareham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Gareth Bacon (Orpington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kemi Badenoch (Saffron Walden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Shaun Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Paul Bristow (Peterborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	James Brokenshire (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudon) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Steve Barclay (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ms Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paula Barker (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Simon Baynes (Clwyd South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Margaret Beckett (Derby South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Robert Buckland (South Swindon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Alex Burghart (Brentwood and Ongar) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
		Richard Burgon (Leeds East) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
		Conor Burns (Bournemouth West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sir Geoffrey Cox (Torridge and West Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Byrne (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Virginia Crosbie (Ynys Môn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Amy Callaghan (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Jon Cruddas (Dagenham and Rainham) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP)	Sammy Wilson	John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
James Cartlidge (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)	Wendy Chamberlain
Miriam Cates (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
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
Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell
Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Dr James Davies (Vale of Clwyd) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Mims Davies (Mid Sussex) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Jo Churchill (Bury St Edmunds) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Feryal Clark (Enfield North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dehenna Davison (Bishop Auckland) (Con)	Ben Everitt
Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Theo Clarke (Stafford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Marsha De Cordova (Battersea)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Chris Clarkson (Heywood and Middleton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Caroline Dinéage (Gosport) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Miss Sarah Dines (Derbyshire Dales) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Elliot Colburn (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell
Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Michelle Donelan (Chippenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Dave Doogan (Angus) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Allan Dorans (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Ms Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Robert Courts (Witney) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		
Claire Coutinho (East Surrey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Oliver Dowden (Hertsmere) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Yvonne Fovargue (Makerfield) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Dr Liam Fox (North Somerset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mary Kelly Foy (City of Durham) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Rosie Duffield (Canterbury) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Lucy Frazer (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mike Freer (Finchley and Golders Green) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Richard Fuller (North East Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP)	Patrick Grady	Gill Furniss (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mark Eastwood (Dewsbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind)	Stuart Andrew	Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mark Garnier (Wyre Forest) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Nick Gibb (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Sir Alan Campbell (Ogmore) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Peter Gibson (Darlington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Natalie Elphicke (Dover) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jo Gideon (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell	Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell
Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Dame Cheryl Gillan (Chesham and Amersham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP)	Sammy Wilson
Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell	John Glen (Salisbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Michael Gove (Surrey Heath) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Laura Farris (Newbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Helen Grant (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance)	Wendy Chamberlain	James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Fell (Barrow and Furness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Neil Gray (Airdrie and Shotts) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind)	Stuart Andrew	Damian Green (Ashford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Colleen Fletcher (Coventry North East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Katherine Fletcher (South Ribble) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mark Fletcher (Bolsover) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Nick Fletcher (Don Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
		Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
		Kate Griffiths (Burton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
		James Grundy (Leigh) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Stewart Hosie (Dundee East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Sir George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Louise Haigh (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	John Howell (Henley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Paul Howell (Sedgefield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Luke Hall (Thornbury and Yate) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Dr Neil Hudson (Penrith and The Border) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Claire Hanna (Belfast South) (SDLP)	Ben Lake	Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Neale Hanvey (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mr Alister Jack (Dumfries and Galloway) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Rebecca Harris (Castle Point) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sajid Javid (Bromsgrove) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Trudy Harrison (Copeland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Ranil Jayawardena (North East Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mark Jenkinson (Workington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Andrea Jenkyns (Morley and Outwood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Boris Johnson (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Heapey (Wells) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gordon Henderson (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell	David Johnston (Wantage) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Darren Jones (Bristol North West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Darren Henry (Broxtove) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andrew Jones (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Anthony Higginbotham (Burnley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mike Hill (Hartlepool) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Fay Jones (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Damian Hinds (East Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Kate Hollern (Blackburn) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Simon Jupp (East Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Adam Holloway (Gravesham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Holmes (Eastleigh) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Conor McGinn (St Helens North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Danny Kruger (Devizes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Cherilyn Mackrory (Truro and Falmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Robert Langan (High Peak) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jim McMahon (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mrs Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con)	Mr William Wragg	Anna McMorris (Cardiff North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	John Mc Nally (Falkirk) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Karl McCartney (Lincoln) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Stephen McPartland (Stevenage) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Levy (Blyth Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Andrew Lewer (Northampton South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Brandon Lewis (Great Yarmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Alan Mak (Havant) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kit Malthouse (North West Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Scott Mann (North Cornwall) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Logan (Bolton North East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Julie Marson (Hertford and Stortford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Julia Lopez (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jack Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kenny MacAskill (East Lothian) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Robin Millar (Aberconwy) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Amanda Milling (Cannock Chase) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Abena Oppong-Asare (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Navendu Mishra (Stockport) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Kate Osamor (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kate Osborne (Jarrow) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Gagan Mohindra (South West Hertfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West)	Patrick Grady	Taiwo Owatemi (Coventry North West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Damien Moore (Southport) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sarah Owen (Luton North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (Con)	Sammy Wilson
Penny Mordaunt (Portsmouth North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Priti Patel (Witham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Joy Morrissey (Beaconsfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con)	Chris Loder	Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Holly Mumby-Croft (Scunthorpe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
David Mundell (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell	Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Christopher Pincher (Tamworth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell
Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell
Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lia Nici (Great Grimsby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Nicolson (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Tom Pursglove (Corby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jesse Norman (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Will Quince (Colchester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell	Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Tom Randall (Gedling) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Steve Reed (Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell
Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
		Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
		Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
		Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
		Nicola Richards (West Bromwich East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
		Angela Richardson (Guildford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Ms Marie Rimmer (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Rob Roberts (Delyn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Dean Russell (Watford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sir Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell	Wes Streeter (Ilford North) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC)	Ben Lake	Mel Stride (Central Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Selaine Saxby (North Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Paul Scully (Sutton and Cheam) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Julian Sturdy (York Outer) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Rishi Sunak (Richmond (Yorks)) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Grant Shapps (Welwyn Hatfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alok Sharma (Reading West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con)	Mr William Wragg
Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Sir Robert Syms (Poole) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell	Mark Tami (Alyn and Deeside) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sam Tarry (Ilford South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op)	Sir Alan Campbell
Chris Skidmore (Kingswood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Owen Thompson (Midlothian) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Alyn Smith (Stirling) (SNP)	Patrick Grady	Richard Thomson (Gordon) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Chloe Smith (Norwich North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Maggie Throup (Erewash) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Greg Smith (Buckingham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Edward Timpson (Eddisbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julian Smith (Skipton and Ripon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kelly Tolhurst (Rochester and Strood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Royston Smith (Southampton, Itchen) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Michael Tomlinson (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Craig Tracey (North Warwickshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Anne-Marie Trevelyan (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Amanda Solloway (Derby North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jon Trickett (Hemsworth) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
John Spellar (Warley) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Laura Trott (Sevenoaks) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Ben Spencer (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Elizabeth Truss (South West Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell	Karl Turner (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matt Vickers (Stockton South) (Con)	Chris Loder
Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Ben Wallace (Wyre and Preston North)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Jamie Wallis (Bridgend) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
David Warburton (Somerset and Frome) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Suzanne Webb (Stourbridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Claudia Webb (Leicester East) (Ind)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Heather Wheeler (South Derbyshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Mick Whitley (Birkenhead) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Whittingdale (Malden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nadia Whittome (Nottingham East) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Craig Williams (Montgomeryshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC)	Ben Lake
Gavin Williamson (Montgomeryshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Beth Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab)	Rachel Hopkins
Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP)	Patrick Grady
Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell
Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab)	Sir Alan Campbell

Written Statements

Monday 1 February 2021

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Zimbabwe

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and First Secretary of State (Dominic Raab): On 1 February 2021, I imposed asset freezes and travel bans on four individuals under the Zimbabwe (Sanctions) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

The four individuals designated were involved in brutal crackdowns by the Government of Zimbabwe on public protests. This includes events that led to the deaths of six demonstrators in August 2018 and of 17 demonstrators in January 2019, and resulted from the Zimbabwean security forces' use of excessive and disproportionate force. As a result, the designations focus on some of the most egregious human rights violations since President Mnangagwa took power.

This is the first set of designations of individuals under the UK's autonomous Zimbabwe sanctions regime since the regulations came fully into force on 31 December 2020. These sanctions are not targeted at the wider economy or the people of Zimbabwe. The UK is on the side of the Zimbabwean people and we will continue to work to reduce poverty and help Zimbabweans secure their constitutional freedoms. This sanctions regime seeks to press the Government of Zimbabwe to: respect democratic principles and institutions and the rule of law in Zimbabwe; refrain from actions, policies or activities which repress civil society in Zimbabwe; and comply with international human rights law and respect human rights.

These sanctions sit alongside the asset freeze on Zimbabwe defence industries, which was transferred from the EU Zimbabwe sanctions regime to the UK's autonomous Zimbabwe sanctions regime at the end of the transition period on 31 December.

The full list of designations is below:

Owen Ncube – Minister of State for National Security
 Anselem Nhamo Sanyatwe - Formerly Brigadier General, Commander of the Presidential Guard and Tactical Commander of the National Reaction Force
 Godwin Matanga - Commissioner General of the Zimbabwe Republic Police
 Isaac Moyo - Director General, Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO).

[HCWS749]

HOME DEPARTMENT

Hong Kong British National (Overseas) Route

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): I am pleased to confirm that the Government have launched the Hong Kong British national (overseas) (BNO) route on 31 January 2021.

The introduction of the Hong Kong BNO route follows the imposition of the national security law on Hong Kong by the Chinese Government in June 2020, which restricted the rights and freedoms of the people of Hong Kong and breached the joint declaration.

The basis for this route was established through changes to the immigration rules made on 22 October 2020, creating a route to settlement for BNO status holders from Hong Kong.

Eligible BNO status holders, and their family members, will be able to come to the UK to live, study and work. After five years in the UK, they will also be able to apply for settlement, followed by citizenship after a further 12 months.

As I have said throughout the development of this route, this is absolutely the right thing to do, in recognition of the historic commitment of the UK to the people of Hong Kong, and specifically to those who elected to retain their ties to the UK through obtaining BNO status.

I am also pleased to announce that from 23 February 2021, applications to the route can be made through a fully digital process, using the new technology developed for the UK's points-based immigration system.

This means that if an eligible applicant holds a BNO, Hong Kong special administrative region (HKSAR), or EEA biometric passport, they will be able follow a quicker and easier process by submitting their biometrics to validate their identity through a smartphone app, rather than visiting a visa application centre. Successful applicants will receive a digital status, which they will be able to check and prove online.

BNO status holders and their dependants are the second group after EEA nationals to have access to this new digital process, which further upholds our commitment to them.

In addition to the new route for BNO status holders, individuals from Hong Kong will also be able to apply to come to the UK under the terms of the new points-based immigration system, which will enable them to come to the UK in a wider range of professions and at a lower general salary threshold than in the past. They are also able to use student routes and have access to the youth mobility scheme.

Further detail about the route, including detailed applicant guidance, can be found at www.gov.uk/british-national-overseas-bno-visa.

HMG is working to ensure BNO status holders who take up this offer feel fully supported and welcomed when starting their life in the UK. I look forward to welcoming applications from those individuals who wish to make the UK their home.

[HCWS751]

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Design and Building Standards

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Robert Jenrick): In late 2018, the Government established the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission. Under the leadership of Nicholas Boys Smith and the late Sir Roger Scruton, it was tasked with championing beauty in the built environment

and advising the Government on the reforms needed to ensure new homes are built to much higher, locally popular design standards and reflect local character and preferences.

The Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's report, "Living with Beauty", set out 45 policy propositions, for Government and industry, on ways the planning and development process needed to change to provide the conditions for building more beautiful places. The report set out three principal aims: to "ask for beauty", to "refuse ugliness" and to "promote stewardship".

When the report was published, we welcomed the commission's recommendations and committed to taking forward as many of them as possible. We agreed with the commission's assessment that the design quality of new development is too often mediocre and that systemic change would be needed to ensure design and beauty were a core part of the planning process, not an afterthought.

Over the past 12 months, we have undertaken a review of the existing planning system to consider what changes the Government could make to deliver on the commission's ambitions. As part of this, on 6 August we published "Planning for the Future" which included proposals for putting beauty at the heart of the planning system. This set out the importance of setting local expectations on design, ensuring communities have their say and promoting more widespread use of digital technologies to open up the design and planning processes to communities and encourage more participation in the planning system.

Following this work, on 30 January 2021, we published a comprehensive response to the commission's report setting out clear steps the Government are taking to embed beauty, design and placemaking in the planning system.

First, we are proposing significant revisions to the national planning policy framework to put a greater emphasis on design and beauty. For the first time in the modern planning system, beauty and placemaking will be a strategic policy in their own right. This will put an emphasis on granting permission for well-designed buildings and refusing it for poor quality schemes. To ensure local preferences lie at the heart of this, we are asking all local authorities to work with local communities to produce local design codes or guides, setting out the design standards that new buildings will be expected to meet. These reforms will empower communities to expect and demand beauty in the built environment.

Secondly, we are also introducing a new expectation that all new streets should be tree-lined. This will deliver on the Government's manifesto commitment for tree-lined streets, improve biodiversity and support the Government's wider ambitions to plant 40 million trees. The updated national planning policy framework will also include wider changes to address environmental issues, including on managing the risk of floods, supporting heritage listings and amend the rules for the application of article 4 directions. The consultation on the revisions to the national planning policy framework was launched on the 30 January 2021 and will close on 27 March 2021.

Thirdly, in line with the commission's recommendations, we have produced the first national model design code. We agree with the commission's view that the use of

local design codes, in which communities have a say, is an effective way of setting design expectations that will shape and deliver beautiful homes and places. Whereas a design guide sets out high level principles of good design, a design code sets out illustrated design requirements that provide specific, detailed parameters or constraints for the physical development of a site or area. The national model design code provides a clear framework setting out the parameters that contribute to good design and a step-by-step process for local authorities to follow to produce their own local codes and guides. We have made clear in the national planning policy framework that all areas should produce their own codes or guides, based on the principles set out in the design code. The Prime Minister also recently set out his 10-point plan for a green industrial revolution, which will create, support and protect hundreds of thousands of green jobs, whilst making strides towards net zero by 2050. This includes plans to make cycling and walking more attractive ways to travel, making our homes, schools and hospitals greener, warmer and more energy efficient and protecting and restoring our natural environment, planting 30,000 hectares of trees every year, while creating and retaining thousands of jobs. This vision is at the heart of the national model design code which puts a strong emphasis on building greener and more energy-efficient developments.

Fourthly, to ensure communities understand the principles and vision set out in the national model design code and to support them to apply it, we intend to establish a new Office for Place within the next year. This organisation will draw on Britain's world-class design expertise to support communities to turn their visions of beautiful design into local standards all new buildings will be required to meet. We will be establishing an interim Office for Place within the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, with a transition board chaired by Nicholas Boys Smith tasked with considering what form the organisation should take, informed by responses to the "Planning for the Future" consultation. The interim Office for Place will begin the work to drive up design standards now. This year it will be piloting the design code with 20 communities and empowering local authorities to demand beauty, design quality and placemaking, through training on the principles outlined in the code. We have launched an expression of interest for local authorities to apply to be one of the first 10 pilot areas and the recipients of a share of £500,000 to support this work. We are seeking views on the draft national model design code, alongside the national planning policy framework consultation.

Fifthly, the Government are also relaunching the community housing fund, making £4 million available to help community land trusts bid for funds to support them to prepare bids for the £11.5 billion affordable homes programme. This programme is the largest investment in affordable housing in a decade and will provide up to 180,000 new homes across England, should economic conditions allow.

Looking forward, the Government's "Planning for the Future" White Paper published on 6 August 2020 outlined a set of reforms that are intended to lay the foundations for future house building and economic development, whilst meeting our commitments to design, the environment and climate. As more homes are delivered under the new system, they will be built to higher

standards, placing a clear emphasis on design, beauty, heritage and sustainability and ensuring that communities are at the heart of the planning system. We are currently analysing the 40,000 consultation responses and will publish a response in due course.

Finally, the Government are also encouraging local communities to nominate historic buildings, monuments, parks and gardens and other heritage assets they value so they can be protected through the planning system. Following an overwhelmingly positive response to the expressions of interest, funding has been doubled to £1.5 million, allowing 22 areas to develop and update their local heritage lists, instead of the ten originally announced.

The response to the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission's report, along with the reforms to the national planning policy framework, the national design code, the intention to establish the Office for Place and our wider proposals to reform the planning system, will ensure that for the first time design is established as a core pillar of the planning process. They will encourage a more diverse and competitive building industry. They will make the planning process more digital and accessible for everyone, not just those with planning expertise or with the time to attend late night meetings. They will support communities to define their visions of good design and empower them to demand these standards are met in all new developments. Ultimately, they will ensure that beautiful homes and places become the expectation and the norm.

[HCWS750]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Free Trade Agreements

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for International Trade (Mr Ranil Jayawardena): In under two years, HM Government have secured trade deals with 63 countries, which covered £217 billion of trade in 2019. Taken alongside our recent deal with the European Union, trade worth £885 billion in 2019 is now covered. No country, anywhere in the world, at any point in history, has conducted trade negotiations concurrently on this scale nor with our ambition.

We reached agreements with some of our largest trading partners such as Canada, South Korea, Switzerland and Norway—and agreed economic partnership agreements with South Africa, Kenya and others. Most recently, on 29 December 2020, we secured a trade agreement with Turkey—worth £18.6 billion in the previous full year. All have been on the basis of providing continuity to the existing trading arrangements that we enjoy and providing a firm foundation for deeper trading relations in the future.

This strong progress not only accounts for 97% of the value of trade with non-EU countries that we initially set out to secure agreements with—it goes further. Since the beginning of the transition period, we expanded the ambition of our programme to go above and beyond its original scope. In doing so, we secured agreements with Japan, Singapore, Vietnam and Turkey, which accounted for £72 billion of trade in 2019.

This has been the culmination of extensive work led by my Department, working hand-in-hand with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and

carried out across the whole of HM Government. While this has been a difficult time, we and our partners have adapted our work—as far as possible—to reflect the reality of the global pandemic, and respecting public health, to bring forward deals that work for British businesses and the British people.

Parliamentary scrutiny has, and always will be, important in trade negotiations. All continuity agreements are laid in Parliament under the terms of the Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 (CRaG) for scrutiny, and we will continue following this process for future trade agreements.

HM Government have built on statutory commitments by voluntarily publishing parliamentary reports alongside agreements, identifying and explaining clearly any differences with previous EU agreements. My Department has held close and constructive discussions with the parliamentary Committees on the progress of our programme over the last few years too; I was pleased to see this engagement praised by the Lords' International Agreements Sub-Committee in their report on working practices.

Trade remains a reserved matter, but we have engaged with the devolved Administrations, crown dependencies and overseas territories on the continuity programme regularly, including through sharing of texts and providing implementation support.

Where a continuity agreement was unable to complete the CRaG process before the end of the transition period, we have brought them into effect via “provisional application”, or through a “bridging mechanism”. These are tried and tested methods, used widely around the world, and do not affect Parliament's ability to fully scrutinise these deals under CRaG. All signed agreements will be submitted to Parliament for scrutiny. We have also recently re-published a technical note outlining how we have brought agreements into force and effect, as well as those we have not been able to complete, due to entry-into-force considerations.

Many deals have been done—even where it was previously thought by some to be impossible—but we have always been clear that we will only agree to a deal if it is in the British national interest, irrespective of deadlines. Likewise, factors in those countries with who are negotiating, such as elections or delays in forming a government, can intervene and halt trade negotiations.

As a result, it was not possible to secure agreements with Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Algeria, Montenegro and Albania by the end of the transition period. British exports to these markets totalled less than £1 billion in 2019, or just 0.07% of our total trade.

In addition, though we were unable to sign an agreement for entry into force on 1 January, Ghana reached a consensus with us on the main elements of an agreement on 31 December 2020. All these countries remain valued partners on a range of economic and security issues, so our message is clear—if they wish to regain the terms of trade that have existed in recent past, they will find a willing partner in Britain. We have published updated guidance on gov.uk to make sure businesses are aware of the changes that came into force at the turn of the year.

Our continuity programme will deliver a real and positive impact for British businesses and consumers. And this is not the end of the journey. There is more to do in the months and years ahead.

All the deals my Department is negotiating will bring trade and investment to Britain—delivering economic growth, creating opportunity in every corner of our great country, helping Britain bounce back.

Trade leads to better jobs and higher wages for workers; and more choice and lower prices for consumers. Trade helps protect our environment and protect our health. Trade is a force for good and I look forward to making further progress in the future.

[HCWS748]

Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership

The Secretary of State for International Trade (Elizabeth Truss): Today, the Government submitted their notification of intent to begin the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) accession process.

This notification of intent comes shortly after the UK celebrates one year since leaving the EU and becoming an independent trading nation.

It is our first step in accession to the CPTPP which is part of a big strategic move that aims to deepen the UK's access to fast-growing markets and major economies of the future, including Mexico, Malaysia and Vietnam, for the benefit of UK business.

Joining the £9 trillion free trade area will cut tariffs for vital UK industries like food and drink and cars and create new opportunities for future industries like tech and services, ultimately supporting and creating high-value jobs across the United Kingdom and helping the country build back better from covid-19.

Unlike EU membership, joining does not require the UK to cede control over our laws, borders, or money.

The UK would be the first country to take forward accession negotiations since the agreement was formed in 2018, putting us at the front of the queue to become the next full member. A number of other countries have also expressed an interest in joining, including Thailand, Colombia and South Korea.

Joining is a critical part of the Government's wider trade strategy, which aims to deepen links with some of the fastest growing parts of the world, partnering with countries who believe in free and fair trade.

The CPTPP is one of the most important free trade areas in the world, accounting for 13% of global GDP in 2019. CPTPP GDP would rise to 16% if the UK were to join.

The CPTPP removes tariffs on 95% of goods traded between members and reduces other barriers to trade across four continents. The CPTPP countries accounted for £111 billion worth of UK trade in 2019, and the 2016-2019 annual growth in UK trade with CPTPP member countries was 8% a year. Joining now opens the way to further increase trade with these economies, enabling the UK to build back better by bringing more opportunities for our businesses and supporting jobs for our people.

Benefits that membership will bring for businesses include:

Modern digital trade rules that allow data to flow freely between members, remove unnecessary barriers for businesses, and protect commercial source code and encryption.

Eliminating tariffs quicker on UK exports including whisky—down from 165% to 0% in Malaysia—and cars—reducing to 0% in Canada by 2022, two years earlier than through the UK-Canada trade deal.

Rules of origin that allow content from any country within the CPTPP to count as “originating”; for example, this would mean that cars made in the UK could use more Japanese-originating car parts, such as batteries.

Easier travel for businesspeople between CPTPP countries, such as the potential for faster and cheaper visas.

As well as removing trade barriers, the CPTPP helps businesses trade easily across borders and keep supply chains open and predictable. Joining the CPTPP will help us diversify our supply chains, which could help make us more resilient in an adverse environment such as the coronavirus pandemic.

Joining the CPTPP also creates an opportunity to help level up the UK. UK regions and nations exported between £1 billion and £3.7 billion worth of goods to CPTPP countries last year, including £2.4 billion worth of exports from Scotland, £2 billion from the north-west, and £3.1 billion from the east midlands.

CPTPP membership is a key part of the Government's plan to position the UK at the centre of a network of modern free trade deals that support jobs and drive economic growth at home, while also positioning us as a champion of free trade and reform of the rules-based system abroad.

The CPTPP sets modern rules in areas of increasing importance for UK industry and business. This includes strategically important sectors such as digital, financial, professional and business services. Digitally delivered services from the UK to CPTPP members, for example, already hit £18.7 billion in 2019; joining now creates an opportunity to unleash forward-leaning parts of our economy like this.

Furthermore, membership puts the UK in a prime position to help reshape these global rules in UK strengths like digital and data, and in services.

It would help to secure our future place in the world as a leader in a network of countries committed to free trade and send a powerful signal to the rest of the world that as an independent trading nation the UK will champion free trade, fight protectionism and remove barriers to trade at every opportunity. In doing so, we aim to turn the UK, a newly independent trading nation, into a global hub for businesses and investors wanting to trade with the rest of the world

Over the last two years, we have engaged with all 11 member countries at both ministerial and official level to discuss UK accession to the CPTPP. All CPTPP members have welcomed the UK's interest in accession.

As part of one of the largest consultation exercises run by the UK Government in 2018, we sought views on potential UK accession to the CPTPP and are using these responses to inform our preparations. We are continuing to engage business, civil society, and trade unions on an ongoing basis where they can outline their priorities.

As we have committed, the UK will publish their negotiation objectives, scoping analysis, and consultation response for public and parliamentary scrutiny, and when we are ready to begin formal negotiations.

We will only accede to CPTPP on terms compatible with the UK's broader interests and domestic priorities.

The Government have been clear that the NHS and the price it pays for drugs is not for sale in any trade negotiations—including the CPTPP—and that

they will not sign trade deals that compromise the UK's high environmental protections, animal welfare and food standards.

[HCWS747]

Ministerial Corrections

Monday 1 February 2021

TRANSPORT

Transport Decarbonisation

The following is an extract from oral questions to the Secretary of State for Transport on Thursday 28 January 2021.

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): With our borders open and our schools closed and the Prime Minister introducing new quarantine measures, the recent aviation test and release announcement is now in tatters. We want to decarbonise and we want to give the industry confidence, but the Jet Zero Council, much lauded by the Prime Minister, has met only once and has no workstreams and the Government are dithering over financing the airspace modernisation programme. When will the Secretary of State step up?

Grant Shapps: I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman missed my speech yesterday at Davos where I addressed that subject in detail. In fact, I want to correct the record of the House: the Jet Zero Council has actually met on two occasions and—wait for the punchline—has sub-committees that have met on many occasions, because they are the work horses of the Jet Zero Council and they bring together academia, the sector itself, Government and international partners to deliver zero-carbon flight by 2020. I refer him to my speech of yesterday, which he can get to from my tweet at @grantshapps.

[Official Report, 28 January 2021, Vol. 688, c. 537.]

Letter of correction from the Secretary of State for Transport:

An error has been identified in my response to the hon. Member for Wythenshawe and Sale East (Mike Kane).

The correct response should have been:

Grant Shapps: I am disappointed that the hon. Gentleman missed my speech yesterday at Davos where I addressed that subject in detail. **The Jet Zero Council has met on one occasion but has sub-committees that have met on many occasions**, because they are the work horses of the Jet Zero Council and they bring together academia, the sector itself, Government and international

partners to deliver zero-carbon flight by 2020. I refer him to my speech of yesterday, which he can get to from my tweet at @grantshapps.

WORK AND PENSIONS

Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit

The following is an extract from the debate on universal credit and working tax credit on 18 January 2021.

Will Quince: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Maintaining the uplift would cost a huge amount of money—somewhere in the region of £6 billion. But it is not just about that. Throughout this pandemic, we have always looked at how best to support the poorest, most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. Because this is an ever-emerging and changing situation—that is the very nature of a pandemic—we have to keep everything under review. That is why the Secretary of the State, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister do meet regularly to discuss all these issues. I want to make one further point because it was raised by the Chairman of the Select Committee: yes, we will continue the roll-out of universal credit, as we committed in our manifesto, ensuring that those on legacy benefits and working tax credits are moved across by 2022.

[Official Report, 18 January 2021, Vol. 687, c. 644.]

Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, the hon. Member for Colchester (Will Quince).

An error has been identified in my response to the debate.

The correct response should have been:

Will Quince: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Maintaining the uplift would cost a huge amount of money—somewhere in the region of £6 billion. But it is not just about that. Throughout this pandemic, we have always looked at how best to support the poorest, most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society. Because this is an ever-emerging and changing situation—that is the very nature of a pandemic—we have to keep everything under review. That is why the Secretary of the State, the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Prime Minister do meet regularly to discuss all these issues. I want to make one further point because it was raised by the Chairman of the Select Committee: yes, we will continue the roll-out of universal credit, as we committed in our manifesto, ensuring that those on legacy benefits and working tax credits are moved across by **2024**.

ORAL ANSWERS

Monday 1 February 2021

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
DEFENCE	663	DEFENCE—continued	
Armed Forces Covenant	672	Defence Estate	663
Armed Forces Covenant: Military Charities	666	Defence Procurement:	
British National (Overseas) Immigration Pathway	671	Net Zero Carbon Emissions Target.....	673
Covid-19: Armed Forces Professional		Dreadnought Class Nuclear Submarine.....	675
Development.....	676	Military Training: Overseas Armed Forces	664
Covid-19: Overseas Territories	675	Procurement.....	676
Covid-19: Regional Support.....	664	Soft Power.....	674
Defence Equipment	669	Topical Questions	677
Defence Equipment Programme	668	Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.....	672

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Monday 1 February 2021

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND		HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL	
DEVELOPMENT OFFICE	19WS	GOVERNMENT	20WS
Zimbabwe	19WS	Design and Building Standards.....	20WS
HOME DEPARTMENT	19WS	INTERNATIONAL TRADE	23WS
Hong Kong British National (Overseas) Route	19WS	Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for	
		Trans-Pacific Partnership.....	25WS
		Free Trade Agreements	23WS

MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

Monday 1 February 2021

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
TRANSPORT	5MC	WORK AND PENSIONS	6MC
Transport Decarbonisation	5MC	Universal Credit and Working Tax Credit.....	6MC

No proofs can be supplied. Corrections that Members suggest for the Bound Volume should be clearly marked on a copy of the daily Hansard - not telephoned - and *must be received in the Editor's Room, House of Commons,*

**not later than
Monday 8 February 2021**

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT GREATLY FACILITATES THE
PROMPT PUBLICATION OF BOUND VOLUMES

Members may obtain excerpts of their speeches from the Official Report (within one month from the date of publication), by applying to the Editor of the Official Report, House of Commons.

CONTENTS

Monday 1 February 2021

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 663] [see index inside back page]
Secretary of State for Defence

Opposition Day [16th allotted day]

Unsafe Cladding: Protecting Tenants and Leaseholders [Col. 685]
Motion—(Thangam Debbonaire)—on a Division, agreed to

Covid Security at UK Borders [Col. 752]
Motion—(Nick Thomas-Symonds)—on a Division

Cultural Centres and Sporting Facilities: North West Durham [Col. 792]
Debate on motion for Adjournment

Written Statements [Col. 19WS]

Ministerial Corrections [Col. 5MC]

Written Answers to Questions [The written answers can now be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/writtenanswers>]
