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HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 26 April 2021

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

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(FORMED BY THE RT HON. BORIS JOHNSON, MP, DECEMBER 2019)

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Monday 26 April 2021

THE PARLIAMETARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTY-EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF THE
UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND
[WHICH OPENED 17 DECEMBER 2019]

SEVENTIETH YEAR OF THE REIGN OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II

SIXTH SERIES

VOLUME 693

TWENTY-FIFTH VOLUME OF SESSION 2019-2021

House of Commons

Oral Answers to Questions

Monday 26 April 2021

EDUCATION

The House met at half-past Two o'clock

The Secretary of State was asked—

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.]

BUSINESS BEFORE QUESTIONS

HIGHGATE CEMETERY BILL [*Lords*]: SUSPENSION

Ordered,

That the promoters of the Highgate Cemetery Bill [*Lords*], which was originally introduced in the House of Lords in this Session on 22 January 2020, should have leave to suspend any further proceedings on the Bill in order to proceed with it, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament according to the provisions of Standing Order 188A (Suspension of Bills).—(*The Chairman of Ways and Means.*)

MONKEN HADLEY COMMON BILL: SUSPENSION

Ordered,

That the promoters of the Monken Hadley Common Bill, which was originally introduced in this House in this Session on 22 January 2020, should have leave to suspend any further proceedings on the Bill in order to proceed with it, if they think fit, in the next Session of Parliament according to the provisions of Standing Order 188A (Suspension of Bills).—(*The Chairman of Ways and Means.*)

Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Ian Levy (Blyth Valley) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to support children with special educational needs and disabilities. [914719]

Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to support children with special educational needs and disabilities. [914748]

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson): The best place for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs is at school. That is why we kept schools open throughout the pandemic. The high needs budget has grown by £1.5 billion in two years, and £42 million has been made available for specialist organisations to support children with special educational needs.

Ian Levy [V]: During my campaign in 2019, I became aware that parents of children with special educational needs in Blyth Valley were very concerned about the lack of educational provision for their children. I am delighted that plans are now well under way for the opening of a new special educational needs school in Blyth on the site of the old Princess Louise First School, in an area well known to a lot of my constituents. Will my right hon. Friend do all he can to ensure that this much-needed facility will be available as quickly as possible for these children, who so desperately need the additional support and resources that it will offer?

Gavin Williamson: I join my hon. Friend in recognising the important role of this new free school, led by the Prosper Learning Trust. It will make a real impact on so many children in his constituency, and I look forward to working closely with him and with the new school to ensure that we deliver the very best special educational needs education in his constituency.

Rob Butler [V]: The all-party parliamentary group for special educational needs and disabilities heard some very moving and sometimes concerning personal experiences from young people about the impact of the pandemic on them. I know that schools and local authorities, including in Buckinghamshire, worked incredibly hard to provide the best services they could, but could my right hon. Friend reassure the House that help and funding will be made available specifically to support the mental health of young people with SEND as part of the recovery from the pandemic?

Gavin Williamson: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight some of the challenges that young people suffer, especially in the area of mental health. That is why, just a short while ago, we announced extra provision and extra money and resources to support children in schools and make sure they have the very best mental health, and we are supporting schools in doing that.

Lost Learning: Covid-19

Mark Logan (Bolton North East) (Con): What support his Department is providing to help children catch up on learning lost during the covid-19 outbreak. [914720]

Paul Holmes (Eastleigh) (Con): What support his Department is providing to help children catch up on learning lost during the covid-19 outbreak. [914749]

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson): Helping pupils to make up learning is vital. That is why this Government have invested £1.7 billion to provide support to help pupils get back on track as they return to school.

Mark Logan [V]: From its birth in Bolton to its national roll-out, Tutor The Nation has connected schools in more challenging areas to carefully vetted volunteers, supported by professional tutors working for free. Unfortunately, Tutor The Nation is unqualified to participate in the national tutoring programme. What support can the Secretary of State's kind Department provide to Tutor The Nation, to give children across the UK the same opportunities that we are enjoying in Bolton?

Gavin Williamson: The national tutoring programme is making great progress in supporting so many children right around the country. I am certainly happy to look into Tutor The Nation in greater detail, to see whether there is more we can do to work closely with it, to ensure that we are able to continue with the great expansion of the national tutoring programme across all constituencies.

Paul Holmes [V]: As we support vulnerable and disadvantaged children in returning to the classroom, ensuring that they have routines and structures in place

to help them reach their potential will be essential. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we cannot overestimate the importance of promoting behaviour and discipline in schools in our ambition to give every child a quality education?

Gavin Williamson: We all know how important it is that we create calm, positive and good environments for children to flourish in, and strong behaviour and discipline policies have been the hallmark of being able to do that. It is particularly important for children from some of the most disadvantaged backgrounds to ensure that we create the type of environment in schools that we want and expect to see right across the country.

Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): The national tutoring programme is reaching only one in six pupils on free school meals, and changes to the school census date mean that schools are also losing out on thousands of pounds of pupil premium funding for those students. Will the Secretary of State now come clean and publish his Department's full financial analysis of the funding lost to schools from this pupil premium stealth cut?

Gavin Williamson: The hon. Lady forever moans and complains about the resources—the extra resources—that we have been putting into schools. Just a short time ago, we unveiled a £14.4 billion expansion of funding into secondary schools.¹ On top of that, we have outlined a further £1.7 billion that is going to support schools in helping to ensure that children are able to catch up having been away. We continue to make those investments and to make that difference.

Kate Green: So are headteachers moaning when they say that the pupil premium stealth cut means that they will not be able to pay for speech and language therapy, or a teaching assistant, or additional small group sessions? One head told me that they lose out more on pupil premium cuts than they receive in catch-up funding. This is not a Government that are serious about catch-up. Will the Secretary of State guarantee that no school will be worse off as a result of his changes to the pupil premium?

Gavin Williamson: This Government are delivering real increases for schools right across the board. We are delivering an extra £1.7 billion in support to schools to ensure that they are able to help children to catch up. That is what we are doing. That is the difference we are making through schemes such as the national tutoring programme. This is making a real impact on children's lives. We are proud of that and we will continue to drive it forward.

Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con) [V]: While I strongly support the Government's summer holiday activities programme, there is a risk that disadvantaged pupils may be less likely to attend. Extending the school day with proper buy-in from parents and pupils makes it easier to engage disadvantaged pupils who are already through the school's gate. All the evidence suggests that extending the school day has beneficial effects, including increasing educational attainment by an additional two months, and Sheffield Hallam University has said that it generates £4.5 million from improved educational attainment. Will my right hon. Friend support extending

1. [Official Report, 16 June 2021, Vol. 697, c. 2MC.]

the school day, and can he confirm whether the Government have conducted any modelling to calculate the potential cost of an extended school day in England?

Gavin Williamson: My right hon. Friend is right to highlight the fact that we want to ensure that children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds will be among the key beneficiaries of any changes and further interventions we make to ensure that children are able to catch up. One of those areas, which it is right to look at, is an extended school day and how we ensure that children from all backgrounds can benefit from being in school longer. That is why we have asked Sir Kevan Collins to look at this with us. We are doing extensive modelling on this whole area, looking at a whole range of different options, not just on the time in a school day, but targeting schemes such as the National Tutoring Programme as well as supporting teachers in their professional development and continuing to raise the quality of teaching in all our classrooms.

Adult Education Devolution: Choice of Colleges

Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect of the devolution of the adult education budget to combined authorities on the choice of colleges available to students living near the authority boundary. [914721]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Gillian Keegan): Devolution gives providers an opportunity to work with mayoral combined authorities to shape the ways in which they can contribute to meeting skills needs locally, so that more people of all ages and backgrounds are given the opportunities to develop the skills and experience they need. Devolution is based on the residency of learners, so where learners reside near boundaries, they need to attend a provider with which their funding body contracts. Many providers are funded through a number of areas to overcome this.

Rosie Cooper [V]: Both Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Liverpool city region have been refusing funding for their residents looking to study outside their boundaries. That is severely limiting the choices available to students and has left West Lancashire College in my constituency, near both the Liverpool and Greater Manchester boundaries, with a greatly reduced potential student pool. Liverpool has agreed to stop this but Greater Manchester has not. What advice can the Minister give to local authorities acting in this protectionist way with taxpayers' funds, to the detriment of places such as West Lancashire College?

Gillian Keegan: We would encourage all mayoral combined authorities always to look at outcomes for learners. We are there to ensure that learners get the best experience and outcomes. The White Paper that we published in January 2021 sets out the Government's overall objective for the funding system, which is to streamline the system so that there is a simpler allocation approach that will give greater autonomy and flexibility, and we also want an effective approach that improves accountability. We are currently working with the sector to develop and test our proposals ahead of consultation.

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): The Minister refers to a simpler adult education funding approach, but the decision to increase the adult education clawback threshold from 68% last year to 90% this year, and to impose it at the last minute, will place many colleges in a brutal financial situation. Leicester College, for example, is forecasting that it could be as much as £4 million worse off than expected. The Government can either commit to a skills-based revolution, as they claim they want to do, or endanger the sector by repeatedly cutting its funding; they cannot do both. Why is there such a dangerous discrepancy between what the Government say they want on further education and what they do?

Gillian Keegan: The Government have actually increased funding across the sector quite significantly in many different ways. On the issue that the hon. Gentleman refers to, it is wrong to categorise it as such. We have effectively changed from 97%, which is the clawback this year, down to 90%, thereby giving colleges some leeway. He refers to a previous year, and it is true that we did reduce it to 68%, because that was at the very beginning of the pandemic. We have asked providers to keep provision available, to move online and to give learners that experience, and we have given them time to do so. That is a fair approach.

University of Central Lancashire: Medical Degrees

Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Co-op): What recent discussions he has had with the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on allocating a higher number of domestic medical places to the University of Central Lancashire's bachelor of medicine and bachelor of surgery programme. [914722]

The Minister for Universities (Michelle Donelan): Although the Department of Health and Social Care leads on this area, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the University of Central Lancashire for the excellent job it is doing. The Government are committed to supporting the NHS by ensuring that its future workforce needs are met. Over recent years we have created an extra 1,500 medical school places and opened five new medical schools across the country, and as a result we have seen record numbers of medical students in training.

Sir Mark Hendrick [V]: Mr Speaker, as a neighbouring MP to me, you know that the quality of education at the University of Central Lancashire medical school has been independently assessed as excellent. At a time when the health service has been crying out for more doctors during the covid-19 pandemic, can the Minister please provide assurances that, through her discussions with the Department for Health and Social Care, the University of Central Lancashire will be allocated an evidence-based significant increase in its permanent allocation of domestic medical school places, for the benefit of the county of Lancashire and the wider north-west region as a whole?

Mr Speaker: I am sure that Chorley would like to hear the answer.

Michelle Donelan: The cap on medical places was lifted last year, and those medical students who had to defer will not count towards the cap this year. If medical training places are to be permanently raised, there will

be a process for medical schools to apply for a proportion of the expansion, just as was the case with the recent uplift of 1,500. I am sure that the hon. Member will be more than happy to meet the Minister for Care, my hon. Friend the Member for Faversham and Mid Kent (Helen Whately), who also looks after workforce matters, and that she would be only too happy to discuss the issue with him.

T-Levels: Industry Placements

Robert Largan (High Peak) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to ensure that all students taking T-levels receive a high-quality industry placement. [914723]

Chris Clarkson (Heywood and Middleton) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to ensure that all students taking T-levels receive a high-quality industry placement. [914728]

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson): The Government have invested £165 million to help providers to prepare for and deliver industry placements, building capacity in their relationships with employers. We have invested nearly £7 million so far in direct support for employers, and we are also exploring what short-term funded support may be appropriate to enable employers to offer placements.

Robert Largan [V]: I welcome the Government's plan for jobs, which rightly prioritises technical education. Does the Education Secretary agree that investing in further education and T-levels in places such as the High Peak is vital for our economic recovery, for improving skills and training, and for increasing opportunity, helping local people of all ages and backgrounds into good-quality jobs?

Gavin Williamson: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. It is so vital that we see the roll-out of T-levels. These qualifications have been designed hand in glove with employers to make sure that they are delivering not only for students, but for the employers themselves. As we roll out our skills accelerators across the country, we are putting in £65 million-worth of further investment to ensure that we start to link up jobs, skills and young people, to ensure that we are getting the workforce right for the future.

Chris Clarkson: Each T-level comes with a 45-day placement in industry, which is a fantastic opportunity for young people to get some real-life experience of their chosen sector. However, owing to competing pressures on business at the moment, some businesses are reluctant to commit to these qualifications, so will my right hon. Friend meet me and the principal of Hopwood Hall College to discuss how we ensure that young people can access these qualifications and that they turn out to be the success that they clearly should be?

Gavin Williamson: I would be delighted to meet my hon. Friend and the principal of Hopwood Hall College to discuss that. It is incredibly important to ensure that we get this right and that it works, and for T-levels such an important element of that is the industrial placements that those young people will be able to benefit from.

I think that there is agreement on both sides of the House on the importance of getting this right, and I very much hope that we can continue to build on the original consensus about the vital role that T-levels can play in ensuring that our young people have the right level of technical skills to meet our future economic needs.

Speech and Language Therapy

Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the effect on children's attainment of the (a) suspension of and (b) time taken to deliver speech and language therapy in schools. [914724]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Vicky Ford): We have been very clear that speech and language therapists are able to visit educational settings and that ideally they should not be redeployed during the most recent lockdown, although that was not always possible in all parts of the country, so some children will have missed some therapy sessions. However, I met representatives of the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists last week to discuss this important issue.

Steve McCabe [V]: I thank the Minister for her answer, but she will be aware that reports say that 70% of families do not have access to pre-pandemic levels of speech and language therapies. When does she hope to see this restarted in all schools? What specific steps is she taking to address the educational impact of delays for children who need this particular support?

Vicky Ford: We have been very clear that speech and language therapists are able to attend all educational settings. As we move out of restrictions, more therapists are back in schools delivering face-to-face therapy. Schools can use their catch-up and recovery funding to purchase additional therapies, and we know of examples where that has already happened. For example, my advisers spoke to a special school in Greater Manchester that has done exactly that, and it was very pleased with the services provided. Therapies are really important for children with special educational needs and disabilities, and we want them back as soon as possible. That is why we are investing more of our recovery and catch-up funding in special schools and for those with SEND than we would for others.

Official Development Assistance Reductions: Higher Education

Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP): What recent discussions his Department has had with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effect of official development assistance funding reductions on (a) higher education research and (b) universities. [914725]

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): What recent discussions his Department has had with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effect of official development assistance funding reductions on (a) higher education research and (b) universities. [914733]

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): What recent discussions his Department has had with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the effect of official development assistance funding reductions on (a) higher education research and (b) universities. [914762]

The Minister for Universities (Michelle Donelan): My Department and I regularly discuss research in universities in England with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and with the Minister for science, research and innovation, my hon. Friend the Member for Derby North (Amanda Solloway). Overall, Government investment in research and development across the UK is up to £14.9 billion in 2021-22, following four preceding years of significant growth. This shows the clear benefits of the Union in delivering on science and research across the nation.

Kirsten Oswald [V]: The Universities of Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle and Coventry have all been leaders in the global challenges research fund. With the cuts to ODA, they are now having to find additional seven-figure funding to keep life-saving research going. Is this really the Tories' fabled levelling-up agenda?

Michelle Donelan: The Government recognise the importance of supporting international research partnerships and the UK research sector, especially our universities. Our commitment to research and innovation was clearly demonstrated by the recent Budget announcement that we are increasing investment in research and development to £14.6 billion. International collaboration is central to a healthy and productive R&D sector and, as a result of the policies of this Government, UK scientists will have access to more public funding than ever before.

Stuart C. McDonald [V]: Twelve flagship research hubs were supposed to run projects lasting five to 10 years in support of the sustainable development goals. Some of those projects are midway through clinical trials on humans but, thanks to the recent cuts, might not be able to continue, thereby jeopardising both the research and research jobs. How on earth can the Government justify funding cuts to research projects in the middle of human clinical trials, in clear violation of medical ethics?

Michelle Donelan: The hon. Gentleman might like to take up his question with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, which is ultimately responsible for research. On 1 April, BEIS set out an additional £250 million of funding for R&D—as a result of which, as I have said, UK scientists will have access to more public funding than ever before—taking the total Government investment in R&D to £14.9 billion in 2021-22, despite what the Opposition would have the public believe.

Alan Brown: Because of the ODA cuts, universities have reported that research contracts have been terminated, sometimes with just a few hours' notice. This has undermined trust between researchers, universities and UK Research and Innovation, and it also means that research commissioners now require a risk assessment on the UK Government's ability to honour contracts.

Why does the Minister think it is acceptable that the UK Government's promises mean so little that they need to be risk assessed?

Michelle Donelan: On the actual ODA allocations, BEIS is currently working with UKRI, all global challenge research funds and its Newton fund delivery partners to manage the financial year 2021-22, including by determining which projects will go ahead. Its delivery partners have been communicated with, and award holders will set out the next stages of the review of ODA funding next year and explore the options available for individual programmes.

Northern College, Barnsley: Residential Provision

Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab): What steps he is taking to ensure the future sustainability of residential provision at Northern College in Barnsley. [R] [914726]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Gillian Keegan): The Further Education Commissioner carried out a diagnostic assessment at Northern College in February, and a structure and prospects appraisal started this month, on 21 April. A number of options are being considered to improve the college's financial position. We will continue to work with Sheffield City Region Mayoral Combined Authority and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, which will provide the majority of the college's funding from August 2021.

Dan Jarvis [V]: I am grateful the Minister for that response. She will know that Northern College is one of Barnsley's proudest institutions—it provides an outstanding level of education and reaches disadvantaged learners—but financially it is on the brink. In respect of the Government's review, will the Minister commit to working closely with local stakeholders, so that together we can do everything we can to ensure that Northern College retains its independence and its residential provision?

Gillian Keegan: I have had many representations from MPs in the hon. Gentleman's area, not least my hon. Friend the Member for Penistone and Stocksbridge (Miriam Cates). As I said, the structure and prospects appraisal began on 21 April. Membership of the steering group includes representatives of the college governing body, the interim FE Commissioner, the deputy FE Commissioner, senior officers from the two combined authorities and the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The FE Commissioner's team has made contact with all local MPs and I have offered a call with all local MPs. We are committed to work in good faith to ensure that we look seriously at the options for Northern College.

End-of-Year Assessments 2021

Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth) (Con): What progress he has made on ensuring that there is an effective end-of-year assessment process for school students in 2021. [914727]

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): In the absence of statutory assessments, primary schools continue to assess children's attainment and support the transition to secondary education. Guidance has been published to support secondary schools to determine grades for GCSE, A-levels and AS-levels, as well as vocational and technical qualifications. Students can be assured that grades will be as fair and consistent as possible and that they will be able to move on to the next stage of their education and careers.

Dr Evans [V]: I am grateful to the Minister for his answer. I met students from years 11 and 10 and the staff from South Charnwood High School near Markfield. They are very concerned about the assessments not only for this year, but for next year as well. What work is going on to look at future assessments to make sure that what happens is fair not only this year, but next year and subsequently, because those pupils are anxious?

Nick Gibb: My hon. Friend raises an important point. We remain clear that exams are the fairest method of assessment. We know that students at South Charnwood High School and elsewhere will be working hard to prepare for exams in 2022. We continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic, and we will announce our plans to ensure that pupils in years 10 and 12 can be awarded grades safely and fairly in 2022.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): Like so many other aspects of the Government's coronavirus response, the Department for Education's handling of exams has been a total disaster. Schools are currently grappling with a whole series of challenges that could have been easily avoided if only the Department had planned ahead. Can we finally have the triumph of hope over experience, and the Government learn their lessons from last year's disaster and the unfolding disaster this year and publish plans for next year so that those exams are not a disaster, too?

Nick Gibb: Given the disruption to children's education over the past year, it would not be fair for exams to go ahead as normal. On 15 January, 11 days after the decision was taken to cancel exams, we consulted Ofqual on the details of alternative arrangements to ensure that students can be awarded a grade and can move on to the next stage of their lives, despite the fact that we have had to cancel exams. That consultation received more than 100,000 responses. This year's students taking their GCSEs and A-levels and some vocational and technical qualifications will receive grades determined by their teachers based on a range of evidence, including in-class tests, course work and optional exam board-provided sets of questions. Robust internal and external quality assurance processes are in place to ensure fairness and consistency. We will monitor the position regarding 2022 and we will make a statement then.

Mr Speaker: Order. I say gently to the Minister that that must have been the longest answer. I am sure that he would like to get some other colleagues in.

Covid-19: School Reopenings

Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): What assessment his Department has made of the progress made by schools on fully reopening as covid-19 lockdown restrictions have eased. [914729]

Holly Mumby-Croft (Scunthorpe) (Con): What assessment his Department has made of the progress made by schools on fully reopening as covid-19 lockdown restrictions have eased. [914742]

Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con): What assessment his Department has made of the progress made by schools on fully reopening as covid-19 lockdown restrictions have eased. [914746]

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson): The return to school from 8 March has been very successful. Just before Easter, on 25 March, 99.8% of state-funded schools were open. From 15 April, pupil attendance in state-funded schools was at 94%. That is higher than at any point during the autumn term.

Anthony Browne: School funding in South Cambridgeshire has been a particular focus of mine and something that I have raised with the Department before. We have the sixth lowest funding in the country, with £400 per pupil per year less than the national average. The formula means that small village schools are particularly badly affected. Last week, I met one chair of governors of a primary school that has had to make a teacher and an assistant teacher redundant and has now had to merge the years. Will my right hon. Friend consider a change to the system to help small schools that have high fixed costs per capita but that are expected to meet the same standards as larger schools with comparatively higher funding?

Gavin Williamson: We all know the very important role that small schools play in our communities and villages right across the country. That is why we took the decision to increase the funding to support them from £26 million to £42 million in the latest settlement. That is on top of the fact that we are increasing spending on our schools right across the board, and, for this financial year, my hon. Friend's schools will receive, on average, a 3.8% increase in their funding, which goes to show that we recognise the importance of fair funding right across the country.

Holly Mumby-Croft: I thank the Secretary of State for the work that his Department has done with the Engineering University Technical College in Scunthorpe on its new and exciting health, sciences and social care course. Will he welcome this course and encourage young people in Scunthorpe to look at everything that is on offer, because colleges have not had their usual opportunity to speak to students and visit schools during this unusual year?

Gavin Williamson: I congratulate the Northern Lincolnshire University Technical College. UTCs do an amazing job right around the country, not least in my hon. Friend's constituency. They can be truly transformative to young people's life chances. I very much look forward to working with her to make sure that that message is put out there. It is also quite right to pay tribute to the amazing work of Lord Baker who has done so much to champion the cause of UTCs, making sure that they opened up opportunities for so many young people in all of our constituencies.

Mrs Murray [V]: An important part of my and my children's education was visiting places such as our fantastic museums. What work is being undertaken to ensure that those visits can resume safely as our country comes out of lockdown?

Gavin Williamson: We all know that children gain so much from visiting museums and other great cultural institutions right around the country. I was delighted that the latest step out of lockdown taken by this

country meant that children were able to go on non-residential visits around the country. Moving into step 3 will be another opportunity—for young people to be able to visit museums. It will be so important for them to have that experience. We look forward to working with schools and encouraging them to make such visits—not least, of course, in my hon. Friend's part of world in Cornwall.

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab) *rose*—

Mr Speaker: Order. Question No. 23.

50 to 66-year-olds: Qualifications

John Spellar (Warley) (Lab): What recent assessment his Department has made of the proportion of the population aged between 50 and 66 that have a university degree or two A-levels. [914730]

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson): I always feel nervous to cut off the right hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar) when he is in full flow. Office for National Statistics data for 2020 shows that 29% of those aged 50 to 64 have a degree, and 20% have A-levels or equivalent as their highest qualification. This Government are committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to upskill, including through: the lifetime skills guarantee, which includes free courses for jobs; new skills boot camps, funded by £375 million, made available through the national skills fund; and a new lifelong loan entitlement.

John Spellar: This question is very timely because, in the here and now, today's report from the Resolution Foundation highlights the difficulties being faced by the over-50s in getting back into work. One of the many obstacles they face is insistence by employers, or their graduate-stuffed HR departments, on A-levels or university degrees, even when those qualifications are not relevant to the job. The Minister will recognise the unfair nature of this for a generation for which, as is shown by the figures, taking such qualifications was much less common. Can we get employers—public and private—to focus on the person, not the piece of paper, and end this wasteful discrimination against older workers?

Gavin Williamson: The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely correct, as he would often say he always is; he is absolutely right on this issue. It is so important that employers look at the experience—what people have learnt over their careers—and the true value that they are able to bring to that company. We must not be trapped in the situation that so many companies get themselves into, whereby jobs are advertised as “graduate only”, when so many people who could be applying for that job would bring a level and depth of experience unequalled in so many other areas. I would happily work with the right hon. Gentleman to do more to ensure that all employers understand the value of a workforce of all ages.

Disabled Children: Covid-19 Recovery Plan

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the potential merits of implementing a covid-19 recovery plan for disabled children and their families. [914731]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Vicky Ford): We are committed to helping all pupils and students, including those with disabilities, to recovery from any lost learning or development. We have already allocated £1.7 billion to support education recovery and have appointed Sir Kevan Collins, who has a wealth of experience on SEND, to lead our work to effectively target resources and support towards those with the greatest need.

Mohammad Yasin [V]: The Disabled Children's Partnership says that the health of over half of disabled children has deteriorated due to delays and reductions in essential health and therapy appointments. The Government have advised that such appointments should be prioritised, but many families are not being reached. Will the Minister develop a cross-departmental therapies and health catch-up plan for disabled children and families as part of the wider covid-19 plan?

Vicky Ford: We have been very clear that schools and colleges remain open for therapists to attend, but some children will have missed some therapies during the pandemic. Schools can use their catch-up and recovery funding to purchase additional therapies, as I mentioned in my answer to an earlier question. Many schools, especially special schools, have done so already. I advise the hon. Member to ensure that he is in touch with local schools in Bedfordshire. In his own borough, we have increased the high-needs funding budget by 8% for this financial year, on top of an 8% increase last year. The funding should be there; please do get the therapists back into the schools and use that catch-up and recovery funding well.

Solar Power for Schools

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): With reference to his Department's proposals for a centralised procurement framework, what recent discussions he has had with the community energy sector on solar power for schools. [914732]

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): I will try to be brief, Mr Speaker. In January 2020, the DFE commercial team conducted market research when considering the possibility of undertaking a commercial tender for the provision of solar installations and monitoring in schools. On 14 and 15 January, a two-day supplier surgery was held where officials met a range of organisations, including community energy groups.

Wera Hobhouse [V]: Community energy providers have successfully installed community solar on school roofs for many years, including in my constituency of Bath. This is one of the few remaining community energy models, but the Department's proposed new framework to centralise procurement threatens to take it away. Will the Minister meet me and representatives of the community energy sector to discuss the impact of these proposals, plus a possible way forward?

Nick Gibb: Yes, of course I would be delighted to meet the hon. Member. The DFE is currently reviewing a variety of options for the most appropriate solutions for schools to assess the relevant supply chains for solar installation, and I look forward to having that discussion soon.

Turing Scheme: Disadvantaged Students

Craig Williams (Montgomeryshire) (Con): What steps his Department is taking to encourage take-up of the Turing scheme by disadvantaged students. [914734]

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson): The Turing scheme encourages take-up among students from disadvantaged backgrounds, with additional financial support to make this opportunity accessible to all. Disadvantaged students can receive increased grants towards living costs and funding for travel-related costs such as passports, visas and insurance. We have actively targeted and promoted the scheme in areas of disadvantage, helping to level up the country.

Craig Williams: Can I ask my right hon. Friend particularly about agricultural and technical education? Across the United Kingdom, young farmers clubs and our agricultural colleges are doing a terrific job and have built a global network, and have often been let down by previous schemes. What can we do to support the technical and agricultural aspects of this scheme?

Gavin Williamson: I think we all know in this House that my hon. Friend is a great champion of agricultural interests in his Montgomeryshire constituency. He is right. This is an incredibly international business and it is important to learn on an international level, whether it is from our friends in Australia, in New Zealand or in many other countries. I would be happy to meet him to discuss how this could be done more, maybe through the agricultural colleges and universities that serve our agriculture industry so very well.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP) [V]: The Government have stated that they want more disadvantaged students to participate in Turing, so how does the Secretary of State assess the success of this scheme for disadvantaged students, and will he commit to an annual report to Parliament on these figures?

Gavin Williamson: We have already seen a really high level of interest from both institutions and, most importantly, students in the new Turing scheme. They recognise that they want to seize the opportunities on a global scale as against being constrained by the European Union. That is why I have every confidence that we will have such an enormous success with the Turing scheme and it will be truly transformative to young people's lives.

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab) [V]: This is a Government of illusion. The Prime Minister said that there was no risk to Erasmus, then it was gone, replaced by the Turing scheme, which Ministers said would improve opportunities. But a quick look at the scheme shows that for cost of living, Turing offers just £490 of support—£140 less than Erasmus—while for travel costs, only a fraction of students are now eligible whereas under Erasmus+ all students were eligible for up to £1,300. In tuition fees, there is no support, whereas it was guaranteed under Erasmus for free. Could the Secretary of State just be straight with students and confirm that Turing equals Erasmus minus?

Gavin Williamson: I am afraid the hon. Gentleman obviously is not very familiar with the scheme. Actually, there are a number of slight inaccuracies in what he stated. I would be happy to send him the details so that he can undertake some homework and understand it a little bit better in future.

International Students: Hotel Quarantine

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the capacity of the Government's covid-19 hotel quarantine system to meet demand from international students entering the UK in summer 2021. [914735]

The Minister for Universities (Michelle Donelan): I have been working closely with my counterparts across Government, including in the Department of Health and Social Care, about how covid-19 policies affect international and domestic students. Immigration concessions allow for the ongoing provision of online learning this academic year, meaning that international students can study remotely from the UK or in their home country. Universities have informed us that a sizeable number have stayed in the UK throughout.

Daniel Zeichner [V]: International students are hugely important to our universities. With India added to the red list, there is real concern that the cost of hotel quarantine will be a deal breaker for some. Can the Minister tell us whether universities will be allowed to manage the quarantine system for themselves, which they are well qualified to do, and how soon could that be resolved? If not, who or what is the obstacle?

Michelle Donelan: International students, including those from India, are indeed a vital and valued part of our higher education sector and communities. The UK was one of the first countries to introduce important visa concessions for international students at the very start of the pandemic. That has been flexible throughout, including extending the deadline for eligibility for the graduate route to 21 June. We continue to work with the Department of Health and Social Care to ensure that the UK remains as accessible and welcoming as possible. International students are also eligible for the additional £85 million that we have given universities for support with hardship.

Topical Questions

[914779] **Geraint Davies** (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Education (Gavin Williamson): The "Skills for Jobs" White Paper set out the Government's plans to put employers at the heart of local skills provision. Since January, we have delivered on what we set out by expanding our skills bootcamps, offering free level 3 qualifications to eligible adults from 1 April and opening applications for the skills accelerator. We will continue to build on that over the coming weeks and months.

Geraint Davies [V]: In Wales, the Labour Government are investing heavily in catch-up summer schools, geared in particular to children from poorer backgrounds. We know that 50% of children from poorer backgrounds start school with speech and language difficulties. What is

the Education Secretary doing to ensure that these pupils do not suffer disproportionately from cuts in England to the pupil premium, when it is they who are most in need of catch-up after the lockdown?

Gavin Williamson: I am glad to see that the Government in Wales are following the example of what is being done in England. Hopefully they will be able to see an increase in standards in schools in Wales similar to what we have been seeing in England. We continue to ensure that we offer additional support, especially to those schools that are special schools and looking after some of the children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Our interventions, including an additional £1.7 billion, go a long way to ensuring that children, especially those who are most disadvantaged, are properly supported.

[914781] **Andrew Jones** (Harrogate and Knaresborough) (Con): Hundreds of new courses have become available this month through the lifetime skills guarantee, across a very wide range of business sectors. How is my right hon. Friend ensuring that the voice of business is heard in identifying priorities so that skills development takes place where the skills are needed most?

Gavin Williamson: It is absolutely vital, as we make more courses and support available—people may have to look at re-entering the labour market in a different area from the one they previously worked in—that we are matching that up with where the skills needs are. We work very closely with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Department for Work and Pension, but most importantly, we work with employers on the designation of what courses are available. I would be happy to take any representations from my hon. Friend if there is more work that can be done together to ensure that this process is best honed to ensure people get into work as swiftly as possible.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP) [V]: The Scottish National party has committed in its manifesto to free school breakfasts and lunches for all children in primary school. Can we expect a similar commitment for primary children in England?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Education (Vicky Ford): The Department has already been funding breakfast clubs in more than 2,450 schools in disadvantaged areas of the country. We have just announced another £24 million to continue that programme and reach even more children in the two years ahead.

[914783] **Dr Luke Evans** (Bosworth) (Con) [V]: Although I do not have a university in my constituency, I do have many young people who travel to universities up and down the country. They are concerned—financial concerns, accommodation, freshers' and concerns—about going back to university in September and October. What are the Government doing to ensure that there is a smooth return for those who have already attended and a welcome for those who are new to university?

Gavin Williamson: I think we are all very much looking forward to welcoming all university students back, and we very much expect to be seeing that as part of the next step. I would like to thank universities for the work they have been doing to ensure that universities are covid-secure,

including extensive testing of students in universities and the greater availability of the home testing kits that we have been able to deliver on. We will continue to work with Universities UK, the Russell Group and the whole sector to ensure that students are able to return to university safely at the earliest possible moment and that we are able to welcome a new cohort of students in September.

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab): More and more children are relying on free school meals because of the pandemic. The Government's holiday activities and food programme tells local councils to provide just 16 days' worth of food support over a six-week summer holiday period, so could I ask the Minister: what does she expect children to eat the rest of the time?

Vicky Ford: This Government have extended free school meals to more groups of children than any other Government over the past half a century. We have spent almost half a billion pounds on vouchers so that children had access to food when schools were closed during lockdown. We have spent £270 million through local authorities on making sure that children, including pre-school children, could get access to food and essentials. We have this massive holiday activities and food programme running all across the country—not only food, but fun and friendships. I just wish the Labour party would get behind this fantastic initiative, go and see what it is giving our children, see what they get out of it and the benefits of it, and say well done to everybody involved.

[914784] **Huw Merriman** (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): Thanks to our teachers and all in education, our schools are once again the centres of learning. Many pupils and teachers at secondary schools would like to see face coverings in the classroom come to an end by 17 May. Can I ask the Minister if the data gives cause for optimism?

The Minister for School Standards (Nick Gibb): Our overriding objective is to keep covid out of the classroom and keep pupils and staff safe. All decisions will be based on that data, and on scientific and medical advice. Whether or not we continue to advise that face coverings should be worn in secondary school classrooms is subject to step 3 of the road map process, which will happen, as my hon. Friend mentioned, no earlier than 17 May.

[914780] **Kirsten Oswald** (East Renfrewshire) (SNP) [V]: Students have had a difficult year dealing with online learning, isolation, and increased student poverty and debt. As these young people will play a key role in driving economic recovery, does the Secretary of State agree that it is time to reassess this Government's position on tuition fees and free students from the shackles of debt?

Gavin Williamson: We recognise that it is incredibly important that we do everything we can do to support students, which is why we made available £85 million of hardship funding. We also recognise how important it is that we have a really thriving higher education sector. That is why we have maintained investment in research and development, which is the backbone of so many of our universities.

[914788] **Marco Longhi** (Dudley North) (Con): We all know that the use of mobile phones in the classroom can have a very negative impact not just on a child's education, but on their mental health. They are also a breeding ground, unfortunately, for bullying. Can my right hon. Friend confirm that he will be moving ahead with his plan to support schools to become mobile phone-free environments?

Gavin Williamson: My hon. Friend raises an important issue about mental health and wellbeing. Sometimes, bullying can sadly be exacerbated as a result of such issues, and mobile phones are used to do that. Some 50% of schools have already rolled out phone-free environments, while ensuring that students have access to a mobile phone as they travel to and from school. That delivers benefits for children's wellbeing and mental health, as well as for how well they do at school. We want such environments to be rolled out, and I assure my hon. Friend that that is what we will do.

[914785] **Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): I have written to the Minister about an error in the way the national school census recorded nursery provision. Along with the cancellation of the summer census, that meant that Four Acres academy in my constituency lost some £80,000. The Government change of date on the pupil premium has left Bristol schools with a shortfall of about £1.6 million. Catch-up funding is about £1.64 million. By my maths, that is a case—almost exactly—of the Lord giveth, and the Lord has taken away. Will the Minister meet me to assure me that poorer children in Bristol are not being penalised, and will he publish the data and let us see exactly what has come to our schools and what has been taken away? I will work with the Minister to ensure that that is clear.

Vicky Ford: We have invested record amounts in early years funding over the past few years, with more than £3.5 billion a year for the past three years. We have continued to put unprecedented amounts into that. I confirm that, on the whole, more funding will be going to the pupil premium next year than in previous years. The Schools Minister leads on this matter, and I am sure he would be delighted to meet the hon. Lady.

[914789] **Harriett Baldwin** (West Worcestershire) (Con) [V]: The Secretary of State was good enough to meet me to look at the condition of the windows at Malvern Parish primary school. Will he update the House on when the next condition improvement fund will be announced?

Nick Gibb: On 8 April we announced that we are working with 16 colleges in some of the worst conditions, and we expect to announce the outcome of the first FE capital transformation fund bidding round in October. The condition improvement fund 2021-22 application round for schools closed on 14 January, and outcomes will be announced later in the spring.

[914786] **Ms Karen Buck** (Westminster North) (Lab) [V]: Further education colleges are central to the roll-out of the Government's skills agenda, yet in London the teaching grant for further education colleges has been cut by 13.7%, which is equivalent to a loss of £64 million. Will the Minister explain why the levelling-up agenda has meant levelling-down for further education in London?

Gavin Williamson: There is a major expansion in the amount of money we are investing in further education, and the last settlement included a commitment to close to £700 million for that. We are also putting a £1.5 billion capital investment into further education colleges, and colleges in London are able to apply for that.

[914790] **Mrs Pauline Latham** (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): What practical steps is the Secretary of State taking to ensure that children, young people, and staff in educational settings have access to appropriately qualified people to help with mental health issues?

Vicky Ford: Support for the mental health and wellbeing of our young people is important, and the Government are making a major investment in such support. We recently announced a further £79 million boost for mental health services for children, which will accelerate the provision of mental health support teams in schools and colleges. That is on top of the £2.3 billion a year that we have committed through the NHS long-term plan. Since September, our Wellbeing for Education Return scheme has linked schools with local mental health experts in 90% of local authorities.

[914787] **Bell Ribeiro-Addy** (Streatham) (Lab) [V]: This country deserves a well-funded, well-valued teaching profession, but the litany of problems affecting teachers has not gone away, and issues such as increased workload, stress, and a lack of professional autonomy have been documented widely, including by the Department. With a looming recruitment and retention crisis, does the Minister have any long-term plans to allow greater autonomy and trust? Would a potential recruitment and retention strategy promise to do away with the excessive scrutiny of teaching professionals?

Nick Gibb: The essence of our academies programme is about delivering autonomy for schools, and it is that autonomy—the hon. Lady is quite right—that is driving up standards. We have also, since 2014, been addressing the workload issues of schoolteachers up and down the country, and that has proven successful in reducing the number of hours in addition to teaching time that schoolteachers face.

[914791] **Steve Brine** (Winchester) (Con): The new all-party parliamentary group on issues affecting men and boys will, I hope, do very good work during this Parliament, including on educational attainment. Given that there is still a tiny number of male teachers in primary education—do not even get me started on early years—what are the Government doing to address that imbalance, and given the shifting labour market that we have seen post pandemic, what are they doing to get new, inspirational teachers into the classroom from non-traditional backgrounds?

Nick Gibb: I share my hon. Friend's concern about this issue, and I pay tribute to him for his work on this matter and that of the APPG. We aim to attract and retain high-skilled, talented individuals, including men, into teaching through effective pay structures and financial incentives, and we have set out plans to increase starting salaries nationally to £30,000. We also intend to retain male teachers in primary schools by offering world-class support and development through the early career framework reforms.

[914794] **Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con) [V]: Parents and students alike are concerned about the impact the pandemic has had on students' learning, particularly for those in years 10 and 12, who will face exams next summer. Will my right hon. Friend therefore update the House on what steps he is taking to support those students to ensure that they meet their full potential and get the results they deserve?

Nick Gibb: We have invested £1.7 billion to help pupils get back on track, including through tutoring. We will continue to monitor the impact of the pandemic on all students, including those due to take their exams

in 2022, to ensure that students in this cohort can receive a fair grade. We have appointed Sir Kevan Collins as recovery commissioner, and he is advising on further measures to ensure that all students catch up on the education that they have lost.

Mr Speaker: I am suspending the House for three minutes in order to enable the necessary arrangements to be made for the next business.

3.31 pm

Sitting suspended.

Ministerial Code

3.35 pm

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP) [V] (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office to update the House on the ministerial code.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office (Michael Gove): The ministerial code is the responsibility of the Prime Minister of the day. It is customarily updated and issued upon their assuming or returning to office. The code sets out the behaviour expected of all those who serve in government. It provides guidance to Ministers on how they should act and arrange their affairs to uphold those standards. The code exists and should be read alongside the overarching duty on Ministers to comply with the law and to protect the integrity of public life.

The current version of the code was issued by the Prime Minister in August 2019 shortly after he assumed office. While the code sets out standards and offers guidance, it is Ministers who are personally responsible for deciding how to act and conduct themselves in light of the code, and, of course, for justifying their actions and conduct to Parliament and to the public. That is as it should be in a robust democracy such as ours. Ministers are not employees of the Government, but rather office holders who hold their office for as long as they have the confidence of the Prime Minister as the Head of Government. It is always, therefore, the Prime Minister who is the ultimate judge of the standards of behaviour expected of an individual Minister and of the appropriate consequences were a breach of those standards to occur.

The code also sets out a role for an independent adviser on Ministers' interests. It is an important role, the principal duty of which is to provide independent advice to Ministers on the arrangement of their private interests. The independent adviser also has a role in investigating alleged breaches of the ministerial code. As the House will be aware, Sir Alex Allan stepped down from his role towards the end of last year. Following the practice of successive Administrations, the Prime Minister will appoint a successor to Sir Alex. The House will understand that the process of identifying the right candidate for such a role can take time. However, an appointment is expected to be announced shortly. The House will be informed in the usual way as soon as that appointment is confirmed. It will clearly be an early priority for the new independent adviser to oversee the publication of an updated list of Ministers' interests. I expect that will be published shortly after a new independent adviser is appointed.

I can, of course, reassure the House that the process of managing Ministers' interests has continued in the absence of an independent adviser, in line with the ministerial code, which sets out that the permanent secretary in each Department and the Cabinet Office overall have a role. Ministers remain able to seek advice on their interests from their permanent secretary and from the Cabinet Office. The ministerial code has served successive Administrations well and has been an important tool in upholding standards in public life. It will continue to do so.

Mr Speaker: Let us go to the SNP spokesperson for the urgent question. I call Alison Thewliss. [*Interruption.*] Order. Can I just say to Members that they should be wearing a mask in the Chamber? For the two Members

sat there: please, it is not my decision, but the decision of Public Health England that we should be wearing masks. If you do not wish to, please leave the Chamber.

Alison Thewliss: Thank you, Mr Speaker—[*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: Order. We will have to suspend the sitting if Members do not wear their masks. That is not on my order, but Public Health England's.

Alison Thewliss: Thank you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question.

In his foreword to the "Ministerial Code", the Prime Minister says:

"To...win back the trust of the British people, we must uphold the very highest standards of propriety...No misuse of taxpayer money and no actual or perceived conflicts of interest. The precious principles of public life enshrined in this document—integrity, objectivity, accountability, transparency, honesty and leadership in the public interest—must be honoured at all times".

Well, this UK Tory Government is failing on all counts. They are riddled with conflicts of interest and allegations of corruption. Indeed, 37% of the public think the Prime Minister is corrupt—53% think that in Scotland—and that is before getting into the latest on what the Prime Minister is alleged to have said, which is that he would rather see bodies pile up in their thousands than order a third lockdown. Despicable, cruel and callous. Comments not befitting the office of Prime Minister.

Transparency International's "Track and Trace" report raised serious questions on 73 Government contracts worth £3.7 billion. Of those, 24 personal protective equipment contracts, worth £1.6 billion, were handed to those with known political connections, with a further £536 million on testing services. We need to know who has benefited and what their links are to Ministers, especially in the light of the VIP lane that the National Audit Office identified as a risk. People on that list were 10 times more likely to win a contract. Transparency International identified the VIP lane as potentially a "systemic and partisan bias in the award of PPE contracts."

Will the Minister stop hiding behind commercial confidentiality and publish in full the details of those VIP contracts, along with who recommended them? It is our money and we have a right to know. Will he also finally publish the updated register of Ministers' interests?

From the contracts for the Health Secretary's pub landlord to the cosy chumocracy of the Greensill Capital affair, the casual text messages between the Prime Minister and Sir James Dyson promising to "fix" tax issues, apparently in exchange for ventilators that we never even got, and now questions over the Prime Minister's funding for feathering his Downing Street nest, does the Minister agree that there is a clear pattern of behaviour and it absolutely stinks? The UK Tory Government are about to prorogue the House to duck further scrutiny. In the absence of an independent adviser to investigate Ministers, we can no longer trust them to investigate themselves; that much is clear. Will the Minister for the Cabinet Office instead instruct a full independent public inquiry to get to the bottom of the sleekit, grubby cabal in charge of the UK?

Michael Gove: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for raising a number of issues. She raised the whole question of procurement of PPE. It is a well attested fact that less than 0.5% of the PPE procured did not meet the standards

that we had set out. It is a fact that every single recommendation for the procurement of PPE went through an independent eight-stage process verified by independent civil servants. It is the case that the Government, operating at a time when the pandemic was raging, did everything possible—we make no apology for it—to ensure that those at the frontline got the equipment that they deserved. The techniques that we used and the processes that we followed not only stand up to scrutiny; the same techniques and the same processes were used by the Welsh Government, the Scottish Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

The hon. Lady raises the Greensill question. Of course, the truth is that all the efforts on behalf of that company in order to push the Treasury and others were rejected. She raises the issue of Sir James Dyson. She does not acknowledge the fact that Sir James spent millions of pounds of his own money to try to ensure that we had ventilators to save those on the frontline. She does not mention that the ventilator challenge was investigated by the Public Accounts Committee, which said it was a model of public procurement. She does not mention the fact that the changes to the Prime Minister's flat were paid for by the Prime Minister himself, and she repeats a line from a newspaper but ignores the fact that the Prime Minister instituted not only a second but a third lockdown to keep us safe.

What the hon. Lady does not mention is that she and other Opposition Members criticised the appointment of a vaccine tsar as cronyism when Kate Bingham has been responsible for saving millions of lives. What she does not say is that Opposition MPs criticised Kate Bingham for spending money on public relations when that money was there to ensure that people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds were able to get the vaccines they required. What she does not acknowledge is the determined effort by public servants in this Government and others to deal with a pandemic and to save lives. Instead, she tries to score political points in a way that, sadly, causes regret.

Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): I commend a great deal of what my right hon. Friend just said, but let us face it: there is not a great deal of public confidence in propriety and ethics in politics in this country, and that is to be laid at the door of all political parties over a long period. What would begin to restore public confidence in such matters is more genuine discussion of principles and values and how conflicts of interests should be better managed, and to have rather less quibbling about whether we are inside or outside certain rules. I feel that accusations should perhaps be less blaming as well.

I commend to my right hon. Friend the letter sent by the chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life to the Prime Minister last week. It recommended a number of changes to the role—that the chair should be able to initiate his or her own inquiries and to publish a summary of the findings—that the

“Prime Minister should retain the right to decide on any sanction following a breach of the Code”

and that it is “disproportionate” for the Prime Minister always to require a resignation for a breach of the code. The Prime Minister should be able to use a range of sanctions to deal with breaches of the code. Will the Government accept those recommendations?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes a characteristically thoughtful series of points. As a former Chair of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee and as a current leading Select Committee Chairman in this House, the points that he makes are certainly ones that we should reflect on. It is the case that the process of holding Ministers and others to account is always an evolutionary one. We should look at thoughtful recommendations such as those made by Lord Evans and others and we should consider what more can be done. It is important to stress, however, that the Government have already introduced a series of changes in order to ensure greater transparency in public life. Of course, we always seek to do better.

Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab): Mr Speaker:

“There must be no bullying and no harassment; no leaking... No misuse of taxpayer money and no actual or perceived conflicts of interest.”

Those words are from the Prime Minister's foreword to the ministerial code. I do not know whether he believed them when he wrote them, but he is certainly trampling all over them today. The Prime Minister is now corrupting the standards of public life expected in high office as he dodges questions and tries to cover up payments for the luxury refurbishment of his flat, feathering his own nest and possibly breaking the law through undeclared loans.

As for leaks, we are seeing the pipes burst with the sewage of allegations. People say that a fish rots from the head down. There is a reason why there is no independent adviser on ministerial standards and why the Government will not publish the long-overdue list of Ministers' interests. The reason is that the Prime Minister has not wanted them. This is a Prime Minister who would rather the bodies “pile high” than act on scientific advice, but they are not bodies; they are people, they are loved ones and they are deeply missed.

I ask the Minister to engage with the issues at hand. When will the Government publish that register of Ministers' financial interests? Who paid the invoices for the Prime Minister's flat refurbishment in the first place and when were those funds repaid? When will the review by the Cabinet Secretary of this fiasco be complete? When will the vacancy for the independent adviser on ministerial standards be filled, and will the Government give that adviser the powers to trigger independent investigations, as the hon. Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) has just said and as recommended by Lord Evans?

Finally, will the Minister apologise for the stomach-churning comments that have come out today and announce an urgent public inquiry into the Government's handling of the pandemic? This is all about conduct, character and decency. Frankly, our country deserves an awful lot better than this.

Michael Gove: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for her questions. As ever, she raises a number of significant issues. On the question of the No. 10 Downing Street refurbishment, it is important to stress that previous Prime Ministers have used taxpayers' money in order to refurbish No. 10 Downing Street. In 1998-99, in real terms, the then Prime Minister spent £73,000 of taxpayers' money on refurbishing Downing Street; in 2000-01, £55,000; and, again, in 2007-08, £35,000—all taxpayers' money. This Prime Minister has spent his own money on refurbishing Downing Street. That is a distinction to which the hon. Lady should pay close attention.

[Michael Gove]

The hon. Lady also suggested that the Government did not act on scientific advice in dealing with the pandemic. I hope that she will reflect on those words and recognise that that is completely wrong. This Government, as I pointed out, initiated not just a second but a third lockdown in response to medical and scientific advice, and this Government, working with doctors and scientists, have ensured that we have had the fastest vaccine roll-out in Europe. We have also developed many of the therapeutics and tools necessary to ensure that those who are suffering and in pain at last receive relief. Of course, the ventilators that this Government took part in procuring are now helping to save lives in India.

The hon. Lady is right to say that we should appoint an independent adviser on ministerial interests as soon as possible, but as I mentioned in my statement, that appointment is due within days and that independent adviser will have the freedom to carry out their role in exactly the way that they should. Scrutiny is always welcome, but it is also the case, as the hon. Lady should recognise, that scrutiny should extend beyond those who are our political opponents to the parties that we ourselves lead or are members of. I can only quote from *The Times* at the weekend, one of whose columnists wrote:

“our only proper bit of suspected corruption”
in this country

“in Labour-run Liverpool. The allegations have got everything: dubious contracts, records created retrospectively, discarded in skips or destroyed altogether.”

The hon. Lady must look at the beam in her eye before criticising the mote in others’.

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): May I pick up on the excellent point made by my hon. Friend the Chairman of the Liaison Committee about the powers of the next occupant of the position of the Prime Minister’s adviser on the ministerial code and encourage my right hon. Friend to go down that road? The proposals made by the chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life exactly match ones that I made to that committee about a month and a half ago. It strikes me that we have now reached the point where we must strengthen the entire system so that it commands cross-party confidence and trust, and these proposals will be very welcome and widely appreciated on all sides if this is a step that we could ultimately take.

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes a very important point, and the work he has done to increase standards in public life has been applauded across parties and across this House, and, indeed, outside it. The Government and the new independent adviser on ministerial standards will want to reflect on Lord Evans’s recommendation and other points to make sure that we can have the maximum confidence in our system.

Mr Speaker: We now come to the SNP spokesperson, Mr Stewart Hosie.

Stewart Hosie (Dundee East) (SNP): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) for securing this important urgent question. We have had PPE contracts awarded to donors and cronies

without a robust tender process, NHS contracts awarded to a firm partly owned by the Health Secretary, privileged secret communications between an ex-Prime Minister and the Chancellor, and between James Dyson and the current Prime Minister—and I could add a Tory fondness for oligarchs—and the allegation of Tory donors funding the Prime Minister’s home improvements. There is no point in the Minister’s sitting there, part bombast and part Teflon Don, hoping that the stench of cronyism will simply pass. It is far too late for that. When did this Government judge that integrity, probity, transparency and the ministerial code were obstacles to be overcome rather than principles to always be adhered to?

Michael Gove: The right hon. Gentleman is always a skilled and gifted rhetorician, but as I pointed out in response to his colleague, the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss), if we look at PPE, we see that the processes by which it has been procured by this Government have been independently validated and assured by officials, with an eight-step process to ensure that contracts were awarded only to those who could provide the right equipment. There is no variance in the approach that this Government took and the approach that the Scottish Government or Welsh Government took in the procurement of PPE.

The right hon. Gentleman talks about a Tory fondness for oligarchs, and refers to text messages and so on. I can only point out that our mutual friend the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Tourism dined with Mr Lex Greensill and Mr Gupta in one of Glasgow’s finest restaurants. If there is a particular fondness for dining with oligarchs, it is not the preserve of any one individual or party in this House.

As for suggesting that the ministerial code is something to be got round or overlooked and suggesting that propriety might need to be looked at, I would simply refer the right hon. Gentleman to the report of the independent Committee of the Scottish Parliament on the investigation into the former First Minister. If people want to see a story of obstruction, obfuscation, prevarication and a waste of taxpayers’ money, they can find it there.

Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con): Constituents are sick and tired of this endless tittle-tattle. They just want their lives to go back normal, which is what this Government are helping them to achieve. They could not care less about the Prime Minister’s cushions or his curtains. When will we have an Opposition who care about the actual priorities and not who the Downing Street decorators are?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes an important point. It does seem sometimes as though the Opposition and some critics are more concerned about the world of interiors than about the real world in which the rest of us live. The really important thing is that we welcome scrutiny when it is there to ensure that we are serving the public. It is quite right that there should be scrutiny of how we respond to the pandemic; and it is quite right that we should resolve to learn lessons from everything that this Government have done; but it is also right that those in this House who have the opportunity to scrutinise the way in which taxpayers’ money is spent look effectively at the delivery of public policy, rather than necessarily seeking to make partisan points.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD) [V]: The Minister just said that public scrutiny is always welcome, so does he not agree that instead of all the reports relying on leaks in the newspapers and on accusations in Dominic Cummings' blog, the best way forward would be to get all the facts straight in an independent public inquiry into the Government's handling of the pandemic? Will he urge the Prime Minister to go ahead with it without delay?

Michael Gove: The hon. Lady makes the very fair point that we need, in due course, an independent public inquiry into dealing with the pandemic, but I also think it is important that we concentrate now on the successful vaccine roll-out and on making sure that the road map on the lifting of restrictions, to which so many people are quite rightly looking forward, is in place. There will be time for an independent public inquiry and there will be lessons to be learned; mistakes have been made. But I think it is important that we concentrate now on making sure that our economy is restored to health, that public services get back to the level that they should be, and that we deal with the virus once and for all.

Simon Fell (Barrow and Furness) (Con): There is no doubt that the allegations made by the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) are serious, but there is also very little doubt that we work in a profession where often claims and counterclaims are made with scant reliance on evidence. Transparency and openness are vital to retaining the trust of this House and the people who put us here. With that in mind, will my right hon. Friend confirm that any donations and benefits given will be returned and made open and transparent through the regular processes?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes an important point. All of us have a responsibility to declare political donations, and there is a clear means of doing so. I know that all donations received by all politicians in this House will be declared appropriately.

Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab) [V]: Last week, the Government claimed that the Prime Minister funded the up-front costs of decorating the Downing Street flat himself. This afternoon, the Prime Minister did not deny that the up-front costs were met by Conservative party donors. This is not the first but the third time in the space of just one week that the Prime Minister has been caught out. How many more times will Ministers accept that their leader—our Prime Minister—has misled the public, the press and Parliament before they declare him unfit for office?

Michael Gove: I have enormous respect for the right hon. Lady, a brave and courageous fighter for many causes and a very distinguished former Select Committee Chairman, but I think she may wish to reflect on the specific allegation she makes against the Prime Minister. On the broader point of substance she raises, as I pointed out earlier, the Prime Minister paid for the costs of renovation. Declarations are properly made about political donations, and indeed the Cabinet Secretary pointed out, when being questioned by the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, that he is making sure that everything done was done in accordance with the rules.

Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that this Conservative Government have taken more steps to reform and regulate lobbying and public procurement than any Labour Government did, and that at the last general election the Labour party said it intended to scrap the same lobbying law that it now wants to strengthen? Does that not show the hypocrisy of Captain Hindsight? [*Interruption.*]

Michael Gove: Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right. I do not know why Labour Members were making a noise. It was the case that this Government banned the use of taxpayers' money for quango lobbying. We banned taxpayers' money being used in grants for other organisations' lobbying. We introduced a statutory registrar of lobbyists, and we have introduced transparency measures on Government spending, Government salaries, Government contracts, Government tenders and Government meetings. He is quite right: the Labour party said that it wanted to scrap that legislation. It is for the Labour party to justify to people in Redcar and Hartlepool why it wants to scrap lobbying regulation, and it will be interesting to hear that conversation on the doorsteps.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC) [V]: At Prime Minister's questions two weeks ago, the Prime Minister agreed with me that politicians "must not lie". That is vital to the credibility of the ministerial code, but a host of recent events, including the Prime Minister's reported comments regarding lockdowns, raise serious questions about the Government's adherence to that code. Is the Minister confident that his answers today are sufficiently comprehensive and robust to lay these matters to rest?

Michael Gove: Yes.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I read through the ministerial code this morning; it took me longer than most Members because I am slower. I could see absolutely nothing in there to make me think that the Prime Minister has done anything wrong. Why do we not leave it to the system to investigate this matter, if there is a requirement for it, rather than dance to the tune of a media frenzy?

Michael Gove: My right hon. Friend is an officer and a gentleman, and he puts the point very well. There are tried and tested procedures and principles in order to make sure that Ministers and others in the House behave in an appropriate way. Judgments can be made, of course, by all of us in a democracy. His reading of the ministerial code this morning may be a prelude to his being appointed as a Minister in due course, but I cannot further speculate on these matters.

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green) [V]: Contrary to what one Minister said at the weekend, concerns about the Prime Minister and the ministerial code are not "tittle-tattle". People care deeply about this, which is why Peter Stefanovic's video on the Prime Minister's relationship with the truth has been viewed nearly 13 million times on social media. If the ministerial code says that any "inadvertent error" should be corrected at the earliest opportunity, what should be done about systematic deliberate errors? If, as seems to be the case with our archaic and dysfunctional rules, it is the Prime Minister himself who decides whether the ministerial code has

[Caroline Lucas]

been broken, should we really be trusting this one to mark his own homework, or should the whole system not be urgently revised?

Michael Gove: The hon. Lady makes a number of important points. She is absolutely right that the public have a right to expect that those who are responsible for discharging Government duties and spending taxpayers' money do so in a way that is consistent with the public's values. She also makes a broader point about the need always to review the mechanisms of scrutiny to which Government are subject. As was pointed out by my hon. Friends the Members for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin) and for Weston-super-Mare (John Penrose), there is an opportunity, with the appointment of a new independent adviser on ministerial interests, to look again at how that role and, indeed, perhaps other roles can be strengthened if necessary.

Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con) [V]: While these matters should always be open and transparent, one can only muse at what other world leaders think of the UK Prime Minister having to pay for his own refurbishment, additional tax for the benefit in kind and the running costs of the flat that we insist he stays in. Surely my right hon. Friend agrees that the ridiculous situation here is why our Prime Minister should be paying anything at all personally, unlike other world leaders, when it is us—the taxpayer—who demand that they live above the shop.

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes an important point, and existing trusts are responsible for looking after Dorneywood, Chequers and, I believe, Chevening, where Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative politicians have used those facilities in order to discharge their duties. Downing Street is a working building, and it is appropriate, as has been the case in the past, as I referred to earlier, that some public money is allocated to ensure that the Prime Minister and others who work in that building can perform their duties as appropriate. Of course, when we are spending taxpayers' money we must have a care—we must recognise that this money is entrusted to us—but when it comes to Government buildings, particularly Government buildings such as Downing Street, there is a role for public funding in making sure that they function effectively, on behalf of all of us.

Mr Speaker: Let us go to Geraint Davies. Oh, an empty chair. In which case, let us go to Jack Brereton.

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the Leader of the Opposition was really serious about tackling corruption, he would start by cracking down on the Labour Government in Wales, who handed out NHS contracts worth more than £650,000 to a Labour activist without any kind of competitive tendering process?

Michael Gove: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for bringing that case to my attention. I was not aware of it, but I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition and others will want to make sure that all the correct procedures have been followed.

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab): Whether it is the Prime Minister's luxury refurbishment of his flat or other things, day after day more sordid, sleazy details are unearthed about this incompetent Conservative Government, who are becoming an embarrassment for our nation, given the billions wasted on crony covid contracts. Tory donors have been profiteering at the British taxpayer's expense, in the midst of widespread public misery. So will the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster inform the House as to why he is delaying the public inquiry into the handling of the pandemic, which would allow us all to ascertain for ourselves how many Ministers have broken the ministerial code by texting or handing out Government contracts to their Tory chums?

Michael Gove: As I pointed out in response to some earlier questions, every PPE contract that was awarded went through an eight-stage process. It was supervised by independent civil servants, and the imputation that lies behind the hon. Gentleman's comments is unfair to those dedicated public servants, who worked incredibly hard at a difficult time to make sure that those on the frontline received exactly what they needed. Of course, it is the case that there needs to be an inquiry in due course, but that inquiry should cover every aspect of the handling of the pandemic and we should all be suitably humble in recognising that it will necessarily make recommendations that all of us should take account of as we prepare for future health and other challenges.

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend confirm that all Ministers, both at the Treasury and at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, followed the ministerial code in all of their dealings with Greensill Capital?

Michael Gove: Yes. The point that was made earlier is that when Lex Greensill and others with whom he was working were making representations to Government, those representations were dealt with in an appropriate way, and the critical thing is that the efforts that they were soliciting were rejected—that is quite clear.

Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP): Of course attached to the ministerial code are the seven principles of public life, the first of which is "selflessness", where it states:

"Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest."

Today, we have had a number of sources state that the Prime Minister shouted in a rage that he would rather see the bodies piled high in their thousands than order a third lockdown. Does the Minister not accept that a Prime Minister who does not put public health first is no Prime Minister at all?

Michael Gove: Let me deal with this. I was in the meeting that afternoon, with the Prime Minister and other Ministers, as we looked at what was happening with the virus and with the pandemic, and we were—[*Interruption.*] We were dealing with one of the most serious decisions that this Prime Minister and any Government have had to face. People have been pointing out, quite rightly, that tens of thousands of people were dying. The Prime Minister made a decision in that meeting to trigger a second lockdown. He made a subsequent decision to trigger a third lockdown. This is

a Prime Minister who was in hospital himself, in intensive care. The idea that he would say any such thing, I find incredible. I was in that room. I never heard language of that kind and I am afraid that the hon. Gentleman, by seeking to make the points in the way that he does, I think diverts attention from the fact that so many people who have been affected by this pandemic rely on the Government, the NHS and others to strain every sinew. These decisions are never easy, but the Government made the decision, and the Prime Minister made the decision, to have a second and third lockdown, and I think we can see the evidence of the leadership that he showed then, not just in the courage that he showed, but also in the success of the vaccination programme, from which people across this whole United Kingdom have benefited.

Joy Morrissey (Beaconsfield) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that people in glass houses should not throw stones? Does he also agree that there is an election next week and as the Labour party is behind in the polls, Labour Members have chosen to wheel out a mantra from 20 years ago that they thought worked then and perhaps works now? And if we are talking about wheeling out glass houses, may I mention the Member under criminal investigation for fraud, the Liverpool mayor arrested for fraud, and a past Labour Prime Minister who pocketed millions from advising big businesses and foreign Governments?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes an important point—that we all have a responsibility to learn lessons, learn from the past, do our best to make sure that we collectively maintain high standards in public life, acknowledge that there are human frailties in individuals who represent all the parties in this House and do our very best to learn from the past.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): Does the Minister know the identity of the person who gave the Prime Minister the money to pay for the refurbishment of the Downing Street flat? Either he does not know, in which case he should not be at the Dispatch Box saying there is no problem at all, or he does know, in which case he should just tell us what their name is. Can he do that now, please?

Michael Gove: The person who paid for the renovations in the Downing Street flat was Boris Johnson.

Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con) [V]: Does my right hon. Friend agree that this UK Government are almost painfully transparent by any yardstick, and that while sessions such as this may be an inevitable part of the disinfecting oxygen of publicity, it is a bit rich for the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) to raise concerns when the SNP wants the UK to rejoin the EU, a body that has not had its audit signed off for decades?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes an important point. Governments of all stripes can always do better, but I think it is fair to say that, over generations and across parties, there has been a determined effort by our Prime Ministers to do everything they can to make sure that our democracy stays healthy. Of course, Prime Ministers in the past have made mistakes, but I think it

is important that we recognise that, overall, we can have confidence in institutions like this House of Commons to hold them to account.

Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab) [V]: The Minister has a specific duty to ensure transparency in Government through the Freedom of Information Act. Is he concerned that Transparency International last year identified nine unremedied breaches of the ministerial code? Why is information withheld in Government FOI responses more often than not? And is he still running his FOI clearing house to delay and filter FOI responses?

Michael Gove: The freedom of information clearing house, sadly, is not mine. It was set up under a Labour Government, so it is a Blairite inheritance. What it exists to do is make sure that freedom of information responses are effectively co-ordinated and that we do everything we can in order to make sure that we comply with the terms of that legislation. But of course one point about the freedom of information legislation is that it needs to be a safe space for frank advice to be offered by officials to Ministers, and it is important for the good conduct of government that that safe space remains.

Danny Kruger (Devizes) (Con) [V]: We need to get the system of regulation and accountability right. I echo the point made earlier by the Chair of the Liaison Committee, my hon. Friend the Member for Harwich and North Essex (Sir Bernard Jenkin), that most of all we need a culture of values in public service to run through what Ministers, ex-Ministers and officials do. We will never write rules so perfect that people do not have to make judgments about who they see and what they do, but to shore that up, we really need a culture of transparency, so will my right hon. Friend confirm that the independent review into the Greensill affair will have full access to all the documents and all the decision makers involved?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes a very good point—two actually—about the importance of culture complementing rules, and also about the review being undertaken by Nigel Boardman, who will be given all the details he needs about any contact between individuals within Government and those acting on behalf of Greensill.

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): The Minister for the Cabinet Office says that he welcomes this urgent question today, and for once I believe him, because there is nothing he likes more than seeing the remaining shreds of the Prime Minister's credibility for probity being blown into the wind. We know that he will look forward to an opportunity to finally get his own head down in that lavishly furnished apartment above No. 10 Downing Street, and that when we come to the next Conservative party leadership contest he will once again be persuaded to put his hat in the ring, but is he really saying that the way this Government have operated is acceptable and that this is really the way we should expect a Government to operate?

Michael Gove: Yes.

Antony Higginbotham (Burnley) (Con): In the past 12 months, right hon. and hon. Members from both sides of the House have stood up and made sure that offers of support from local businesses have reached

[*Antony Higginbotham*]

Ministers at the right time and in the right way, because that is how we have supported people across the country. Does my right hon. Friend agree that ensuring that those offers got to the right place at the right time has been an important part of getting PPE, ventilators and vaccines to people across the United Kingdom when they needed them most?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The Government were operating—as all Governments were, to be fair—in difficult circumstances and with a clear demand that we do everything possible to source PPE. As has been pointed out, the overwhelming majority of the PPE was sourced in a way that was rigorous, so that the equipment was fit for purpose and those on the frontline could benefit.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD) [V]: I wonder, does the Secretary of State agree that a version of the ministerial code should apply to the leaders of new political parties who might possibly be receiving payments from the arms of overseas Governments who do not hold dear to their heart the best interests of the United Kingdom?

Michael Gove: I do not want to embarrass the hon. Gentleman too much by saying that almost every time he asks a question or makes a point in the House of Commons, I think how lucky his constituents are to have him as their Member of Parliament. Even though we disagree on many issues, he puts his finger on an important point of public scrutiny at this time, as people decide how to cast their votes.

Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): Does my right hon. Friend agree that there is only one party in this House that stands guilty of ignoring votes in a Parliament to which it is responsible, that withholds legal advice, that spends thousands of pounds trying to cover its back in a botched court case, and whose leader had been found guilty by a cross-party Committee of that Parliament of misleading that Parliament? It is not my party but the party of the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss), who asked this urgent question today: the Scottish National party—the real cosy, sleekit cabal that is running Scotland today.

Michael Gove: I could not put it better myself. The surprising thing is: where are the SNP MPs now? Some people might think that turning up, reading out a question and then leaving before the debate has concluded is the perfect definition of a cynical political stunt, but I will leave that for other people to decide.

Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP) [V]: The Minister is trying to say that there is absolutely nothing to see here over contracts for cronies, shady deals for decorating, text messages for tax breaks and peerages for donations. If that is the case, are not the public entitled to see this examined in a full, independent public inquiry? If not, what is he afraid of?

Michael Gove: As I am sure the hon. Gentleman is aware, there are a number of issues that might appropriately be the subject of a full, independent public inquiry—we

can all think of appropriate issues—but I would say that, in response to the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss), I ran through the points about PPE and I explained why James Dyson had done so much to ensure that ventilators could be available to all. It is also the case, as I have mentioned to a number of Members, that an inquiry into the handling of the pandemic is of course appropriate, but the important thing is that we should not pre-empt its findings.

Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance) [V]: In January 2020, the Government were a party to the “New Decade, New Approach” agreement, which restored devolution to Northern Ireland. That agreement included a commitment to a panel of commissioners for ministerial standards. More recently, the Northern Ireland Assembly has given that role to the Assembly’s Commissioner for Standards. Why are the Government prepared to support that much more rigorous approach to ministerial standards in Stormont but not in Whitehall?

Michael Gove: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. I applaud the cross-party working that Stormont has exhibited in ensuring that the Executive and Ministers work well. As I pointed out earlier, we hope that the independent adviser on ministerial standards will be appointed very shortly. There will then be an opportunity, of course—following on from a number of questions put by right hon. and hon. Members—to review what changes, if any, are needed in order to improve that role.

Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con): I have spent the last few days knocking on literally hundreds of doors across mid-Cornwall, as I am sure many Members have done in their own constituencies. The residents of St Austell and Newquay raised a number of important issues with me: the roll-out of the vaccine that is protecting them and their loved ones; the economic impact of the pandemic and what the Government are doing to ensure that we recover quickly; and the lifting of restrictions as we follow the road map that will enable them to see their loved ones again and get back to life as normal in the coming weeks. The one thing that nobody raised with me at all was the matter of the arrangements for refurbishing the Prime Minister’s flat. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that the Prime Minister and the Government will remain focused on the things that really matter to the people of this country, which is getting through the pandemic and getting back to life as normal as quickly as possible?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend is spot on. Today I had meetings about the vaccine roll-out; ensuring that our justice system operates more quickly after the pandemic; ensuring that we can deal with the backlogs in the NHS as a result of elective operations having to be put aside because of the pandemic; and ensuring that the educational opportunities of our young people—again, scarred by the pandemic—are restored. I think—others may disagree—that those are all more important issues than curtains and soft furnishings, but I leave it to others to decide.

Dame Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab) [V]: Dominic Cummings has described the Prime Minister’s plans to get Tory donors to pay for the lavish refurbishment of the Downing Street flat as “unethical, foolish and...illegal”.

Either the Prime Minister's former chief adviser is a liar and a fantasist, or the Prime Minister is not being entirely straightforward with the House or the country. Which is it?

Michael Gove: As someone once said in a different context, "recollections may vary".

James Cartledge (South Suffolk) (Con): The question today relates to the ministerial code and to Government Ministers, but has my right hon. Friend reflected on the fact that while the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) was asking her questions, a number of her own Front-Bench colleagues are under the direct employ of prominent and well-known lobbying companies? Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we are to look at the ministerial code, we should also look at the rules governing shadow spokesmen?

Michael Gove: That seems to be an important point and one for the House to consider.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): In reply to my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), the Minister made a virtue of the Prime Minister having paid for the refurbishment of the Downing Street flat. There have been several weeks of speculation about this and it was only last Friday that Downing Street confirmed that he had. Will the Minister clarify whether the Prime Minister paid the original invoices for this work, or did he reimburse the donors who allegedly donated money to this fund or to the Conservative party?

Michael Gove: As I pointed out earlier, the Prime Minister paid for the renovation of the flat. All donations to the Prime Minister, to any other Member of Parliament, or indeed to political parties, will be declared appropriately and properly. Of course, the Cabinet Secretary also made clear in his hearing with the Select Committee on Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs the background to this issue.

Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con) [V]: Does my right hon. Friend not find it ironic that the self-same people who are attacking the Government today for the process of procurement were attacking the Government just about a year ago for their slowness in achieving supplies of PPE and other equipment? Is it not right that the Government have moved heaven and earth and that Ministers and civil servants have worked literally through the night often to make sure that we get through this covid pandemic as safely as possible?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend makes a very fair point. It was the case, entirely legitimately and appropriately, that Opposition Members were criticising us for the slow procurement of PPE, and that the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves) wrote to me to encourage us to go faster and made a number of suggestions about companies that we should follow up, which we did. Now the allegation is that, when political figures pressed us to procure PPE more quickly for those at the frontline, that was a mistake. Either Labour's position last spring was wrong, or its position now is wrong; they both cannot be right.

May I conclude by wishing my hon. Friend a happy birthday? It is, I understand, a very significant date, but the Official Secrets Act forbids me from revealing how significant.

Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab): We all know that the delay in locking down the country in lockdown one, lockdown two and lockdown three led to a higher toll in both lives and livelihoods. What I do not think anyone expected was to read on the front page of the *Daily Mail* today that the Prime Minister had said:

"Let the bodies pile high in their thousands."

The claim has been subsequently verified independently by other journalists. The Minister takes statements that he makes at the Dispatch Box more seriously than the Prime Minister does, so may I ask him again to be absolutely categorical that he has never heard the Prime Minister say those words, that the Prime Minister did not say those words, and that, prior to arriving in the House this afternoon, he received assurances from the Prime Minister that he did not use those words? Can he be absolutely clear, straightforward and honest about that?

Michael Gove: Totally. As I pointed out earlier in response to the question from, I think, the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn), I had been in a meeting in the Cabinet Room with the Prime Minister. I would not ordinarily go into discussions that take place in Cabinet Committees, for reasons that the hon. Gentleman will well understand, but I never heard the Prime Minister say any such a thing. We were all wrestling with an incredibly difficult decision—the decision to lock down necessarily imposes costs in other ways, as we are all aware. The Prime Minister concluded at the end of our discussion, which was a sober, serious and detailed discussion, that it was necessary not only to have that second lockdown but, sadly, to have a third lockdown as well.

Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP) [V]: According to Opinium for *The Observer*, 53% of people in Scotland think that the Prime Minister is corrupt. Whether it is covid contracts for his cronies, peerages for his pals, or tax breaks over texts, the Prime Minister is leading a Government who are rotten to the core and fast losing public trust. Any healthy democracy must have leaders with credibility. Will the Minister do the right thing and ensure that a public inquiry happens and recognise that people in Scotland have a right to decide their own future—a future free from Tory sleaze and corruption that they did not vote for?

Michael Gove: I think we are grateful for that party election broadcast. The most important thing to stress is that, on each of the detailed questions raised quite understandably by the hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss), I explained the position and it is not as the SNP would wish it to be.

Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab) [V]: We have seen a growing divergence between what Ministers say in public and the true intentions that they share in private. The public deserves to know what the Prime Minister said to Manchester United's Ed Woodward in a meeting before the European super league was announced,

[Rachel Hopkins]

as it seems that the Prime Minister gave the impression that he supported the plans. Without full transparency, questions remain about the Prime Minister's potential breach of the ministerial code and the Nolan principles. Can the Minister commit the Government to publish all details relating to that meeting?

Michael Gove: It was clear from what the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport said in the wake of the suggestion that there should be a European super league that they were wholly opposed to that venture. My understanding—I was not there at the time—is that the conversation with Ed Woodward of Manchester United related to the broader opening up of sporting events and what social distancing or other measures might be necessary to allow more of us to go back to football matches.

Mr Speaker: I will now suspend the House for three minutes to enable the necessary arrangements to be made for the next item of business.

4.29 pm

Sitting suspended.

ODA Budget

4.32 pm

Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs if he will make a statement on reductions in the overseas development assistance budget.

The Minister for the Middle East and North Africa (James Cleverly): I thank my right hon. Friend for his question. The pandemic has resulted in the biggest drop in UK economic output in 300 years, and it has had a major impact on public finances; the deficit this year is projected to be double its peak during the financial crisis. That is why we had to take the tough—but, I assure him, temporary—decision at the end of last year to reduce the official development assistance target from 0.7% of GNI to 0.5%.

In spite of that, the UK will spend £10 billion on aid in 2021, making us the third largest donor in the G7 as a percentage of our gross national income. Not only that, but we will be the third largest bilateral humanitarian donor, spending at least £906 million this year, and we will invest at least £400 million bilaterally on girls' education in over 25 countries. We will deliver £534 million of bilateral spend on climate and biodiversity, a doubling of the average spend between 2016 and 2020. We have committed £548 million to COVAX to provide vaccines for poorer countries, and we are multiplying our impact by integrating our aid spend with our diplomatic network, our science and technology expertise and our economic partnerships.

This Government's commitment to the UK's being a leader in development has not changed. The integrated review reaffirmed our pledge to fight against global poverty and to achieve the UN sustainable development goals by 2030, and we reiterate our commitment to return to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows. This week's new allocations show that we are following through with the vision that the Prime Minister set out in the integrated review. The way the UK applies our world-leading investment and our expertise must be strategic, in line with the approach defined by the integrated review, it must represent best value for taxpayers' money, and it must deliver results by tackling poverty and improving people's lives around the world.

To achieve this, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office has conducted a thorough review of aid spending to ensure that we target every penny at the highest-priority global challenges. The Foreign Secretary's written statement to the House last week set out how this sharpened focus of the FCDO's aid portfolio lies behind seven strategic priorities for poverty reduction. These are: climate and biodiversity, covid-19 and global health security, girls' education, humanitarian preparedness and response, science and technology, open societies and conflict resolution, and economic development and trade. We believe that this plan will deliver the greatest impact where it matters most.

Mr Mitchell: When Germany will now exceed the 0.7% target, France is now pledged to hit it and the US is increasing aid spending by \$15 billion, why is Britain, chair of the G7, breaking its promises to the poorest

and the election manifesto commitment on which we were all elected, and which this country previously has so proudly upheld? Do the Government understand that the aid cut to Syria undermines our key ally in the middle east, Jordan, and will increase the flow of refugees into Europe? Do the Government realise that sending 300 troops to Mali while cutting humanitarian aid to the Sahel is a failure of understanding that puts our troops at greater risk? Why are the Government derailing our Prime Minister's pledge on girls' education with cuts that will result in 4 million fewer girls going to school while Britain is simultaneously hosting an international replenishment conference asking others to fund this key British objective?

The 0.7% is not just a commitment to the world's poorest enshrined in law by this House; it is a reflection of the kind of country we aspire to be and the values that we uphold. Ninety-five per cent. of red wall voters approve of life-saving humanitarian aid, but that is exactly what the Treasury is cutting in their name. We are cutting £500 million in humanitarian aid. This will mean that 3 million women and children will not now receive life-saving support. Is it not clear that the original estimate of 100,000 souls who will die as a result is now a tragic understatement? This dreadful political—not economic—decision shames our country and our Government. It should shame us all.

James Cleverly: I completely understand the passion with which my right hon. Friend speaks, but the simple truth is that the UK economy is 11.3% smaller than it was last year and is undergoing the worst economic contraction for 300 years. The coronavirus has put in place a unique set of circumstances to which we are forced to respond. Yet despite these difficulties—despite this economic impact—the UK will remain in both absolute terms and percentage terms one of the largest ODA donor countries in the world, and will remain the third largest ODA donor in the G7.

My right hon. Friend speaks of the areas where the UK wishes to be a force for good in the world. We are still absolutely committed to making sure that we use our ODA spend in areas such as girls' education, the environment and climate and others, but with our diplomatic efforts as part of the joint Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office as a force multiplier to ensure that the money we spend is amplified by our diplomatic efforts both bilaterally and on the world stage. I remind him that when the fiscal circumstances allow, we are committed to returning to the 0.7% of GNI which he, others and indeed this Government are so rightly proud of.

Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: Last week the Foreign Secretary exposed his fear of scrutiny by trying to sneak out a written statement on his callous aid cuts. Today, having been forced to come to face up to his decisions by the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell), he has once again evaded scrutiny and hidden behind one of his Ministers instead.

Make no mistake, slashing humanitarian support in the middle of a global pandemic is callous and incredibly short-sighted. People will lose their lives as a result of the cuts, and we will all be less safe. As the only G7 nation to cut aid, it is a retreat from our moral duty and will weaken our position on the world stage.

The statement published last week was light on detail, so will the Minister tell us whether ambassadors have been informed of their allocated budgets and the date when all FCDO country office budgets for 2021 will be made public? Will impact assessments be conducted for each country? When will they be forthcoming? Will he explain the Foreign Secretary's comment:

"Nobody is going hungry because we have not signed cheques"? Sixteen million Yemenis and 12 million Syrian people are on the brink of famine. How does the Minister think the respective 60% and 30% cuts in aid will impact people in those countries?

The impact of the cuts on the Government's own stated priorities are stark—from education, which has been cut by 40%, to health programmes such as the International Rescue Committee's Saving Lives in Sierra Leone, which has helped more than 3 million people and has now been cut by 60%. In a year when Britain will be hosting the G7 and COP26, the cuts are a shameful act and part of a pattern of retreat from the world stage by this Conservative Government. Rather than continuing to treat Parliament with contempt, will the Minister commit to putting the cuts to a vote at the earliest opportunity?

James Cleverly: The hon. Lady speaks about my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary attempting to avoid scrutiny; that would carry a bit more credibility had it not been for the fact that he specifically put the written ministerial statement in the public domain ahead of his appearance at the International Development Committee so that the Committee could grill him on that statement.

The hon. Lady made a point about our commitment to overseas development and assistance; I remind her of the answer that I gave a few minutes ago: we are facing an unprecedented set of circumstances. I also remind the hon. Lady that this is one of, if not the, most difficult economic years that the country has faced in a number of centuries. Even against that backdrop, we are committed to 2.5% of GNI—a proportion that previous Labour Governments managed to hit only a couple of times in the most benign economic circumstances. I am proud of the fact that this Government remain committed to being one of the most generous aid donors in the world and, as I say, to linking our diplomatic efforts with our development efforts to maximise the force for good in the world that we can bring about.

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): The British Government first committed to the 0.7% target in the year I first stood for Parliament. They would reach the target when they could; it took 39 years. The Minister's prepared statement said that the Government intend to get back to 0.7% when circumstances allow. If they said that would be next year, the House would partly understand, but as the Minister has not, we have to assume that it will be more than a year.

A previous Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest West (Sir Desmond Swayne), said:

"The UK aid strategy sits firmly in our security and defence strategy. The 0.7% spent on international aid and the 2% commitment to NATO are the 2.7% that we spend, in our international interests, on securing a safer, more stable and more prosperous world."—[*Official Report*, 13 June 2016; Vol. 611, c. 297WH.]

Will the Minister say how much would be saved by the reduction in the economy—the 11.2% to which he referred? That would be a big cut, but it is provided for

[Sir Peter Bottomley]

in the legislation. Will he kindly read out the words that the current Prime Minister reinforced in our 2019 manifesto, when he added the word “proudly” to the commitment that repeated what was said by two previous Conservative Prime Ministers?

James Cleverly: I completely understand the point that my hon. Friend makes. No one could have predicted the once-in-a-generation health and economic event that was covid-19 and we have had to take unprecedented action to respond to that. I can personally attest to the passion of both my right hon. Friends—the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister—for the priorities that we have set out in response to the urgent question from my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell). The reason why we have not set a specific date in respect of the point at which we will get back up to 0.7% is that none of us can predict that—this is a genuinely unprecedented set of circumstances. The quicker we can get the British economy back into shape, the quicker we can get back to committing to development expenditure at the level that we would all want it to be at.

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP) [V]: Last week, the Secretary of State admitted not only that 60% cuts would fall on Yemen, the world’s worst humanitarian disaster, but that no impact assessment had been undertaken. He shamefully hid behind the pitiful excuse of needing to make difficult decisions. Was it a difficult decision to use the money to deliver a windfall for the defence budget and increase spending on nuclear weapons, or was it simply an ideological decision that everyone can see through clearly? The global covid pandemic should not be used as an excuse to cut aid. Indeed, it is our essential duty to increase support to the world’s most vulnerable during this crisis.

While this Government are intent on breaking their manifesto commitment to maintaining the 0.7% target, the SNP has pledged to increase the Scottish Government’s aid budget by 50% if re-elected next week. Indeed, the rest of the G7 have increased their aid spending as a result of covid, and over 200 non-governmental organisations have accused this Government of delivering a “tragic blow” to the world’s poorest people. Does the Minister believe that the G7 and all these NGOs are wrong and that the UK Government are right? Is this not further proof that the reality of global Britain is, indeed, rather little Britain?

James Cleverly: I remind the hon. Gentleman that the UK remains, in both absolute terms and percentage of GNI terms, one of the most generous ODA-donating countries in the world. He mentions the impact of coronavirus. The UK has donated over half a billion pounds to support COVAX to help to vaccinate the poorest countries in the world. In addition to that, we have commitments both for science and technology and for health preparedness as priorities. The UK Government have had to make—

Chris Law *indicated dissent.*

James Cleverly: The hon. Gentleman can shake his head, but the simple fact is that the UK Government have had to deal with an unprecedented, once-in-300-year

economic as well as health event, and we have to respond, but we do so in a way that maintains our commitment to the poorest in the world.

Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con): The integrated review identifies the United Kingdom as a “soft power superpower”, citing as one of the reasons our contribution to international development. Exactly how is that position going to be enhanced by the action of cutting aid to the world’s poorest, including those in slavery? I note that slavery was not even referred to in the written statement issued by the Foreign Secretary last week.

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend is absolutely right that the UK is viewed globally as a soft power superpower. The conversations I have had since the announcements have been made demonstrate that the international community still very much sees the UK as a soft power superpower. Our development expenditure is an important part of that, and that is why we are committed to getting back to 0.7% when the fiscal situation allows. We will continue to work with partners, and to lobby, co-ordinate and convene our international friends and partners to support the poorest in the world. We will not step back from that just because of the temporary financial situation we find ourselves in. I can assure her that she and I and, as I say, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary are as one, in that we aspire to be a global leader in soft power and in development, and we will recover back up to 0.7% as soon as the fiscal situation allows.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab) [V]: Over the last 12 months, this Government have asset-stripped our foreign aid programme, and along with it done serious damage to the UK’s global standing, security and soft power. All this was done without consultation or scrutiny by this House or the aid sector. To be quite honest, I am staggered that the Secretary of State tries to justify there being scrutiny of this House by sneaking out a statement last Wednesday before my Committee met the following morning. Can the Minister please tell us the date when this House will be told the funding allocation for aid projects by countries, and when will he publish the impact assessment that should have been done alongside the decision?

James Cleverly: The written ministerial statement was put out so that the hon. Lady’s Committee would be able to scrutinise the Foreign Secretary. It is unusual, perhaps even unprecedented, to set out thematic allocations at the beginning of the financial year, as the Foreign Secretary has done via his written ministerial statement last week and in his IDC evidence. Detailed information about how we will spend ODA is usually set out in the “Statistics on International Development” process in the year following the spend, and programme-by-programme information is also published on the Development Tracker. We have tried to be as open and as transparent as we are able to be. Clearly we are still in the process of making detailed decisions. We have informed the House and her Committee of as much detail as we are able to at this point. As we go through country by country and theme by theme, more details will be forthcoming.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con) [V]: I am intrigued to hear the comment that it is a challenge that we will return to the 0.7% as soon as possible,

because the Minister realises, like everybody else in this House, that the rest of the world is not standing still. Others are filling the gaps that we leave, and votes in the United Nations and different support elements are going according to those power dynamics.

Can the Minister assure me that the decisions being taken will be in keeping with the other decisions that the Foreign Office is taking in reinforcing our bilateral interests, defending British people abroad and making sure that things such as covid do not have pools of disease around the world in which they can develop further? Of course, aid spending is not actually about foreigners; it is about us and supporting the world we live in and making sure we are able to communicate, to travel and to operate around the world. Will he assure me that that in that integration, although we are committed legally to multilaterals we will not forget the bilateral commitments we have made, which are so much more easily dropped?

James Cleverly: My hon. Friend makes an incredibly important point. The UK is proud of the role it plays in multilateral forums around the world, and we are a leading player in many of them, but we are very conscious that we have incredibly important long-standing bilateral relationships around the world. I am very proud of the fact that we have maintained not only our commitments to multilaterals, but, through ODA and our diplomatic channels, our very strong set of bilateral relationships. He is right to highlight that both matter. Both are incredibly important to our partners around the world, and also, as he says, to the interests of people here in the UK.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD) [V]: Announcing these deep, potentially unlawful aid cuts through a written statement was cowardly, but in the context of coronavirus, the cuts are also incredibly short-sighted. Chile, Brazil, India, here—we have seen what happens when new variants emerge and countries become overwhelmed. Every time it happens, the virus then mutates even faster.

Last week, the all-party group on coronavirus heard that the cuts are likely to result in hurting scientists' ability to catch the new variants abroad—variants that may well threaten our own recovery here. Although £1.3 billion has been allocated to coronavirus and global health, there has been no detail on the country-specific allocations. Can the Minister provide that clarity now? Can he assure the House that he understands that no one is safe until everyone is safe?

James Cleverly: The UK has been a leading country in funding COVAX to ensure that poorer countries in the world have vaccinations as part of their arsenal to defend against coronavirus. We have a globally enviable ability to analyse and sequence mutations—information that we share with the world. The hon. Lady is absolutely right that no one is safe until everyone is safe, and that is why we are so very proud of the research that has happened here in the UK, which is being shared globally through the COVAX and Gavi processes. We are also proud that we are committing to a significant investment in science and technology and research as part of our ODA expenditure, for the very reasons that she outlines.

Mrs Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): Could I just put the Minister right? The Foreign Secretary put out the statement at gone 5 o'clock the night before we

met at 9 o'clock the following morning, so he did not give much time for anybody to digest what was in it and there was not much in it to start with.

I am deeply saddened and very upset that we are going to be balancing the books in this country on the backs of the poorest in the world. When are the Government going to come clean and be honest about where these cuts to lifesaving humanitarian aid will fall? How many women and children will die as a result? Is it more or is it fewer than the 100,000 estimated by the leading think-tanks and NGOs?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Just before the Minister answers the question, I must make a plea. It would be good if I could manage to call everyone who is on the call list for this statement, but I cannot allow it to go on for more than an hour because we have several other pieces of business. It might be helpful for Members to know that, as things stand at the moment, the calculation is that the House will sit till about 1 am or 2 am tomorrow morning. I realise that that will not matter to the people who are sitting comfortably at home, but it does matter to the people who keep this Chamber and this building running. I am not criticising the Minister, who has been giving thorough answers—that is what the Chamber is looking for—but now that he has given thorough answers, perhaps he might be inclined to give shorter ones.

James Cleverly: Of course, Madam Deputy Speaker.

There is always a balance between the earliest points at which information, and the detail of that information, can be shared. We are not yet in a position where we can share the granularity of either thematic programmes or country programmes. We did not want to delay giving any information to the House in order to do that. That process is going forward, but at the moment it is not possible for either the Government or anyone else to predict with any accuracy the impact that global situations have. However, we are absolutely committed to being and remaining one of the most generous ODA-donating countries in the world.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): The Minister will be in no doubt whatever where I and others stand on this issue. Indeed, in my own debate at the end of March I flagged the dreadful decision to cut our aid. Will he outline to me and others in this House how we can possibly fulfil our moral obligation to nations who rely on our support, in particular those in the Commonwealth, at a time of the greatest insecurity since the war years? Will he and the Department not rethink this decision, which is tantamount to a death sentence to so many people?

James Cleverly: I completely understand the passion with which the hon. Gentleman speaks. He speaks on international affairs issues with great authority and passion. I remind him that while of course the totality of ODA expenditure matters, this is one of the most difficult economic circumstances that this country has faced in many centuries. Yet even in these circumstances, I assure him that we are still committed to more than has been the historic norm for this country under Governments of other political persuasions. I also assure him that as soon as the fiscal situation allows, we will be returning to 0.7%.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): The awful scenes we are seeing in India are obviously having a deeply personal and human impact there, but they are for many here too. People are dying right now and, as we know from our experience, rising case numbers can mean only one thing. They cannot breathe. The UK may have committed £330 million per year to Gavi through to 2025, which is good, but it is a drop in the ocean. What more can we do, through the Minister's good offices, to export our vaccine miracle to our historical good friends in India who really need us right now?

James Cleverly: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. India remains a long-standing and close friend of the United Kingdom. It has come to our aid in times of difficulty and it is absolutely right that we reciprocate that now. I am very proud of the fact that the UK Government have moved quickly to help to supply oxygen-related technologies. We are also committed to ensuring that the scientific breakthroughs that the teams at Oxford University have created, alongside AstraZeneca, will be shared globally around the world. We are assessing what more we can do to support one of our very longstanding friends around the world.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind) [V]: The Minister says that Britain has a huge commitment to the poorest around the world. If we do, this is a strange way of showing it: we are cutting aid budgets while at the same time increasing arms expenditure. More than 2 billion people around the world have no access to safe, clean water. Many more have even less access to sewerage or any other kind of facilities. For many around the world, security is something to eat, clean water, a health service and the ability to have their children educated. What kind of message to the world is it that we cut aid expenditure while at the same time we increase the defence budget by £24 billion and massively increase the number of nuclear warheads? Instead, should we not give a message to the covid-dominated world that we are committed to bringing good, decent water and healthcare around the world as our absolute priority to bring about security for the whole planet?

James Cleverly: More often than not, security and the alleviation of pain and suffering go hand in hand. All around the world, the prevention and resolution of conflict is the most significant positive move that could be taken to alleviate pain and suffering. That is exactly why the integrated review looks across the gamut of international affairs, including defence and security, as well as diplomacy and development. It is right that we think of these things hand in hand.

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) [V]: Is the UK now stopping making overseas aid payments through the EU, given the way it has been spending money on a country such as China, which has \$3.2 trillion in reserves? Is this not an opportunity for the UK to express its own moral priorities, and secure better value for money by making more of its own direct choices and payments? Can that include being very generous in response to the current Indian crisis?

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend makes the important point that, having left the European Union, the United Kingdom can now make its own decisions. In many instances—not in all cases—the positions that

we take now are similar to those that we took as members of the European Union. He will note that we have significantly—almost completely—reduced our aid support to China; the only expenditure now is in support of human rights and open societies. As I said in response to an earlier question, we will be focused very much on how we can support our friends around the world in their times of need.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: I have great regard for the Minister. I think he is an honourable man. But I am sorry, the Prime Minister who he has been defending today is a moral vacuum—a “vacuum of integrity”, as one of his colleagues said today. We have a Prime Minister who does not believe at all in international aid. That is the fact of the matter. Friends of mine are working on the frontline in Delhi, in India, and it is a tragedy. It is a tsunami. We should have been at the front with a massive aid package. Please can we have a vote in the House because this was not in the Conservative party manifesto at the last election and I do not think this aid cut would carry a majority?

James Cleverly: I can assure the House that the Prime Minister is absolutely committed to supporting the poor and suffering people around the world. Through the priorities that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary outlined, including climate change, biodiversity and girls' education—something the Prime Minister is particularly focused on—we have seen that we are absolutely committed to these things. I will say again: the circumstances in which we find ourselves are unique; they are unprecedented: the biggest economic contraction this country has seen in 300 years. It is right that the Government respond to that, but I remind the House that, even in the midst of this response, in percentage and absolute terms, we remain one of the most generous aid donor countries in the world.

Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con): The Office for Budget Responsibility says that the economy will return to pre-pandemic levels of activity in quarter 2 of next year, so why do the Government not commit to returning to 0.7% at that point? It is the fact that they will not do that that makes people worry that this is a conscious political choice, not force of circumstance caused by the pandemic. According to Save the Children, 400,000 children in Yemen will not be fed because of this cut in British aid. I know that the Minister has to defend decisions that he has not personally made, but is this not defending the indefensible?

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend knows that we make decisions collectively in Government. I defend the decisions that I am part of making and I am not going to imply that I am passing the buck to anyone else. These are difficult decisions that we had to make. He has sat in that seat and knows how difficult decisions are made—how difficult decisions can be. We all hope that the UK economy will recover as quickly and completely as he suggests. If that is the case, it may well be that we are able to return to 0.7% sooner rather than later, but it would be wrong and foolhardy of me or indeed anyone else at the Dispatch Box to give a date when the circumstances are still so unknown and unpredictable. I can assure him, however, that, as soon as the fiscal situation allows, we will return to 0.7%.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. I have to say that it is not fair to the Minister if people ask the same question over and over again, so he feels obliged to give the same answer again and again. I can now say to the Minister that he has given many answers very strongly and emphatically and he does not have to feel bad about saying to Members now, “I refer them to the answer I gave a few moments ago,” because at this rate not everyone will get in.

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab) [V]: Yemen, we believe, will suffer some 60% cuts in our development assistance, yet it is a country where the world’s failure to stop a brutal war means that children are dying of preventable disease and now of starvation. Would the Minister seriously say to a mother or father nursing a dying child that this is all about the economy and the economic recovery of this country?

James Cleverly: The UK remains one of the largest aid donors to Yemen. But alongside that, we are also giving support to Martin Griffiths, the United Nations envoy. We are liaising directly with the Houthis, the Government of Yemen and other parties in the region to try to bring about a resolution to that conflict. The best gift we can give to the people of Yemen is peace and that is what we are pursuing. While pursuing that, we are also maintaining our commitment to support people, feed people and try to keep them alive until peace comes to that country.

Ms Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con) [V]: Instability in Afghanistan and the growing confidence of the Taliban are a threat to international security and will impact us here in the UK. Can the Minister give me some assurance that an assessment has been made of withdrawing support to Afghanistan, especially the impact that will have on Afghan women and girls who rely on us for education and basic healthcare?

James Cleverly: I can assure my hon. Friend that we think carefully about the implications of all the decisions we make and indeed the decisions made by other countries around the world. We remain committed to women, peace and security as an agenda and the education of women and girls in particular. We will absolutely continue to pursue both those agendas.

Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab) [V]: We have heard a succession of senior Conservatives condemn this decision as “shameful”. As well as the humanitarian costs, the ODA cuts have a direct impact on UK research and development. The Royal Society tells us that its programmes are being cut by around 70%. Can the Minister tell me whether the Government were aware of those consequences when the decision was made and whether he has seen or carried out any impact assessment?

James Cleverly: It is the normal process of this Department and its predecessor Department to speak regularly with our delivery partners and opinion formers in the sectors with which we work. The decisions we made are difficult, and they are driven by the economic circumstances. As I have said a number of times, we will get back up to the 0.7% to reinforce the sectors that the hon. Member speaks about as soon as the fiscal situation allows.

Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con) [V]: Can my right hon. Friend update the House on the pivot away from UK taxpayers’ money being used in aid to totalitarian countries such as China towards more open and democratic parts of the world?

James Cleverly: I thank my hon. Friend for raising that point. The UK is committed to supporting democracy and political stability around the world. He will have seen in the written ministerial statement the commitment that the Foreign Secretary made to reducing our ODA expenditure in China and focusing it exclusively on human rights and open societies.

Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP) [V]: To paraphrase the journalist Ben Taub, radicalisation lies in a shallow grave. Can the Minister advise the House how reducing refugee support in Syria from the £137 million pledged last year to £45 million this year will not play a part in resurrecting radicalisation in Syria and the wider middle east?

James Cleverly: We completely understand that instability and failed economies are drivers of terrorism and radicalisation. That is why the UK remains committed to supporting Governments around the world in both maintaining their economic stability and alleviating the suffering of displaced people, and we will continue to do so.

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): From covid to Ebola to malaria, we have all seen how important international scientific research is, and we are proud to be a world leader in this. If we are to continue that progress, it does not make sense to cut those international budgets just when their importance is so clear. Will the Minister meet with scientists and find a way to ensure that these vital research programmes can continue uninterrupted?

James Cleverly: My right hon. Friend makes a good point. The FCDO has committed £253 million on R&D this year across the seven themes. Of course, we are always keen to hear from expert voices. I cannot make a commitment that we can necessarily respond in the way that they would want us to, because of the fiscal situation that I have discussed, but we absolutely recognise that science and technology in so many areas—for example, in covid—is the key that unlocks many of the world’s challenges.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD) [V]: The Government’s reductions in the overseas development aid budget, FCDO research spending cuts and now other departmental cuts, according to the research profession, amount to more than half a billion pounds lost to research. Does the Minister agree that, while we battle a once-in-a-generation pandemic, the effects of which across the world we see every night on our TV screens, science is at the heart of many of the solutions we desperately need and that the Government need to continue to invest in and grow science talent and champions of evidence around the globe, not step back in this way?

James Cleverly: The work that the science community around the world has done in bringing vaccines to bear as quickly as it has is a testament to how important this

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sector is. The UK absolutely remains committed to being a global leader in science, technology and research, and we will do that both domestically in the UK and internationally through our ODA expenditure.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): I am no pinko leftie and I sometimes pointed out distortions caused by the 0.7% commitment at the end of the financial year, but I am completely mystified from a public accounts point of view about what is going on here. Is it not a fact that, because of the contraction of the economy, the aid budget would have declined by some £2.9 billion anyway? The Minister is now imposing another £4 billion cut on that. We are causing complete chaos, with international development staff all running around trying to cut the budget. Now, by the Minister's own logic, he is going to revert to 0.7%. We know the economy is going to bounce back, so having cut all this money, they are going to have to put it all back again. What is the logic from a public accounts perspective in what we are doing? Why are we causing such incompetence and chaos in the Department?

James Cleverly: As I said, the economic situation has been forced on us by coronavirus. May I suggest that my right hon. Friend has misrepresented the situation in the FCDO in terms of the actions our officials have taken? I have been deeply impressed by the professionalism and the speed with which FCDO officials have responded to this once-in-a-generation—once-in-a-lifetime—situation. We are keen to get back up to the 0.7% as soon as the situation allows. Our officials will look very carefully at what programmes we are not able to continue with and what programmes we will be able, or would choose, to either restart or start anew once the financial situation improves.

Navendu Mishra (Stockport) (Lab) [V]: In 2019, the UK pledged £400 million to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative between 2020 and 2023—£100 million per year. Last week, it was confirmed that the UK will contribute only £5 million to GPEI this year—a 95% cut. Will the Minister explain how his Government will make up for 2021's shortfall in a subsequent year, and deliver on the £400 million commitment by 2023?

James Cleverly: I am not able to make commitments for future years. The economic situation is probably more unpredictable now than it has been in our lifetimes. What I can say is that we will seek to get the UK's ODA target back up to 0.7% as soon as the fiscal situation allows.

Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab) [V]: I am grateful to the right hon. Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) for asking this urgent question. The Government have claimed that improving the education of girls globally is their priority, but Save the Children estimates that the Foreign Secretary's decision will result in a 25% cut in spending on girls' education worldwide. The funding slash is detrimental to girls in developing countries. In the light of the cuts, does the FCDO expect to fulfil the Government's manifesto promise?

James Cleverly: The economic situation we find ourselves in is unprecedented and not one that any of us could have predicted when generating the manifesto. The hon.

Lady will have heard our commitment to get back up 0.7%. Girls' education remains a priority for the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Government as a whole. I am pleased that the Prime Minister has appointed my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone and The Weald (Mrs Grant) to be his special envoy for girls' education, and I have seen the energy that she has already applied, with alacrity, to that incredibly important work.

Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con): The original 1958 aid target was 1% and covered public and private aid flows. In 2013, the OECD said that we were getting 1.21% in total. Will the Minister make sure that in the future private as well as public aid flows are recorded, so that we have an up-to-date picture of total aid spending?

James Cleverly: My hon. Friend makes an incredibly important point. I do not have at my fingertips the figures for private donations from the United Kingdom, but I think we all know not only that, through the UK Government, we remain one of the most generous ODA-donating countries in the world, but that the British people are incredibly generous. We can all be proud of the way the British people step up whenever there are international challenges. My hon. Friend is completely right that Government ODA spending is incredibly important, but so is the huge amount of money donated by private individuals in the UK.

Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab) [V]: The Indian community in my constituency is traumatised by the scenes that we are seeing of the covid crisis in India. I welcome the UK's emergency package of ventilators and oxygen concentrators, but the Minister earlier acknowledged that no country is safe until the virus is under control in every country. Is this therefore not the worst year to cut the aid budget, because by doing so he is endangering lives not only overseas but here in the UK too?

James Cleverly: I have already said how proud we all should be of our support to India. This is part of a long-standing bilateral relationship, perhaps one of the strongest in our history. All I can say in response to the hon. Gentleman's broader question about ODA is that it is driven by circumstances and that we will get back up to the 0.7% as soon as the fiscal situation allows.

Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con) [V]: Will my right hon. Friend explain—if not now, perhaps in writing—why the Government seek to change the 0.7% target set out in the International Development (Official Development Assistance Target) Act 2015, rather than to utilise the provisions of the Act to explain why they are unable to meet it at this time? If indeed the Government are seeking to change the target and believe that they may do so without further legislation or parliamentary sanction, what does he believe that the 2015 Act was intended to do, if not to stop Governments doing exactly that?

James Cleverly: The 2015 Act envisaged that there might be circumstances in which a Government would be unable to meet the 0.7% target. As I said, this is a truly unique and unprecedented set of economic

circumstances. We will look to get back up to 0.7% as soon as the situation allows. We will look at the situation with regard to legislation.

Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP): Will the Minister confirm—he has yet to do so—whether any impact assessment was made of the cuts, in particular to Yemen of 60%, Syria two thirds, Libya 63% and South Sudan 40%? Does he not recognise that the feeling of the House is such that those serious measures, those damaging cuts, should go to a vote of the whole House?

James Cleverly: Of course the whole process that we are going through is to balance the decisions that have been forced on us by economic circumstances and the impact that they would have. The whole job of the Department is to make those incredibly difficult decisions. That is the job that we do each and every year. Those decisions have perhaps come into sharper focus this year because the economic situation has forced the reduction in our ODA expenditure, but this is what the Department does: it balances the expenditure that we have at our disposal and assesses the best way in which we can maximise the positive impact of that money.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): I ask the Minister a simple question: does he think that the world will be safer or more dangerous over the next five to 10 years? We know the answer to that: authoritarianism is on the rise, power bases are shifting, and international institutions are struggling as we enter a profound and dangerous era of change. Our soft power counts, and reducing our support will leave vacuums to be filled either by countries such as Russia and China pursuing a very different agenda, or by extremism, taking advantage of poor governance and insecurity. I ask the Government not to jeopardise our seat on the UN Security Council by cutting our soft power in this way.

James Cleverly: I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend and the work of his Committee. He and I have discussed the integrated review, and the unpredictability and potential dangers that the future might have in store for us. That is why the integrated review is such an important document to assess our development expenditure. I absolutely hear the point that he makes about how such expenditure has an influence on our soft power standing, but he will also recognise that integrating our defence, security and diplomatic efforts is incredibly important. We enjoy a huge amount of soft power, notwithstanding this temporary reduction in our ODA expenditure. I have no doubt that once we can get back up to 0.7%, we will be able to reinforce further still the important work that we do on the international stage.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab) [V]: As chair of the all-party parliamentary group for Africa, I am deeply disturbed that 60 African researchers on the Royal Society's future leaders programme have been left without funding without warning because of these cuts. As MP for Newcastle University, I am deeply disturbed that funding for its global challenges hub has been cut by 70% without warning, making researchers redundant unless the university steps in. Will the Minister at least agree to remove the cap on carrying over previous years' underspends on UK Research and Innovation ODA-funded research to help save research and jobs in Africa and the UK?

James Cleverly: The Government absolutely recognise the importance of Africa, in terms of the challenges it faces and the opportunities that it presents itself with. We will spend around 50% of our bilateral ODA in Africa. I am not able to give commitments on the granularity of how programmes will be funded or, indeed, with regard to carry-overs, but as I have already said, we absolutely recognise the importance of research and development as a theme and Africa as a continent.

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con) [V]: My right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) was absolutely correct in pointing out that this represents a double cut: it is a cut from 0.7% to 0.5%, but it is also, of course, 0.5% of a lower figure, because gross national income has fallen. Can my right hon. Friend the Minister tell the House what effect that is going to have on the Ascend programme, what effect it will have on research into the treatment and prevention of malaria, and how many young women around the world will not receive education as a result of what I am afraid I have to regard as a breach of faith?

James Cleverly: I am not able to provide my right hon. Friend with the level of detail that he has asked for at this stage. The thematic programmes that were set out in my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary's written ministerial statement will now be worked out in more detail, and we will provide detail to our delivery partners as soon as we are able to, but I am not able to furnish the House with those figures at the moment.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: The rate of HIV infection remains stubbornly high—1.7 million people acquired HIV in 2019—and AIDS remains the leading killer of women of reproductive age. These are all preventable deaths. The UK's most recent pledge to the Global Fund, in 2019, saved 2 million lives. The proposed cut to global health spending is 40%; if passed on to HIV funding, that is 800,000 lives. Can the Minister confirm that there will be no cuts to the Robert Carr Fund, the Global Fund, UNAIDS or HIV research—including on a vaccine, which we are now very close to—and that we will renew and fully meet, without delay, all those pledges that we have made to save those lives?

James Cleverly: The hon. Gentleman makes the important point that while the attention of the world is rightly focused on coronavirus, that is not the only significant health issue facing the world. Unfortunately, as I said in my previous answer, I am not able to give assurances on individual programmes at this stage. The detail that my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary set out in his written ministerial statement is available to Members online, and we will be providing further details as our teams, both in country and thematically, work through the next stages of the programme.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): We have almost run out of time, but I will try to get in the six people who are left. Can we please have really short questions and really short answers? I think the Minister has answered every conceivable question.

Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con) [V]: My right hon. Friend is fully aware of the excellent work undertaken by arm's length bodies such as the

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British Council in fostering better understanding and relations with other countries. We are indeed a soft power superpower. What steps are the Government taking to ensure that these ODA reductions do not lead to decisions that will damage those bodies' long-term effectiveness?

James Cleverly: We are conscious of the potential long-term impacts of what we believe to be a one-off and hopefully short-term situation with regard to the economic impact of coronavirus. We will look carefully at the best use of taxpayers' money to ensure that important delivery mechanisms can continue into the future.

Claire Hanna (Belfast South) (SDLP) [V]: The pandemic has set back progress in healthcare and education for many years, at a time when the Government are cutting aid for reasons that, again, have not been justified. The medical supplies that the UK is sending to India are welcome and vital, but the evidence is clear: long-term strategic support is key to building resilience and capacity, and to preventing future problems from doing the type of harm that we are now witnessing in India. Does the Minister recognise that aid cuts now—even if restored at some point in the future—are, at best, penny wise and pound foolish?

James Cleverly: I have answered the broader question about our budget situation a number of times. The hon. Member is right that the resilience of our partner countries is an important factor, which we consider when we make the decisions that we have made.

Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con) [V]: I know, through my work as the Prime Minister's trade envoy to Angola and Zambia, of the excellent work of TradeMark East Africa in upgrading borders so that trade can take place more easily, thereby helping developing countries to move from aid to trade much more quickly. Will the Government therefore protect the budget of TradeMark East Africa for this excellent work?

James Cleverly: Although I completely agree with my hon. Friend's broader point about helping countries move to economic self-sufficiency, I cannot give assurances for individual projects at this time.

Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab): UNICEF says that we are facing a children's rights crisis, so will the Minister tell us what steps he has taken to ensure that children are protected from the impact of these cuts and that the UK continues to support children who find themselves living in desperate situations?

James Cleverly: As I have said before, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Government as a whole take the plight of children around the world incredibly seriously. That is why we are so committed to education, particularly of girls, which has been prioritised in our planning of this process.

Theo Clarke (Stafford) (Con) [V]: I have visited many successful UK aid-funded programmes, so I am disappointed by the proposed cuts to our aid budget. The Minister has confirmed that economic development is a priority for the Foreign Secretary, so does he agree that in order to help countries trade out of poverty and to deliver a truly global Britain, we must continue to fund aid for trade ODA programmes that help the poorest people in the world and enhance our mutual prosperity.

James Cleverly: Although humanitarian issues will always remain a priority, the Government have ensured that we still spend some ODA money on the resilience and strengthening of the underlying economies of a number of countries around the world, addressing the very point that my hon. Friend makes.

Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudoun) (SNP): The Scottish National party has committed to increase aid spending by 50% next year if back in government, despite the constraints imposed by Westminster. With the worldwide pandemic, COP26 to come and loss and damage to be discussed, it is ridiculous that the UK Government are cutting aid. Did the Minister fight his corner to protect the ODA budget, or does he not care enough about the poorest and most vulnerable?

James Cleverly: I, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary, the Prime Minister, every Minister in this Government, and, I have no doubt, every Conservative Member, are absolutely passionate about support for the poorest people in the world. I am glad that the hon. Member's party has chosen to be so generous. It is Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland working together—as a globally renowned Union—that enables his Government to be generous overseas. I am proud of the fact that our strong Union relationship allows them to do so.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I will now briefly suspend the House for three minutes in order that arrangements can be made for the next item of business.

5.34 pm

Sitting suspended.

Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions

5.37 pm

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and First Secretary of State (Dominic Raab): With permission, Madam Deputy Speaker, I should like to make a statement on our new global anti-corruption sanctions regulations.

Corruption has an immensely corrosive effect on the rule of law and trust in institutions. It slows development, drains the wealth of poorer nations and keeps their people trapped in poverty. It poisons the well of democracy around the world. Whistleblowers and those who seek to expose corruption are targeted, and some have paid the ultimate price with their lives, including, of course, Sergei Magnitsky himself, the inspiration for our human rights sanctions regime. But his courage was not in vain. The framework of sanctions that we are launching today, shared by some of our partners around the world, flows directly from his decision to take a brave stance against injustice, and that will not be forgotten.

This country has an important role to play in the fight against corruption. Our status as a global financial centre makes us an attractive location for investment, and we are proud of that and welcome it. But it also makes us a honey pot—a lightning rod—for corrupt actors who seek to launder their dirty money through British banks or British businesses. That is why we have already taken steps to become a global leader in tackling corruption and illicit finance. Our law enforcement agencies are recognised as some of the most effective in the world. The National Crime Agency's international corruption unit and its predecessors have restrained, confiscated or returned well over £1 billion of assets stolen from developing countries since 2006. My Department continues to provide funding for this vital work.

The Bribery Act 2010 criminalises bribery and the failure of businesses to prevent bribery from happening in the first place. In April 2016, the UK was the first in the G20 to establish a public register of the beneficial owners of companies and similar legal entities. That was an important first step in tackling the use of anonymous shell companies to move corrupt money around the world. I can tell the House that more than 4.5 million companies are now listed on that register.

In 2017, we adopted the ambitious five-year anti-corruption strategy, bringing in measures such as unexplained wealth orders, account freezing orders and the like, and that year, we also established the International Anti-Corruption Co-ordination Centre in London, which has helped to freeze more than £300 million of suspected corrupt assets worldwide and led to dozens of arrests. According to Transparency International's corruption perceptions index, those actions—our commitment to tackling corruption—have seen the UK rise from a global ranking of 20th in 2010 to 11th place in 2020, out of a total of 180 countries.

Against that backdrop, the new sanctions regime that I am announcing today will give us an additional powerful tool to hold the corrupt to account. It will prevent corrupt actors from using the UK as a haven for dirty money while combating corruption around the world. As hon. Members across the House will recall, this follows the launch of our global human rights sanctions regime, which I introduced to the House in July 2020.

Since then, the UK has imposed human rights sanctions on 78 individuals and entities involved in serious human rights violations, including in Russia, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Pakistan, Myanmar, North Korea, Belarus, the Gambia, Ukraine and, most recently, in relation to Xinjiang in China. Now, we have an equally powerful weapon in the fight against corruption.

As with our global human rights sanctions approach, the anti-corruption sanctions are intended not to target whole countries or peoples but, rather, the individuals who are responsible, and should be held responsible, for graft, and the cronies who support or benefit from their corrupt actions. These regulations will enable us to impose asset freezes and travel bans on individuals and organisations who are involved in serious corruption. Our approach is grounded in and based on the UN convention against corruption and related instruments. It has a clear focus on bribery and misappropriation of property, and that includes embezzlement.

Bribery is well understood. It is defined in the regulations. It includes both giving a financial or other kind of advantage to a foreign public official, and a foreign public official receiving a financial or other advantage. Misappropriation of property occurs when a foreign public official improperly diverts property entrusted to them in their official role, and that may be intended to benefit them or a third party. For example, it could be, or include, siphoning off state funds to private bank accounts. It could include the improper granting of licences for the exploitation of natural resources, but whatever the particular circumstances, at the heart of this lies the same debilitating cycle of behaviour: corrupt officials ripping off their own people.

These powers will also enable us to target those who are either facilitating or profiting from such corrupt acts—those who conceal, those who transfer the proceeds of serious corruption and those who obstruct justice relating to serious corruption, and that will not be limited to state officials. For additional clarity in all this, we have published a policy note today that sets out how we will consider designations under these regulations. I know that, across the House, there is always interest in the legal criteria as well as the evidence base that we have to accumulate. It is right to say that we will also ensure due process and the rule of law, so that the rights of others are respected. Those designated will be able to request that a Minister reviews the decision, and they can also apply to challenge the decision in court, which is an important check in the system.

As well as introducing the legal basis for this regime, today, I can tell the House that we are also making the first designations under these new regulations, which include some of the most notorious cases of corruption in recent history. Each designation is underpinned by evidence and meets the test set out in the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018 and the regulations. So today, I can tell the House that we are imposing sanctions on individuals who have been involved in serious corruption from six particular countries. First, we are imposing sanctions on 14 individuals involved in the \$230 million tax fraud in Russia perpetrated by an organised crime group and uncovered by Sergei Magnitsky. Next, we are imposing sanctions on Ajay, Atul and Rajesh Gupta and their associate Salim Essa for their roles in serious corruption. Those individuals were at

[Dominic Raab]

the heart of a persistent pattern of corruption in South Africa that caused significant damage to its economy and directly harmed the South African people.

We are also designating three individuals involved in serious corruption in Honduras, Nicaragua and Guatemala, including facilitating bribes to support a drug trafficking cartel. Finally, we are imposing sanctions on the Sudanese businessman Ashraf Seed Ahmed Hussein Ali, also known as Al-Cardinal, for the misappropriation of significant amounts of state assets in one of the very poorest countries in the world. That diversion of resources, in collusion with South Sudanese elites, caused serious damage to public finances in South Sudan and has also contributed to the ongoing instability and conflict there.

Let us be clear about this: corruption is not a victimless crime—far from it. By enriching themselves, these people have caused untold damage and hardship to their countries and communities, which they exploited for their own predatory greed. So today we send a clear message: those sanctioned today are not welcome in the UK. They will not be able to use British bank accounts or businesses to give their illicit action some veneer of respectability, because their assets will be frozen. I can tell the House that more designations will follow in due course, based on the policy note as well as on the legal criteria that we have set out, and assessed against the evidence.

As with all targeted sanctions, they are most effective when they are backed up by co-ordinated international action, and of course that is particularly important when it comes to corruption, given the fluid, complex and global nature of modern illegal corruption schemes. We will continue to work with our friends and partners, including the US and Canada, who are equipped with the legal framework to take similar action. Today, I hope that the whole House will unite and join me in standing up for the values of democracy, good governance and the rule of law as Britain sends out the clearest message to all those involved in serious corruption around the world: you cannot come here, and you cannot hide your money here. I commend this statement to the House.

5.46 pm

Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab): We warmly welcome today's announcement. We agree that corruption is a global scourge. It costs the global economy billions every year, it sustains rotten Governments, it protects the dishonest and the criminal, it tilts the playing field against businesses that do the right thing and it denies people around the world money that belongs to them and that should be spent on our shared prosperity, our healthcare and our opportunities. As I told the Foreign Secretary last June, the absence of measures on corruption left a huge hole in the global human rights sanctions. If we want to crack down on human rights abusers, we have to follow the money, so we are really pleased to see the Government following the standard set by the USA and Canada in plugging this hole today, and we will study the regulations and the policy note carefully.

However, I hope the Foreign Secretary can assure the House today that there will be resources to support investigations and enforcement, because the current rate of prosecutions for economic crime is woefully low,

as he knows. To put it bluntly, if he is serious about what he is saying today, he needs to put his money where his mouth is and ensure that agencies such as the National Crime Agency have the resources they need, allow Parliament to put forward names to be considered for designation and, as I pressed him to do last year, allow parliamentary scrutiny of who is and, crucially, who is not designated, to ensure that there is no prospect or suggestion that big money can corrupt our politics and influence the decisions that are taken. That last one really matters, because while I welcome his words today, the mass of revelations that have come to light in the last few days alone have shown a tangled network of financial interests and cosy relationships at the heart of Government that appear to send a green light to many of the very regimes that he has mentioned in his statement. We need to know that this announcement it is not just a gloss on the surface of a grubby system that underneath signals business as usual.

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned Saudi, but may I ask him what message it sends to the Saudi regime when he sanctions officials implicated in the murder of Jamal Khashoggi but we then find that all it takes is for the Crown Prince to WhatsApp the Prime Minister to tell him that relations will be damaged between our countries unless the path is cleared for him to buy a key economic asset in the UK, and that instead of standing up to it, he deploys his top aide to investigate? The Foreign Secretary mentioned sanctions against Chinese officials engaging in genocide in Xinjiang, but what message does it send to the Chinese Government when on Saturday we learned that a former Prime Minister could simply message the then Chancellor to ask for Chinese investment into the UK in areas of critical national infrastructure, such as energy, and could gain access, despite having been only 15 months out of office and despite this being in clear breach of the rules?

And for all the Foreign Secretary's admirable words about Sergei Magnitsky, the UK still acts as a haven for the dark money that sustains the Putin regime, with more than £1 million in Russian-linked donations to the Tory party since the Russia report was handed to the Government, but not a single recommendation acted upon to safeguard our country in all that time. Surely the Foreign Secretary can see the problem. He signals an intent to crack down on corruption and human rights abuses by causing economic pain to those responsible, but just down the road those very same regimes can call up the Prime Minister to advance their own interests, even when those interests are at odds with the interests of the British people. The Foreign Secretary has used very strong words today, but while he is rightly pressing ahead with sanctions, he is either turning a blind eye to the real power relationships in Government or he is being played. We deserve to know which it is.

Dominic Raab: Let me start by welcoming the hon. Lady's support for both the legal regime and the designations we have made today. I agree with much of her analysis on the damage wrought by corruption around the world, and I think we are at one on that. She raised the issue of the international corruption prosecutions, on which she made an interesting point. Of course, criminal prosecutions are done on the criminal standard of proof, whereas sanctions are done on the civil standard —[*Interruption.*] Well, she is shaking her head, but that is just a fact. One challenge we have with international

corruption is with gleaning the evidence in relation to it, and one advantage we have with the sanctions regime is that it gives us more flexibility and agility to address to the hole, to which she rightly refers, that we are plugging.

The hon. Lady also asked about Parliament feeding in its views, and I think there is a role for not only hon. Members in this Chamber, but relevant Select Committees. As with the human rights regime, we are entirely open to views and evidence. Indeed, we will have to rely on that evidence in order to look at further designations in the future. She mentioned Saudi, but I am afraid that she rather confused herself, because the sanctions relating to Khashoggi were imposed by this Government and remain in place under this Government. That roundly rebuts and repudiates the point she tried to make, which was that somehow the Saudi Government were seeking to undermine the robust approach we take by political influence. *[Interruption.]* She makes some good points about corruption, but I am afraid she tarnished her statement with a range of political mudslinging.

I do, however, wish to address this issue relating to the Government's response to the Intelligence and Security Committee's Russia report, which was published back in July 2020. It sets out multiple actions we have taken and are taking against the Russia threat, some of which I mentioned in the House today. We take action on cyber activity. We have introduced a new power to stop individuals at UK ports and the Northern Ireland border area to determine whether they have been or are involved in hostile state activity. We are introducing new legislation to provide the security services with additional tools to tackle the evolving threat. That Bill will help to modernise the existing offences. We have already implemented the National Security Council-endorsed Russia strategy and have established the cross-Government Russia unit, which brings together all of our intelligence, diplomatic and military capabilities to have maximum effect. This sanctions regime that we are introducing today on corruption is an additional tool, and we will be—*[Interruption.]*

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): Order. I have already told the hon. Member for Wigan (Lisa Nandy) to stop talking from the Dispatch Box while the Secretary of State is speaking.

Dominic Raab: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. The fact is that the hon. Lady, who agrees with us on this policy point, resorts to the mudslinging because she does not have too much more to say on the substance.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con) [V]: First, may I congratulate my right hon. Friend? He knows how passionately many of us have supported his quest to make corruption part of the sanctions regime. Indeed, it was the Foreign Affairs Committee with its “Moscow's Gold” report in May 2018 that called for action not only on those abroad who are corrupt, but on those who are enablers in the UK. Indeed, I hope that he will highlight to the House exactly where those agencies and individuals in the UK who are assisting with corruption could be held to account as well.

I welcome very much the identification that the Secretary of State has given us today of Russian, South African, Honduran, Nicaraguan, Guatemalan and Sudanese elements. Perhaps, for his second tranche, I could ask him to look a little bit wider. We know that corruption

is undermining the people of China. We know that the red princes are robbing the people and enriching themselves already. We also know that the Maduro regime in Venezuela has stolen off the Venezuelan people now for the best part of a decade, and, before then, the Chávez regime did the same. The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps has been stealing off the Iranian people for decades and continues to enrich itself off the back of a proud and independent people. Perhaps he could address some of those countries when he responds.

The last point I wish to make is that, while the Foreign Secretary has mentioned Russia, it would be good to hear him talk about those who are close to the Putin regime—those who directly assist President Vladimir Putin in hiding hundreds of billions of pounds overseas. We know that there are many around the world who, sadly, have used our own markets and other territories that are dependent on us to hide wealth. Will he assist in exposing where that money is hidden and using these powers to hold them to account?

Dominic Raab: I pay tribute to my hon. Friend and his Committee. He has not only campaigned passionately for this but provided, bit by bit, some of the evidence both for the regime and for the focus. I take his point about further tranches and further designations. Of course, we will consider all evidence that we have, whether it is open source or provided by Committees—he should feel free to provide it. He will forgive me if I do not accept the temptation at this point to speculate on future designations, but we remain open to seeing all the evidence to which he refers.

Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP) [V]: I thank the Foreign Secretary for advance sight of his statement and welcome any effort that is made to tackle corruption that robs societies of both money and resources needed to develop and deliver for their citizens. Targeted sanctions towards individuals and organisations involved in serious corruption are a welcome step; the UK should never be a safe haven for those engaged in those corrosive practices. However, this is all happening against a backdrop of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office confirming that it is cutting its own world-leading anti-corruption, open societies, media freedom and human rights work by more than 50% this year. This is an abdication of responsibility that will allow corruption and criminality to flourish in developing countries. Dr Sue Hawley, executive director of Spotlight on Corruption, said that the cuts

“could undermine not just the UK's stated aim to act as a force for good globally, but also seriously curtail the UK's ability to stem and seize corrupt money laundered through the UK's financial system”.

This Government have used the covid pandemic as an excuse to cut aid. In many parts of the world, including close to home, the pandemic has been exploited by Government officials as a smokescreen to conduct business dishonestly by fraudulent means and at the expense of human rights. Can the Foreign Secretary explain why he thinks cutting aid to combat corruption helps rather than hinders the sanctions regime that he is introducing today, and what impact assessment has been made of these cuts to the UK's anti-corruption work?

Finally, given the debate that took place last Thursday and the unanimous support for the motion calling the UK Government to fulfil their obligations under the

[Chris Law]

convention on the prevention and punishment of genocide in relation to the persecution of Uyghurs in Xinjiang, when will the Foreign secretary return to the House to give a statement imposing global human rights sanctions on the perpetrators of this crime against humanity, not least the Chinese Communist Party Committee Secretary, Chen Quanguo?

Dominic Raab: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his support for this initiative. He makes a range of points. It is a fair question as to how our aid and development policy is used to reinforce our law enforcement action. He will know that we have safeguarded £10 billion this year, which means we remain one of the global leaders in aid. When we set the seven priorities to safeguard and for allocating in a strategic way, notwithstanding the temporary shift from 0.7% to 0.5% of GNI, one of those priorities was open societies, and that includes our media freedom campaign, which goes from strength to strength. We do this very much in partnership with the Canadians, but the numbers joining that campaign have risen. That gives us an increasingly broad basis on which to support precisely those journalist and media groups that hold the corrupt to account.

I do not know whether it was just a mistake, but the hon. Gentleman referred to sanctions relating to Xinjiang. We have already imposed Magnitsky sanctions, under our human rights regime, on those responsible for the systemic human rights abuses there. I will not speculate on further designations, but we always consider them based on the evidence.

Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con) [V]: I welcome these important extensions to the sanctions regime and the sanctions announced today. They are a fitting tribute to Sergei Magnitsky and the work of Bill Browder, but they also hit Putin where it hurts: the corrupt cronies who hold up his kleptocracy. However, Alexei Navalny is being tortured to death before our eyes, so if these sanctions do not result in his release for medical treatment abroad, ending Putin's second attempt to kill him, will my right hon. Friend continue to escalate sanctions against dirty-money oligarchs, before Navalny dies in plain view of the world?

Dominic Raab: I join my hon. Friend in paying tribute to Bill Browder, who was Sergei Magnitsky's employer, because he has campaigned for this not just on the human rights front but on the corruption front for many years. I am pleased that yet again we have taken a further step towards instituting some measure of justice. Like my hon. Friend, we are very concerned about Alexei Navalny. His situation has remarkable parallels and bears comparison with what happened to Sergei Magnitsky, whose health was allowed to deteriorate in prison before he was then tortured and ultimately killed. I can reassure my hon. Friend, however, that we have already sanctioned six individuals in the state scientific research institute in relation to the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, and 14 Russians are named under the new corruption regime that we are discussing today.

Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD) [V]: It is about time the Government took further action to stop big money from figures close to the Kremlin influencing our politics—the Russia report made that need abundantly

clear—but there are other ways of gaining influence in this country, such as owning football clubs, for example. The review of football governance following the European super league debacle may yet provide an opportunity in this regard, because the owner of one of the six English clubs, Roman Abramovich, has been described by Alexei Navalny's team as one of the key enablers of Putin's corrupt regime. Will the Secretary of State speak to the Culture Secretary about ensuring that any future football regulator is tasked with investigating and acting on money in the sport with ties to corruption and human rights abuses?

Dominic Raab: Like many across the House, I share the hon. Lady's concern about what we saw with the recent football episode. Given the strong lead taken by the Prime Minister and the Culture Secretary, we also saw a swift rowing back from the earlier planned initiative. The hon. Lady makes an interesting point about reform, and of course we take those on board.

Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con): The measures announced by the Foreign Secretary are extremely welcome, underlining the Government's commitment to tackling corruption and its toxic impact on some of the poorest people in the world. Can he reassure me that these new sanctions will work in conjunction with other measures that the Government are taking to tackle global corruption, including spending more to support open societies and to help resolve overseas conflicts?

Dominic Raab: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We have prioritised, amid a difficult settlement this year, the open societies agenda, and there is £419 million going into it. I cannot tell him the precise allocation country by country, because we are quite careful not to do that—it often gives such regimes and countries a tool or influence, and it exposes charities, non-governmental organisations and journalists to greater vulnerability.

John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con): May I, too, welcome these designations and this initiative today? Last year, the Foreign Secretary promised that he would extend the existing human rights sanctions to include corruption, and indeed he has done so today. That is a triumph not just for him, but for other campaigners such as Bill Browder, whom he has just mentioned. May I therefore press him to say whether he will be able to go even further, not just by designating more people, which I think he has said he already has in mind, but—he rightly pointed out that this is the trick—by following the money? There is a series of measures, for example relating to reforms to Companies House, that are being considered for potential inclusion in the upcoming Queen's Speech, which would make it dramatically easier for this country to follow the money and for him to make more designations underpinned by proof. Will we be able to get those into the Queen's Speech?

Dominic Raab: My hon. Friend is demonstrating yet again what a tenacious campaigner he is. He is lavish in praising others, but actually he has been one of the most thoughtful, ardent and tenacious campaigners for this reform. I will certainly take on board his comments about further measures that we can take in order to really reinforce the global sanctions regime. As he knows, I wanted to make sure that we got this right legally, in practical terms, so that we do not give those corrupt

cronies the PR gift of a weak regime that could be challenged in the courts. We want to learn from the practice, but I will certainly continue to listen carefully to everything my hon. Friend says on this subject.

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab): I join my hon. Friend the shadow Foreign Secretary in welcoming the broad thrust of today's announcement, but it goes after individuals, not after the structures and tax havens that enable this—tax havens such as the Cayman Islands, for example, which is on the EU blacklist. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that the Cayman Islands enables tax abuse, and if so, what is he going to do about it?

Dominic Raab: The hon. Gentleman makes an important point. As I set out in my opening statement, we have taken a range of measures, including to address the kinds of concerns that he has raised. Obviously, we are mindful of the constitutional powers of the relevant overseas territories, but nothing will stop us taking further measures and further action if we deem it necessary.

Ms Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con) [V]: I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his welcome statement on upgrading the Magnitsky sanctions to include corruption, and we must not forget the tremendous work of Bill Browder. Can I ask my right hon. Friend whether these new sanctions will apply equally to all individuals who fall short of the law? For example, will they apply not only to junior but to senior officials in the Chinese Communist party who are implicitly involved in the abuse of the Uyghur and are living off the finances of Uyghur slave labour?

Dominic Raab: My hon. Friend is another ardent, tenacious and eloquent campaigner on this issue. She makes a really important point. We obviously want to be able to apply all the tools we have at the most senior level. We are more likely to have an effect that way. The challenge, of course, is that the higher up the chain we go, the more indirect—I think that was the word she used—the links are, and the challenge is to make sure we have the evidence. However, we will look at this based on the seriousness of the activity and according to the policy note, which I am sure, when she gets a chance to look at it, will give her the reassurance she needs.

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP) [V]: The Secretary of State mentioned Transparency International in his statement. Last year, it said that it had identified more than £5 billion of property in the UK bought with suspicious money, one fifth of which came from Russia, and half of all the money laundered out of Russia is laundered through the United Kingdom. So does he not agree that any action taken by the UK to tackle global corruption will lack credibility until the United Kingdom Government have put their own house in order by implementing in full the recommendations of last year's Intelligence and Security Committee report, including the tightening of rules on all political donations from Russia?

Dominic Raab: I think I have already addressed the second part of the hon. Gentleman's question. On the first part, in relation to Transparency International, the United Kingdom is of course an open, outward-looking country. We want to attract direct investment, which is why, as I said in my statement, we need to be on the

lookout and be eternally vigilant to make sure that dirty money or blood money does not drift into this country. We are taking these actions today precisely because we are serious about this issue. If he looks at this fairly, he will see that when we came into office in 2010, the UK was ranked 20th in the world on the corruption perceptions index. We have now risen to 11th, and we will keep taking action until we are even higher up the rankings.

Mr Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con) [V]: I welcome the statement and the extension of sanctions. Corruption really eats away at the prospects of people in the developing world and gives them less confidence in the future and in their elected officials. Will my right hon. Friend meet me to see whether there are ways in which we can innovate to ensure that, for example, development aid money goes to people more directly, to provide the social development opportunities that can otherwise be diverted by corrupt officials?

Dominic Raab: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. We give an increasing proportion of our aid to operate in countries via third parties, whether they are NGOs or other partners, rather than direct to Governments. There is a case for both, for all the reasons that my hon. Friend suggested, and I totally agree with him that the approach to official development assistance should complement and supplement what we are doing in the law enforcement space, including through these sanctions. I would be interested to hear any ideas he has for fusing the two and making them even stronger, and Ministers would be keen to meet him.

Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab) [V]: I congratulate the Foreign Secretary on the statement, which is an important step forward. In respect of Belarus, where the President is propped up by senior people in the military and the police complex, will the Foreign Secretary work with other interested countries—not only Belarus's neighbours but those throughout Europe—so that we are prepared to look at the evidential trail more broadly than just what our own investigatory authorities can determine? That could make a material difference in challenging the Lukashenko regime.

Dominic Raab: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. We very much led the way in relation to Belarus and the human rights sanctions regime—the Magnitsky sanctions—and instituted human rights sanctions before the EU, but we were in constant dialogue with the EU about the names, evidence and individuals. It is important to have that systematic approach, partly to have more effect but also to be on surer ground when sanctions are imposed. Belarus is also a good example, raised by Members from all parties, of where, at the same time as we have imposed sanctions, we have provided extra support for civil society, including opposition groups, not directly but through NGOs, journalists and the support for the media and the open society agenda that we have been talking about as part of the integrated review.

Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con) [V]: I warmly welcome the statement and the measures announced. Does the Foreign Secretary agree that there is a need to update the international rules and action to ensure that all the progress we have made on tackling money laundering and the hiding of stolen money is not undermined by

[Nigel Mills]

the use of crypto-assets such as crypto-currencies, which are much harder to track as they move around the world?

Dominic Raab: My hon. Friend is right: we need some international co-ordination. It works better as co-ordination rather than supranational institutions, because we want to retain some flexibility, and that has often been quite effective. On the corruption sanctions regime, we already co-operate with the US and Canada, as we did on the list of names we have designated today, and Australia is in the midst of considering a Magnitsky regime on human rights that may, in due course, extend to corruption. The EU followed the UK lead in enacting a global human rights sanctions regime, but it has not yet introduced powers for an equivalent corruptions regime, so we are ahead of the pack on all this. My hon. Friend raises the important point that this is about not just what we do individually, but our convening power and our ability to be a force for good, working with others including the EU, the US, Canada and Australia.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): May I, too, thank the Foreign Secretary for his commitment and personal determination? Having seen the effect of Libyan sanctions for those Americans and Germans affected by terrorism, in comparison to what has been secured for victims of IRA terrorism working hand in hand with Gaddafi, I believe it is past time that these sanctions are in place. What assurance will the Foreign Secretary give to the British people that the Government are now in a position to impose sanctions and that the people affected can be beneficiaries? What consideration has been given to the widespread use of these sanctions in areas such as those involved in atrocities against the Uyghurs, the Christians, the Falun Gong and the Tibetan Buddhists in China to ensure that businesses as well as Governments will feel the brunt, the pain and the impact of these sanctions?

Dominic Raab: I thank the hon. Gentleman. I share his determination to tackle this in relation to some of the groups he refers to. He will know that we have taken action, in particular in relation to the persecution of the Uyghur Muslims and the use of forced labour. In relation to others—he mentions Libya and others—I cannot speculate in advance. What I can tell him is that we have the legal framework now. We have also set out a policy note—he will be able to look at that and feel free to come back and ask me further questions—which will give him a sense of how we will determine the criteria. It is evidence-driven. That is often the hardest part, but again it comes back to the point about the importance of co-ordinating with our international partners, sharing evidence and sharing our assessment of individuals and countries where we can act.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): I will now briefly suspend the House for three minutes in order to allow arrangements for the next item of business to be made.

6.16 pm

Sitting suspended.

Carrier Strike Group Deployment

6.20 pm

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

I would like to make a statement on the forthcoming deployment of the carrier strike group. Before I do, I wish to send my condolences to the Indonesian navy and the families of the ship's company of KRI Nanggala following the tragic news that the submarine has been lost. I know the sorrow is felt particularly strongly within our own Royal Navy submarine community, who understand the risks faced by their friends all too well. The United Kingdom stands ready to help our Indonesian colleagues in any way we can going forward.

The UK has a long history of involvement in the Pacific. This year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our five power defence arrangements between the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. Few outside military circles are familiar with the relationship despite the fact that it is Asia's most enduring military multilateral arrangement. It is a partnership that has grown in scope to cover everything from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to counter-terrorism and maritime security. It is a partnership based on the common shared values of tolerance, justice and the rules-based order. But even as the Pacific's importance to our future economy continues to rise, so the challenges to the freedom of navigation in that region continue to grow. Our trade with Asia depends on the shipping that sails through a range of Indo-Pacific choke points, yet they are increasingly at risk whether from hostile state actors or from piracy on the high seas.

We have to be clear to any who wish to challenge our international rules-based system that the laws must be upheld. But our partnership gives us strength. Friendship is the one thing that our adversaries lack and we deliver a powerful message of strength when we show our solidarity. That is why in recent years we have begun returning to the east. The UK now has a persistent presence in the region through British Forces Brunei, a regional and logistics hub in Oman and our maritime component command in Bahrain.

Our carrier strike group gives us something different. HMS Queen Elizabeth is a floating piece of sovereign territory that can sail over 70% of the world's surface. It is probably the most guarded UK airfield to be found. It gives the Government unprecedented options to act independently against hostile forces on land or at sea for months without having to access bases ashore. It is a warship, a mothership, a surveillance reconnaissance ship, a convener of allies and partners, and a great projector of Britain's soft and hard power.

The UK has a proud history of being a carrier nation. Those legendary second world war vessels HMS Courageous, Glorious, Illustrious, Ark Royal, Formidable and Indefatigable are synonymous with the unquenchable spirit of our people. Carriers have also continued to play a defining role in our nation's history well into the modern era. Those who recall the Falklands war will not forget the fundamental role that HMS Hermes played in providing air cover for the vulnerable taskforce while 8,000 miles away from home. Our last carrier HMS Illustrious's career spanned some 900,000 miles and took in service from Bosnia to the Gulf and Sierra Leone.

British ingenuity has long driven carrier innovation forward, from the angled flight deck to the ski jump developed for the Sea Harrier, but our newest carriers provides a true step change in capability. One can only appreciate the sheer enormity of each vessel when standing on its vast deck, as I did this morning. At 65,000 tonnes, HMS Queen Elizabeth and her sister ship, HMS Prince of Wales, are the most powerful surface ships ever constructed in Britain. Longer than Parliament and taller than Nelson's column, she has a range of more than 10,000 nautical miles and can fly 72 fast jet sorties per day. This is British engineering at its best: a supreme example of a national endeavour, built by six dockyards—Appledore, Birkenhead, Govan, Portsmouth, Rosyth and Tyne. A cast of more than 10,000 took part in the construction. Some 8,000 apprentices helped complete the major construction in almost five years. Hundreds of small companies lent their niche capability, and 90% of those suppliers came from the United Kingdom.

The carrier does not operate alone, however. She will be surrounded by a ring of capability: Type 45 destroyers HMS Defender and HMS Diamond; Type 23 anti-submarine frigates HMS Kent and HMS Richmond; and, tanker and storage ships Fort Victoria and RFA Tidespring. We will also be accompanied by the Dutch frigate, HNLMS Evertsen, and the US Arleigh Burke destroyer, The Sullivans.

Our carrier's cutting edge is located on the flight deck, with the renowned RAF 617 Squadron, the Dambusters, operating eight world-class, fifth-generation, F-35B Lightning II fast jets, partly made, I am proud to say, in Lancashire. While 815 Naval Air Squadron will pilot four Wildcat maritime attack helicopters, 820 Naval Air Squadron will fly seven Merlin Mk2 anti-submarine and airborne early warning helicopters, three of which will be fitted with the new Crowsnest, and 845 Naval Air Squadron will operate three Merlin Mk4 commando helicopters. Below deck, a company of 42 Commando Royal Marines will be embarked, while in the ocean depths, a Royal Navy Astute-class attack submarine will deploy in support.

Over the coming 28 weeks, from May to December 2021, we will see our carrier strike group travel over 26,000 nautical miles from the Mediterranean to the Red sea, from the Gulf of Aden to the Arabian sea and from the Indian ocean to the Philippine sea. Besides the full integration of units from the UK, US and the Netherlands, the carrier strike group will operate with air and maritime forces from a wide number of international partners including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, France, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, Denmark, Greece, Italy, Turkey, Israel, India, Oman and the Republic of Korea.

The deployment will see the units of the strike group visiting more than 40 countries and undertaking more than 70 engagements, visits, air exercises and operations. Critically, these events will provide excellent opportunities for the UK to develop new and existing trade and political links, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. Not only will we meet our commitment to UN-mandated operations in the region but, 50 years on from the creation of the five power defence arrangements, we will further augment our friendship by participating in Exercise Bersama Lima. Meanwhile, units from the strike group will visit Association of Southeast Asian Nations partners as part of our commitment to a more enduring regional defence and security presence. Four major stops on the Indo-Pacific leg of their journey will be Singapore, the

Republic of Korea, Japan and India. It will help tighten our political ties in the region. In late summer, we will host our first Pacific future forum in Korea.

Meanwhile, China is increasingly assertive, building the world's largest maritime surface and sub-surface fleets. However, we are not going to go to the other side of the world to be provocative. We will sail through the South China sea. We will be confident, but not confrontational. More often than not, the carrier group will be in the eastern Mediterranean or the Atlantic, carrying out our duties in support of NATO. As part of this deployment, our strike group will be in the middle east, conducting bilateral exercises and engagement with our long-standing defence and security partners, confirming our commitment to a lasting stability.

Critically, in Europe, our carrier strike group will demonstrate the UK's enduring commitment to the NATO alliance—the cornerstone of our defence—by participating on this deployment in NATO-level exercises such as Exercise Steadfast Defender. Not only will there be a period of dual carrier operations with the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle in the Mediterranean, but elements of the strike group will support NATO missions in the Black sea region, demonstrating that we do not go alone to deter a tier 1 power; we go as NATO.

The contribution of the United States to the rebirth of UK carrier strike has been immense, but our carrier strike group will take our integration with our US partners to a new level. We will have the Arleigh Burke-class destroyer USS The Sullivans providing the strike group with air defence and anti-submarine capabilities, not to mention a squadron of 10 US Marine Corps F-35B Lightnings—the Wake Island Avengers—flying side-by-side with their UK counterparts from the decks of the Queen Elizabeth. This is the largest air group of fifth generation fighters ever put to sea, as well as the greatest quantity of helicopters assigned to a single taskforce in a decade.

It has been a year since the last Royal Navy ship deployed to the Pacific. It has been more than seven years since the last carrier—HMS *Illustrious*—deployed there as well. It has been more than 20 years since the last carrier strike group deployed to that region. Our carrier strike intends to return us to that presence. As the crew of the carrier strike group embark on their maiden mission, we wish them well. The threats are moving on, and we must move with them. In this anxious and insecure world, Fortress Britain cannot batten down the hatches. We must stand up for our values and rights wherever they come under threat, not just in our backyard, but far from our shores. Our carrier strike group will send a signal to allies and adversaries alike that Britain will continue to play its part in shaping the international system, not stepping back, but sailing forth to promote our prosperity and protect our interests.

6.30 pm

John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and for the advance copy, and I add Labour's condolences to the friends, family and comrades of the Indonesian submariners who tragically lost their lives in the service of their country this week.

We welcome this first major deployment of the Queen Elizabeth, and pay tribute to all those involved who have made this possible. The Secretary of State rightly says that the UK has a proud history as a carrier nation,

[John Healey]

but Britain has not had a carrier strike force since 2010, when the Conservative defence review scrapped all three of our aircraft carriers, along with 74 newly upgraded Harriers that flew from them. This deployment fills a big gap in Britain's military capability over the past decade. It is a major achievement that, in the words of Sir Nick Houghton, vice-chief of the defence staff in 2011, is as complex as "staging the Olympics."

The successful design and build of our two new aircraft carriers is a tribute to the UK's shipbuilding industry and our UK steelmakers. Will the Secretary of State confirm how much UK-produced steel will be used in the new Type 26s, Type 31s, Astute, Dreadnought and Fleet Solid Support ships? This is a big opportunity to back British industry and jobs. If done well, it will strengthen the UK economy, and our sovereignty and self-reliance. The carrier strike group will sail east with the support of US and Dutch naval warships, and with US F-35 fighters on board.

It is good that the Queen Elizabeth sails with allies, but it is not good if she can sail only with allies. Despite state-based threats to the UK growing and diversifying, the Secretary of State will cut the number of Royal Navy frigates over the next two years. When, if ever, does he plan to have enough British warships to sail with our own British carriers? Will he confirm clearly that the majority of planes on the deck of the Queen Elizabeth will be US not British fighters? Despite the increasing military threats to the UK, he confirmed last month that Britain has ordered only 48 of the planned 138 F-35 fighters. When, if ever, does he plan to have enough British F-35s for our own British carriers?

There are serious concerns about the carrier's long-delayed Crowsnest radar. Will the Secretary of State confirm that Crowsnest is now fully operational, and that the carrier strike group is fully combat ready? With the Royal Navy currently almost 1,600 under strength, and with the real cuts to the MOD's resource budget through to 2024, will he confirm the full cost of this year's deployment?

The Secretary of State has spoken of hard power and soft power, and across the House we hope that Britain will see significant diplomatic and trade benefits from that deployment. With covid security, however, how far will the diplomatic impact be reduced when a carrier cannot host guests or send people ashore? This deployment is important proof of our new British carrier strike capability, but let us not fall for the illusion that Britain is somehow able to project force everywhere in the world at once. Global Britain is a beguiling phrase, but this time-limited deployment will not significantly alter the balance of military power in the Indo-Pacific region. Surely we should focus our defence efforts on where the threats are, not on where the business opportunities might be. Can the Secretary of State confirm that, after the Queen Elizabeth's gap-year tour of 40 countries, she will return to the military business of helping to protect Britain and patrol the north Atlantic, the High North and the Mediterranean—our NATO area, where Russia poses the greatest threats to our vital national interests?

As the Secretary of State rightly says, the Queen Elizabeth and the Prince of Wales are the most powerful surface ships ever constructed in Britain. They will strengthen our maritime forces for decades to come.

This maiden mission for the Queen Elizabeth is a great achievement for the Royal Navy and a proud moment for our country. We wish her well.

Mr Wallace: I echo what the right hon. Gentleman said about this being a proud moment for this nation: a British made carrier deploying overseas, protecting Britain's interests and supporting our allies.

The right hon. Gentleman put a series of questions to me. On the steel, I am happy to write to him with details of each individual class of ship. As he knows, we are committed to building the Type 26 in the United Kingdom; it is under construction on the Clyde. In Rosyth, work is ongoing to build the facility needed to build the Type 31s and the subsequent Type 32s. He also knows that I recently recategorised the future Fleet Solid Support ship as a warship. I intend to make sure that, if not entirely, there is a considerable degree of UK build in that process, subject to tender. I have to be cautious about the contract, because the competition is to begin soon—very soon.¹

It is important to recognise that throughout all our ships, we try to do our best by our sailors by providing the best equipment we can, and that is often a balance between what is on the shelf in the here and now and what we need to invest in for the future. That is why we have a record research and development budget in the recent defence settlement. It will allow us to invest for the future, so that when we place the orders for subsequent ships and the next generation of submarines, we have British skills and British technology ready to go. It is incredibly important that we give them the best.

I turn to the right hon. Gentleman's questions about sovereign capability. It is perfectly possible; we have 18 F-35s and we could put all 18 now on the aircraft carrier—we could have just had a UK sort of 2 squadron—and deploy without other ships alongside if we wished to, but as I said at the beginning of this exercise, this is about the fact that our strength, compared with that of our adversaries, is that we have friends and alliances. To attack us is to attack NATO. To attack us is to attack our allies. That is our real strength globally—it is what the Australians would say, what the United States would say, and what all our European friends would say. When countries were ringing up saying, "We'd like to join you," it would have been wrong to miss the opportunity. More countries offered than we took that wanted to sail with us and stand up for our common values.

I am pleased to say that Crowsnest is now being rolled out onboard Queen Elizabeth, and I look forward to reports of its use and deployment. It is important that we recognise that this has to be delivered. I have been clear with the manufacturers that it needs to be delivered to spec and operate well, because it is obviously important to the protection of our carrier group.

There are plenty of covid safeguards in place. We are all very mindful of the need to protect our sailors. All our sailors will be vaccinated and protected on the deployment. By the time they go into the Mediterranean, they will all be properly doubly vaccinated to make sure that we can give our friends and allies the assurance that the crew are protected. The Navy is almost one of the best organisations in terms of covid safeguards, because living with quarantine for onboard diseases is something naval personnel have had to do for hundreds of years.

1. [Official Report, 29 April 2021, Vol. 693, c. 4MC.]

The right hon. Gentleman mentioned the number of ships and the increase and decrease in the numbers. As I said at the time of the Command Paper, numbers are important, but availability is even more important. I have taken the decision that we will invest in some new classes of ship, so we have more ships. Yes, there will be a drop in hulls for a short period, but at the same time, because of the investment we are doing on availability, we will have more time at sea. That is equally important.

I went to Portsmouth today and stood on a brand-new carrier deck, looking at a number of Type 45s ready to accompany the group, but some of those other ships tied alongside were a sorry sight. People have lots of money to buy ships, but not a lot to maintain them. They were hollowed out year on year. The right hon. Gentleman will make his points about previous Conservative Governments, but the fact is that such hollowing out was common practice across the board under both the Labour and Conservative Governments I served under as a soldier. That is something that I hope this defence settlement will put to rest.

Finally, on NATO, absolutely it is our cornerstone. Our home beat, as I often call it, is the Atlantic. That is where our most aggressive adversary is active. Only recently, we saw it active at Christmas, December time, when nine or maybe more Russian ships in effect surrounded Britain. The Russians have been quite assertive, and that is why it is important that we are active and hold the flank of NATO, also using that convening ability to bring in the French, Germans and others who wish to patrol the seas alongside us.

This is an incredibly exciting opportunity. Where I can, I am happy to facilitate Members of this House visiting the carriers, whether the Queen Elizabeth or the Prince of Wales. They are something to behold. I was incredibly proud to stand on the deck of a ship that is made in Britain and is NATO's first and only fifth generation aircraft carrier capability. To those people who say, "No one wants aircraft carriers anymore", we should ask the question why the Chinese plan to build five.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): I join the Defence Secretary in sending condolences to the Indonesians on the loss of their submarine crew. That shows what a dangerous environment all our navies operate in.

I welcome the carrier's maiden deployment to help Britain re-establish a sense of purpose on the international stage. Tasking the carrier group to the South China sea but avoiding the Taiwan strait, however, is to set a precedent and to cede effective ownership of those international waters to China. If we are to uphold the rules-based order that my right hon. Friend has just spoken about, there should be no exceptions.

More widely, I pose this question directly to my right hon. Friend the Defence Secretary: does he think that the world will be safer or more dangerous over the next five to 10 years? It is clearly the latter, and the Royal Navy is now tasked to tilt towards the Indo-Pacific, to conduct naval patrols in the Black sea and to do maritime duties in the Gulf and off east Africa, as well as to protect UK waters and overseas territories. Politely, I put it to him that our Royal Navy will soon be too small to meet our growing operational commitments and the increasingly diverse threat picture that we now face.

Mr Wallace: I thank my right hon. Friend for his points about sense of purpose, and I think that is right. The carrier is an amazing thing in that it convenes a lot of different levels—it convenes hard power, soft power, political will and intent. The mission for the Royal Navy, however, is like the mission for most of the armed forces, which is to strengthen our alliances. That is really important as we go forward.

I agree with my right hon. Friend, that the world is more anxious, more unstable, more insecure and less predictable. That is hard for all policy makers around the globe and for people who have lived by the international rules—for example, maritime law. It is a challenge for us all. The real issue is how to strengthen our alliances, because that is our unique and single point of strength against some very large adversaries.

On this deployment, therefore, we will meet US carrier groups and exercise together in the Pacific. There is no shortage of contested sea lanes in the Pacific. It is not just the strait of Taiwan; there are plenty of contested areas of sea. We will absolutely be making sure that we are confident in our sailing and that we stand up for our values, along the way making friends or strengthening our friendships with a whole range of partners, some traditional and some less traditional. We are here—a role that Britain has always played—to stand up for people who cannot stand up for themselves or to join with them to ensure that we stand strong. Do I think we will need more in the future? Our investment in our defence budget and in seeking to spend our money both on hard ships and power and on cyber and all sorts of other technology is a strong indication that this Government take seriously the rising threat. We will continue to keep it under review, but in the meantime we will go to the Pacific, demonstrate our capability, return, take our watch at NATO and continue on that cycle.

Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP) [V]: I thank the Defence Secretary for advance sight of his statement and I, too, pass on my condolences and those of my party to the Indonesian navy. We all watched what happened over the past few days with horror and they are very much in our thoughts.

Of course, I wish all of those involved in this new venture well. This will undoubtedly be an exciting time for them. The Defence Secretary rightly pays tribute to those involved in building HMS Queen Elizabeth and I join him in that, not least in paying tribute to those in Scotland who were part of that effort. He knows, because we have discussed it before, that my party and I are yet to be convinced of this whole Indo-Pacific tilt, especially as it is about chasing commerce rather than countering threats, and it sounds like there is a fair bit of that going on. The Defence Secretary has said to me in the past that there is no point chasing one threat only to leave oneself exposed to another closer to home. The shadow Secretary of State mentioned the threat we have here in our own backyard. The Defence Secretary knows that that is the kind of tilt that I and my party want to see. What assurances can he give us that we will not be left open closer to home?

May I press the Defence Secretary on the Black sea element of the trip, in particular? His statement mentions that the strike group will support NATO missions in the Black sea region. What exactly will the support look

[Stewart Malcolm McDonald]

like while the strike group is there? As we know from Russia's recent actions, that is something we should be focused on.

Lastly, on fleet solid support ships, can the Defence Secretary talk us a bit through the timeline we can expect for the competition? Like the shadow Secretary of State and many on the Defence Secretary's own Benches, we want to see that announced soon and to ensure that it is the yards closer to home that benefit from it.

Mr Wallace: First and foremost, we cannot separate trade from security. We need to secure our trade. The hon. Gentleman's party's whole economic basis used to be about exporting oil around the world. If a country cannot export its oil, it cannot run its economy, according to some of the Scottish National party's previous manifestoes. It is really important that we secure our trade and do not let the values in the rules-based system be undermined far away until it is too late and it gets close to our shores. That is really important.

I am not ashamed at all that this deployment will also be linked to trade. I am proud of standing on British-made equipment, made by Scottish hands, and English, Welsh and Northern Irish hands, and I am proud that there is equipment on those ships that can be used for a whole range of things—humanitarian and non-military-method means, and all sorts of things. We should be really proud that we will be showing that off to the world.

We will not leave Britain undefended. We will still have our Type 23s, our Type 45s and our P-8s, which are based in Lossiemouth, as excellent maritime patrol vessels. We will still have a number of capabilities. Our submarines will be on watch based out of Faslane. I pay tribute to those submariners who will be departing from Faslane to join and escort the carrier group. They do an amazing job, and it is something special to understand what submariners do.

We have had long-scheduled deployments into the Black sea. This is not new. It is not an increase or decrease. We have taken a view that we should stick to our planned exercises and deployment. I think that is the right thing to do—to say that we will not be intimidated from it and that we will stick up for our friends in the Black sea—Romania, Turkey and all those other nations that we work alongside. We will be doing that, as we had planned long before the recent friction we saw up in Ukraine. I hope the hon. Gentleman recognises that we are not off to go around picking a fight; we are there to stand up for our values and I think the Royal Navy will do a great job.

Fundamentally, this comes back to the point that we rely on each other. The security of Europe is incredibly important to the United Kingdom and to the continent of Europe. Even last year, in December, when the Russians appeared with a number of ships, the French, the British and the Dutch all set about that issue. We will continue to do so. As I said, the greatest thing about our friends and allies is that we are all in a partnership with solidarity, and that is the best way to defeat or push back our adversaries.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): If we want the United States to help defend our interests in Europe, it is only right that we should help it defend common interests in the far east. Does the Secretary of State accept

that having Americans intimately involved in this whole process adds to the deterrent effect of a carrier strike force? We do not want to get, in the digital age, into a situation where a surface ship, no matter how powerful, up against a peer enemy armed with hypersonic missiles, might find itself at a fatal disadvantage, but for the deterrent effect of our joint activity with our strategic allies.

Mr Wallace: I note my right hon. Friend's final phrase, "strategic allies". Not only are they allies, but they make a strategic difference, and they stand for the rule of law and the same values we do. Today, I met the US commander on the Queen Elizabeth. He said not only that it was an amazing ship, but that they look forward to working with us. As my right hon. Friend said, it is about partnership: "You attack us, you attack us all" is a strong message around the world. The number of people from different countries around the world who have got in touch wanting to be part of this deployment speaks volumes about what is going on in their neighbourhood and their backyard. Finally, as my right hon. Friend rightly says, the United States has always been a significant net contributor to the security of Europe; it is only right that we do the same when its interests are under threat.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD) [V]: I was delighted and actually very proud when HMS Queen Elizabeth visited Invergordon when she was undergoing her initial trials, but while she was tied up at Invergordon, someone managed to land a drone on her deck. Whoever it was commented later in the press that, should they have been of evil intent, they could have landed 2 lb of Semtex on the aircraft carrier and it could have taken out the radar. May I press the Secretary of State? What are our defences against something like that being repeated with ill intent to cause us damage?

Mr Wallace: The hon. Gentleman makes a really valid point about the varying types of threat, from Gatwick airport, as when I was Security Minister—we all remember that—all the way up to a fifth generation aircraft carrier. Small drones pose a real challenge. That is why the Government have taken forward reforms on that. I cannot reveal too many of the details of how we will protect the carrier—obviously, that would weaken it—but I can say that the ship and her escorts are bristling with sensors, which will all be on as she is deployed, and there will be lots of steps that can be taken to protect the carrier.

Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con) [V]: May I, too, send my condolences to the families and friends of those lost on the Indonesian submarine?

Despite the negative coverage on the BBC's "Today" programme this morning, I welcome this historic deployment by HMS Queen Elizabeth and the ships accompanying her, and I wish them well. Does my right hon. Friend agree that a fighting platform of this kind will prove an invaluable, independent operational base that will give us greater flexibility to cope with a wide variety of tasks in the future?

Mr Wallace: Yes, and it is a long future. This is not a 10-year or 20-year project; these are 30, 40 or maybe 50-year platforms. Who knows what will be flying off those decks in 50 years' time or 40 years' time? They are flexible. They are designed to be flexible; they are designed to do a whole range of tasks. We should not forget that

it will not always be about peer to peer; the aircraft carriers of the United States and, indeed, the French Charles de Gaulle have often been deployed on counter-terrorism duties and Afghan overflight duties. I think that HMS Queen Elizabeth will be a very busy ship, as will her sister ship, and all the time she will be flying the flag for Britain.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): A couple of weeks ago, I had the privilege of visiting HMS Prince of Wales with the Defence Committee and saw the two carriers alongside each other in Portsmouth. I agree with the Secretary of State that it is an impressive sight. I wish her crew all the best on their deployment. In his statement, the Secretary of State said that eight F-35s from the UK and 10 from the US Marine Corps will be deployed on the carriers. I agree with him that this is an example of the good co-operation between the two nations, but I do not know whether he has yet had the chance to read the US Government Accountability Office's report, published last week, on the F-35; there are persistent problems around the engines, which the office says will see a third of US F-35s being grounded by 2030, as well as ongoing problems with spare parts. Will he give us some assurance that the issues raised in that report will be addressed not only to ensure that we have the capability to support our allies, but to ensure that our F-35s keep on flying into the future?

Mr Wallace: I regret to inform the right hon. Member that I have not read the US report, but it is absolutely right that we keep an eye on all these issues. The supply chain for all our aircraft is really important. There is nothing more powerless than when we discover that somebody has switched off the supply chain and we are dependent on that model. We all often find that in our own homes—for example, when Microsoft stops updating something and suddenly we are stuck. That is why we are a tier 1 partner in the F-35 programme. A significant part of every single plane, including the US F-35s, is made in Samlesbury in Lancashire, in the constituency of Mr Deputy Speaker himself. I am proud that part of the US planes sitting on that deck is made in Lancashire as well—probably the best part of the plane, to be honest. The right hon. Member is right and I will definitely keep an eye on the matter.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): We are all proud of that in Lancashire.

Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con) [V]: May I join my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State in welcoming this very proud moment for the Royal Navy, for the crew and air crew who will be embarked on HMS Queen Elizabeth, and for the 10,000 people in the UK who were involved in construction of the vessels, as he has already referenced?

The construction contracts went through significant challenge in the early years as a result of changes in design, but from 2012 the design was stabilised and the Aircraft Carrier Alliance interests were aligned with those of the Government. Will my right hon. Friend take lessons from that final stage of the procurement process in his procurement of the fleet solid support vessels that will be designed to accompany the carrier strike group in future? Will he give some confirmation to the House of when he expects the first of those vessels to be able to take its place within the carrier strike group?

Mr Wallace: First, on the carrier alliance, I think the bigger lesson to take is for our future combat air system—the future fighter programme. There are so many vested interests in it and it is such a big and broad programme; we should incorporate many of those lessons.

On the fleet solid support ships, I cannot reveal too much because it is so close to us publishing the competition. We would like it to happen as soon as possible. Forgive me for some of the delay; that is entirely my fault. When I took over office, I was keen to ensure that the fleet solid support ship, for which the previous competition had collapsed, was put in a healthy place. I hope we will see some innovative means by which we can get the best out of British and the best value for money for the taxpayer, as well as improve some of our skills base for our workforce, because it is really important that it is not feast or famine when we make our ships.

I give credit where credit is due; I remember sitting in Aberdeenshire listening to the then Chancellor, Gordon Brown, announce this programme in the March 1998 Budget. It is a joint endeavour of the United Kingdom involving Governments who commissioned these aircraft and indeed this carrier. My right hon. Friend the Member for Ludlow (Philip Dunne) makes the real point, which is that the risk—it is always a risk—is that we start on a 20-year endeavour and things change. Threats change, design changes and things become unavailable; I am afraid that that sometimes unavoidably increases the cost of these programmes. That is the simple reality. Very few countries are prepared to lean in and take that risk, but in the end I think the prize is worth it, as we will see when this carrier group sails at the end of May.

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): I very much welcome the maiden deployment of the carrier strike group. The Secretary of State is right to say that it was envisaged and laid down under a Labour Government, and set sail under a Conservative Government. Built in shipyards in both England and Scotland, it is an example of why we are stronger in both our security and economic interests when we work closely together across the four nations. He is right to say it is important we work closely with our friends the United States and other countries, but it is also important that we have sovereign capability. Can he confirm whether we currently have the capability for both our aircraft carriers to go to sea at the same time with British support ships and aircraft if we were to choose to do that alone?

Mr Wallace: The hon. Gentleman asks a valid question. Strictly speaking we could, but we do not envisage such deployments unless we are in a time of war or significant stress. At the moment, yes, we could strictly speaking, but the way we are working up each aircraft carrier means that we will not be required to do that.

Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con) [V]: May I pay huge tribute to Her Majesty's Royal Navy for getting together and preparing this carrier for sea so effectively? Does the Secretary of State look forward as I do—indeed, as does a great friend of mine, Minister Kono Taro, the current Minister for Regulatory Reform in Japan but his former opposite number in Japan—to seeing Japanese F-35s flying off the deck of the Queen Elizabeth, shortly before he works with his opposite number today to see whether Japan could possibly even join the Five Eyes community?

Mr Wallace: I am not sure how long I will last in this job; no one ever does. I would love to be in Japan when she arrives and join my Japanese counterpart. The Japanese are in a rough neighbourhood sometimes. They stand for an open, liberal society and for free trade, and it is in our interests that we join together. The great thing about the carrier is that Italian and Japanese F-35Bs—all of them—will be able to operate from the carrier. I hope in future we have more and more nations operating from that deck. It is incredibly good news that we are going to go to Japan. It was one of the key directions I gave to the Navy. We are not going to go around in circles; we are going to see our ally. We are going from A to B and it is very important that Japan is the destination. I hope we will go from strength to strength with Japan. I think we have a lot to offer. I hear my hon. Friend's suggestion and no doubt we will examine it at some stage.

Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP) [V]: In his confirmation of this operation, the Secretary of State referred to the encompassing approach of the UK as set out in the integrated review. With respect to India, he drew attention to the UK's research and development. Currently, our R&D spend is well below the OECD average. He also referred to aid spending, which has been cut in the face of the covid crisis facing countries abroad, including India. Given that, sadly, that will not be the last covid crisis abroad, what planning is being undertaken by the Government to apply that principle of a joined-up approach in the context of covid?

Mr Wallace: One of the lessons from the pandemic is that joined-up working and burden sharing is the key, whether that is better integration internally with devolved Administrations and local authorities or internationally. The international lesson is that we have to be better at working together in our international organisations—the UN, the World Health Organisation, NATO—all of which are incredibly important. What we are seeing right now with India is an international response, with the United Kingdom and the United States sending oxygen compressors and ventilators. We will work together to deliver that response. That is the lesson: partnerships and solidarity win the day.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): May I point out that I am the chair of the British-Taiwanese all-party parliamentary group? To supplement what my right hon. and gallant Friend, and very good friend, the Member for Bournemouth East (Mr Ellwood) mentioned in his question, I am really saddened that we are, in a way, capitulating to the neo-colonialism of China that is taking over islands in the South China sea, occupying them and militarising them against international law, and yet we seem not to be able to join our friends from Taiwan by letting their ships join this taskforce or, indeed, by visiting Taipei. I realise that it is probably a bit late, but I feel quite strongly that we may well have to revise how we tackle the matter of Chinese aggression in the South China sea.

Mr Wallace: I hear my right hon. Friend, and we are all concerned when the rules-based system is tested in the way that it is and when aggressive exercising or deployments happen, as we have also seen in Ukraine. That is no good for anybody and does not resolve any of the issues. The carrier group will be sailing in lots of

parts of the Pacific that are contentious. We will be in the Philippine sea, the South China sea and, I think, the East China sea, and making sure that we are in parts of the world where there are currently contentious issues. I do not think that we can be everywhere, but we will be making the point—we will be exercising with US carriers—and we have been very clear in our relationship with China, whether that is dealing with Hong Kong or others, that we believe that respect for human rights and international law is incredibly important, and we will uphold it.

Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: My father served on the carrier HMS Victorious, hunting down the Bismarck, so I welcome the Queen Elizabeth carrier strike group, which will travel 26,000 nautical miles over 28 weeks to 40 countries. However, I ask the Secretary of State: what will the cost of this deployment be? What will the carbon footprint be? What message will it send in relation to COP26? And are there any plans for the Navy overall to try to reduce its carbon footprint and, indeed, the carbon footprint of our trade?

Mr Wallace: On the carbon footprint and the environment, there are a number of initiatives right across Government—as shipbuilding tsar, I am part of steering that—to try to invest in alternative energy or alternative fuels. There is a real prize in shipping if we can help to lead the pack in that—Norway is active in this—because one of the big polluters around the world is shipping, and if we can change the fuel that ships use and so make a difference, we can really help British shipping to steal a march on some of its competitors and open up many of the skills.

I am happy to write to the hon. Gentleman about the cost, because there are marginal and real costs, and all the different costs set out. Obviously, the carrier is paid for, deployed, fuelled and ready to go, but it would be anyhow, as are the salaries of all the sailors and Marines on board and everything else. I will write to him with what we estimate the additional cost to be. Of course, I give him one health warning that—as I was always taught as a soldier—no plan survives the very first contact, so who knows where we will be at the end of the year, if they are diverted and we do something else? But I will tell him the details as we get them.

Joy Morrissey (Beaconsfield) (Con): My right hon. Friend said that the carrier strike group will be NATO's first fifth generation carrier strike capability. Does he agree that fifth generation technology is hugely significant for our modern-day armed forces?

Mr Wallace: Yes, absolutely. One of the traits of the generation is situation awareness and its ability to process all that data and stealth, but, also, these generations do not stand still. We are already committed to a sixth generation. FCAS, the next fighter programme for the RAF, is absolutely about the sixth generation. One of the challenges is that we cannot sit still for very long before somebody is trying to get a strategic advantage, but I am confident that, at this moment in time, the carrier and her partnership with the F-35 will present a formidable capability around the world.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP) [V]: As the wife of a submariner, may I join others in sending my condolences to the families of the Indonesian submariners who have been lost in this tragic accident?

For many years, we have been pushing on fleet solid support ships. In the integrated review, the Government committed to a fleet of three FSSs required for the carrier strike group. We have been pressing for all of them to be built entirely in UK yards, so will the Secretary of State finally confirm that the full contract will go to UK yards?

Mr Wallace: As I have said in previous answers, we are on the cusp of issuing the full competition, and we have to be very careful; I do not want another competition to collapse or to be jeopardised by legal action. I have been pretty clear, and I have reclassified it as a warship. I have put some conditions in the contract, which will be seen by people hopefully to increase skills and the British shipbuilding industry. The details will be revealed when the tender is put out.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. May I, on behalf of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker team, pass on our deepest condolences to the families and friends of those submariners who were tragically lost at sea? We grieve your loss. [HON. MEMBERS: "Hear, hear."] We will now suspend for two minutes.

7.10 pm

Sitting suspended.

BILL PRESENTED

HIGH-RISE PROPERTIES (ELECTRICAL SAFETY) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Andy Slaughter, supported by Hilary Benn, Ms Harriet Harman, Paul Blomfield, Stella Creasy, Sir Peter Bottomley, Mr Andrew Mitchell, Dr Julian Lewis, Sir Graham

Brady, Bob Blackman, Ed Davey and Liz Saville Roberts, presented a Bill to require social landlords of residential properties in high-rise buildings to undertake regular safety inspections of electrical installations; to establish a complaints procedure for tenants of such properties who have electrical safety concerns; and for connected purposes.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time tomorrow, and to be printed (Bill 292).

FINANCIAL SERVICES BILL (PROGRAMME) (NO. 2)

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

That the following provisions shall apply to the Financial Services Bill for the purpose of supplementing the Order of 9 November 2020 (Financial Services Bill (Programme)):

Consideration of Lords Amendments

(1) Proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion two hours after their commencement.

Subsequent stages

(2) Any further Message from the Lords may be considered forthwith without any Question being put.

(3) The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement.—(*Scott Mann.*)

Question agreed to.

Financial Services Bill

Consideration of Lords amendments

Before Clause 1

DUTY OF CARE FOR FINANCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS

7.13 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen): I beg to move, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 1.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): With this it will be convenient to consider the following:

Government amendment (a) in lieu.

Lords amendments 2 to 7.

Lords amendment 8, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendments 9 to 21.

John Glen: I am delighted to speak again on the Financial Services Bill following its passage through the other place, where it has been well looked after by my colleagues Earl Howe, Lord True and Baroness Penn. As our first major piece of financial services legislation since leaving the EU, the Bill will enhance the UK's world-leading prudential standards, protect financial stability, promote openness between the UK and international markets and maintain an effective financial services regulatory framework and sound capital markets.

The Bill was thoroughly scrutinised in the other place, with more than 200 amendments tabled across Committee and Report. In total, the Lords made 21 amendments to the Bill. During the passage of the Bill, there has been a lengthy discussion about how best to address issues of consumer harm in the financial sector. Lords amendment 1 before us today proposes that this should be addressed through a requirement on the Financial Conduct Authority to bring forward rules that would place a duty of care on financial services firms in relation to their customers.

The Government are committed to ensuring that financial services consumers are protected and that steps are taken quickly to address new issues when they are identified. However, the Government believe that the FCA already has the necessary powers and is acting to ensure that sufficient protections are in place for consumers. The Government therefore cannot accept this amendment, but recognise that Parliament wants to be assured that the FCA's ongoing work will lead to meaningful change.

I will today set out the standards that firms must already adhere to when providing financial services to their customers. These are governed by the FCA's "Principles for Business", as well as specific requirements in the handbook. These principles set out how specific requirements on firms work, and they include:

"A firm must pay due regard to the interests of its customers and treat them fairly."

The FCA's enforcement powers allow it to ensure that these standards are met, although the FCA recognises that the level of harm in markets is still too high and is committed to taking further actions.

The Government agree with the concerns that were raised in the other place that this harm may in part stem from an asymmetry of information between financial services firms and their customers. The risk is that many

firms may seek to exploit this asymmetry. The FCA is well aware of how informational asymmetries and behavioural biases can influence consumer behaviour, and is committed to ensuring that these issues are addressed where it considers that they may result in harm. The Government therefore support the FCA's ongoing programme of work in this area and believe that it will deliver meaningful change for the benefit of consumers.

The FCA has considered its existing framework of principles, and whether the way in which firms have responded to the principles is sufficient to ensure that consumers have the right protections and get the right outcomes. Building on this, the FCA will consult in May on clear proposals to raise and clarify its expectations of firms' actions and behaviours, and on any necessary changes to its principles to deliver this. These proposals will consider how to raise the level of care firms must provide to consumers through a duty of care or other provisions. Ultimately, the proposals in this consultation will seek to ensure that consumers benefit from a better level of care from financial services firms.

I have therefore tabled amendment (a) in lieu of Lords amendment 1. This amendment will require the FCA to consult on whether it should make rules providing that authorised persons owe a duty of care to consumers. It ensures that the FCA will publish its analysis of the responses to this consultation by the end of this year. It also ensures that the FCA will make final rules following that consultation before 1 August 2022.

I hope that the establishment of these clear milestones demonstrates the commitment of both the Government and the FCA to delivering better outcomes for financial services consumers. In line with commitments made in the other place regarding Parliament's scrutiny of the financial services regulators, I can confirm that the FCA will bring its conclusions to the attention of the relevant parliamentary Committees, giving them an opportunity to consider the proposals and, if they choose, to express a view or raise any issues. The FCA will respond to any issues that are raised by parliamentary Committees.

I now turn to Lords amendment 8 on mortgage prisoners. It is an issue I take extremely seriously, but I am afraid that the Government cannot accept this amendment. We must continue to be guided by the facts and the evidence. The FCA's analysis shows that half the 250,000 borrowers with inactive firms meet the normal risk appetite of lenders and could therefore switch if they chose to without any Government intervention.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I have been contacted by many constituents who are in a precarious position and do not have such options. My hon. Friends the Members for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) and for South Antrim (Paul Girvan) have conveyed to me that some of their constituents are also in that position. I respect the Minister greatly, but is it not possible to reconsider given the precarious position that my constituents and others find themselves in?

John Glen: I thank the hon. Gentleman, as ever, for his contribution. I will go on to explain the situation of the remaining 125,000 individuals who could be categorised in that way, the actions that we have taken to date and

what we will continue to look for. If that category can move without Government intervention, they are not “prisoners”.

Of the remaining 125,000 who cannot switch, 70,000 are in arrears and therefore could not secure a new deal even if they were in the active market. Those borrowers need to work with their lender to agree an appropriate repayment plan. The remaining 55,000 who are with inactive lenders and are up to date with their payments but who cannot switch are paying on average only 0.4 percentage points more than similar borrowers on reversion rates with active lenders—those with similar characteristics. The reason these borrowers are unable to switch is not that their mortgage is with an inactive firm but that they do not meet the risk appetite of lenders. They may, for example, have a combination of high loan-to-values, be on interest-only mortgages with no plan for repayment, or have higher levels of unsecured debts, non-standard sources of income or poor credit history. Similar borrowers in the active market are also typically unlikely to be offered deals with new lenders.

As I have set out previously, the Government and FCA have undertaken significant work in this area to create additional options that make switching into the active market easier for some borrowers. In particular, the modified affordability assessment allows active mortgage lenders to waive the normal affordability checks for borrowers with inactive lenders who meet certain criteria—for example, not being in arrears and not wishing to borrow more.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): I know that the problem the Minister is trying to solve is not of his making. The problem originated when the affordability rules were changed pursuant to the financial crisis. The affordability rules were waived for people with their existing lenders who wanted to move from one fixed-rate deal, when it terminated, to the next one. Those with inactive lenders who are in the same situation cannot do that because those products are simply not available. That is one of the key problems that we have not solved yet. I would appreciate his continued efforts to work with us on this particular issue.

John Glen: I thank my hon. Friend, who, without equal in this House, has done so much to champion mortgage prisoners. I hope he will carry on working with us as we continue to improve our understanding and the quality of the data that could underpin further interventions.

I can reaffirm to the House today that my own, and this Government’s, commitment is as strong as it ever has been to finding further solutions that do not provide false hope to borrowers, but I am afraid that amendment 8 represents neither a proportionate nor practical response on this complex issue. I will address the two sections of the amendment in turn. First, the amendment seeks to cap the standard variable rate, or SVR, that inactive firms charge borrowers. This would be an unprecedented intervention in the mortgage market and is a completely disproportionate approach when the data shows that the 55,000 borrowers to which I referred pay on average 0.4 percentage points more than similar borrowers in the active market. Such drastic Government intervention should not be undertaken lightly, as it could have significant impacts above and beyond the effect that the amendment seeks.

That cap would be deeply unfair to borrowers in the active market who are in arrears or unable to secure a new fixed-rate deal, because the cap would not include them. Let us consider two hypothetical borrowers. The first borrower took out their mortgage prior to the financial crisis when, as my hon. Friend said, there were looser affordability requirements. They borrowed, in some cases, 125% of the property’s value, avoiding the need to save a deposit. Shortly after, their lender failed and had to be nationalised. The second borrower took out their mortgage following the financial crisis, when there were stricter affordability requirements. They saved a deposit of 5% or perhaps even 10%, and then were able to buy their home. Let us say that both those borrowers lost their jobs and now work in lower-paid jobs. They live in an area where property prices have not grown as much as they would have liked. Both try to keep up with their repayments, but ultimately fall into arrears, with the result that neither can easily access new deals. Neither of those borrowers has done anything wrong, and both deserve support from their lender and the wider financial system, but the Government cannot possibly agree with the idea that one should be supported by an unprecedented market intervention of this kind, and the other not. Both adhered to the prevailing conditions at the time.

I am also concerned that any cap on standard variable rates, including one only applicable to inactive lenders, would have unintended consequences for financial stability. The London School of Economics agreed and did not recommend a cap, noting that it could cause market harm. It would restrict lenders’ ability to vary rates in line with market conditions—the ability to vary SVRs allows lenders to re-price products to reflect changes to the cost of doing business—and could therefore create risks with significant implications for financial stability.

The second part of the amendment would require new fixed-rate deals to be offered to borrowers with inactive lenders, although it is unclear how that is to be achieved. Lending remains a commercial decision based on a variety of factors and it would not be right for the Government to compel lenders to provide products for specific groups. If the amendment is intended to require the current holders of these mortgages to offer new products, that would require firms that do not currently have the lending expertise, systems or regulatory permissions necessary to offer new mortgage products to do so. However, in opposing the amendment, I reiterate once again my commitment to continue to find further practical and proportionate options for affected borrowers, supported by facts and evidence, as I have over the past three years. Equally, I do not want to give false assurances, or false hope, for the sake of political expediency, especially when it is likely that there is a limit to what further action the Government can take to support such borrowers.

Kevin Hollinrake: Could we agree a basic principle that identical borrowers—the Minister uses the example of two similar borrowers in similar situations—should be treated exactly the same? One should not be treated better than the other. Will he agree to a principle that, if a person is a UK borrower and is in the same financial situation as others, whether they are with an active lender or an inactive lender, the treatment of those individuals should be the same: the options should be the same; the deals should be the same.

John Glen: I would be happy to seek solutions for those mortgage holders of active and inactive lenders, but my hon. Friend must recognise that different individuals have different characteristics: different loan-to-valuation ratios; different credit histories; different income flows; and different histories in their financial situation. Those characteristics cannot be factored out. None the less, I am absolutely committed to this issue and it is in that spirit that I announce today that the Treasury will work with the FCA—that means work with it on a review to its existing data on mortgage prisoners—to ensure that we have further detail on the characteristics of those borrowers who have mortgages with inactive firms and are unable to switch despite being up to date with their mortgage payments.

The FCA will also review the effect of its recent interventions to remove regulatory barriers to switching for mortgage prisoners and will report on this by the end of November, and I will lay a copy of that review before Parliament. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton, who has done so much excellent work in this area and who champions the cause of mortgage prisoners, may wish to bring proposals sooner than that, and, of course, I have always made myself available to Members across the House to look constructively at any solution that has merit.

The Treasury will use the results of the review that I have set out to establish whether further solutions can be found for such borrowers that are practical and proportionate. Recognising the significant constraints that I have noted, I assure the House and the other place that the Government will continue urgently to seek any further solutions that may provide support to borrowers with inactive lenders who are unable to switch, but, as I have said, those solutions must be practical and proportionate.

In addition, I am grateful to the active lenders who have come forward to offer options to these borrowers. I am also committing today to write to active lenders to urge them and the wider industry to go even further and look at what more they can do to ensure that as many borrowers as possible benefit from these options.

I hope that I have convinced the House that this amendment, in this form, is not the right solution to such a complex issue. I also hope that I have demonstrated my personal commitment, and the Government's commitment, to continuing to seek sensible and workable solutions.

7.30 pm

I turn to two Lords amendments, tabled by Lord Holmes of Richmond, that the Government were pleased to support. Lords amendments 9 and 13 introduce an exemption for cashback without a purchase so that it will no longer be a regulated payment service. This means that it will be brought into line with the regulatory treatment of cashback with a purchase. This removes a significant burden for firms that want to offer this service. Where the service is offered, a local business, such as a corner shop, café or pub, will be able to provide cash to a customer without their having to make an accompanying purchase. This change will take effect two months after Royal Assent. I am very happy to take this opportunity to deliver this change through the Bill—a change that has become possible only as a result of leaving the EU.

However, Lords amendments 9 and 13 are only one of the steps required to protect access to cash and ensure that cash infrastructure is available long term for the millions of people across this country for whom this access remains important every day. The Government are committed to legislating and will continue our work on this important issue.

I turn to the remainder of the Lords amendments, which were tabled by the Government. Members of this House will recall my commitment in Committee to act quickly following the publication of the Woolard review, to enable “buy now, pay later” products to be brought into the scope of regulation if that was what the review recommended. That review has now concluded, so Lords amendment 6 provides the necessary powers to bring “buy now, pay later” products into Financial Conduct Authority regulation in a proportionate manner. As I said, this was discussed extensively during our earlier consideration of the Bill, and I hope that the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) will be pleased to see that the Government are acting.

The role of the financial services sector in tackling climate change was the subject of significant and passionate debate in both Houses. As I have detailed previously, the Government and regulators are both committed to ensuring that the sector plays its part. Lords amendments 16, 17, 18 and 19 require the Prudential Regulation Authority and the FCA to consider the 2050 carbon target in relation to the Climate Change Act 2008 when making prudential rules under the accountability framework set out in the Bill. The Lords amendments also delay this application of mandatory climate change considerations to 1 January 2022 to avoid any delay in implementing these vital prudential regimes. Lords amendment 7 makes a minor change to the market abuse regulation to ensure that personal data collected for the purposes this regulation can be retained for longer than five years, where appropriate. Without this action, the FCA would have had to begin deleting vital data from July this year, posing risks to the ability of the FCA to investigate and prosecute complex cases of market abuse. The GDPR's protections for personal data will still apply.

Lords amendments 2 to 5, 10 to 12, 14, 15, 20 and 21 remove Northern Ireland from the scope of the relevant parts of clause 34 and schedule 12, and make changes to clauses 44 and 45 to help give effect to this. During the passage of the Bill, it became clear that, despite the best efforts of Ministers and officials from the Treasury and the Northern Ireland Executive, legislative consent motions for the relevant parts of this Bill would not be completed in time. Therefore, in line with the Sewel convention, the Government tabled these Lords amendments to ensure that the Government are not legislating for Northern Ireland without its consent. I am grateful to the Lords for the improvements made to the Bill but hope that this House will approve the Government's motions in relation to Lords amendments 1 and 8.

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab): I thank their lordships for their work in considering the Bill. In particular, I thank Lord Tunnicliffe and Lord Eatwell, who led for the Opposition in the relevant debates.

Let me start tonight with some of the areas where we agree with what the House of Lords has done with the Bill. Lords amendments 16 to 19 make the UK's net

zero targets part of the remit of the financial services regulators. We moved similar amendments in this House, both in Committee and on Report, and both times the Minister led MPs on the Government Benches to vote them down. Indeed, when the House last discussed the Bill, on 13 January, the Minister said

“I do not believe that regulators should be required to have regard to broader questions that are not so closely related to prudential standards.”—[*Official Report*, 13 January 2021; Vol. 687, c. 398.]

So what was it that led to this Damascene conversion? What happened between 13 January and now to make the Minister do a U-turn and support amendments that he and his party voted down repeatedly in the Commons?

There are many reasons to oppose legislative propositions in this House, but “not invented here” has to be one of the weakest. We have argued throughout the passage of the Bill that financial services, including the work of the regulators, are a vital part of the drive towards net zero. There was no good reason for the Government to oppose the idea during the earlier debates on the Bill. Every sector of the economy will have to adapt to the change and it will be for Government Members to explain to their constituents why they voted the amendments down.

We also welcome Lords amendment 6 on the regulation of “buy now, pay later” firms—a cause championed with characteristic energy and determination by my hon. Friend the Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy). Again, we called for such regulation in the Bill’s previous Commons stages and the Government voted against it on Report. As financial services innovate, so must the regulatory boundaries. The regulation was recommended by the Woolard report, which was published in February, and we welcome its inclusion in the Bill. The new clause that has been inserted will be just the first stage of the process; the FCA will have to decide exactly how it will be done. Given the enormous growth in the use of such platforms over the past year or two, it is important that the regulator gets on with it as soon as possible.

Lords amendment 9 deals with cashback without purchase. There has been a significant decline in the use of cash during the pandemic, with a big move to contactless payments and payments online. We understand that this has many benefits for consumers—indeed, the pandemic has been called the great acceleration in respect of the many ways it has influenced our behaviour. Despite that acceleration, there will still be a proportion of the population who need cash, both for payments and for budgeting purposes. The Government promised to legislate on this issue at the Budget last year. Since then, it has felt like this is an ownerless problem, with the banks, LINK, the ATM providers, the regulator and the Treasury all somewhere on the pitch but no one really gripping the situation.

Cashback without purchase might be part of the answer, but that alone does not fulfil the Government’s commitment to ensure a nationwide system of free-to-use access to cash. We cannot allow innovation in payments to mean that the lowest-income households in the country have to pay to access their own money. When will the Government get a grip of the situation and bring forward a proper plan for access to cash, even in a world where the total number of transactions paid for in cash declines?

Let me turn to what are perhaps the more contentious issues before us. For many years, consumer groups have campaigned for a duty of care for financial services

providers, because of the enormous imbalance of information between the sellers of such products and the purchasers. If we add to that imbalance a financial incentive to sell, we have the seeds of many of the mis-selling scandals that we have seen, with all the distress they have caused to individuals, plus, of course, the lengthy and extremely expensive processes of redress that the industry has had to establish. Would it not have been better to avoid the push selling of inappropriate products in the first place? That is the idea behind a duty of care. Its aim is to change the question in the seller’s mind from, “Is it legal?” to, “Is it right?” The amendment made in the Lords would empower the FCA to introduce such a duty.

The Minister says that he is not convinced. Instead, his amendment in lieu proposes a consultation on the matter by the FCA. Of course there will be scepticism about that, because there have been consultations before and nothing has happened. However, we accept that this commitment, with the timetable set out, is a step forward. In any case, there would have to be a consultation before any such duty could be brought forward. We therefore encourage all the consumer groups, and anyone concerned, to take part in the consultation set out by the Minister.

That brings me to the final issue of mortgage prisoners. We have been living through a period of historically low interest rates. Few people would have predicted that, 13 years after the financial crash, interest rates would be at their lowest levels in modern times. For Governments, including our own, that has enabled the financing of large deficits. For mortgage holders—or the vast majority of them, at least—it has given them access to long-term fixed rates at a low level, enabling them to pay down debt and to finance their home ownership. Indeed, one of the policy aims of low interest rates is to help people pay down debt.

However, one group has been excluded from the ability to fix their mortgages at low rates: those mortgage prisoners stuck on high standard variable rates with little or no ability to switch to competitive mortgage rates available elsewhere in the market. That is not how it started for most of those borrowers. They borrowed from regulated high street lenders such as Northern Rock, which were considered robust institutions at the time they took out their mortgages. Since then, however, some of those lenders have gone bust and the mortgages sold on to inactive lenders. People have become stuck, often at the cost of paying thousands of pounds more per year than would be the case on a more competitive rate. An estimated quarter of a million borrowers are in that position.

The Minister quoted some figures about how much extra people were paying and how that 250,000 was broken down. Some of those figures are disputed by the all-party parliamentary group on mortgage prisoners. Let us take the 0.4% that he cited. He said that people were paying, on average, only 0.4% above average SVRs elsewhere. That is disputed by the APPG. It estimates that mortgage prisoners have in fact been paying an average of 1.33% above the average SVR available, according to the Bank of England. Also, remember that in the mortgage market in general, only a small minority of borrowers are on SVRs; most are on a two or five-year fixed rate. That is how the UK mortgage market works for most people.

[Mr Pat McFadden]

The Minister said that half of those borrowers could switch now if they wanted to. However, when the affordability changes were brought in, the FCA assumed that it would be only a fraction of that number. Whoever is right, the question must be posed: why have so few of them switched if they had the ability to do so? It cannot be because they like being stuck on a rate of 4% or more. Nor is it the case that all of those borrowers are somehow at the top end of loan-to-value ratios. Three quarters of mortgage prisoners have loan-to-value ratios of less than 75%, and that figure was calculated before the increase in house prices over the past year or so.

The Government claim that 70,000 mortgage prisoners are in arrears and could not switch even if they were allowed to. Let us look at what happens when borrowers with active lenders have been allowed to switch. The APPG estimates that someone with a mortgage of £165,000 will have paid an extra £24,000 over the past decade, compared with the Bank of England average SVR.

In individual cases with active lenders, where borrowers have been able to switch the effects have been huge. The APPG cites the case of a borrower with the TSB who saw her rate reduced from 4.69% to 1.99% and her payment go down from £928 to £397 a month—a saving of about £500 per month. This is transformative for the family finances of those involved. The release of pressure and freedom conferred by such a change in their monthly finances makes a massive difference to people's lives, and those who have benefited from being able to switch in that way talk of a great weight being lifted from their shoulders—and no wonder.

7.45 pm

What the amendment aims to do is to take the benefits of the low interest rate environment that the Government and most mortgage borrowers have been able to use and extend those benefits to borrowers who have been paying over the odds for the past 13 years. It would apply only to those who are up to date with their payments or have missed no more than one monthly payment in the past year.

The Minister cited the LSE report. Financial journalist Martin Lewis, who backed that report, has spent the last two days encouraging this House to support the Lords amendment. The LSE report cited a number of other things that the Government have not done, such as Government equity loans, removing together loans—a particularly difficult product—partial loan write-offs and mortgage rescue schemes. The Government have not acted on any of those. The Minister takes issue with the drafting of the amendment, but here is the difference: unlike the issue of duty of care, the Government have not tabled an amendment in lieu; they have not produced an alternative legislative proposal. If it was just a matter of drafting, with the same intention, that avenue was open to the Government this evening, but the Treasury chose not to take it. That means that we will support the Lords amendment and vote against the Government proposal to strike it down.

Whatever the outcome of all this, surely it is time for the Government to do more to ensure that those who are stuck on high SVRs through no fault of their own can have access to more of the mortgage products available on the market, which could make such a difference to their finances and to their lives.

Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, for calling me to contribute to this debate on the amendments made in the other place. There is no doubt that the Bill represents a major step in our post-Brexit world, enabling us to take responsibility for our own financial services regulation. This is an area of the economy that is important to us all for several reasons, including the revenue the sector raises for public services, the jobs it creates and the impact it has on our financial stability and global presence. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor and my hon. Friend the Economic Secretary have rightly set ambitious targets and objectives to develop the sector for the United Kingdom.

We all know the impact the big bang had in the 1980s, elevating the UK to a leading global position in this field, but it is fair to say also that some challenges stem from such radical change, and that is why I am pleased that, at the heart of the Bill, is recognition of the need to enhance our prudential standards and commitments to maintain the highest regulatory standards. Lords amendments 16 to 19 are welcome in that they extend the reach of the Prudential Regulation Authority and the Financial Conduct Authority to take account of our climate change commitments. That shows how serious the Government are about contributing to our regulatory standards and expectations and enhancing our reputation globally in our attitude to both climate change and strong financial regulation. Lords amendment 7 and the string of amendments relating to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 are also welcome, updating legislation to ensure that it remains fit for purpose in the fight against market abuse and the fight against crime, and recognising the status of legislative consent, specifically in relation to Northern Ireland.

In the limited time available, I will focus on Lords amendment 8, which relates to people who are trapped with their current inactive mortgage providers—mortgage prisoners. We need to recognise the seriousness of the issue and the circumstances in which people find themselves. I, like many Members across the House, have constituents paying higher interest rates on their mortgages than would otherwise be necessary. Although I am optimistic about the economy, it is fair to say that there remains much uncertainty, and developing solutions for people in this situation, who could save thousands of pounds, deserves full and proper consideration.

It has been suggested that there are 250,000 people in this situation, although others challenge that by highlighting that many can already switch providers—that is absolutely true—and others are restricted because of arrears and myriad complex reasons. Whatever the data says, the reality is that an individual paying over the odds inevitably wants to gain a better deal or the best deal possible, and we, as Members of Parliament, have an obligation to give support in a range of ways. However, in doing so, we must also recognise the hardship and complexity of individual cases.

In spite of recognising that solutions need to be developed and worked through and recognising the positive motives of those who tabled Lords amendment 8, I do not think it would achieve what many believe or claim it would. It is simplistic in its drafting and it would be merely a short-term fix. I want to see long-term solutions to the challenges for these individuals and families. Even consumer commentators and London School of Economics research recognises that it would be only a

short-term stopgap, not the longer-term answer we would like to see. Intervention in the market for some people would create issues and set precedents that may not have been fully thought through. Ultimately, we need to be working to gain market solutions that will be the long-term answer that people deserve. I welcome the comments made by the Minister in his introductory remarks from the Dispatch Box. He absolutely recognises the challenges that people face. The commitment to work with the Financial Conduct Authority is excellent news that offers the potential of a long-term solution. However, an effective market solution would not be the one-size-fits-all approach that the amendment suggests.

We must also recognise the complexity that the Minister and the Financial Conduct Authority will have to deal with because of the unique circumstances in which each and every individual finds themselves. The reality is that answering those serious issues, with far-reaching effects on the families tied in such circumstances, requires a number of solutions that genuinely reflect the complexity of those individuals' circumstances. The amendment has been presented as a simple answer, but, as I said, it requires much more work and study. I am grateful that the Minister responded to the calls from across the House that clearly build on the work he has been pursuing up to this stage. I ask the Minister to continue to respond to those Members supporting the amendment by asking them to recognise the complexity of the situation.

Although I am challenging the Minister—in, I hope, a positive way—I want to recognise the changes that he has introduced so far. The changes to mortgage affordability assessments have had a significant impact. They have made a major change, and there is the prospect of supporting a group of people with a more effective market-based answer than that offered by the amendment. That is the type of solution that we need as a long-term answer. I want to act to support mortgage prisoners, but I do not think that the amendment achieves that. There are many people in very many different circumstances, and I do not think that it recognises all the circumstances that exist. It will not deliver what many people believe it will achieve. There are myriad complex situations.

I would also say that it will take time for the amendment to become effective, even if it was passed today. I say to the Minister that we can use this time to come up with alternative long-term solutions. I had not expected the Minister's response at the Dispatch Box, which commits to doubling his efforts with the Financial Conduct Authority and even setting a specific timescale. That recognises the urgency of this while managing expectations of the challenges and work that they are committed to doing. We are using the time, as I was planning to call for it to be used, to come up with long-term answers rather than the short-term fix that Lords amendment 8 claims to provide.

Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP) [V]: I very much support Lords amendment 1 on the duty of care. As the Minister will recall, we have raised this during the previous stages of the Bill, in Committee and on the Floor of the House. We think that a financial services duty of care has never been more needed than it is just now, given the difficulties that people have had in the past year with the impact of coronavirus and long covid. The Minister's proposals are really for consultation, to kick the can down the road until August 2022, giving

our constituents quite some time before they can get the duty of care that I think we would all agree they deserve.

In particular, the amendment would help those suffering not just from the effects of covid but from cancer, which is why it is supported by Macmillan Cancer Support. Four out of five people with cancer are affected financially, being on average £570 a month worse off as a result of their diagnosis. Without support to manage this financial impact, money worries can spiral out of control. Macmillan estimates that more than a third of people with cancer, 39%, are severely financially impacted by their diagnosis and of those almost one in three had to take a loan or go into credit card debt. Macmillan's clear ambition is that every person affected by cancer can rely on their financial services provider to give the support they need to cope with the financial impact of a diagnosis.

At the moment, there is a clear gap in the service. Only 11% of people tell their bank about a diagnosis. Why is that? Is it because they do not think that they will get a fair hearing? Is it because they do not want to admit something like that to their bank because they fear some sort of negative consequence? That tells me that the rules as they stand are not working. It is a patchwork. Someone might have the good luck to have a financial services provider who is understanding, but that is not good guidance and it does not help everybody.

People support there being a duty of care. Research by the Financial Services Consumer Panel found that 92% of consumers, 99% of sole traders and 97% of small and micro businesses believe it is important that there is a duty of care in financial services. Health issues could have an impact on them, because they would affect their business and its viability going forward. The duty of care is also supported by Age UK, the Alzheimer's Society, Fair by Design, the Money and Pensions Service, StepChange Debt Charity, Surviving Economic Abuse and The Money Charity. They believe in it because a duty of care can lead to the necessary change in culture and practice. Customers should be easily able to access forbearance from their provider, including flexibility on mortgage payments and interest freezes on credit cards or loans, without it damaging their credit files. If we put that in place, it would prevent long-term harm and financial exclusion.

There should be a clearer path to compensation when things go wrong because a provider has failed in its duty of care. That leads to a standard that people can expect and we can hold to account people who do not meet that standard. It would make a real difference were the Government to take this on, and it is hugely disappointing that they do not wish to do so today. I suppose there is still hope that the Government could change their mind right now and do this, but kicking the can around until 2022, when perhaps something will happen, does not help people here and now. I urge the Government to consider that and see whether there is any way they can bring it forward more quickly. Lots of the evidence on this issue already exists so we do not need to go into further consultation to prove the evidence that is clearly there.

In other areas the evidence is slightly more contentious and disputed, such as Lords amendment 8 on mortgage prisoners. The number of people affected seems to be part of the contention. The Minister said that he follows the facts and the evidence, but in reality he is disregarding

[Alison Thewliss]

some of the facts and evidence that do not suit his position. As the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) said, the evidence is disputed. Although there may be up to 250,000 people stuck on that standard variable rate, many of them have also paid considerably over the odds in their mortgage payments.

There is also a degree of geographical impact. As a result of the location of Northern Rock, 14% of those affected are in the north-east, 16% in the north-west, 12% in Yorkshire and Humberside, and 11% in Scotland. That bears consideration, because this issue has a disproportionate impact on a large and significant group of people and their families, particularly in the context of covid and the challenges that many will be facing, which have deepened this year. It is incumbent on the Government to bring forward some kind of solution.

8 pm

People are undoubtedly being let down again by the Government and by the Minister. We need solutions, and it is deeply frustrating that the Minister is leaving people trapped with no solution. It is a bit hollow for him to talk about practical options and solutions, but not to say when such solutions will be brought forward. Unless he is prepared to do so—perhaps in the Financial Services Bill; the best minds in the Treasury could have been put to this—the situation does not give people an awful lot of hope. The Minister talks against the notion of false hope, but he is leaving many with no hope at all that there will be a solution and that people will get change. I pay tribute to the all-party group on mortgage prisoners, the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake), and all those who have worked hard with this group of people. They deserve a solution from the Government to this long-running issue, and they deserve it now.

The SNP was glad to see the move to extend cashback, particularly because the wider issue of access to cash is missing from the Bill, despite its being a perfectly good place to include it. The move might to some degree help to keep money in local communities. Many communities do not have facilities for business banking at all, and that is part of the wider picture and problem. What conversations has the Minister had with business representatives about the practicalities of this measure? Will it mean that small businesses will have to hold more cash in order to provide cashback as a service? What are the costs and implications of that? It would be useful to have a wee bit more practical information.

I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) who was brilliant on “buy now, pay later” in Committee. The timing of the Woolard review was not helpful for bringing things forward in the Bill, but I am glad action is now being proposed. I hope it will happen swiftly, as there has been a massive proliferation of “buy now, pay later” companies. Now when people click on any website to buy something, that is what pops up. The Government have a job on their hands to try to regulate that and ensure that our constituents are kept safe. As I said in Committee, this seems to have a disproportionate impact on young women who are buying things on those websites, and I ask the Government to do a lot more analysis into who this issue affects, and how best to introduce legislation that will protect everybody.

I welcome any movement to improve the regulations on climate change. With COP26 hopefully happening this year in my constituency, I am keen for the Government to take a leading role and do more to ensure that financial institutions take their responsibilities to tackle climate change seriously. A lot more could be done on that, and everybody needs to take responsibility and play their part if we are to tackle climate change and make meaningful progress.

Finally, it would be nice if Opposition amendments were taken on board more often, or indeed at all, by this Government. There is so much that could be done in areas reserved to this Parliament, where the Scottish Parliament would also like to act but cannot do so. I hope very much that some day soon Scotland will not have to wait for a UK Treasury Minister to act, and that we will be able to do so ourselves, with the proper powers of an independent nation to protect our own people and to build a fairer, more inclusive, more prosperous nation.

Gareth Davies (Grantham and Stamford) (Con): Mr Deputy Speaker, you will be pleased to know that I will keep my remarks incredibly focused and brief. They will be entirely on Lords amendment 8, which I am afraid I cannot support.

Let me first congratulate and thank the Economic Secretary for all his hard work in bringing the Bill through so eloquently and in such a detailed way. I thank him particularly for his remarks on Lords amendment 8, which I will re-emphasise for the House. He set out very clearly that there are 250,000 people with inactive lenders, of whom 120,000 are unable to switch. Of them, 70,000 are in arrears, which means that they are unable to meet the risk criteria of other lenders.

However, it is worth pointing out that the Government are taking action to help financially vulnerable people and people in financial difficulty with mortgages, for example through the breathing space scheme, which helps to enhance legal protection for borrowers, and the pre-action protocol, which essentially puts repossession at the end of the queue, as a last resort for borrowers.

The centrepiece of Lords amendment 8 is, of course, the cap on SVRs. I entirely agree with the Minister and many others in the market who suggest that that would be unfair to borrowers with active lenders, but most significantly, it would represent a significant and radical intervention in private markets. It would represent a serious risk to financial stability, as the Treasury and the Minister have outlined. Lenders' ability to adjust SVRs according to market conditions is critical, to enable them to take a risk-based approach to market conditions. Taking that away would make those lenders more vulnerable to financial shocks, such as a future financial crisis, which none of us wants.

This is a significant issue. The Treasury has said that it does not support a cap on SVRs, as has the London School of Economics, as many speakers have already outlined. The right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) outlined that Martin Lewis backed the LSE report. Martin Lewis has also said that a cap on SVRs would be imperfect and a temporary “stopgap”. That is not a ringing endorsement. For the reasons I have outlined, I simply cannot support the amendment.

Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: I start by paying tribute to Rachel Neale and the UK Mortgage Prisoners group for their incredible resilience and the way that they have worked for the last two years with the all-party parliamentary group on mortgage prisoners, which I co-chair, to help to get a pragmatic solution to the problems that we know they face. I also pay tribute to my constituent Mohammed Masood, who first brought this issue to my attention after his family's own experience—a situation that, after so many years, is still ongoing.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in support of Lords amendment 8, which would provide immediate relief to up to 250,000 mortgage prisoners—the FCA's estimate—by capping standard variable rates and ensuring that they could access fixed-rate deals. The arguments for that were made powerfully and movingly in the other place, and indeed by my right hon. Friend the Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) from the Front Bench tonight.

The Minister said that he wants to be guided by the facts. I thank him for his commitment to addressing this issue, but perhaps I can share some other data and another interpretation of the same facts to show why I and others believe that the solution proposed in Lords amendment 8 would indeed be both proportionate and practical.

The 250,000 mortgage prisoners took out their mortgages prior to the financial crisis with fully regulated high street banks such as Northern Rock. They were then kept trapped on high standard variable rates before being sold to mortgage loan sharks such as Cerberus, Tulip and Heliodor. The amendment would apply a cap on the standard variable rate for mortgage prisoners with inactive lenders and unregulated entities and ensure that they can access fixed-rate deals. It would be a targeted intervention that would have no impact on the wider market of active lenders, such as the main high street banks, which compete to offer their existing customers new deals.

The margins on these Northern Rock mortgages increased significantly after the financial crisis. As interest rates available to those at active lenders fell, the Government kept mortgage prisoners on high SVRs and then sold them off to inactive lenders and vulture funds, who also kept them on high SVRs. Prior to the financial crisis, the gap between the Northern Rock SVR and the base rate was 2.09%. Since 2009, it has been 4.29% above the base rate.

When the Government sold on the loans, they gave some of the purchasers, such as Tulip Mortgages, complete discretion on interest rate policy after 12 months. Protections for later packages of mortgages sold required only that the SVR be kept at the level of the third highest of a basket of 15 SVRs, which was higher than the current rate charged to mortgage prisoners. If mortgage prisoners were entitled to new deals on the same basis as other customers, the average rate they would be paying would be 1.8% below the level of the proposed SVR cap of 2.1%.

The Minister suggested that the SVRs paid by mortgage prisoners are just 0.4% higher than SVRs at other lenders. As I said on Report, our case studies, which include nurses, teachers, members of the armed forces and small business people, tell another story. It is inappropriate to compare the rates that borrowers with

inactive lenders are currently paying with those paid by SVR customers at other active lenders. If mortgage prisoners were with an active lender and up to date with payments, they would have access to a product transfer, giving them a lower fixed rate.

The Treasury has said that the amendment cannot be supported because it would not be fair to borrowers in the active market, but more than 75% of borrowers in the active market move off the SVR within six months as they are able to access a new deal. Mortgage prisoners have been stuck on high SVRs for more than 10 years. Their mortgages were sold by the Government without their consent and without the proper protections. People trapped on these high interest rates do not have much chance to reduce the amount they owe. When their mortgage finishes when they are in their 60s or 70s, these mortgage loan sharks often put pressure on them to sell and threaten to repossess their home.

The FCA and the Government claim to have helped mortgage prisoners by changing the rules on affordability tests, but there has been very slow take-up of those new flexibilities. The FCA's cost-benefit analysis, published when the rules were proposed, estimated that somewhere between 2,000 and 14,000 mortgage prisoners would switch using the new rules. The APPG has received reports from campaign groups that only 40 mortgage prisoners have been able to switch so far.

Mortgage prisoners have been neglected for more than 10 years. Families have been destroyed and homes have been lost. While the Minister commissions yet another review, every month mortgage prisoners struggle to make their monthly payment due to high interest rates. The delays will mean that more homes will be lost. As the consumer champion Martin Lewis has said, an SVR cap on closed-book mortgages

“would provide immediate emergency relief to those most at risk of financial ruin. No one should underestimate the threat to wellbeing and even lives if this doesn't happen, and happen soon.”

We welcome support for the amendment from Martin Lewis and from Surviving Economic Abuse.

The Government have the option of coming up with an alternative proposal to provide the relief that mortgage prisoners so desperately need. So far, they have failed to do so. That is why I hope that all colleagues will support Lords amendment 8 tonight.

Kevin Hollinrake: I rise to speak to amendment 8. I listened carefully to the Minister's comments, and he has engaged across the House very frequently on this issue. I know this challenge is not of his making. It is not even of this Government's making, but it is the responsibility of the Government of the day to solve it, because it is a problem of a Government's making—indeed, it is of a Conservative Government's, or coalition Government's making. We are duty-bound to find a solution.

We have heard some very good speeches, including some very fine points about markets and intervention in markets. I am somebody who absolutely believes in markets. The markets have revolutionised my life and I have seen them revolutionise many others—how much wealth they create, how many jobs and opportunities they create, and what a great job they do for consumers in driving down prices and driving up service. But there is no market here. This is an extreme example of market

[Kevin Hollinrake]

failure. Inactive lenders do not set their SVRs based on recruitment of new customers, which is what should happen in a marketplace. It is not defensible to say, “We cannot intervene in this way in terms of an SVR cap because it is an intervention in markets.” The two things are not compatible.

8.15 am

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury set out an example of two similar customers and said that we should treat both customers the same. I absolutely agree with that principle. Let me just give him an example of how iniquitous this is. Louise Womble—I have permission to mention her—is a member of the UK Mortgage Prisoners action group. The group is led very ably by Rachel Neale, who has done fantastic work on this issue. Louise is with the regulated entity Landmark, an inactive lender that is owned by Cerberus. She is on a 5.19% mortgage with two years left on it. She is divorced; her husband left 10 years ago and paid nothing towards the mortgage. She has cancer. In two years’ time, because the inactive lenders will not renew or extend that mortgage—there is no requirement to do so—she will lose her home.

If Louise was with an active lender—assuming she was not in arrears, which I have no reason to suspect she is—she would be on something more like 2% or 2.5%, which is a huge difference compared with the payments that have been made over the last 10 or 12 years: something like £30,000 or £40,000. Of course, with an active lender, Louise would also be given the chance to stay in that property until perhaps she was in her 70s and then probably take an equity loan; she would not be forced out of her home. That is a massive difference when we are talking about two potentially identical borrowers. We cannot countenance that unfairness. I agree with the Minister about fairness and with his description of two identical borrowers, but we must also look at this example.

We created this problem. Of course others created it through irresponsible lending—Northern Rock, Bradford & Bingley and others—but we gave the job of disposing of those loan books to UK Asset Resolution. When it decided to dispose of the loan books—the first, I think, was back in 2016—to Cerberus, it took some reassurances from Cerberus that these people would be able to access new deals and fixed rates, and would even be able to take further advances. When that did not happen, UK Asset Resolution wrote to John McFall, the then Chair of the Treasury Committee, to say that it had clearly been misled, but that at the time it had had no reason to disbelieve Cerberus.

There were no doubt some very clever people looking after this at UK Asset Resolution, but that was pretty naive. I mean, I believe in business and that business is a force for good; nevertheless, to simply take it on trust that Cerberus would do the right thing by these borrowers was terribly naive. I think it was Charlie Munger, Warren Buffett’s right-hand man, who said:

“Show me the incentive and I will show you the outcome.”

Clearly, the incentive for Cerberus and the like is to extract maximum value from their portfolios without worrying about reputational risk.

Louise, who I was talking about earlier, is one of—I would guess—about half a million people who are affected. We talk about 250,000 people, but that is the number of mortgages or households, not people. All the people in the household are affected by the issue, so we are talking about a cohort of potentially up to 500,000 people. Of course, everybody is in a different situation, but the FCA’s analysis suggests that the current provisions and changes that we have made—I welcome any changes that will relieve some people from this situation—will only help between 2,000 and 14,000 people. Let us say that it is a mid-range of 8,000 people; we are probably looking at a maximum of 5% of the cohort, meaning that 95% of people in this situation will not be helped.

We are making things worse. We have just sold off another loan book; 89% of the people in that loan book are on 4.5% or greater and some are on over 5%. Again the iniquity continues.

The iniquity does not just apply to people who are up to date with payments. All this occurred because of the change in affordability rules following the global financial crisis. We said at that point that people had borrowed too much and that in future in order to access deals people would have to be on more modest borrowing and sensible affordability criteria. That was perfectly sensible.

We then realised, however, that lots of people would not be able to re-mortgage. The UK is unique in the western world—Andrew Bailey said this. Most of us are on fixed rates and that is how we keep our payment levels low. We realised that lots of people would not be able to access fixed rate deals, so the mortgage conduct of business rules were changed at that point, in 2012, to say, “If you are already borrowing, you are not in arrears and do not want any further monies, the affordability tests do not apply to you. If you are with an active lender you can refinance and continue on your fixed rate deal.” If you are with an active lender—not, of course, if you are with an inactive lender, because inactive lenders do not offer new mortgages and new fixed rates, even though we thought they would when we sold it off to them. It is one of those basic iniquities for people who are not in arrears.

It is also unfair to those who are in arrears. I know we say, “Well, if you are in arrears you would be in the same situation with an inactive lender as you are with an active lender”, but that is not the case. With an active lender, the rules are far more flexible. For example, they will let you capitalise the arrears, putting you out of arrears and then you can go to new deals. Of course, if you have been paying a lower amount, either through a fixed rate or a lower SVR, you will have lower arrears, so it is bound to be easier to move from a more expensive deal to a cheaper deal.

What we tried to do when we sold the loan books off was look after the public finances and who can argue that that is not the right thing to do? However, there has to be a balance between what is right for our public finances and what is effectively consumer detriment. Looking back, I wonder—the Minister was not about when this happened, of course—whether the balance was right. I feel that we got the balance entirely wrong.

The key is how we move forward. Some Members have said that the SVR cap is not the right thing to do. Comments have been made that this is a stop-gap. I do not think that anyone would argue that it is not anything

other than a stop-gap: it is a stop-gap until we get to a long-term solution that we all want to bring forward. If you are paying 5%, I doubt you would consider it a stop-gap to move down to 2% or 2.1%.

There is no doubt, however, that it is a nuclear option. When we have talked about it in the all-party group, we have always said it is a nuclear option to try to precipitate a good response, either from regulators, lenders or the Treasury to resolve the problem. Yes, it is a nuclear option, but it is also brutally simple and very effective at solving lots of problems.

I can, of course, see the arguments why not. It may be that foreign investors would, to coin a phrase, regard us as an unreliable boyfriend if we sold off the loan book and then restricted the rates that could be charged on that loan book. I am very reassured by the conversations I have had today with the Treasury, including with the Economic Secretary and the Chancellor, and by the determination and renewed effort to find a solution. They have shown a willingness to be innovative in the past with things such as the recently rolled out mortgage guarantee scheme, so I am willing to take on trust that the Minister will work with me and other stakeholders, such as the UK Mortgage Prisoners action group, to find a holistic solution that works for borrowers with inactive lenders and active lenders, and that we can bring forward solutions as quickly as possible.

On that basis, I am happy not to support the amendment and not to vote with the Government. This is the closest I have been, in six years doing this job, to voting against the Government. Nevertheless, I am reassured by the conversations I have had with the Minister and am willing to work with him to try to make sure that we can find solutions, as rapidly as possible, to solve the plight of many tens of thousands or even hundreds of thousands of people.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op)[V]: I associate myself with the powerful speech by my hon. Friend the Member for Feltham and Heston (Seema Malhotra). I understand where the hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) was coming from, but I really believe that we could make some progress on this issue this evening. That would be of great benefit to many people affected by the issue, so I will certainly support the relevant amendments.

We know how important this legislation is. I pay tribute to the Minister, who has been listening to concerns throughout the Bill's passage. I wish to comment on two particular issues in respect of which I would like him to tell us further information; I hope he might be able to. We know that this legislation matters desperately because between a fifth and a quarter of adults have experienced a reduction in income in the past year. That is mainly because of furloughing but is also true among the self-employed. It is crucial to get financial services right as we come out of the pandemic to help to make sure that people are not stuck in interminable circles of debt.

We knew that one in five people were already struggling to pay for housing, food and energy and were unable to meet their credit commitments. That proportion has now risen to two thirds among people who were already suffering from financial problems before the lockdown. There has never been a more important time to get right how we regulate our financial services. StepChange points out that 26% of those affected by coronavirus

have borrowed money to make ends meet, usually using their credit cards or an overdraft facility. At least £3.3 billion of new debt has been taken on since the start of the crisis. The question for us is whether the Bill is going to do enough to make sure that that credit is offered at a fair and affordable price for people.

Given that 6 million Britons have already fallen behind on a household bill, this is a question for the state as well as for our economy. Mothers, lone parents, those from black and ethnic minority backgrounds, the young and the disabled are most at risk of debt. In April, a quarter of all mothers from minority community backgrounds reported that they were struggling to feed their children, and 32% of young women reported finding it hard to pay for essentials. That is not just a financial problem; it is a mental health issue. There is a mental health crisis coming to our country, with one in every 12 people who are over-indebted experiencing mental health problems.

I know that the Minister shares the concerns I am outlining. That is why I have been a terrier when it comes to the "buy now, pay later" industry—because of my concern about the way in which it engages in lending to our communities. The Minister knows the speed at which the industry has grown during the pandemic. The FCA found that 11% of consumers in this country—roughly 5 million people—have used a BNPL product since the start of the covid outbreak, and many of them say that they use "buy now, pay later" credit because they cannot manage their financial distress, which is directly related to the crisis, without it.

BNPL companies have exploded. Within a year, Clearpay now has 1 million customers in the UK, lending to them on average eight times a year. Klarna, perhaps the most well known, reports that its worldwide revenue for 2020 grew by 40%, to \$1 billion. The founder of Laybuy expressed concern and surprise that fraud in the UK market was huge in comparison to that in New Zealand and Australia. That just shows the problems of the industry coming and exploding at such a rate in our communities without regulation.

Compare the Market tells us that "buy now, pay later" schemes are being used 35% more than they were in the pandemic, with most customers saying that it is because they cannot afford to make purchases outright. We are a nation with a massive debt bubble underneath our economy and we need to ensure that, when these companies operate, they do not exacerbate it.

I welcome the Woolard review, which was clear that the "buy now, pay later" industry needs to be regulated because people were in financial distress and difficulty because of these products, that the products were not good value for money, and that many of the things their lobbyists had told MPs were simply not true. Indeed, the review also found that consumers may not be applying "the same level of scrutiny to their decision-making as they would for other credit"

companies,

"including consideration of the potential consequences of failing to repay",

because they were not getting the right information. The Minister will know—we tried to tell him at the start of the Financial Services Bill—of the case that we needed to take to the Advertising Standards Authority about the way in which Klarna was advertising its products.

8.30 pm

I welcome an amendment that does what we were trying to do through the Bill—to get these companies regulated—but the Minister will understand that I have some questions about this regulation. Looking at that context and the explosion of these companies, it is absolutely critical that we get this right. I was very troubled to hear the Minister in the other place say that the Government do not believe that all elements of the Consumer Credit Act 1974 should apply to the “buy now, pay later” industry, as it would be what he called “disproportionate”.

Will this Minister tell us what sets this industry apart, and the problems that we have seen already, from other forms of credit so that it does not need regulation in the same way that other credit providers do? What would be disproportionate about applying the 1974 Act? In particular, what factors has he assessed with regard to consumer detriment and how has he determined that that regulation is not in the consumer’s best interest? Can he tell us bluntly and simply now, if the Bill goes through and it becomes an Act, what form of redress consumers will have? We know that there are thousands of people who have complained about these companies. Will they be able to go to the ombudsman’s service, and what standards will the ombudsman be able to hold these companies to account for now?

The Minister stated that with “buy now, pay later”, it is important to note that those products are interest-free, and thus they are inherently lower risk than most other forms of borrowing—that was said in the other place—but the Woolard review itself pointed out that the service might be free to the consumer as long as the repayments are made on time. It is the repayments that are the issue. The Woolard review stated:

“The exemption under the CCA was never intended for this kind of product but only for short-term invoice deferral.”

So why are the Government not taking on board what the Woolard review said and bringing that into the Bill now to make sure that we properly protect consumers from these companies?

Will the Minister tell us whether more regulation of the “buy now, pay later” industry is coming outside the Financial Services Bill? We know that the industry is continuing to lobby hard. We have heard the words and we have seen the briefings, but, Minister, we need to know who is speaking for consumers in this—the millions of people in difficulty, in debt and indebted to these sorts of companies. Who is meeting the Government from those organisations as these proposals are crafted? Will he urge retailers to exercise caution until the proper regulations are in place? Will he hold the major companies—the H&Ms, the Marks & Spencers—to account for promoting these companies, so that we can keep consumers safe while this is resolved? This matters in the same way that access to cash matters, because as so many consumers have found, being limited in options means being open to exploitation, and I fear that this is not the end of the “buy now, pay later” industry issue, but just the start.

Finally, I just want to say something about the net zero amendment, which, for many of my constituents, is a vital issue. Achieving this country’s new target to cut its greenhouse gas emissions requires action across all parts of the economy. It is not just about retrofitting buildings or driving less, or using solar power, but about

the crucial things that our state can do and that our regulatory bodies can do and that we can do through our finance. That is a lesson that we can learn from many other countries around the world.

Again, I have to be honest: I share the shadow Minister’s frustration that, throughout the Bill, we were proposing these measures on net zero and meeting resistance from Government. As with the “buy now, pay later” amendments, had we agreed on these much earlier in the Bill, we could be much further forward not just in making sure that we are getting on track with our existing carbon commitments in the run up to COP26, but in gaining the benefits that come from being a net zero economy. We need that kind of fresh thinking. There is agreement across the House, whether that is on “buy now, pay later” industries or on net zero, but I wish that the Minister had agreed with us much earlier to do this, because we could then, in the run-up to COP26, be leaders in this field, rather than playing catch-up.

As we shift our country’s resources away from importing fossil fuels and towards sustainable infrastructure and reskilling the—[Inaudible.]—the need for national income will grow. We know that it is a benefit to our economy as well as our society and, indeed, our children’s future. I hope therefore the Minister will use this as a springboard to go much further so this is not just about individual regulators but is instead about becoming that net zero economy and putting climate change and sustainability at the heart of our future covid recovery. Tonight’s Lords amendment is a good step towards that, but it is just the start of a clear pattern we need to build within our financial services to make sure we are not just doing our bit in the UK, but that we are world leaders.

I will support the Lords amendments, and I hope the Minister will take it in the good spirit in which it is meant when I say that I will continue to lobby him on these issues, because I know that he does want to get this right. Currently, however, there are still too many unknowns about what will happen next, and without that action—without that clear commitment, on tackling not just consumer detriment but climate change—we will always be playing catch-up. Our constituents need and deserve nothing less than for us to take this forward and be world leaders.

Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): I will keep my remarks short, because I know it is late and we have a lot of work to do.

There are many amendments to welcome from the other House, particularly the regulation of “buy now, pay later” by the Financial Conduct Authority, where there is clear risk of consumer harm. The Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 is a remarkably ineffective piece of legislation but it is right that it is extended to e-money, as there is a clear loophole there. On cashback without purchase, there is no risk of consumer detriment there and we need to increase access to cash. It is right that it is brought outside the FCA’s remit.

On Lords amendment 1 and the duty of care, I spent five years of my life trying to get the banking industry to improve the care given to vulnerable customers, and clearly many consumer harms carry on. I launched schemes, actually in this House, for the banking industry to help customers with cancer and customers with Alzheimer’s. I am very attracted to the idea of some sort of blanket duty of care, but I do not support this

amendment, for two reasons. The first is that, as written, it is so wide-ranging that there would clearly be massive unintended consequences, which even vulnerable customers would live to regret. The second is that, as the Minister said, the FCA already has very wide-ranging powers, almost certainly enough to deal with all the consumer harms that need to be dealt with. I very much welcome the Government's move, through their amendment, to push the FCA to look at how to reduce consumer harm and implement an effective duty of care.

On Lords amendment 8, mortgage prisoners absolutely need help. They have suffered massively, through no fault of their own, losing tens of thousands of pounds, if not more. We have rehearsed all the arguments tonight for and against this measure. We agree that we need to help these people, but the question is: how do we do that? The cap of interest rates is, as people say, a sticking plaster—even its supporters say that. I can see the appeal of it, but this sticking plaster comes at great cost: Parliament would be setting out interest rates in primary legislation. That could lead to huge unintended consequences in lots of ways—for example, through the impact on financial stability that we heard about earlier on some of the firms. It would also set an extraordinary precedent, with the Government doing price controls in that way. One does not have to be an historian of the 1970s to know of all the dangers of price controls.

It is also really not the solution we need. Where someone is trapped in a horrible prison with their guards abusing them and they are very uncomfortable, would they want that prison to be made more comfortable and the guards to behave themselves, as this cap in effect proposes, or would they want to get out of the prison? They would want to get out of the prison. We need to make sure that mortgage prisoners can move to other mortgage providers. That should apply to all people who are mortgage prisoners, including those who are in arrears, for the reasons that my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) set out. This is very complicated stuff. There are lots of reasons why people cannot move, whether it is their loan-to-value ratio or their income stream, or because they are in arrears. It is absolutely right that they should be helped to go to regular mainstream mortgage lenders that are offering other suppliers, and I very much welcome the Government move to really push on that, working with the FCA. I take on trust their commitment to really push in that direction and get a solution to that for all the mortgage prisoners.

For those reasons, I am happy to vote against Lords amendment 8, so long as the Government do everything they can to help those prisoners.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD) [V]: I, too, will keep my remarks brief. In the debate tonight I, on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, will be opposing the Government's motions to disagree with Lords amendments 1 and 8.

In particular, I would like to focus my comments on Lords amendment 8. This amendment would offer significant relief, I believe, to thousands of so-called mortgage prisoners caught in a vicious cycle of debt through no fault of their own. We have already heard the arguments rehearsed and some terrible stories of what they have been through. All that has been the result of the original decision, after the collapse of the mortgage providers, to sell off those mortgages to investment funds,

and that has left as many as a quarter of a million homeowners trapped in spiralling mortgage costs for more than a decade now.

It is a situation that the Government have failed to address, even though there is clear evidence that it is jeopardising wellbeing. A recent study found that mortgage prisoners experienced higher rates of physical and mental health problems, and that they are up to 40% more likely to default as a result of coronavirus. The significance of this amendment is that it would finally unlock this trap and offer an escape from the nightmare of the past decade. Significantly, it would lower interest payments through a cap on the standard variable rate of interest for mortgage prisoners who are borrowing from a firm that no longer lends to new customers. The cap would be no higher than 2% above the Bank of England base rate, which is currently a mere 0.1%. It would also require lenders to offer mortgage prisoners new fixed interest rate deals in certain circumstances—for example, if they have kept up with payments in the past 12 months, if they have an outstanding loan amount of over £10,000, or if they have not received consent to let the property.

The misery caused to tens of thousands over the past decade and the continuing threat it poses demand that we act. We have heard tonight why. To me, it seems simple. It seems the correct thing to do, and therefore I strongly urge the House to reject the Government's motion to disagree with this amendment—Lords amendment 8—as well as with Lords amendment 1.

Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con): There is a famous saying, is there not, that an Englishman's home is his castle, but the problems born out of the banking crisis in 2008 still persist. Indeed, there are a quarter of a million households with mortgages affected by lenders who suffered at that time. They are with inactive lenders, and in simple terms their mortgages are stuck with non-lending asset management funds.

We know that the Government have looked at many of those borrowers to try to help them so that they can switch lenders. Many of them can—almost half of them—and they can benefit largely from doing so, but it is the remaining half that are our real problems, the so-called mortgage prisoners. Their rates, as they came off the original term deals, moved on to the standard variable rate we have heard about tonight, leaving them paying such disproportionately high repayments. Their lender's debt was sold on, and as such they cannot remortgage or switch, leaving many families struggling immensely to manage each month. Lords amendment 8 would require the FCA to introduce a cap on those standard variable rates and ensure that mortgage prisoners can access new fixed interest rate deals.

I know there are huge amounts of work going on to try to help these people, not least by my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake)—I thank him for all the work he has done—but also by the Minister, who has been a tower of strength. He has been talking to me far too much about how we can help these people, and I thank him greatly for that. It is an absolute must that we do keep helping these people.

First, the 70,000 mortgage prisoners who are in arrears, would—for many reasons, unfortunately—potentially not be a better position if they were in the active market, as borrowers are unlikely to be able to switch within the market, given the very stringent risk criteria

[Duncan Baker]

there are today. The Government are trying to support these householders with the initiatives we have heard about, such as the breathing space scheme.

It is the remaining 55,000 who have kept up their repayments that I particularly want to make sure the Treasury can really help and work on solutions for. I know there are again attempts to modify the affordability criteria assessment to try to move those people on to a new lender. Notwithstanding such efforts, those solutions are not the final answer. So what is the answer? Is it Lords amendment 8? Do we interfere with a market?

8.45 pm

I should know this from experience, because I have asked the Chancellor before about other scenarios: rarely, and for good reason, do we create interventions in the market. The ramifications and unintended consequences can easily have knock-on effects. What if those in the active market on high interest rates, struggling to make repayments and perhaps affected recently in the pandemic, are now in arrears and unable to switch? Where do we draw the line of the cap for those in the inactive market without prejudicing those in the active market? Market intervention is the easy answer to an incredibly difficult and complex problem that we must solve, but the easy answer is not necessarily the right answer.

As much as it pains me not to be able to pass a quick simple fix, patched on this problem by this amendment, it is not a workable solution that addresses the problem adequately. I will keep working with Ministers to ensure that, absolutely, we work with the FCA to look for the workable solution to this and to help borrowers end their misery. In summing up, I hope that the Minister will give us hope and progress on helping those people effectively.

Jim Shannon: It is a pleasure to speak on this issue, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak in the debate this evening.

As other Members have, I will speak to Lords amendment 8 on mortgage prisoners. In an intervention on the Minister earlier, I expressed concern about the issue. I do so having been asked by numerous constituents to highlight the dreadfully precarious position in which many have found themselves. I will give one example. The hon. Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) also gave an example, and such examples are real-life ones of people on the frontline.

I have spoken on a number of occasions—I believe this to be the fifth time since 2017—on the subject of mortgage prisoners and, from the outset, I make it clear that my colleagues and I will vote in favour of Lords amendment 8. I have the deepest respect for the Minister, but there has to be more than cake tomorrow to assure my colleagues and me on behalf of my constituents. We hope that he and Her Majesty's Government will do what is right for those people.

As we have all heard, the Lords amendment coined the phrase, "mortgage prisoners". That is what my constituent has highlighted—she believes her family to be prisoners of their mortgage. She writes:

"My husband and I, like many others in Northern Ireland are classed as mortgage prisoners, through no fault of our own. Like many others in Northern Ireland, our mortgage was taken out with Northern Rock, which subsequently collapsed. Our mortgage

was then sold to a vulture fund without our consent. As these vulture funds are not an active lender, they do not offer mortgages, hence are unable to offer alternative mortgage products.

We are penalised on very high interest rates, which at the moment is currently well over 4% above the BOE base rate. This is crippling us, never mind the detrimental effect that it is having on our mental health."

Sometimes it is not just about the finances; it is the effect on mental health as well.

Her email was not the only one to use such terminology. My belief is that the Lords amendment would take strides to free those who have thus far been all but imprisoned through no fault of their own, unable to do anything but scrape by, not entitled to Government help or aid, as their wages are sufficient on paper, but not in reality. I agree that a cap on the standard variable rate of interest for mortgage prisoners on closed books would address the issue.

I do not propose to spend much time rehearsing the specific arguments, which others have done already. Instead, I wish to make two points that are self-explanatory. Last Monday, the Minister came to the House to tell us that a compensation fund for London & Capital bondholders—with a sum of £120 million of UK taxpayers' money—would be necessary following the excellent forensic investigation and analysis report by Dame Elizabeth Gloster. I understand the rationale behind that decision, and yet it leads me to my second point: why not a solution for the mortgage prisoners tonight? As I said, and have been reiterating for years, there continues to be what I can only term a failure to regulate in any way vulture funds such as Cerberus, but at the same time Her Majesty's Treasury rightly made the decisions on Northern Rock. Despite limited efforts by the FCA, due to the restrictions placed in legislation by Her Majesty's Government on the regulatory perimeter, little or nothing has been done for those mortgage prisoners in more than a decade. It is time for that to stop and for Her Majesty's Government to start finding credible solutions.

A constituent contacted me to tell me that there is a rumour that the Conservatives will impose a three-line Whip against Lords amendment 8. If that is true, it is very sad. I also believe, with respect, that it is disgraceful. Many of my constituents are worried. They have talked to me personally. My hon. Friends the Members for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) and for South Antrim (Paul Girvan), and my other colleagues have all expressed the same concern. We have to make a decision tonight on behalf of our constituents that ensures that their viewpoints are heard, and we have to do it in the best way that we can in this House, which is by how we cast our vote.

After seeing at first hand the impact of no action on the lives of mortgage prisoners in my constituency and beyond, I can do nothing but agree. If this is the line of the Government against these 250,000—or the half a million, as one hon. Member has said—struggling families, I will be supporting Lords amendment 8. I have no difficulty in that and I shall ask all other right-thinking MPs to do the same.

A decade of struggle has passed. We have it in our hands, right now, in this Chamber, to make a change. It is, I believe, right to do so. I shamelessly ask Members to do what is right on this occasion for those families in the middle section who have been squeezed beyond

belief, physically, financially and mentally. Let us give relief to them, as today, right now, it is in our gift to be able to do so.

John Glen: I am extremely grateful to all Members who have contributed to this debate. I will not to rehearse the arguments that I made at the outset, but will respond in the right spirit, in the right way, to the constructive and careful analysis that we have had from many Members across the House this evening.

Let me start by addressing the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden). I said to him during the Committee stage that I was always listening. I think that I have proved that to be the case in the way that the Government have responded on the climate change amendment and on “buy now, pay later”. I listened very carefully to the hon. Member for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) who spoke with characteristic deep knowledge of the sector. It is absolutely clear that we need to get the legislation and the intervention right when it comes to “buy now, pay later”. She rightly asserted the massive growth in that sector and the unfortunate consequences that will certainly befall, and that does befall, a number of consumers. We will work quickly to examine that market and what interventions will meet the need.

I am very tempted to address a whole number of points around Lords amendment 8. It is a real priority of mine to find a response that meets the unfortunate situation where people are trapped in very difficult circumstances. I pay tribute once again to my hon. Friend the Member for Thirsk and Malton (Kevin Hollinrake) who made a passionate speech, identifying Louise, a mortgage prisoner, whose personal story was one to which the whole House was sympathetic. A number of other colleagues raised similar stories. None the less, I do need to have a proportionate response—a response that can take account of data. I appreciate the excellent work carried out by the all-party group and I recognise its dataset—449 people. None the less, when I am faced with data from the FCA, looking comprehensively at 23,000 cases, I cannot deny that asymmetry. I will commit to continued dialogue to try to find a way forward. Those are not empty words; they reflect the complexity of this matter—a matter that is underpinned by half a generation of different rules and regulations. Before the crisis, people could borrow in ways that today we would think totally unacceptable, and that are indeed unacceptable. The market must provide better solutions than it can provide at the moment, and I will look carefully at what we can do to ensure that that happens.

The hon. Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) made a number of points on Lords amendment 1 about the duty of care, and I have set out at length my approach to that, which is again to examine and listen carefully to what the FCA is saying. It will then be obliged to come forward with rule changes. So these are not empty words; they recognise all the work of the charities and organisations that are highlighting this case. Of course, in financial services there is a strong dynamic of change, and the Government and regulators must be ready to step in and make appropriate interventions as that market changes.

I believe that this Bill is a key component of a new, broader regulatory strategy that will underpin the UK financial services sector as a genuine world leader now

that we have left the European Union. I welcome the speeches from my hon. Friends the Members for Grantham and Stamford (Gareth Davies) and for South Cambridgeshire (Anthony Browne), which exhibited a deep knowledge and a constructive approach to this very sophisticated industry, underpinned with a lot of personal experience. I will take from this debate many points of detail. I do not agree with every point that has been made on Lords amendment 8, but I stand ready to engage with Members across the House to seek to find solutions. I am proud to have been able to lead this Bill through the House.

Lords amendment 1 disagreed to.

Government amendment (a) made in lieu of Lords amendment 1.

Lords amendments 2 to 7 agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 8.—(John Glen.)

The House divided: Ayes 355, Noes 271.

Division No. 272]

[8.57 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Bruce, Fiona
Afolami, Bim	Buchan, Felicity
Afriyie, Adam	Buckland, rh Robert
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Burghart, Alex
Aiken, Nickie	Burns, rh Conor
Aldous, Peter	Butler, Rob
Allan, Lucy	Cairns, rh Alun
Amess, Sir David	Carter, Andy
Anderson, Lee	Cartledge, James
Anderson, Stuart	Cash, Sir William
Andrew, rh Stuart	Cates, Miriam
Ansell, Caroline	Caulfield, Maria
Argar, Edward	Chalk, Alex
Atherton, Sarah	Chishti, Rehman
Atkins, Victoria	Churchill, Jo
Bacon, Gareth	Clark, rh Greg
Bacon, Mr Richard	Clarke, Mr Simon
Badenoch, Kemi	Clarke, Theo
Bailey, Shaun	Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Baillie, Siobhan	Clarkson, Chris
Baker, Duncan	Cleverly, rh James
Baker, Mr Steve	Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Baldwin, Harriett	Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Barclay, rh Steve	Colburn, Elliot
Baron, Mr John	Collins, Damian
Baynes, Simon	Costa, Alberto
Bell, Aaron	Courts, Robert
Benton, Scott	Coutinho, Claire
Beresford, Sir Paul	Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Berry, rh Jake	Crabb, rh Stephen
Bhatti, Saqib	Crosbie, Virginia
Blackman, Bob	Crouch, Tracey
Blunt, Crispin	Daly, James
Bone, Mr Peter	Davies, David T. C.
Bowie, Andrew	Davies, Gareth
Bradley, Ben	Davies, Dr James
Bradley, rh Karen	Davies, Mims
Brady, Sir Graham	Davis, rh Mr David
Braverman, rh Suella	Davison, Dehenna
Brereton, Jack	Dinenage, Caroline
Bridgen, Andrew	Dines, Miss Sarah
Brine, Steve	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Bristow, Paul	Docherty, Leo
Britcliffe, Sara	Donelan, Michelle
Brokenshire, rh James	Dorries, Ms Nadine
Browne, Anthony	Double, Steve

Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Dunne, rh Philip
 Eastwood, Mark
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Eustice, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Everitt, Ben
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Kate
 Grundy, James
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Sally-Ann
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin

Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Jack, rh Mr Alister
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Largan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherylyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel

Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe

Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
 Scott Mann and
 David Rutley

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur

Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh 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
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brock, Deidre
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Ms Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Callaghan, Amy
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 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
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 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
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Glindon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh 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
 Lockhart, Carla
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana

Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, 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
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie

Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Royston
 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, rh Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Colleen Fletcher and
Bambos Charalambous

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 8 disagreed to.

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

Lords amendments 9 to 21 agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83H), That a Committee be appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendment 8;

[John Glen]

That John Glen, David Rutley, Craig Williams, Mr Pat McFadden and Owen Thompson be members of the Committee;

That John Glen be the Chair of the Committee;

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—
(James Morris.)

Question agreed to.

Committee to withdraw immediately; reasons to be reported and communicated to the Lords.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): In order to observe social distancing, the Reasons Committee will meet in Committee Room 12.

Domestic Abuse Bill

Consideration of Lords message

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I must draw the House's attention to the fact that financial privilege is engaged by Lords amendment 41B. If any Lords amendment engaging financial privilege is agreed to, I will cause the customary entry waiving Commons financial privilege to be entered in the *Journal*.

Clause 55

ANNUAL REPORTS

9.9 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Victoria Atkins): I beg to move, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 9B.

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

Government amendments (a) to (c) in lieu.

Lords amendments 40B and 40C, Government motion to disagree, and Government amendments (a) to (g) in lieu.

Lords amendment 41B, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendments 42D, 42E and 42F, Government motion to disagree, and Government amendments (d) to (f) in lieu.

Victoria Atkins: I thank right hon. and hon. Members of this House and noble Lords who have worked tirelessly to make this a truly transformational Bill. It will make a significant difference to the lives of many women, men and children by better protecting them from their abusers and providing them with the support they so very much need. However, before the Bill can have any impact, we need to pass it, and we are fast running out of road to get us to that point. In the course of our deliberations, we should all be clear, therefore, about the risk of the Bill being timed out this week. None of us wants that—I hope I can take that as read. In the collegiate spirit of many of the debates on the Bill, we reflected carefully on the debates that took place in the Lords last Wednesday and we have tabled further amendments in the hope, and indeed expectation, that both Houses can now agree to submit this landmark Bill to Her Majesty for Royal Assent.

On child contact centres, there is no dispute that they need to be subject to appropriate regulation. It remains our contention that, on the evidence currently available, that is already achieved through accreditation by the National Association of Child Contact Centres, the agreements in place between the NACCC, the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service and the judiciary, and the comprehensive statutory provisions already in place that determine how local authorities should discharge their duties in public law family cases.

We listened carefully to the debate last week and recognise that there is an issue that needs to be examined further, but we cannot legislate on the basis of anecdotal—albeit pertinent—evidence. That is why the Government tabled Amendments 9C and 9D, which will require the Secretary of State to prepare and publish a report about the extent to which individuals, when they are using contact centres in England, are protected from the risk

of domestic abuse or, in the case of children, other harm. The report will need to be laid before Parliament within two years of Royal Assent. We will engage closely with the NACCC and others in carrying out the work, which will provide a firm evidence base on which to introduce further regulation, including in the area of vetting, should that be necessary.

I turn to Lords amendments 40B and 40C. We remain concerned that the revised Lords amendments regarding data firewalls still pre-empt the outcome of the review recommended by the independent policing inspectorate in response to the super-complaint. We need to undertake that review without any preconceptions as to its outcome. To provide further reassurance on that point, Government amendments 40D to 40J introduce two new clauses. The first new clause will put the review of the current data-sharing arrangements on to a statutory footing and enshrine in law our commitment to report on the outcome of the review by the end of June. The second new clause will provide for a statutory code of practice relating to the processing of domestic abuse data for immigration purposes. Persons to whom the code is issued—notably the police and Home Office immigration staff—will be under a duty to have regard to the code, which will also be subject to parliamentary scrutiny. Although the clause is framed in terms of a permissive power to issue a code, I assure the House that we fully intend to exercise that power.

On Lords amendment 41B, I welcome the fact that this revised amendment attempts to separate the issue of leave to remain from the provision of support for migrant victims of domestic abuse. As I previously indicated, we need to focus on ensuring that victims with insecure immigration status can access the support they need. That is the priority. Unfortunately, despite the best intentions, the amendment would not achieve the outcome it seeks. The question of leave to remain is inextricably linked to the conditions attached to that leave, so it is impossible to waive the “no recourse to public funds” condition in isolation from consideration being given to a person’s immigration status.

As I announced last week, we have now appointed Southall Black Sisters to oversee the support for migrant victims scheme. The scheme will provide access to safe accommodation and the associated support to migrant victims of domestic abuse who are not eligible for the destitute domestic violence concession or other existing support mechanisms. The scheme will be independently evaluated, and will provide us with the necessary evidence of the gap in current support arrangements, so that we can put in place sustainable long-term provision. That is the direction of travel we are on. Since the scheme will provide support to victims, Lords amendment 41B is not necessary, and waiving the no recourse to public funds condition for a full year will again have significant new resource implications. The support for migrant victims scheme will be up and running shortly. We should see it through to its proper conclusion and settle on a sustainable programme of support.

9.15 pm

Lords amendments 42D to 42F bring us back to the issue of how best to strengthen the management of high-harm domestic abuse and stalking perpetrators. Again, we are all in agreement as to the outcome we want to achieve. If I thought that the amendments would,

of themselves, make women safer, I would be offering them my full support. However, it remains our firm view that they will not deliver the outcome they seek to secure. I say again that the legislative framework under which multi-agency public protection arrangements operate is not the problem. We acknowledge that those arrangements need to work better on the ground, but we need to look elsewhere for the fix.

A comprehensive programme of work is in place to deliver a step change in the protection of vulnerable women, and men, from domestic abuse perpetrators. First, we will update and strengthen the MAPPA statutory guidance so as to include sections on domestic abuse. That will ensure that all agencies involved take the necessary steps to identify offenders who are domestic abuse perpetrators whose risk requires active multi-agency management, and to put in place an action plan that reflects the risk. We will ensure that domestic abuse perpetrators captured under category 1 and category 2 are included in the threshold guidance being developed. That will assist relevant agencies in making decisions on the appropriate level of MAPPA management needed in individual cases.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): Will the Minister clarify what she just said? At the moment, repeat domestic abuse cases and stalkers will often not be included in categories 1 or 2 because the offences are not treated as serious enough in the way those categories are listed. Category 3 currently involves a tiny number of people. Will the Minister include all repeat domestic abusers and high-harm stalkers—all of them—under MAPPA in future?

Victoria Atkins: As the right hon. Lady will know, category 1 perpetrators have to have committed a specified sexual offence under the legislation, and for category 2 they have to have been convicted of a violent offence and received a sentence of imprisonment for at least 12 months. If they are domestic abuse perpetrators, they will be included in the threshold guidance. This is very much about drawing out in the guidance the factors that local agencies should be concentrating on.

Although domestic abuse is already mentioned in section 6 of the guidance, we have listened to concerns that at local level the preponderance and patterns of behaviour are not necessarily being picked up in offenders in categories 1 and 2, as well as category 3. That is why, in discussions with Baroness Royall, we have been clear that we want to better capture those people under the existing framework. We will consult MAPPA responsible authorities on the draft revised guidance by the summer recess, and we will inform Parliament when the updated guidance is promulgated. Today, Baroness Williams of Trafford has written to Baroness Royall to confirm that past patterns of behaviours will be explicitly referred to in the guidance.

Yvette Cooper: There are countless serious repeat domestic abuse cases that are not sexual offences. There are also countless very serious repeat domestic abuse offences that do not pass the 12-month threshold. All the Minister is saying is that she is going to try to include little bits of lines about domestic abuse in categories 1 and 2, which we know will not include huge numbers of repeat domestic cases, so she has actually gone backwards on some of the things that Baroness Williams was saying.

Victoria Atkins: I do not accept that. The point is that category 3, as we have always said, is the flexible category. It is meant precisely to fit those cases that the hon. Lady has described. These offenders do not fit in category 1 or 2, but because they are considered to be dangerous offenders—they may, for example, have received a sentence of imprisonment of less than 12 months—they are in category 3. We want to join up that understanding in the guidance across all three categories.

We will consult with MAPPA authorities and will also invite views from across the House, but we have been working closely with Baroness Royall to try to address some of the issues that were rightly raised in the other place about past patterns of behaviour and so on. We give that undertaking today: we will look at that phrasing within the statutory guidance that is being drafted to help address some of the concerns in both Houses.

Yvette Cooper: Will the Minister give way?

Victoria Atkins: One more time, then I have to make progress.

Yvette Cooper: I am very grateful to the Minister, who is being very generous with her time. May I specifically ask about category 3? There are only around 300 offenders in that category, compared with the thousands or nearly tens of thousands of people that we are talking about. Will she undertake to include all convicted serial domestic abusers in category 3?

Victoria Atkins: The flexibility of category 3 means that that is already possible, if there has been a conviction. I gave the example on 15 April of criminal damage, such as if somebody kicks down a door. On the face of it, a criminal damage offence would not fit into category 1 or category 2. That is where the professional curiosity of professionals on the ground—police, probation and prison officers and so on—comes in. If someone has been convicted of that offence, he or she may not be in category 1 or category 2, but if those professionals believe that it is part of a pattern of past behaviour, on which Baroness Royall has rightly focused, that is how they will be put on to the system under MAPPA. We very much want the concerns that have been raised to be reflected in the guidance as well as the national framework.

I have already announced that we need to be sure that action is taken when there are indicators of escalating harm for those who are managed under the least intensive level of MAPPA—so, level 1. To that end, Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service will issue a new policy framework setting out clear expectations for the management of all cases at MAPPA level 1 by the National Probation Service. This includes domestic abuse perpetrators. That will further help improve the quality of information sharing, the consistency and regularity of reviews, and the identification of cases where risk is increasing and additional risk management activity is required.

Thirdly, as I announced on 15 April, we are bringing in the new multi-agency public protection system, or MAPPS, which will be piloted from next year. All category 3 offenders will be on MAPPS, which will have much greater functionality than the violent offender and sex offender register, or ViSOR, which is the existing

database. That will enable criminal justice agencies to share information in real time and improve their risk assessments and the management of MAPPA nominals, including domestic abuse perpetrators.

Fourthly, we are legislating in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill to clarify the information sharing powers under MAPPA. For example, GPs and domestic abuse charities can very much be part of that data sharing. That is the intention of the clauses in the Bill, and I hope we will be able to persuade Opposition Members to support us on that.

Fifthly, we are committed to bringing forward a new statutory domestic abuse perpetrator strategy as part of our holistic domestic abuse strategy to be published later this year. Our revised amendment makes it clear that the strategy will address the risks associated with stalking. We will also include a perpetrator strand in our complementary violence against women and girls strategy, which will cover stalking that does not take place in a domestic abuse context.

Sixthly, we are investing new resources, with an additional £25 million committed this year, to tackle perpetrators' behaviour and to stop the cycle of abuse. Finally, more broadly, I can assure right hon. and hon. Members that this Government are committed to supporting vulnerable victims. Having published a new victims code to guarantee victims' rights and the level of support they can expect, we will consult over the summer on the victims' law, which will enshrine those rights in law.

The other place has asked the Government to consider again these four issues. We will do so in the next hour. We have listened carefully to their lordships' concerns and responded with a substantial new package of commitments, both to strengthen this groundbreaking Bill and to further our wider programme to protect and support victims of domestic abuse and their children and bring perpetrators to justice. It is time for the Bill to be enacted and implemented, for the sake of the 2.3 million adults and their children who are victims of domestic abuse each year. Let us agree to the Government amendments in lieu, let us pass this Bill, and let us help victims.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call the shadow Minister, Jess Phillips.

Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): I thank the Minister for running through the amendments in lieu. I am sure she will not be surprised to hear that the Labour party remains in agreement with the Lords amendments. I will also run through some of the amendments in lieu and ask some questions. My right hon. Friend the Member for Castleford, Normanton and Pontefract—sorry, Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper); I went in alphabetical order—has rightly pointed out some of our concerns, although I recognise and want to place on the record our thanks for the constant work that is going on between our two Houses trying to settle this once and for all.

On the Government amendment in lieu on child contact centres, the Minister mentioned the NACCC as one of the safeguards already in place, but in fact it is that very organisation that seeks to make the provision more robust. I am sure she received the message today from Sir James Munby, the former head of family justice in this country, who says that the Government's

reservation to support Baroness Finlay's amendment, which was drafted in partnership with the NACCC, would be a missed opportunity to address an anomaly in safeguarding children and improving standards in general. Specifically regarding domestic abuse, Sir James urges Members of this House to back the amendment in this afternoon's—it was wishful thinking on his part that we would have got to this in the afternoon—consideration of Lords messages, to ensure that standards in child contact centres and services are consistent and high, and that domestic abuse and safeguarding is appropriately handled through high-quality staff training.

I welcome the review offered as an evidence-gathering measure. Although the Minister might say that there is not necessarily such evidence, I have certainly heard about case after case where there was poor practice, including bad handovers and perpetrators able to access victims. That is really problematic, so we will continue to support their lordships.

I am also grateful for the review offered on the firewall. I feel like I have to say that, but I really am grateful for that review, which has been greeted with some cheer in the sector. However, I seek some clarification specifically on the code. Under part 2, it states that the code must be kept under review, but it is not clear by whom. It also says that the code may be revised or replaced, but again, by whom? Can we ensure that at every single stage, there is buy-in by services for the very victims we are talking about and that they are consulted throughout the process? I also seek an assurance that the whole point of the code is explicitly to ensure that data can be shared only to enable victims to receive protection and safety. I will share with the House why that matters. For example, in a case in my constituency, a woman was applying for leave to remain and going through the process. She had been here on a spousal visa. Her husband threatened to kill her. When she called the police, she was taken to Yarl's Wood detention centre, where I had to go and get her out. She came forward to the police because there was a threat on her life, and that information was used to put her in detention. She is now legally in this country with indefinite leave to remain. That is why there is a need for a code.

9.30 pm

The Minister cited the victims code in her remarks. What happens when there is a breach of the code? That needs to be made incredibly clear. I mention the victims code as somebody who has recently been a victim of crime myself. In that case, the way that my case was handled breached the victims code on a number of occasions. What recourse will people have when the code is breached? That needs to be made clearer and more understood. Even I, as an elected representative, am not entirely sure what I am meant to do when a breach of the victims code occurs. It is all well and good having codes, but we seek to have things written into primary legislation so that there is a check and balance in the system. I know it does not sound like it, but I am truly grateful for the progress we have made in that regard, with those caveats.

The Minister and I could spend the rest of our lives disagreeing about whether it would mean “indefinite leave to remain” if we took no recourse to public funds away from migrant victims. I imagine by the end of this week, we will have finally agreed to disagree, but the

question I still cannot answer is about the Minister's £1.5 million pilot. As she said, it will be handled by Southall Black Sisters. What happens in the first year if that £1.5 million runs out? Does the 500th victim go back to destitution or back to their perpetrator? It is not necessarily a solution even for a year, let alone for the future, and I hope it has legs way beyond the pilot, although I am sure the Minister has absolutely no doubt that I will continue saying that for the entire year of the pilot and thereafter.

I am grateful for the work that has been going on with the extra lists of stalkers and serial domestic abuse perpetrators. For me, over the weekend it felt like an ever-changing feast. Even today, as the Minister mentioned, Baroness Williams has written to those who tabled the amendments in the Lords to outline some more safeguards. However, I strongly share the concerns of my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper), who rightly made the point about sentencing. In all my years of going to court and handling court cases of domestic abuse, I can think of less than a handful where more than a 12-month sentence was given. I am afraid to say, I can think of less than a handful where any custodial sentence was given. Last year, 58% of all stalking charges led to a community order or a fine.

These are not cases that will be picked up in categories 1 or 2. The Minister rightly points out the flexibility that exists in category 3, but for me that is part of the problem, because the flexibility has led to a deficit in the past. That is why we wish to remove the level of flexibility from those frontline workers. Many of them rightly have, as the Minister said, professional curiosity, which drives them to seek more, but when we are up against resources that are stretched, it is very difficult for professionals to say, “Well, he kicked her door in, and two years ago, he did this”, when actually, do they have the resource base to do it? I am afraid to say that decisions are made on the ground where harm comes secondary to resource, and that is our concern.

I seek further assurances that serial perpetrators will be included in the new MAPPS database and that it will include perpetrators with a past history, not just convictions. We also seek to take into account past patterns of behaviour under section 1B. The Minister has mentioned past patterns of behaviour, and case after case tells us that they are important. We hope the Lords will consider putting explicit provision into the Bill. An idea of the oversight arrangements is also important. Will the DA Commissioner have oversight of progress?

The peers of the realm will no doubt send the Bill back to us. I only brought enough clothes for one day in London and fear I am going to be here for four days. However—[*Interruption.*] The Minister says from a sedentary position that that is not fair, but she will agree that we are all seeking the best outcome. My remarks and the way we will vote are about only that: getting the best outcome for victims of violence, abuse and stalking in this country.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): This is a very short debate and I want to bring in the Minister by five past 10 at the latest, to give her four minutes to wind up. That means speeches need to be four minutes each.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): I am grateful for the opportunity to speak so early in this debate. It seems to me that what has changed since only a few days ago is that the Government have clearly been in listening and amending mode. In the previous debate, I raised the concerns of two constituents: first, Bishop Rachel, who was concerned about the treatment of those who have suffered domestic abuse who are immigrants; and, secondly, Nick Gazzard, who was concerned about databases and risk registers in the context of the terrible murder of his daughter Hollie Gazzard. I asked questions at that time that have largely been answered today, so I wish to focus on two themes.

The first theme seems to me to be a question of trust. The Government have made various commitments in relation to the Lords amendments on child contact centres, Lords amendment 40B on data firewalls and Lords amendment 40C on data processing for immigration purposes. I believe that the time has come for this House to accept in good faith the Government's commitments to the Home Office review on data sharing and on the code of practice, which uses the word "may" rather than "must", but we have a clear statement of intention from the Minister that these things will happen.

The second theme is more complicated: the use of data and systems. In relation to the concern of Nick Gazzard, it seems to me that the main issue the Minister has addressed this evening is not so much the system and the risk register but how it is used and, in a sense, the reverse of the earlier issue in respect of data processing for immigration purposes, which is how to have effective data sharing so that things known by GPs and domestic abuse charities can be accessed by people who really want to access them. That seems to me to be crucial in the inclusion of category 1 and 2 and some category 3 domestic abuse offenders in the new MAPPS process.

I strongly believe that what has been said today about looking at firm guidance by the summer recess on a strategy for perpetrators, with action taken by the National Probation Service when there are "indicators of escalating" concern, will make a difference. On that issue, the time has come for the Opposition to recognise the incredible value of the Bill as a whole. As the Opposition spokesman, the hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips), said, there is much to support and much to be grateful for. Amendments have continually been made to take on board a whole series of valuable points made by experts in the sector and, indeed, individuals from their own personal experience.

The one other thing I would like to contribute, if I may very briefly, is the use of Clare's law and the domestic violence disclosure scheme, which I do not think has been raised recently in debate. It is interesting to note that the figures for 2020, compared with the year ending 2019, have actually seen double the number of right to ask applications, and the number of applications that resulted in disclosure has gone up by 50% from roughly 2,500 to 4,200. We probably need to make more of that in communicating to the wider public. I think it would be reassuring for people to know that Clare's law is in practice, being used, and increasingly being accepted and the information provided.

With all those things to bear in mind, and being conscious of your strictures on the time, Madam Deputy Speaker, may I encourage everybody in this Chamber, from whatever party, to put aside differences and to come together in accepting this Bill as it now is?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I am going to move to the SNP's spokesperson, and I am sure colleagues will know that I cannot put a time limit on him, but after that I will put on a time limit of four minutes, because otherwise we simply will not get everybody in.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP) [V]: I want to speak briefly in relation to the amendments on data sharing for immigration purposes tabled by Baroness Meacher, which are Lords amendments 40B and 40C, as well as the Lord Bishop of Gloucester's amendment on the domestic violence rule and concession, which is Lords amendment 41B.

On the former, it is good to see that the Government have at least come to the negotiating table with their own amendments in lieu. However, our view is that the other place has sent us what is already a very reasonable compromise, which would mean awaiting the outcome of the review of data processing, as insisted on by the Government, before action is then required in response.

In contrast, the Government alternatives have several problems. First, unlike the Lords amendments, they create for the Government, as we have heard, the power to act, but not an obligation, and also unlike the Lords amendments, that power is not granted for the specific purpose of achieving any specific aim, such as protecting victims of domestic violence. Secondly, Parliament would not be able to amend any code, albeit that either House could reject one. However, if either House did reject a code because it had concerns, the Government could simply then walk away, as there is no requirement to lay a new code that addresses any such concerns.

In short, the danger is that the amendments in lieu could lead to inaction and leave us no further forward. The Minister has sought to assure us that the Government are going to take action informed by the review, and that is welcome, but having given that assurance, the question then is: why are Lords amendments 40B and 40C a problem at all?

Finally on data sharing in relation to the consultation, if any such code is being drawn up that will apply in Scotland—and similar issues may arise for Northern Ireland—it would surely be really important to consult Police Scotland, Scottish Ministers and relevant stakeholders there, given the devolution of criminal justice issues. There is no express requirement for this in the amendments in lieu, so can the Minister give a firm commitment that such consultation would be considered appropriate in advance of issuing any such code?

Turning to the Lords amendment on the domestic violence concession and rule, it is disheartening that the Government have not yet even come to the negotiating table on this one. Instead of offering an amendment in lieu, they are sticking to outright rejection, justified by something I think has really been a moving feast of excuses. A pilot scheme is not even a comprehensive temporary solution, never mind a comprehensive and permanent resolution of the urgent problems that have been highlighted in debate after debate.

The Lord Bishop of Gloucester set out exactly why the pilot, though welcome, is not enough in itself. It is restricted in the numbers it can provide for, restricted in the time it can support people for and restricted in its ability to provide holistic wraparound support, even for

the limited numbers who access it. While the Government may hope that the pilot scheme ultimately leads them to find the best solution, it is not acceptable to do nothing else in the meantime. Indeed, if the Government are confident about the scope and reach of the pilot, they should have nothing to fear from this amendment. All the new amendment asks for is a safety net, just for the duration of the Government's pilot scheme, for those who cannot access that scheme. It is a safety net designed to complement, not undermine the pilot scheme, and surely the Government must now come to the negotiating table to discuss how we can make this work.

Again, this is about where our priorities lie—reserving immigration powers or protecting victims of domestic abuse. Of course, it must be protecting the victims, and that is why we should support amendment 41B.

Madam Deputy Speaker: We now go to Stella Creasy, and the four-minute time limit starts.

Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: I recognise the progress that has been made on these issues through the process with the other House. But as somebody who has been in the House for 11 years seeking to amend legislation to effect change, I gently say to the Minister that every Minister has told us that a Bill is at threat because of the parliamentary process and every Bill seeks to be a landmark Bill, so we are asking her to go the extra mile on these final issues in this Domestic Abuse Bill. In my short contribution, I want to look at the counterfactual: what happens if we do not include these amendments?

Will the Minister tell us the conditions under which she would want somebody's immigration status to be a factor in whether they can access help? Like others, I welcome the pilot scheme, but, like the bishops, I am concerned that it can run out and we will be back at square one, where women are frightened to come forward, or are pushed back into the hands of perpetrators because of their immigration status. We will therefore not meet our conditions under the Council of Europe requirements for the Istanbul convention, and we will see women living with their perpetrators as a direct result of our failure to include them in this legislation.

9.45 pm

I thank Baronesses Royall, Brinton and Newlove, and Lord Russell, for their work on Lords amendment 42B. However, from the fantastic work that Karen Ingala Smith has done with the Counting Dead Women project, we know that one woman is killed every three days in this country by a man, and that many of those men have a history of abuse. What does the Minister think will stop the cycle of violence, if not to clarify who these men are and monitor them—not to ask, as Clare's law does, for victims to come forward, looking after their own safety, but for us to take collective responsibility?

The Minister has set out some welcome proposals, but we need clarity and detail, so will she tell us how past behaviour will be identified and defined in the guidance so that it will be part of category 3? My right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) has pointed out that a handful of people are in category 3. With suggestions that there could be 50,000 people on a stalkers and serial abusers register in this country, what is the Minister's

metric of success? For example, will the number of people in category 3 go up under her proposals? What training will the police, probation service and Prison Service have to ensure that they are using these categories? How will we ensure that it is about not just community orders, but recognising the risk that women face?

Just this weekend, a woman in my constituency came to me, terrified of somebody who was stalking her—and, yet again, faced with police inaction. How will that change under the Minister's proposals? It is not clear that it will. In the absence of that, let us go the extra mile and introduce all these amendments to ensure that the Domestic Abuse Bill will truly be something of which we can all be proud.

Yvette Cooper: I also welcome the progress that has been made on the Bill and the cross-party consensus that exists on many of the important measures, but I want to take this opportunity to pursue further the issues around stalking and repeat perpetrators of domestic abuse, and to discuss what more needs to be done to keep other victims safe from those whose violence escalates and who pose some of the greatest threats.

I welcome the Minister's commitment now to a perpetrators strategy. It was one of the issues that we raised previously through these amendments, so it is very welcome. I hope that she or her colleagues in the other place will be able to give more clarity about how stalking will be included in the perpetrators strategy. The wording is slightly constrained, which I assume is partly about reflecting the scope of this particular legislation, but it would be helpful to have some clarification of the Government's commitment to including stalking and repeat patterns of behaviour as part of the perpetrators strategy. I am still very concerned about lack of strong underpinnings to the commitment to take action against these most dangerous perpetrators whose abuse continues and escalates.

The Minister spoke about being able to change the interpretations of categories 1 and 2 to include domestic abuse among perpetrators already included in those categories. That is fine and it will be welcome in order to take account of their domestic abuse threats, but it will not include the thousands—if not tens of thousands—of repeat perpetrators of domestic abuse, stalkers and high-harm perpetrators who will not be included in either category 1 or 2. As a result, they will not appear on the register or be included in the MAPPA arrangements.

The Minister says that those people will, in the future, be included in category 3, but there would need to be a massive shift in the way category 3 currently operates—not a minor tweak to the guidance, not a few tweaks and changes, not a bit of adjustment here and there; we need a massive change. At the moment, there are only 330 people on that category 3 list. That is half the number there were 10 years ago, and we know that awareness of stalking and of repeat perpetrators of abuse has increased.

That 330 includes a whole load of other offences, not just domestic abuse or stalking. It is tiny in proportion not just to the more than 80,000 people who are already on the high-risk offenders register, but to the number of stalkers and repeat-convicted domestic abuse perpetrators who go through the courts every week and every month, but do not make it on to these registers so that a proper assessment can be made and proper action can be taken to prevent them from committing more crimes and putting more lives at risk.

[Yvette Cooper]

That is what we seek reassurance from the Minister about. That is why we wanted this to be in legislation, not just tweaks to the guidance. We need legislation in order to deliver a substantial shift in the response from the police, from probation and from specialist agencies. We are just not doing enough. We have talked many times before about how two women a week lose their lives as a result of a partner or an ex. It was two women a week 10 years ago. Not enough has changed. Why is anything going to change now?

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): It seems like an age since I spoke on Second Reading, and I commend those involved in the massive amount of work that has been done on both sides of the House and in the Lords. I spoke at that time because, unfortunately, the rates in Bristol South are double the national average and the highest in the city. It is no coincidence that it also contains some of the most deprived areas of the country. That link between poverty and abuse, and particularly the impact on children, must be addressed. Although the Bill is welcome, it does not go far enough in some of those areas.

I shall speak briefly about Lords amendments 42D, 42E and 42F. As we have heard, we all agree on the outcome, but I defer to my right hon. Friend the Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) and my hon. Friends the Members for Walthamstow (Stella Creasy) and for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips), who all, while recognising the Minister's personal commitment and intent, eloquently expressed concerns about how we will hold the Government to account on behalf of the women we all know and represent if legislation is not brought forward on these things.

I know from speaking to women who are expecting a more defined register and legislation that they do not really understand why serial abusers and perpetrators are not more easily registered and tracked. Those are stories that we all know come before us repeatedly. If those amendments are not accepted, I know that the Minister will continue to do this work, but it will be incumbent on her and her Government to prove to those women that these measures are remotely enough.

We all know that we need better action across a range of service providers. Again, that needs much greater support from the Government. Finally—I am conscious of time—I touched last year on the nature of domestic abuse among older women. That is often a much-neglected area, and it would be good to see changes to the Bill that reversed some of the perceptions about the abuse that older women face and made them feel more empowered to come forward, safe in the knowledge that their experiences will be justly dealt with too.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD) [V]: I share what I believe was possibly the frustration of many other speakers tonight that we are so close to achieving what we want the Bill to achieve, yet we seem unable to cross that final line. I appreciate the efforts made by the Government and everyone else, and by the Minister in particular, but I still have reservations about the Bill—particularly about the vulnerability of migrant women, and specifically about amendment 40B. The amendment in lieu laid down by the Minister is a start, but it still

does not go far enough and it fails to capture the one key thing that all our amendments and speeches have said, and everything we have heard this evening: waiting for a stalker or serial domestic abuser to get a conviction for 12 months before considering them for this is way too late.

We know that most stalking victims do not go to the police. This is about cumulative obsessive behaviour. Well-intentioned though the legislation is, we simply do not feel it is going far enough. Between 15 March and 19 April, another 16 women have been murdered—that is between the Report stage in the Lords and ping-pong last week. The Government's inaction has to end. We have to address this issue now. We have to ensure that the Domestic Abuse Bill that so many people in this place have worked so hard for over the past four years is achieved by the end of this week.

The same recommendations have been made over the years and the same reviews have been repeated over and over, yet nothing is changing. Rarely are the recommendations put into place and we have seen systemic failures over many years, with widespread misogyny, institutionalised sexism and a gender bias. No amount of guidance or training has changed that across the past two decades. In fact, matters are getting worse. That is why we need this to be in the legislation.

Many Members have mentioned the overwhelmingly depressing statistics about one woman being murdered every three days by a man, and a woman being murdered every four days by an ex or a current partner. It is simply not acceptable. We are all agreed, but we must find a solution. I appreciate the steps that the Government have taken so far to compromise to meet people halfway, but I still think that this will take another step. That is why I, like the Liberal Democrats, will be rejecting the Government's amendment in lieu this evening.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Briefly, I wish to highlight my concerns on the issue of the identification, monitoring and management of serial domestic abuse and stalking perpetrators, and the provisions that refer to that. I base most of the comments I make in this Chamber on personal experience—on the people I meet in my constituency office and have helped and tried to help over the years.

I recall sitting in my office looking at the face of a victim, sometimes sitting beside the perpetrator, and feeling helpless and hopeless. I could see what was going on. I could also understand that my words could make the situation more difficult for the victim. So I found myself on some occasions just being silent and listening, when everything within me cried out to speak, act and help. That is what I wanted to do, but I felt that sensitivity was more important. All too often, I have tried to distract a partner while the staff attempted to assure the victim that they were here to help wherever they needed and in confidence. All too often, I have offered help, only to hear a victim say, "No one would believe me because he is a pillar of society." That proves that, irrespective of position, those in the highest positions and the lowest positions of the land can abuse ladies.

The Lords amendment on this brings clarity on repeated offences, broadening things to include serious harm, sexual violence and stalking, among other specifications. It makes it crystal clear and a little easier to help those victims. It offers them greater scope and, with that,

greater support. It makes it clear that the offences clearly listed will never be acceptable. It makes it clear that all those listed offences are taken seriously and that a strategy to deal with this must be a Government priority.

This clarity is welcome. This House must send a unified message on this Bill today. I believe that the Minister is very much committed to making the changes that are necessary to pull all of the concerns and thoughts of Members together, and provide reassurance that when we pass the Bill it is not simply the best we can do, but the best possible—not that we offer help, support and recognition to as many victims as possible, but that we have left no victim alone without legislation to protect them.

It is my desire, when I am faced with cases of domestic abuse—unfortunately, my staff and I have been faced with such cases—to have the confidence to be able to tell the victim, “All the elements, from the Police Service of Northern Ireland to the courts, are designed with your needs in mind. You do not have to do this alone. The police and the courts will walk alongside you, and give you the protection you want.” I long to send that message. I look again to the Minister for clarity that this is what we are saying tonight in this Chamber.

10 pm

Victoria Atkins: I thank hon. and right hon. Members across the House for the constructive tone they have maintained not just tonight but throughout. I am particularly moved by the comments the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) has just made. He speaks of the constituents he meets in his office. He knows they are sitting next to their perpetrators and he tries to distract them. I am sure many of us can understand and sympathise with that. It is precisely those people we are trying to help with the Bill.

I will try to deal with some of the issues raised but I am very conscious of time, so forgive me if I am not able to. My noble Friend in the other place will have more time tomorrow and will try to deal with some of the points that will no doubt be raised then.

The hon. Member for Birmingham, Yardley (Jess Phillips) asked questions about the code in respect of the firewall review. We are very much in listening mode. We have not yet drafted the code and will consider the consequences she raised. I draw her attention to the fact that in the new clause we have said we will consult the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and the Information Commissioner’s Office. I very much hope that the fact that we have thought about the point she makes about accountability and so on, and included it in the new clause, gives her some comfort.

I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Gloucester (Richard Graham) for raising Clare’s law. We have not talked about it in the context of recent debates. The right to ask and the right to know is an incredibly important tool for victims and the police. We can spread the message across our constituencies that if someone is worried about a new relationship they can ask the police whether there is something they should know about their new relationship, or if the police are worried about a serial perpetrator and want to warn the new partner, then this facility exists. Again, this is why it is so important that the Bill is passed.

The right hon. Member for Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford (Yvette Cooper) rightly and understandably raised questions about our approach to the point on MAPPA. I know this is an issue to which she has given a great deal of attention and consideration during the passage of the Bill and previously. If I may, I just want to clarify something. I do not know whether there has been a misunderstanding in translation, but I am aware of my duties at the Dispatch Box. I think she said that I had said that category 3 will include all serial perpetrators in future. I hope I have not misquoted her. To clarify, categories 1 and 2 will include domestic abuse perpetrators by definition of the qualifying offences under categories 1 and 2.

We very much hope and expect that the updated guidance we are issuing as a result of the discussions on the Bill and the improvements we will make to data sharing, not just in terms of guidance and framework but also, importantly, through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, will see an increase in category 3 offenders. We want local agencies to be applying the system in the improved way we all want. Of course, domestic abuse protection orders will also include notification requirements. I just wanted to clarify that. Perhaps there has been a misunderstanding in translation, as it were, or in debate.

Yvette Cooper: I think the confusion is that I was asking whether it would be possible to include all repeat domestic abusers and high-harm stalkers in category 3. That is what we were trying to achieve. Can the Minister include all of them through the change to guidance to include them on category 3?

Victoria Atkins: I am extremely grateful to the right hon. Lady for clarifying that. This is the nub of it: through the framework that already exists—improved guidance, the national framework that I described, and the wording in guidance and so on that has been discussed recently—we want those offenders whom local agencies judge to pose a risk to be assessed as such. They will either already have been automatically included in category 1 or 2, or assessed under category 3. That is the point of this—it is the professional curiosity that I talked about. We want this framework to work better, in addition to the work in MAPPS, which is being piloted next year.

I know that this is incredibly technical. I have spent the past three years trying to de-jargon—if that is a word—some of this very technical language so that we may all communicate with the victims whom we are desperately trying to help in our constituencies. This is one of those instances that is very technical. I have tried to de-jargon it as much as I can, but it is incredibly technical. We have to look to local agencies and professionals using their best endeavours to protect our constituents across the country.

The hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth) asked the question—which I might have just answered—how we reassure women in her constituency that we are, first, acting with the best of intentions and, secondly, being held to account. I make this point, not just to us but to Members of another place: this is not the end of the road for our work on domestic abuse. We have been very clear that the Bill is a landmark one, but it is setting up a whole programme of work, locally through things such as our specialist services for people in safe

[Victoria Atkins]

accommodation, the Domestic Abuse Commissioner and all the measures we have put into local family courts.

This programme of work will, I hope, outlast many of us and our time in this place. By virtue of that, I point the hon. Lady to things such as our announcement that we want to publish a VAWG—violence against women and girls—strategy later this summer, looking at some of the behaviours that we have discussed during the passage of the Bill. Later this year, we will publish a domestic abuse dedicated specialist national strategy to tackle abuse. The momentum that the Bill has created will be continued through both those strategies. This is very much the start of the journey as far as I and this Government are concerned. We very much look forward to listening to ideas and suggestions from across the House as we take through those strategies and other pieces of legislation.

To return to the people to whom the hon. Member for Strangford referred, those constituents whom he faces in his office to help—as we all do—I have talked before about my commitment to helping victims of domestic abuse. This is not just about those victims whom we are trying to help today, or in the future; for me, this is about the women, the victims, I could not help when I was working in the criminal courts at the very beginning of my career. In that day and age, it was all too inevitable that the victim would hand in her withdrawal statement, because the abuser had got to her before she had been able to give her evidence and to put her case forward. It is for those victims, as well as victims now and in the future, that this Bill is so critical. I very much hope that the Lords will help us to pass this piece of legislation as quickly as possible this week, so that we can start to help those victims as soon as possible.

Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 9B.

The House divided: Ayes 352, Noes 219.

Division No. 273]

[10.8 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Baron, Mr John
Afolami, Bim	Baynes, Simon
Afriyie, Adam	Bell, Aaron
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Benton, Scott
Aiken, Nickie	Beresford, Sir Paul
Aldous, Peter	Berry, rh Jake
Allan, Lucy	Bhatti, Saqib
Amess, Sir David	Blackman, Bob
Anderson, Lee	Blunt, Crispin
Anderson, Stuart	Bottomley, Sir Peter
Ansell, Caroline	Bradley, Ben
Argar, Edward	Bradley, rh Karen
Atherton, Sarah	Brady, Sir Graham
Atkins, Victoria	Braverman, rh Suella
Bacon, Gareth	Brereton, Jack
Bacon, Mr Richard	Bridgen, Andrew
Badenoch, Kemi	Brine, Steve
Bailey, Shaun	Bristow, Paul
Baillie, Siobhan	Britcliffe, Sara
Baker, Duncan	Brokenshire, rh James
Baker, Mr Steve	Browne, Anthony
Baldwin, Harriett	Bruce, Fiona
Barclay, rh Steve	Buchan, Felicity

Buckland, rh Robert	Frazer, rh Lucy
Burghart, Alex	Freeman, George
Burns, rh Conor	Freer, Mike
Butler, Rob	Fuller, Richard
Cairns, rh Alun	Fysh, Mr Marcus
Carter, Andy	Gale, rh Sir Roger
Cartlidge, James	Garnier, Mark
Cash, Sir William	Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Cates, Miriam	Gibb, rh Nick
Caulfield, Maria	Gibson, Peter
Chalk, Alex	Gideon, Jo
Chishti, Rehman	Glen, John
Churchill, Jo	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Clark, rh Greg	Gove, rh Michael
Clarke, Mr Simon	Graham, Richard
Clarke, Theo	Grant, Mrs Helen
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Gray, James
Clarkson, Chris	Grayling, rh Chris
Cleverly, rh James	Green, Chris
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Green, rh Damian
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Griffith, Andrew
Colburn, Elliot	Griffiths, Kate
Collins, Damian	Grundy, James
Costa, Alberto	Gullis, Jonathan
Courts, Robert	Halfon, rh Robert
Coutinho, Claire	Hall, Luke
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey	Hammond, Stephen
Crabb, rh Stephen	Hancock, rh Matt
Crosbie, Virginia	Hands, rh Greg
Crouch, Tracey	Harper, rh Mr Mark
Daly, James	Harris, Rebecca
Davies, David T. C.	Harrison, Trudy
Davies, Gareth	Hart, Sally-Ann
Davies, Dr James	Hart, rh Simon
Davies, Mims	Hayes, rh Sir John
Davies, Philip	Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Davis, rh Mr David	Heapey, James
Davison, Dehenna	Heaton-Harris, Chris
Dinenage, Caroline	Henderson, Gordon
Dines, Miss Sarah	Henry, Darren
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Higginbotham, Antony
Docherty, Leo	Hinds, rh Damian
Donelan, Michelle	Hoare, Simon
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Holden, Mr Richard
Double, Steve	Hollinrake, Kevin
Downden, rh Oliver	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Holloway, Adam
Drax, Richard	Holmes, Paul
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Howell, John
Duddridge, James	Howell, Paul
Duguid, David	Huddleston, Nigel
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Hudson, Dr Neil
Dunne, rh Philip	Hughes, Eddie
Eastwood, Mark	Hunt, Jane
Edwards, Ruth	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Ellis, rh Michael	Hunt, Tom
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Javid, rh Sajid
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Eustice, rh George	Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Evans, Dr Luke	Jenkinson, Mark
Evennett, rh Sir David	Jenkyns, Andrea
Everitt, Ben	Jenrick, rh Robert
Fabricant, Michael	Johnson, rh Boris
Farris, Laura	Johnson, Dr Caroline
Fell, Simon	Johnson, Gareth
Fletcher, Katherine	Johnston, David
Fletcher, Mark	Jones, Andrew
Fletcher, Nick	Jones, rh Mr David
Ford, Vicky	Jones, Fay
Foster, Kevin	Jones, Mr Marcus
Fox, rh Dr Liam	Jupp, Simon
Francois, rh Mr Mark	Kawczynski, Daniel

Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Largan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherylyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris

Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie

Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James

Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
David Rutley and
Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brown, Ms Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Coyle, Neil
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Dromey, Jack
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Dame Angela

Eagle, Maria
 Efford, Clive
 Elliott, Julie
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Glindon, Mary
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan
 Jones, Ruth
 Jones, Sarah
 Kane, Mike
 Keeley, Barbara
 Kendall, Liz
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kyle, Peter
 Lammy, rh Mr David
 Lavery, Ian
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lloyd, Tony

Lockhart, Carla
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCartney, Jason
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina

Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Colleen Fletcher and
Bambos Charalambous

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 9B disagreed to.

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

10.19 pm

More than one hour having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on consideration of Lords amendments, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, this day).

The Deputy Speaker put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83G).

Government amendments (a) to (c) made in lieu of Lords amendment 9B.

After Clause 72

VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE: DATA-SHARING FOR IMMIGRATION PURPOSES

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendments 40B and 40C.—(Victoria Atkins.)

The House divided: Ayes 350, Noes 270.

Division No. 274]

[10.19 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Clark, rh Greg
Afolami, Bim	Clarke, Mr Simon
Afriyie, Adam	Clarke, Theo
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Aiken, Nickie	Clarkson, Chris
Aldous, Peter	Cleverly, rh James
Allan, Lucy	Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Amess, Sir David	Colburn, Elliot
Anderson, Lee	Collins, Damian
Anderson, Stuart	Costa, Alberto
Andrew, rh Stuart	Courts, Robert
Ansell, Caroline	Coutinho, Claire
Argar, Edward	Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Atherton, Sarah	Crabb, rh Stephen
Atkins, Victoria	Crosbie, Virginia
Bacon, Gareth	Crouch, Tracey
Bacon, Mr Richard	Daly, James
Badenoch, Kemi	Davies, David T. C.
Bailey, Shaun	Davies, Gareth
Baillie, Siobhan	Davies, Dr James
Baker, Duncan	Davies, Mims
Baker, Mr Steve	Davies, Philip
Baldwin, Harriett	Davis, rh Mr David
Barclay, rh Steve	Davison, Dehenna
Baron, Mr John	Dinenage, Caroline
Baynes, Simon	Dines, Miss Sarah
Bell, Aaron	Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Benton, Scott	Docherty, Leo
Beresford, Sir Paul	Donelan, Michelle
Berry, rh Jake	Dorries, Ms Nadine
Bhatti, Saqib	Double, Steve
Blackman, Bob	Dowden, rh Oliver
Blunt, Crispin	Doyle-Price, Jackie
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Drax, Richard
Bradley, Ben	Drummond, Mrs Flick
Bradley, rh Karen	Duddridge, James
Brady, Sir Graham	Duguid, David
Braverman, rh Suella	Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Brereton, Jack	Dunne, rh Philip
Bridgen, Andrew	Eastwood, Mark
Bristow, Paul	Edwards, Ruth
Britcliffe, Sara	Ellis, rh Michael
Brokenshire, rh James	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Browne, Anthony	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Bruce, Fiona	Eustice, rh George
Buchan, Felicity	Evans, Dr Luke
Buckland, rh Robert	Evennett, rh Sir David
Burghart, Alex	Everitt, Ben
Burns, rh Conor	Fabricant, Michael
Butler, Rob	Farris, Laura
Cairns, rh Alun	Fell, Simon
Carter, Andy	Fletcher, Katherine
Cartlidge, James	Fletcher, Mark
Cash, Sir William	Fletcher, Nick
Cates, Miriam	Ford, Vicky
Caulfield, Maria	Foster, Kevin
Chalk, Alex	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Chishti, Rehman	Francois, rh Mr Mark
Churchill, Jo	Frazer, rh Lucy

Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Kate
 Grundy, James
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Sally-Ann
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia

Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Largan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cherylyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher

Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham

Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:

Scott Mann and
 David Rutley

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh 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
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Callaghan, Amy
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Cherry, Joanna
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy

Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 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
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 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
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Glindon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh 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
 Lockhart, Carla
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCartney, Jason
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 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
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick

Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

Bambos Charalambous and
 Colleen Fletcher

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments 40B and 40C disagreed to.

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

Government amendments (a) to (g) made in lieu of Lords amendments 40B and 40C.

RECOURSE TO PUBLIC FUNDS FOR DURATION OF PILOT SCHEME

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 41B.—(Victoria Atkins.)

The House divided: Ayes 352, Noes 270.

Division No. 275]

[10.27 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Anderson, Stuart
Afolami, Bim	Andrew, rh Stuart
Afriyie, Adam	Ansell, Caroline
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Argar, Edward
Aiken, Nickie	Atherton, Sarah
Aldous, Peter	Atkins, Victoria
Allan, Lucy	Bacon, Gareth
Amess, Sir David	Bacon, Mr Richard
Anderson, Lee	Badenoch, Kemi

Bailey, Shaun	Dorries, Ms Nadine	Holden, Mr Richard	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Baillie, Siobhan	Double, Steve	Hollinrake, Kevin	Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Baker, Duncan	Dowden, rh Oliver	Hollobone, Mr Philip	Moore, Damien
Baker, Mr Steve	Doyle-Price, Jackie	Holloway, Adam	Moore, Robbie
Baldwin, Harriett	Drax, Richard	Holmes, Paul	Mordaunt, rh Penny
Barclay, rh Steve	Drummond, Mrs Flick	Howell, John	Morris, Anne Marie
Baron, Mr John	Duddridge, James	Howell, Paul	Morris, David
Baynes, Simon	Duguid, David	Huddleston, Nigel	Morris, James
Bell, Aaron	Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Hudson, Dr Neil	Morrissey, Joy
Benton, Scott	Dunne, rh Philip	Hughes, Eddie	Morton, Wendy
Beresford, Sir Paul	Eastwood, Mark	Hunt, Jane	Mullan, Dr Kieran
Berry, rh Jake	Edwards, Ruth	Hunt, rh Jeremy	Mumby-Croft, Holly
Bhatti, Saqib	Ellis, rh Michael	Hunt, Tom	Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Blackman, Bob	Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Javid, rh Sajid	Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Blunt, Crispin	Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil	Neill, Sir Robert
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Eustice, rh George	Jenkin, Sir Bernard	Nici, Lia
Bradley, Ben	Evans, Dr Luke	Jenkinson, Mark	Nokes, rh Caroline
Bradley, rh Karen	Evennett, rh Sir David	Jenkyns, Andrea	Norman, rh Jesse
Brady, Sir Graham	Everitt, Ben	Jenrick, rh Robert	O'Brien, Neil
Braverman, rh Suella	Fabricant, Michael	Johnson, rh Boris	Offord, Dr Matthew
Brereton, Jack	Farris, Laura	Johnson, Dr Caroline	Opperman, Guy
Bridgen, Andrew	Fell, Simon	Johnson, Gareth	Parish, Neil
Brine, Steve	Fletcher, Katherine	Johnston, David	Patel, rh Priti
Bristow, Paul	Fletcher, Mark	Jones, Andrew	Paterson, rh Mr Owen
Britcliffe, Sara	Fletcher, Nick	Jones, rh Mr David	Pawsey, Mark
Brokenshire, rh James	Ford, Vicky	Jones, Fay	Penning, rh Sir Mike
Browne, Anthony	Foster, Kevin	Jones, Mr Marcus	Penrose, John
Bruce, Fiona	Fox, rh Dr Liam	Jupp, Simon	Percy, Andrew
Buchan, Felicity	Francois, rh Mr Mark	Kawczynski, Daniel	Philp, Chris
Buckland, rh Robert	Frazer, rh Lucy	Kearns, Alicia	Pincher, rh Christopher
Burghart, Alex	Freeman, George	Keegan, Gillian	Poulter, Dr Dan
Burns, rh Conor	Freer, Mike	Knight, rh Sir Greg	Pow, Rebecca
Butler, Rob	Fuller, Richard	Knight, Julian	Prentis, Victoria
Cairns, rh Alun	Fysh, Mr Marcus	Kruger, Danny	Pritchard, rh Mark
Carter, Andy	Gale, rh Sir Roger	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi	Pursglove, Tom
Cartlidge, James	Garnier, Mark	Largan, Robert	Quin, Jeremy
Cash, Sir William	Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Latham, Mrs Pauline	Quince, Will
Cates, Miriam	Gibb, rh Nick	Leadsom, rh Andrea	Raab, rh Dominic
Caulfield, Maria	Gibson, Peter	Leigh, rh Sir Edward	Randall, Tom
Chalk, Alex	Gideon, Jo	Levy, Ian	Randall, Tom
Chishti, Rehman	Glen, John	Lewer, Andrew	Redwood, rh John
Churchill, Jo	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert	Lewis, rh Brandon	Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Clark, rh Greg	Gove, rh Michael	Lewis, rh Dr Julian	Richards, Nicola
Clarke, Mr Simon	Graham, Richard	Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian	Richardson, Angela
Clarke, Theo	Grant, Mrs Helen	Loder, Chris	Roberts, Rob
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Gray, James	Logan, Mark	Robertson, Mr Laurence
Clarkson, Chris	Grayling, rh Chris	Longhi, Marco	Robinson, Mary
Cleverly, rh James	Green, Chris	Lopez, Julia	Rosindell, Andrew
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Green, rh Damian	Lopresti, Jack	Rowley, Lee
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Griffith, Andrew	Lord, Mr Jonathan	Russell, Dean
Colburn, Elliot	Griffiths, Kate	Loughton, Tim	Sambrook, Gary
Collins, Damian	Grundy, James	Mackinlay, Craig	Saxby, Selaine
Costa, Alberto	Gullis, Jonathan	Mackrory, Cherylyn	Scully, Paul
Courts, Robert	Halfon, rh Robert	Macleane, Rachel	Seely, Bob
Coutinho, Claire	Hall, Luke	Mak, Alan	Selous, Andrew
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey	Hammond, Stephen	Malthouse, Kit	Shapps, rh Grant
Crabb, rh Stephen	Hancock, rh Matt	Mangnall, Anthony	Sharma, rh Alok
Crosbie, Virginia	Hands, rh Greg	Marson, Julie	Shelbrooke, rh Alec
Crouch, Tracey	Harper, rh Mr Mark	May, rh Mrs Theresa	Simmonds, David
Daly, James	Harris, Rebecca	Mayhew, Jerome	Skidmore, rh Chris
Davies, David T. C.	Harrison, Trudy	Maynard, Paul	Smith, Chloe
Davies, Gareth	Hart, Sally-Ann	McCartney, Karl	Smith, Greg
Davies, Dr James	Hart, rh Simon	McPartland, Stephen	Smith, Henry
Davies, Mims	Hayes, rh Sir John	McVey, rh Esther	Smith, rh Julian
Davies, Philip	Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Menzies, Mark	Smith, Royston
Davis, rh Mr David	Heappey, James	Mercer, Johnny	Solloway, Amanda
Davison, Dehenna	Heaton-Harris, Chris	Merriman, Huw	Spencer, Dr Ben
Dinenage, Caroline	Henderson, Gordon	Metcalfe, Stephen	Spencer, rh Mark
Dines, Miss Sarah	Henry, Darren	Millar, Robin	Stafford, Alexander
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Higginbotham, Antony	Miller, rh Mrs Maria	Stephenson, Andrew
Docherty, Leo	Hinds, rh Damian	Milling, rh Amanda	Stevenson, Jane
Donelan, Michelle	Hoare, Simon	Mills, Nigel	Stevenson, John
			Stewart, rh Bob

Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian

Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
David Rutley and
Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh 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
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Callaghan, Amy
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Chapman, Douglas
 Cherry, Joanna

Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Coyle, Neil
 Crawley, Angela
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 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
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 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
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Glindon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh 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
 Lockhart, Carla
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian

Mc Nally, John
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCartney, Jason
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 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
 Opong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Oswald, Kirsten
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Sheppard, Tommy
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Alyn
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick

Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
 Thompson, Owen
 Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl

Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Colleen Fletcher and
Bambos Charalambous

Clark, rh Greg
 Clarke, Mr Simon
 Clarke, Theo
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan
 Clarkson, Chris
 Cleverly, rh James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
 Colburn, Elliot
 Collins, Damian
 Costa, Alberto
 Courts, Robert
 Coutinho, Claire
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Crabb, rh Stephen
 Crosbie, Virginia
 Crouch, Tracey
 Daly, James
 Davies, David T. C.
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Dr James
 Davies, Mims
 Davies, Philip
 Davis, rh Mr David
 Davison, Dehenna
 Dinage, Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donelan, Michelle
 Dorries, Ms Nadine
 Double, Steve
 Dowden, rh Oliver
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duddridge, James
 Duguid, David
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Dunne, rh Philip
 Eastwood, Mark
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Eustice, rh George
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Everitt, Ben
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Mark
 Fletcher, Nick
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gibson, Peter
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Mr Robert

Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Gray, James
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Kate
 Grundy, James
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Hands, rh Greg
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Sally-Ann
 Hart, rh Simon
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, John
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Hunt, Tom
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, rh Boris
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnson, Gareth
 Johnston, David
 Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Langan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 41B disagreed to.

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

Before Clause 69

IDENTIFICATION, MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT OF SERIAL DOMESTIC ABUSE AND STALKING PERPETRATORS

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendments 42D, 42E and 42F—(Victoria Atkins.)

The House divided: Ayes 351, Noes 227.

Division No. 276]

[10.35 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel
 Afolami, Bim
 Afriyie, Adam
 Ahmad Khan, Imran
 Aiken, Nickie
 Aldous, Peter
 Allan, Lucy
 Amess, Sir David
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Bacon, Mr Richard
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 Baker, Duncan
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Steve
 Baron, Mr John
 Baynes, Simon
 Bell, Aaron
 Benton, Scott
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Berry, rh Jake

Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, Ben
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Brady, Sir Graham
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Bristow, Paul
 Britcliffe, Sara
 Brokenshire, rh James
 Browne, Anthony
 Bruce, Fiona
 Buchan, Felicity
 Buckland, rh Robert
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Carter, Andy
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Cates, Miriam
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 Churchill, Jo

Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cheryllyn
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela

Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura
 Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William

Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
David Rutley and
Scott Mann

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Brabin, Tracy
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brown, Ms Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Burgon, Richard
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Clark, Feryal
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, Rosie
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Coyle, Neil
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Geraint
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Debonnaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.
 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
 Ferrier, Margaret
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Girvan, Paul
 Glindon, Mary
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Halfon, rh Robert
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh 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
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
 Lewis, Clive
 Lloyd, Tony
 Lockhart, Carla
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Mahmood, Shabana
 Malhotra, Seema

Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 McCabe, Steve
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCartney, Jason
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Moran, Layla
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nandy, Lisa
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Paisley, Ian
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Phillips, Jess
 Phillipson, Bridget
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Lucy
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Reeves, Rachel
 Reynolds, Jonathan
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie

Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Winter, Beth
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

**Bambos Charalambous and
 Colleen Fletcher**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendments 42D, 42E and 42F disagreed to.

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

Government amendments (d) to (f) made in lieu of Lords amendments 42D, 42E and 42F.

Ordered, That a Committee be appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendment 41B;

That Victoria Atkins, Tom Pursglove, Rebecca Harris and Chris Elmore be members of the Committee;

That Victoria Atkins be the Chair of the Committee;

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—(Tom Pursglove.)

Committee to withdraw immediately; reasons to be reported and communicated to the Lords.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): In order to observe social distancing, the Reasons Committee will meet in Committee Room 12.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 15),

That, at this day's sitting, proceedings on the Motion in the name of Mr Jacob Rees-Mogg relating to Business of the House (Today) may be proceeded with, though opposed, until any hour, and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(Michael Tomlinson.)

Question agreed to.

**NATIONAL SECURITY AND INVESTMENT BILL
 (PROGRAMME) (NO. 2)**

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

That the following provisions shall apply to the National Security and Investment Bill for the purpose of supplementing the Order of 17 November 2020 (National Security and Investment Bill (Programme)):

Consideration of Lords Amendments

(1) Proceedings on consideration of Lords Amendments shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion two hours after their commencement.

Subsequent stages

(2) Any further Message from the Lords may be considered forthwith without any Question being put.

(3) The proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement.—(Michael Tomlinson.)

Question agreed to.

National Security and Investment Bill

Consideration of Lords amendments

Clause 4

CONSULTATION AND PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

10.44 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Paul Scully): I beg to move, That this House agrees with Lords amendment 1.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): With this it will be convenient to consider:

Lords amendments 2 to 10.

Lords amendment 11, and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendments 12 to 14.

Lords amendment 15, and Government motion to disagree.

Paul Scully: I am delighted that the Bill has returned to this House from the other place and I am delighted to be able to speak to it briefly today following the excellent handover from the Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment, my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), who is successfully jabbing the nation as we speak. As we are at a late hour, I will not take up too much of the House's time. I will just quickly summarise some of the changes to the Bill.

Lords amendments 1 to 10 and 12 to 14 were all tabled by my colleague in the other place, Lord Callanan. Lords amendments 1, 5, 8, 9 and 10 are what the Office of the Parliamentary Counsel would call minor and technical. Lords amendments 12, 13 and 14 pertain to the annual report as provided for by clause 61, and they reflect the decision to include additional reporting requirements that will provide further value for parliamentarians, businesses and investors. Lords amendments 2, 3, 4, 6 and 7 were made to the Bill in the spirit of a shared recognition that the requirements of the mandatory notification regime must be no more than necessary and proportionate for the protection of our national security, and that businesses and investments are not unduly burdened or stifled.

I wholeheartedly agree with the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), who said on Report that we need

“robust powers to guard our national security and...change that backs our best small businesses and our capacity for innovation. Both of these goals are possible; indeed, they are mutually reinforcing.”—[*Official Report*, 20 January 2021; Vol. 687, c. 1000.]

That is why we have reflected carefully during the passage of the Bill on the 15% starting threshold for the mandatory regime. Lords amendment 2 removes acquisitions between 15% and 25% from constituting notifiable acquisitions under the mandatory regime. The House will recall, though, that the Bill provides the power for the Secretary of State to call in acquisitions of control across the economy. That power remains in place. Provisions in the Bill also ensure that the Secretary of State can amend the scope of the mandatory regime through secondary legislation, which could include the introduction of a 15% threshold if deemed appropriate, although we do not currently anticipate doing so.

I will turn to Amendments 11 and 15—

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): On those amendments, my hon. Friend will know that there are profound and continuing concerns about scrutiny associated with the provisions and powers that the Bill provides. He will furthermore know that the Intelligence and Security Committee, of which I am a member, performs an important role in scrutinising all such security matters. He will know that there is a memorandum of understanding that underpins that between the Government and the ISC. Will he be quite clear that there is no attempt to dilute, to obscure or to escape from the provisions of that memorandum, which says that the ISC can inquire into security matters across the whole of Government?

Paul Scully: I always value the contribution from my right hon. Friend who, as a former Security Minister and a member of the ISC, is very wise and experienced in these matters. I can confirm that the memorandum of understanding absolutely pertains and that the ISC can continue its great work to scrutinise the work of the security services, which will include where the security services' work supports the work of the Investment Security Unit. It is also important to remember, as we consider these amendments, that we value the work of the ISC, and of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and the Science and Technology Committee, which I will speak about as well.

Sir John Hayes: To be absolutely clear, that memorandum is, by definition, flexible. The Government have acknowledged that by history, by example and so on. That flexibility should allow the ISC to scrutinise the additional powers in this Bill, and I gather from what the Minister says that he is comfortable with that principle and that the ISC will continue to perform its role in that way. On that basis, I will support the Government tonight in any Division that might ensue.

Paul Scully: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's enlightening words about his intention. I can indeed confirm that the memorandum of understanding is flexible. The ISC does good work and continues to do so, and I look forward to working with him.

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): My hon. Friend is giving helpful clarification. The Secretary of State wrote to the Chair of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and copied in the Chair of the ISC and me as Chair of the Science and Technology Committee. Will the Minister confirm that he is prepared to commit in a memorandum of understanding to the Chairs of those Committees being able to see, on Privy Council terms, information that might not be otherwise in the public domain?

Paul Scully: We have got to the nub of the matter quickly. I can indeed confirm that. In the letter the Secretary of State sent to the Chair of the BEIS Committee, copying in my right hon. Friend the Chair of the Science and Technology Committee, he spoke about the fact that the BEIS Committee is able to access the material it needs to scrutinise the work of the ISU, including for example details of some of the risks that the ISU has identified under the NSI regime and the measures taken to address them. As part of that, the Secretary of State confirmed that the Department can provide the Chair

of the BEIS Committee with confidential briefings on Privy Council terms, and that he would be happy to set those out in more detail in either a memorandum of understanding or further exchange of letters. The Secretary of State went on to say that he would encourage the STC to provide scrutiny of the work of the ISU where the work of the unit falls within the specific remit of that Committee. He also welcomed the Intelligence and Security Committee's continued scrutiny of the work of the security services, which will include where the security services' work supports the work of the ISU.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): I hate to be slightly disobliging, but it is a fact, is it not, that the staffs of these Select Committees do not have the clearance necessary to see or handle top secret material, and showing a top secret document to the Chair of a Committee on his or her own, briefly in very limited circumstances, does not amount—as I will explain shortly—to effective scrutiny?

Paul Scully: I look forward to hearing my right hon. Friend's explanation.

I believe that the Bill as amended by the other place through amendments 11 and 15 would require the Secretary of State to provide a confidential annexe, to be provided to the ISC. I am advised by my noble Friends Lord Callanan and Lord Grimstone that there is considerable strength of feeling in the other place about ensuring that the operation of the regime receives appropriate parliamentary scrutiny, and I welcome the passionate and expert debate that this question has already received. It has been proposed that the ISC is better placed than the BEIS Committee to scrutinise the Investment and Security Unit, despite the Secretary of State for BEIS having responsibility for the unit. The implication of the amendments is that the Select Committee responsible for holding the Secretary of State to account across their responsibilities is insufficient in that regard. It is also suggested that the ISC would have inadequate access to information to carry out its duties.

In essence, the amendments would require sensitive details to be provided to the ISC regarding the Secretary of State's decision on final notifications given and final orders made, varied or revoked, but the ISC is already able to request such information as soon as is appropriate from the security services where it forms part of its long-established scrutiny responsibilities under the Justice and Security Act 2013 and, as I hope I have made clear, its accompanying memorandum of understanding. In addition, the Bill provides that the Secretary of State must publish details of each final order made, varied or revoked, and clause 61 already requires the annual report to include the number of final orders made, together with a number of other details. Indeed, that clause was amended in the other place to include further such information in the annual report.

We do not disagree that further information may be required for appropriate parliamentary scrutiny. Where that is the case, the Government will follow existing procedures for reporting back to Parliament, but that should be done primarily through responding to the BEIS Committee as it goes about its work of ably scrutinising the work of the Department. We will ensure that the BEIS Committee is able to access the material it needs.

It is of course right that the ISC continues its excellent scrutiny of the work of the security services. The work of the security services on investment security in support of the ISU clearly falls within the remit of the ISC. That does not require any statutory change to be made. As I said, the memorandum of understanding pertains to the continuing work of the ISC, and I look forward to working with colleagues on that Committee. As such, and with the BEIS Committee having appropriate assurance that it will be provided with the information necessary, there is no need for these changes made to the Bill by the other place to stand.

In summary, with the exception of amendments 11 and 15, I believe that this House is today presented with an improved set of measures to safeguard our national security. The ISC will not have its powers—existing powers—diluted through the discussion of the memorandum of understanding, as we have already said. Therefore, I commend the amendments, with the exception of amendments 11 and 15, to the House.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab) [V]: Let me start by welcoming the Minister to the National Security and Investment Bill, and I would like to wish his predecessor well in his work on the vaccine roll-out. I would also like to thank colleagues in the other place who have worked so hard to improve this Bill, and the Members of both Houses who scrutinised its important provisions.

Labour is the party of national security, and has long called for a new regime to deal with evolving national security threats in corporate transactions. A robust takeover regime is also essential if we want firms in our key sectors to grow and provide good jobs here in the UK. So we support this Bill, which allows the Government to intervene when mergers and acquisitions could threaten national security. Unfortunately, the Bill in its original form lacked certain provisions, and particularly the oversight necessary to ensure it was successful in protecting our national security and national interest. So we have sought to improve the Bill along the way, and we are pleased that the Government have adopted some of our suggestions.

Members across party lines raised concerns over the capacity and capability of the new Investment Security Unit to deliver on the Bill's ambition. We are pleased that the Government have acted on this, and Lords amendments 12 to 14 to clause 61 are based on Labour's original amendment 31 during the House of Commons Committee stage, and a later amendment tabled by Labour at Lords Committee. Reporting the aggregate time taken for decisions will help to ensure that the new regime works more efficiently for small and medium-sized enterprises, and I was pleased to hear the Minister quoting my remarks to that effect.

We are also pleased to see that the Government have taken steps to address concerns regarding the 15% threshold for a notifiable acquisition. This follows Labour's probing amendment 16 during Lords Committee stage and Cross-Bench concern. The Wellcome Trust labelled the 15% threshold as a

“regulatory burden for those that may not be able to afford it”.

With Lords amendment 3, the Secretary of State will still be able to call in acquisitions across the economy at or below 25%—and, if necessary, below 15%—where they reasonably suspect that material influence has

[*Chi Onwurah*]

been or will be acquired. But this amendment will bring the notifiable acquisition threshold in line with our allies in France, Australia and Canada. We are pleased the Government have listened to Labour and made a change that will be beneficial to small and medium-sized enterprises.

It is also welcome to see that the Government have now committed to issue public guidance, which Labour called for with our amendment 17 at the Commons Committee stage. This is good news for transparency. Our approach has been to ensure that our small and medium-sized enterprises have clarity, and that those investing in the UK understand what the rules are and how they will work. The publication of guidance will boost confidence in the new regime for national security screening.

But we are here today because of Lords amendments 11 and 15, and to vote on the Government motion to disagree. Labour believes that the Intelligence and Security Committee scrutiny is essential to provide the robust and sensitive oversight and accountability that matters of national security require. The Bill gives significant new powers to BEIS, a Department traditional lacking in national security experience. The BEIS Committee does not have the security clearance necessary to provide scrutiny, and the confidential briefings to the Chair described by the Minister will not change that.

11 pm

Labour's amendments requiring ISC scrutiny were rejected by the Government in the Commons but they won support in the Lords. The amendments would require the Secretary of State to redact any information from the annual NSI report that is damaging to national security and then provide that information to the ISC. We believe that that is entirely proportional and a step that any responsible Government who are serious about national security would undertake. We do not understand why the Government are so reluctant to involve the ISC, and the Lords agrees with us. Lord King, former Defence Secretary under Margaret Thatcher, stated:

"I think a mistake was made in the original construction of the Bill and there now seems to be a determination not to repair the one problem that exists...it is a serious gap, and we could well pay the price for it in the future."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 15 April 2021; Vol. 811, c. 1516-17.]

Former Cabinet Secretary Lord Butler questioned the Government's motives for excluding the ISC, asking:

"Is the reluctance on the part of the Government a hangover from their embarrassment over publication of the ISC's report on Russian interference before the 2017 election, or is it a result of government pique about the committee's appointment of its own chairman in place of the Government's nominee? Whatever it is, it is difficult to understand what the Intelligence and Security Committee is there for if not to have a role on behalf of Parliament and the public in sensitive matters of this sort."—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 16 March 2021; Vol. 811, c. 242.]

I have listened carefully to the Minister's words and I have found nothing to explain this position. The Government have fought this vital layer of scrutiny every step of the way, continually stating that the BEIS Committee can provide the correct oversight. Lord Lansley has said that the Leader of the House is "plain wrong" about

this and that all the amendment seeks to do is to ensure that the Intelligence and Scrutiny Committee can fulfil its role.

There have recently been a number of requests for Intelligence and Security Committee scrutiny—for example, in relation to the Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill and the Telecommunications (Security) Bill. The ISC has shown it is willing to do so but the Government have refused. As Lord Butler suggested, some believe that this is because the Government are not happy with Parliament's choice of Chair of the ISC. I am loth to think that the Government would be so petty when it comes to such an important matter as national security, so I hope they will take action and support Labour's calls for ISC oversight.

I reiterate that Labour has consistently welcomed this Bill and we are pleased that certain issues over national security have been addressed. The UK's takeover regime was not fit for purpose as it was, and the Bill, with today's amendments, goes some way towards fixing that. It is undoubtedly welcome in protecting our national security, but it is only one element of protecting, nurturing and developing the vital sectors of the future that we know are crucial for our economy. We hope the Government will work with us to ensure the national security of the UK in future.

Dr Julian Lewis: The Intelligence and Security Committee greatly appreciates the work of the Minister and of his predecessor on this important legislation. I was on the Committee in June 2013 when we identified the risks posed by foreign investment and takeovers to the United Kingdom's critical national infrastructure, citing Huawei as a case study—and we know what happened after that. We strongly support the Government's decision to address those risks and we welcome their assurances that national security concerns sit at the very heart of the Bill. That is exactly as it should be.

However, what was not as it should be, with the Bill as originally drafted, was the lack of adequate oversight arrangements for those security concerns and for the process when they are weighed against business and other commercial concerns by the new Investment Security Unit. The Government ought to accept amendments 11 and 15 from the other place, introduced on a cross-party basis by former Security Minister and current ISC member Lord West, former Cabinet Secretary and former ISC member Lord Butler, former party leader and former ISC member Lord Campbell, and former Defence Secretary Lord King—who was of course the first Chairman of the Intelligence and Security Committee when it was established. Their amendments make provision for that previous lack of oversight. They would require the annual report produced by the new Investment Security Unit in BEIS to include, for each final order and notification made, the Secretary of State's decision, along with the security services' assessment of the national security risks uncovered. They would allow the Secretary of State to move any classified information into an annex and to provide that classified annex to the ISC. With the amendments in place as they currently are, we could be confident that the Bill will create the robust regime needed to protect the United Kingdom.

Given the powerful speeches from all quarters and the size of the majority in the other place in support of the amendments, it is surprising and disappointing that

the Government remain opposed to them and are seeking to overturn what is clearly common sense. The amendments provide for the ISC to scrutinise the highly classified national security elements and the weighing of those classified elements against commercial concerns.

There appear to be three arguments employed by the Government against the amendments. The first claims that because BEIS is not listed in the Justice and Security Act 2013 or in the associated memorandum of understanding on the scope of our work, the ISC cannot look at decisions taken by the new unit in BEIS. That is based on a false premise.

During the passage of the 2013 Act, the Government explicitly and repeatedly told Parliament that the Act and the MOU would provide the ISC with oversight of all security matters across Government. The MOU mechanism, again, in the Government's own words, was a "flexible" way to ensure that the list of organisations working on security matters and therefore subject to ISC oversight would be kept up to date.

Sir John Hayes: Will my right hon. Friend give way?

Dr Lewis: I will give way in a moment, because I would like my right hon. Friend to hear this next bit, as I think there was a bit he was missing in his earlier intervention.

These words were used in Committee in my presence by the then Security Minister, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire), when introducing the 2013 Act. He said:

"I want to be clear that the Government intend that, through the provisions of the MOU, substantively all of central Government's intelligence and security activities will be subject to ISC oversight." — [*Official Report, Justice and Security Public Bill Committee*, 31 January 2013; c. 97.]

As if that were not clear enough, he went on to say, and this is the bit that matters:

"Things change over time. Departments reorganise. The functions undertaken by a Department one year may be undertaken by another the following year... An MOU is flexible: it can be changed much more easily than primary legislation. It will enable the intention of the Government that the ISC should have oversight of substantively all of central Government's intelligence and security activities to be realised now and in the future." — [*Official Report, Justice and Security Public Bill Committee*, 31 January 2013; c. 98.]

The setting up of the new Investment Security Unit in BEIS is therefore precisely the situation that the Government assured the House that the MOU was designed to address, and the unit can easily be added to the MOU by a simple exchange of letters. Indeed, if the Government were willing to give an undertaking here and now to add the new unit to those listed in the MOU, the need for these amendments would disappear.

Sir John Hayes: That is precisely why I drew the Minister's attention to the flexibility of the memorandum of understanding and asked him whether the Government stood by the terms of that memorandum. The Minister was as clear as crystal. He said that he believed in that memorandum, and he saw no attempt in what the Government were doing to dilute the powers of the ISC or its ability, of the kind that my right hon. Friend set out, to range across government, if I can put it that way, where security is concerned. I think we have had reassurance from the Minister sufficient to support the Government.

Dr Lewis: Unfortunately, and I am afraid unusually for my right hon. Friend, he missed one little part that was missing in turn from the Minister's answer, because the MOU as it stands does not include the Investment Security Unit. The MOU has a list of seven organisations that we can currently scrutinise. The whole point about flexibility is that, as these units are set up in other Departments, they can be added to the MOU, but the Minister has given no undertaking to add the ISU to the MOU. I am happy to give way to the Minister. If he would like to say that he will add the ISU—the new unit within BEIS—to the organisations listed in the memorandum of understanding, I will stop my speech immediately and say, "Well done, Minister," but I fear that that is not going to happen, so I will continue with my speech.

The Government's second argument is that the BEIS Committee is both capable of providing and best placed to provide the necessary oversight. I have the greatest respect for the work and experience of the BEIS Committee, chaired by the hon. Member for Bristol North West (Darren Jones), from whom we will hear later. He and his Committee are indeed best placed to provide oversight of the business functions of the new Investment Security Unit, and there can be no doubt that that Committee will do an excellent job in that respect, yet it is simply impossible for it to provide substantive scrutiny of the highly classified national security elements or of the overarching decisions taken about how to balance them with the commercial elements.

Select Committees cannot be given proper access to top-secret material in order to scrutinise effectively. Ministers have suggested that the BEIS Committee can substantively scrutinise such material, but that is impossible. While it is true, as we have heard tonight, that the provision of classified information can be negotiated with Select Committees on a case-by-case basis, the laying out of classified material in a secure room in the Department for Members to come in and read for an hour or so—but without allowing them to take any notes, without allowing them to retain it, without allowing them to share it with their staff, without allowing them to discuss it and without allowing them to report on it since any one of those would constitute a very serious security breach—does not amount to effective oversight.

Proper oversight of the national security elements of any decision under this new regime within BEIS must include the ability to access, analyse and discuss top-secret material frequently and fully. The Government already have one body, and only one body, that can do all those things and that they created for that express purpose: the ISC. Members of the ISC are all subject to the Official Secrets Act and have a dedicated office with appropriate security facilities to store and discuss top-secret material freely, and staff who undergo the most stringent Government clearance processes before they are allowed to handle such material—I said in an intervention earlier that the staff of other Select Committees of this House are not so cleared. There is also a lengthy process through which the Committee's reports must go ahead of publication.

Greg Clark: My right hon. Friend will know that the call-in power and the power to refuse permission for mergers to proceed on national security grounds is long standing. It is vested in the Business Secretary and sometimes in the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture,

[*Greg Clark*]

Media and Sport. During all this time, scrutiny has been available to the ISC on those decisions. Has my right hon. Friend found that deficient in some way?

Dr Lewis: I am not sure that without concrete examples of what my right hon. Friend has in mind, I am in a position to give an answer to that question. What I do know is that it is the work of the ISC, on a basis of professional, full-time constant monitoring, to be able to look at the activities of those agencies that cannot be looked at by other Select Committees. He seems to be talking about the power of Secretaries of State to call in decisions, and I am not sure quite how that relates to the work of either Select Committees or the statutory Committee, which is the ISC.

Greg Clark: Perhaps I did not explain myself well. What is proposed in the Bill is an amendment of the current powers. There is a long-standing power for mergers to be blocked on national security grounds. It is one of three grounds on which an intervention can take place, so this is not a new power or a novel departure. The ISC is able to scrutinise the security services' input into that now, as it will be in the future.

11.15 pm

Dr Lewis: The ISC, on behalf of Parliament, is able to scrutinise the input of the intelligence agencies into these processes. It would not be able to scrutinise how that input is then handled, and the trouble is that because that input is top secret, the BEIS Committee would not be able to scrutinise it either. That means that there would be a scrutiny gap between what was being scrutinised by us as it went into the process of the new unit and what was being scrutinised by BEIS minus that sensitive material, so there would be no effective parliamentary scrutiny of the process whereby, as I said earlier, the highly sensitive security requirements were being balanced and offset against the commercial imperatives. Indeed, that may be the very reason why the Government are so reluctant to let the ISC see what is going on.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): I fear that my right hon. Friend may have just answered my question before I ask it, but I am most grateful to him; he is making his speech with tremendous passion and is very persuasive. I just looked up the definition of "top secret" and I am wondering what will be missing from the output of the process that would mean that there are some scrutiny gaps. I think he has just explained that he wants to scrutinise the process and I can see why he would make that case, but will he just give us some indication as to what he expects would be top secret in that analysis, if that is at all possible?

Dr Lewis: If I gave an example of something that would be top secret—even if I were in a position to do so because we had started the work that we are not being allowed to start—I would then immediately be breaking the Official Secrets Act so, no, I cannot, and I would not even if I could. However, what is a certainty is that where there are circumstances where the intelligence agencies are advising on the security aspects, for example, of a potentially hostile state buying, overtly or covertly, into a strategically important asset, such as buying up a

company engaged in cutting-edge technology. This unit will have to balance that against the possible commercial advantages of major investment from that other country.

The fact is that nobody on behalf of Parliament will be able to scrutinise that process unless either these amendments are accepted or the ISU—this new unit—is added to the list of units already on the memorandum of understanding. As I have said before and say again, if at any time the Minister wants to give me the assurance that it will be added, I am happy to let these amendments go from the face of the Bill.

As I explained, this is the reason that the ISC was set up as it is. If any Committee could do what the ISC does, it would not be necessary for the ISC to have all those unique facilities and arrangements. That is why paragraph 8 of the memorandum of understanding between the Government and the ISC categorically asserts:

"The ISC is the only committee of Parliament"—

I will say that again:

"the only committee of Parliament that has regular access to protectively marked information that is sensitive for national security reasons: this means that only the ISC is in a position to scrutinise effectively the work of the Agencies"—

and please listen to these next few words—

"and of those parts of Departments whose work is directly concerned with intelligence and security matters."

A footnote to that sentence helpfully explains:

"This will not affect the wider scrutiny of departments...by other parliamentary committees. The ISC will aim to avoid any unnecessary duplication with the work of those Committees."

With that machinery already in place, it is all the more baffling that the Government are now refusing to use the very body they created. Without including oversight by a properly structured and fully cleared security body, the Government are not placing security at the heart of the Bill.

The Government's third and final argument is that if the ISC had a role, it would encroach on the BEIS Select Committee's remit. This, too, is baffling and not borne out by experience. The Government's own MOU already expressly states that the ISC scrutinises the classified parts of some Government Departments, leaving the remainder to the corresponding departmental Select Committees. That is what has always happened, perfectly harmoniously, in respect of a number of other Departments, so it is, again, bizarre that the Government now see this as a problem when they themselves have already made express provision for it.

The ISC can work seamlessly with the BEIS Select Committee on oversight of the Investment Security Unit, as it already does with other Select Committees such as the Defence Committee and the Home Affairs Committee, and in respect of the work of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office. Far from being an "overreach" of our remit, in this particular case the ISC is trying to prevent its existing scope from being reduced. The unit that currently carries out investment security work is based in the Cabinet Office. Consequently, it is already overseen by the Intelligence and Security Committee. The ISC already scrutinises these activities in their current form in the Cabinet Office, so it cannot be "overreach" to do in future something that we already do. If the Government do not maintain this existing

ISC scrutiny when the new Investment Security Unit takes over, it will be a step backwards from the current position.

If national security really is at the heart of the Bill, the ISC, as the national security oversight body, must be allowed to oversee it. The Government gave assurances to the House in 2013 that the ISC would oversee all security and intelligence matters. It is as simple as that. The sensible solution is that which was proposed and accepted in the other place—namely, the amendments that we are now being asked to reject for, as I have demonstrated, no good reason.

If, for some reason we have not been told, the Government cannot accept provision for oversight on the face of the Bill, there is the other solution that I have previously indicated. The Justice and Security Act and the memorandum of understanding linked to it set out the ISC's role and remit, which the Government expressly told Parliament was the oversight of all intelligence and security matters across Government, now and in the future. The memorandum of understanding mechanism was rightly described by the security Minister at the time, my right hon. Friend the Member for Old Bexley and Sidcup (James Brokenshire), as “flexible” because “it can be changed much more easily than primary legislation.”—*[Official Report, Justice and Security Public Bill Committee, 31 January 2013; c. 98.]*

The matter before us today is exactly as described in 2013: an area of Government in respect of which the ISC has oversight responsibility has been moved to a different Department. The memorandum of understanding could therefore be updated to reflect this, by way of a simple exchange of letters, to add the Investment Security Unit to the list of bodies covered by the MOU. The ISC would happily accept a commitment from the Minister to this effect tonight, in lieu of the amendment. Either method will ensure what is needed: real oversight of the national security elements of this legislation by the only body constituted and equipped to carry it out, rather than what might be described as “scrutiny in name only”.

Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP): I am very much of the view that, as Shakespeare said, “brevity is the soul of wit”. Notwithstanding that, the Chair of the Intelligence and Security Committee, the right hon. Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis), made an incredibly professional and profound set of points that I hope the Minister listened to closely.

As the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), did, I welcome the Minister to his place, notwithstanding the fact that the previous Minister, the hon. Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi), is off doing a fantastic job—I think it is fair to say—getting the entirety of the UK vaccinated, of course in partnership with our colleague in Scotland. I am sure that he regards it as a step up in terms of ministerial oversight of the Bill.

On the Bill itself, my right hon. Friend the Member for Dundee East (Stewart Hosie) spoke on Second Reading and on Report with passion and knowledge of the subject in respect of the scrutiny that should be provided by all of us when looking at such serious matters. We have tried to be constructive with the Government and to make helpful suggestions. I am pleased with many of the amendments moved by those

in the other place that the Government are agreeing to—on beefing up scrutiny and perhaps offsetting some of the concerns that some of us might have had about the danger of investment chill, which was certainly real given the original nature of the Bill.

Improvements have been made, therefore, but there is still scope for further improvement. In that regard—as I said, I will be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker—I again urge the Minister to give cognisance to the wise words of the Chair of the ISC.

Adam Holloway (Gravesham) (Con): I welcome the powers that the National Security and Investment Bill introduces and I am very much in favour of the amendments moved by the Government in the other place.

Those amendments temper the impact on investment of the Bill, allowing a greater proportion of transactions and investment decisions to go ahead without requiring Government approval. Furthermore, the Government's power to intervene on their own, if needed, will be retained. That is a good compromise between the Bill's objectives: to grant the Government the powers to defend the UK against losing companies and expertise to unfriendly competitors, without stifling the investment that we need to become the home of the industries of the future. That is vital to our national security and to our future prosperity.

We must ensure that the technologies that are so frequently developed by our brilliant scientists here in this country can also transform themselves into successful world-leading companies here. I think of the many university spin-out programmes and how often extraordinary technology is immediately shipped off somewhere else. Developing more powerful computers and software, but allowing them all to be commercialised and deployed most effectively elsewhere only makes us less secure, not more secure. They will only be commercialised and deployed here if the Government protect them from being snapped up by our competitors, thereby damaging our long-term security interests.

We have seen the impact of such problems in the past. Only last week, the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport called in the potential NVIDIA-Arm deal as representing a potential threat to our national security. If Arm, the Cambridge-based silicon fen semiconductor and software design company, can pose a threat to national security, so could the sale of other critical companies in developing industries.

Quantum computing is about to revolutionise the digital age, and the UK has some of the leading research establishments, notably in London and at the University of Bristol. However, many leading companies have moved abroad in the past. The British academics who founded PsiQuantum, the company that believes it is on track to build the world's first usable quantum computer, moved to California some years ago. I have absolutely zero financial or other interests in that company—it is only that I wish to see the UK lead the world in quantum computing, with all the associated industry and benefits that will follow that.

The four professors from Bristol and London Universities recently made an offer to the Government to build that first usable quantum computer here in the UK, ensuring that the security offered by its cutting-edge technology

[Adam Holloway]

is based in the UK. I think we can all agree that it would have been far easier and a lot less expensive if those academics had never left the country in the first place.

11.30 pm

As the current pandemic has shown, domestic sovereign capability will only become more important in the coming years, particularly in areas such as quantum computing. Mirroring the Prime Minister's wise decision to develop UK-based manufacturing capacity for covid vaccines—a decision that, when placed against the current backdrop of export bans and international power politics, looks very wise indeed—we must also have a domestic sovereign capability for security-critical sectors such as quantum and artificial intelligence. That will help to ensure that the UK does not miss out on the ability to crack other people's codes, decipher intelligence, keep our communications secure—current encryption is obsolete in the face of quantum computing—calculate the solutions to climate change, and cure the diseases of today and the future. This is not just in our economic interest; it is in our national interest too.

The Government must think extremely carefully about how they use this legislation, as well as clever policy design and strong research and development funding, to shape the UK's future security and economy. As the Government amendments will retain the Government's powers to intervene in deals that would prevent us from losing companies key to our national security, I am proud to support them.

Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD) [V]: In common with other hon. Members who have spoken tonight and on other occasions, the Liberal Democrats support the broad principles of the Bill. It is sensible, at a time of geopolitical uncertainty and increasingly globalised trade, to have provisions for the Secretary of State to intervene in business transactions where those transactions may have a bearing on national security. It is important, however, that the parameters of such a Bill are carefully drawn to ensure both that the transactions that may pose a threat can be caught, and that undue constraint is not placed on transactions that ought to be able to proceed freely.

The concerns raised about the Bill have focused on the fact that many of the definitions in it can be drawn too widely, and that the powers of the Secretary of State to call in transactions can be triggered too easily. That creates an environment of uncertainty for investors, as a wide variety of activities come into the scope of the Secretary of State's powers. That will potentially act as a brake on investment, and at a crucial moment, when we are looking to strike new deals with global partners to replace the trade we are losing as a result of leaving the European Union.

I therefore welcome Lords amendments 11 and 15, which would require the Secretary of State to provide an explanation for choosing to exercise the powers granted to them. That seems to be a rational compromise. Instead of attempting to frame more precisely definitions and powers that will quickly become outdated as technology and trading practices progress, we would maintain the wider definitions but explain how and why they were being exercised.

That would provide a framework of precedent that investors could refer to when assessing investment risk. It would provide a much greater degree of transparency and accountability to the Secretary of State's decision making. We have all seen the value of greater transparency over the last few weeks. Adopting these amendments would show that the Government were attempting, in good faith, to regain public trust after that trust has been shaken by recent revelations.

There is a distinct danger that the Bill, without amendment, will leave the Secretary of State vulnerable to pressure from those whose interests go beyond national security. We have seen this Government act to help developers avoid taxes, bankers win access to Government schemes, and shell companies win multimillion-pound personal protective equipment contracts. There is a very real danger that the UK's reputation as a safe and orderly place to do business may be undermined, and these amendments offer the Government an excellent opportunity to restore our reputation once more. I very much hope that the Minister will take it.

The Bill is valuable and necessary, but it is only part of what is required to boost the UK's attractiveness as a global trading partner. The scrapping of the industrial strategy in the last month and the continuing failure to construct a workable plan for achieving net zero are holding the UK back from being able to achieve all that it is capable of achieving as we emerge from the difficulties of coronavirus.

Darren Jones (Bristol North West) (Lab) [V]: I will focus my remarks on Lords amendments 11 to 15 to clause 61, which, as we have heard, have arrived from the other place on the basis that the BEIS Committee, which I chair, does not have the access to the intelligence information that it would need in order to adequately scrutinise the Investment Security Unit in the BEIS Department. Let me start by thanking their lordships for their highly informed debate on this issue and their hard work in drafting these amendments.

It is a matter of fact that the Intelligence and Security Committee has a level of security clearance and powers to demand classified information that no other Committee of this House has, including my own. I was therefore surprised to learn that the Government were not going to update the memorandum of understanding with the ISC to extend its remit specifically to include the Investment Security Unit. That is why their lordships have sent us these amendments, which I have no issue with. On that basis, I commend the Chair of the ISC for his eloquent speech this evening. However, the Government have made it clear to my Committee and to the House that they have no intention of supporting the amendments, and nor will they be extending the memorandum of understanding in respect of the ISC.

The Secretary of State did agree with me in Committee that the Bill extends the powers of the Government to intervene in the market and that adequate scrutiny of that function is therefore important. On that basis, my Committee has received a letter from the Secretary of State, which we will formally report to the House tomorrow morning, setting out three key points. First, my Committee will be guaranteed appropriate levels of information and briefing to understand why Ministers have acted in the way they have—this is noting the points made by

the ISC Chair this evening. On that basis, my Committee and the Department will enter into a new MOU to reflect this. Secondly, the Secretary of State will brief me, as Chair of the Committee, on Privy Counsellor terms, as required. Thirdly, the Science and Technology Committee, which also has standing in this area, will be recognised as sharing the scrutiny responsibility, alongside the BEIS Committee, in addition to the work of the ISC. I welcome the comments made by the Chair of the Science and Technology Committee in this evening's debate.

My Committee has discussed this issue and wants to ensure effective scrutiny of the wide-ranging and important powers in the Bill. Given that the Government are unwilling to support their lordships' amendments this evening, and therefore having the main scrutiny responsibility resting with the BEIS Committee, the agreement to enter into a new MOU with my Committee, and to ensure the Chair's briefing on Privy Counsellor terms, is the next best available option. The BEIS Committee will continue to serve the House in holding the Department to account, and we will of course make it known if we are unable to do that effectively. I therefore look forward to hearing the Minister, when he sums up the debate on the Floor of the House this evening, reconfirming the commitments made by the Secretary of State and promptly agreeing the MOU in due course.

Paul Scully: I very much appreciate the spirit and detail with which this issue has been covered in the Chamber today and the consideration that has come from the other place. I am glad that we have been able to bring forward a number of amendments to improve the Bill, ensuring that we can keep the certainty for business and are responsive to the needs of business, while clearly keeping that central focus on national security. It is so important that we keep the flexibility in the definition of "national security", in order to future-proof the Bill, while none the less making sure that businesses and potential investors in this country know exactly the competitive regime we have here.

That goes to the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Adam Holloway) about PsiQuantum. Quantum computing is an exciting technology. The Bill tackles national security, but we must also ensure that the UK is a competitive, good home for technologies such as quantum computing, not least by making sure that we can unleash innovation, and make the UK the science superpower that is the envy of the world, with people wanting to come to build quantum technology units here in the UK, through our use of research and development and by ensuring that we are competitive in all our offerings, while being able to protect businesses for our national security.

I appreciate the kind words of the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Newcastle upon Tyne Central (Chi Onwurah), and indeed those of the hon. Member for Aberdeen South (Stephen Flynn) when he talked about my coming to this place. Indeed, not only did I follow my hon. Friend the Member for Stratford-on-Avon (Nadhim Zahawi) in leading on this Bill, but I stole his flag for my office, for fear of missing out otherwise when I am on my Zoom calls, because that does symbolise the vaccination process and the fact that the Union has come together—the UK has come together—in an amazing programme.

I am really keen to tackle two more points. The hon. Member for Richmond Park (Sarah Olney) talked about flexibility versus scrutiny, which I have already talked about. She mentioned that she did not want other countries or other businesses to undermine the UK economy. Clearly, we do not have to go that far to have people undermining the UK economy; we have only to go to the Liberal Democrats for that. It is important that we do not allow that speculation—the sort of muckraking we heard from that contribution—to detract from what is a really important Bill for the UK national security regime, and from that optimism and confidence that is needed for attracting investment within this country.

I understand the concerns of my right hon. Friend the Member for New Forest East (Dr Lewis), but I reiterate the fact that it is for the BEIS Committee to oversee the work of the Department. The Committee is particularly well placed to consider how effectively and efficiently the regime interacts with business communities and investors.

Mr Steve Baker: I thought my right hon. Friend the Chair of the ISC really made an open and shut case, and I hope that he will not mind my saying so. If the Minister will not amend the memorandum of understanding, will he be really clear why he will not do so, because my right hon. Friend made an open and shut case that he should?

Paul Scully: I appreciate my hon. Friend's intervention, and I will come back to that. Let me first develop the point about scrutiny. Clearly, the BEIS Committee has business expertise and is able to determine whether the regime is effective in scrutinising relevant acquisitions of control. I do question some of the narrative that I have heard that suggests that the BEIS Committee is not well placed to scrutinise the NSI regime. Furthermore, there are no restrictions on the ISC requesting further information from the unit or the Secretary of State where it falls under the remit of that Committee. There is no barrier to the BEIS Committee handling top secret material or other sensitive material subject to the agreement between the Department and the Chair of the Committee on appropriate handling.

As part of its role, the BEIS Committee can request information that may include sensitive material from the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, including on the Investment Security Unit's use of information provided by the intelligence and security agencies. The Select Committee already provides scrutiny over a number of sensitive areas, and there are mechanisms in place for it to scrutinise top secret information of this kind on a case-by-case basis.

As the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy explained in front of the BEIS Committee last week, and indeed in his letter to the Chairman of the BEIS Committee, which was copied to my right hon. Friend the Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark), Chair of the Science and Technology Committee, there are three Committees that should act in collaboration. The BEIS Committee provides the primary work of scrutinising matters within BEIS competence, but two important additional Committees—the Science and Technology Committee and, indeed, the ISC—were acting in an auxiliary capacity, making sure that the essential cross-cutting nature of the Investment Security Unit benefits from the rigour of those Committees, with expertise in each area that the unit covers.

[Paul Scully]

The Government therefore do not believe that we need to update the existing memorandum of understanding, because it is flexible and it does still pertain. As I have said, there is no dilution of the ISC's work in this. The current arrangements are sufficient to ensure that we can have the correct scrutiny of this.

Dr Lewis: I appreciate that I have tried the patience of the House, but on that one point let me say that the MOU is flexible in the sense that we can add new organisations to it. The flexibility is not being used by the Government because they are refusing to add this new unit to the MOU, so the flexibility is rendered nugatory.

Paul Scully: As I say, the direction from the Secretary of State in his letter to the Chairs of the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee and the Science and Technology Committee was clear in terms of his expectations of how this should work. The Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee should be the prime Committee to scrutinise BEIS competence, but similarly the Science and Technology Committee and the Intelligence and Security Committee should absolutely be there to look at places within their competence to ensure wider scrutiny.

As I said, we have listened to Parliament. We have tabled a number of amendments to increase the amount of information included in the annual report and the various threshold. We have responded.

Lords amendment 1 agreed to.

Lords amendments 2 to 10 agreed to.

Clause 61

ANNUAL REPORT

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 11.—(Paul Scully.)

The House divided: Ayes 366, Noes 260.

Division No. 277]

[11.45 pm

AYES

Adams, Nigel	Baron, Mr John
Afolami, Bim	Baynes, Simon
Afriyie, Adam	Bell, Aaron
Ahmad Khan, Imran	Benton, Scott
Aiken, Nickie	Beresford, Sir Paul
Aldous, Peter	Berry, rh Jake
Allan, Lucy	Bhatti, Saqib
Amess, Sir David	Blackman, Bob
Anderson, Lee	Blunt, Crispin
Anderson, Stuart	Bone, Mr Peter
Andrew, rh Stuart	Bottomley, Sir Peter
Ansell, Caroline	Bowie, Andrew
Argar, Edward	Bradley, Ben
Atherton, Sarah	Bradley, rh Karen
Atkins, Victoria	Braverman, rh Suella
Bacon, Gareth	Brereton, Jack
Bacon, Mr Richard	Bridgen, Andrew
Badenoch, Kemi	Brine, Steve
Bailey, Shaun	Bristow, Paul
Baillie, Siobhan	Britcliffe, Sara
Baker, Duncan	Brokenshire, rh James
Baker, Mr Steve	Browne, Anthony
Baldwin, Harriett	Bruce, Fiona
Barclay, rh Steve	Buchan, Felicity

Buckland, rh Robert	Fox, rh Dr Liam
Burghart, Alex	Francois, rh Mr Mark
Burns, rh Conor	Frazer, rh Lucy
Butler, Rob	Freeman, George
Cairns, rh Alun	Freer, Mike
Campbell, Mr Gregory	Fuller, Richard
Carter, Andy	Fysh, Mr Marcus
Cartledge, James	Gale, rh Sir Roger
Cash, Sir William	Garnier, Mark
Cates, Miriam	Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Caulfield, Maria	Gibb, rh Nick
Chalk, Alex	Gibson, Peter
Chishti, Rehman	Gideon, Jo
Churchill, Jo	Girvan, Paul
Clark, rh Greg	Glen, John
Clarke, Mr Simon	Goodwill, rh Mr Robert
Clarke, Theo	Gove, rh Michael
Clarke-Smith, Brendan	Graham, Richard
Clarkson, Chris	Grant, Mrs Helen
Cleverly, rh James	Gray, James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey	Grayling, rh Chris
Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse	Green, Chris
Colburn, Elliot	Green, rh Damian
Collins, Damian	Griffith, Andrew
Costa, Alberto	Griffiths, Kate
Courts, Robert	Grundy, James
Coutinho, Claire	Gullis, Jonathan
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey	Halfon, rh Robert
Crabb, rh Stephen	Hall, Luke
Crosbie, Virginia	Hammond, Stephen
Crouch, Tracey	Hancock, rh Matt
Daly, James	Hands, rh Greg
Davies, David T. C.	Harper, rh Mr Mark
Davies, Gareth	Harris, Rebecca
Davies, Dr James	Harrison, Trudy
Davies, Mims	Hart, Sally-Ann
Davies, Philip	Hart, rh Simon
Davis, rh Mr David	Hayes, rh Sir John
Davison, Dehenna	Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Dinenage, Caroline	Heapey, James
Dines, Miss Sarah	Heaton-Harris, Chris
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Henderson, Gordon
Docherty, Leo	Henry, Darren
Donaldson, rh Sir Jeffrey M.	Higginbotham, Antony
Donelan, Michelle	Hinds, rh Damian
Dorries, Ms Nadine	Hoare, Simon
Double, Steve	Holden, Mr Richard
Dowden, rh Oliver	Hollinrake, Kevin
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Drax, Richard	Holloway, Adam
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Holmes, Paul
Duddridge, James	Howell, John
Duguid, David	Howell, Paul
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Huddleston, Nigel
Dunne, rh Philip	Hudson, Dr Neil
Eastwood, Mark	Hughes, Eddie
Edwards, Ruth	Hunt, Jane
Ellis, rh Michael	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Hunt, Tom
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jack, rh Mr Alister
Eustice, rh George	Javid, rh Sajid
Evans, Dr Luke	Jayawardena, Mr Ranil
Evennett, rh Sir David	Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Everitt, Ben	Jenkinson, Mark
Fabricant, Michael	Jenkyns, Andrea
Farris, Laura	Jenrick, rh Robert
Fell, Simon	Johnson, rh Boris
Fletcher, Katherine	Johnson, Dr Caroline
Fletcher, Mark	Johnson, Gareth
Fletcher, Nick	Johnston, David
Ford, Vicky	Jones, Andrew
Foster, Kevin	Jones, rh Mr David

Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Knight, rh Sir Greg
 Knight, Julian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Langan, Robert
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Andrea
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Levy, Ian
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, rh Brandon
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian
 Lockhart, Carla
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lopresti, Jack
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Mackrory, Cheryl
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 McVey, rh Esther
 Menzies, Mark
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Millar, Robin
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 Norman, rh Jesse
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Paisley, Ian

Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paterson, rh Mr Owen
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quin, Jeremy
 Quince, Will
 Raab, rh Dominic
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Gavin
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shannon, Jim
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Sharma, rh Alok
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Skidmore, rh Chris
 Smith, Chloe
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, Jane
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, rh Bob
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunak, rh Rishi
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Thomas, Derek
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trevelyan, rh Anne-Marie
 Trott, Laura

Truss, rh Elizabeth
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vara, Shailesh
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warburton, David
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen

Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittaker, Craig
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Gavin
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wragg, Mr William
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:

**David Rutley and
 Scott Mann**

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Antoniazzi, Tonia
 Ashworth, rh 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
 Coyle, Neil
 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
 Flynn, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Green, Kate
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Haigh, Louise
 Hamilton, Fabian

Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hillier, Meg
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Dan
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 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
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Linden, David
 Lloyd, Tony
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 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
 Opong-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, rh 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
 Starmer, rh Keir
 Stephens, Chris
 Stevens, Jo
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thewliss, Alison
 Thomas, Gareth
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
 Thompson, Owen

Thomson, Richard
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Trickett, Jon
 Turner, Karl
 Twist, Liz
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whitford, Dr Philippa
 Whitley, Mick
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Winter, Beth
 Wishart, Pete
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Colleen Fletcher and
Bambos Charalambous

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 11 disagreed to.

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

Lords amendments 12 to 14 agreed to.

Lords amendment 15 disagreed to.

Ordered, That a Committee be appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments 11 and 15.

That Paul Scully, Michael Tomlinson, Jo Gideon, Matthew Pennycook and Stephen Flynn be members of the Committee;

That Paul Scully be the Chair of the Committee.

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—
(David Rutley.)

Committee to withdraw immediately; reason to be reported and communicated to the Lords.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): In order to observe social distancing, the Reasons Committee will meet in Committee Room 12.

Financial Services

11.57 pm

The Economic Secretary to the Treasury (John Glen):
I beg to move,

That the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Amendment) (High-Risk Countries) Regulations 2021 (S.I., 2021, No. 392), dated 24 March 2021, a copy of which was laid before this House on 25 March, be approved.

This Government are committed to combating money laundering and terrorist financing and recognise the threat of economic crime to our financial system. Illicit finance risks damaging not only our national security, but our reputation as a global financial centre by undermining the integrity and stability of our markets and institutions.

While it is right that we stamp out the scourge of illicit finance for the benefit of the United Kingdom, it is also right that we do so because of our responsibilities to the wider world. When illicit finance flourishes, so does serious and organised crime, such as people and drug trafficking and terrorism. These are acts that have huge social and economic costs and, of course, cause unimaginable suffering. That is why the Government are focused on making the UK a hostile environment for illicit finance. As part of this work, we have taken significant action to tackle money laundering while strengthening the response of the whole financial system to economic crime.

The bedrock of these efforts is the money laundering regulations. This is the legislative framework that sets out a number of requirements that businesses falling under its scope must take to combat money laundering and the financing of terrorism. These requirements include the need for firms to implement measures to identify and verify the people and organisations with whom they have a business relationship or for whom they facilitate transactions.

In addition, the regulations require financial institutions and other regulated sector businesses to carry out greater scrutiny or enhanced due diligence in respect of business relationships and transactions involving so-called high-risk third countries. These are nations that have been identified as having strategic deficiencies in their anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regimes, and that pose a significant threat to the UK's financial system. The statutory instrument under discussion this evening amends the definition of a high-risk third country in the money laundering regulations.

Allow me to explain the background to some of these changes. At present, the definition of a "high-risk third country" in the Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds (Information on the Payer) Regulations 2017 is linked to retained EU law and references the list of countries identified by the European Commission as high risk. This list was previously operated via EU law, which no longer has an effect in the UK. If our legislation is not amended, the list will become outdated and could leave the United Kingdom at risk from those operating in nations with poor money laundering and terrorist financing controls.

Furthermore, the United Kingdom will risk falling behind international standards set by the Financial Action Task Force or FATF. This instrument will therefore amend the money laundering regulations to remove

references to the EU's high-risk third countries list and insert a new list of countries identified in schedule 3ZA. This will be the UK's new autonomous high-risk third countries list. It will mirror exactly the list of countries identified by the Financial Action Task Force as having strategic deficiencies in their anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing regimes, and it will keep the UK in line with international standards.

The change that I have outlined will allow us to continue to protect businesses and the financial system from those who pose a significant threat, while ensuring that the United Kingdom remains at the forefront of global standards in combating money laundering and terrorist financing. I thank Members for their examination of this important piece of legislation, and hope that colleagues will join me in supporting it this evening.

12.1 am

Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab):
As we pass the midnight hour, we turn to the subject of money laundering. I am grateful to the Minister for his remarks and note that, alongside this statutory instrument, we had the statement earlier—I was going to say today, but it is now yesterday—by the Foreign Secretary, announcing sanctions against a number of named individuals. In that statement, the Foreign Secretary said that

"Our status as a global financial centre"

had made us both an attraction for investment and also a

"a honey pot—a lightning rod—for corrupt actors who seek to launder their...money through British banks or...businesses."

It is precisely because we are a global financial centre that there is a special responsibility on the United Kingdom to ensure that each part of that sector always operates to the highest standards. We cannot build a future as a laundromat for dirty money, we cannot turn the other way when wrongdoing takes place and we cannot take part in the denigration of institutions. Of course, we also need the highest possible standards in our own public life if we are going to talk to other countries about corruption. That means allegations being properly investigated; it means a duty of propriety with public money; it means procurement based on open criteria, not on inside connections; and it means that those at the very top of our Government should tell the truth.

We support this instrument, which updates the list of third countries where extra due diligence is required in relation to money laundering and terrorist financing. We understand that these matters lie at the heart of national security and financial security, and we want systems as robust as possible in place to guard against money laundering and terrorist financing. Our defences against money laundering are not just a matter of law and regulation, vital though those things are; they are also a matter of enforcement, so I have a couple of questions for the Minister. Why does he think that in the recent FinCEN reports the UK was considered to be a higher-risk jurisdiction? Why does he think that so many shell companies are based in the UK? What are the authorities doing about that?

Both the Royal United Services Institute and Spotlight on Corruption have identified Companies House reform as an urgent issue in the tackling of corruption and money laundering. What are the Government doing to

[Mr Pat McFadden]

drive this? Where are we with the draft Register of Overseas Entities Bill? There was nothing about it in the most recent Queen's Speech. Will there be anything about it in the next Queen's Speech? A foreign property register was supposed to be established this year. Will the Government meet that deadline? Finally, where are the Government on implementing the findings of the Intelligence and Security Committee's Russia report, which used the phrase "the London laundromat" in the first place?

Effective action against money laundering, terrorism and fraud is about a lot more than maintaining a list of countries; it requires action on all fronts if we are to fight these problems effectively. That is what we need to see.

12.5 am

Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP) [V]: I endorse a lot of the comments made by the Labour Front-Bench spokesperson, the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden); I found myself agreeing with a great deal of what he was saying.

The Scottish National party welcomes the measures in the regulations, but I certainly cannot share the Minister's glowing endorsement of the Government's record on money laundering or, indeed, the even more glowing self-praise that we heard from the Foreign Secretary earlier—or yesterday, as it is now. This is a Government who legislate against money laundering, or in favour of transparency in the world of big business only when the eruption of yet another scandal makes it politically too hot for them to continue to pretend that everything is fine. The Government are packed with hard-line Brexiteers—supporters of Brexit, the timing of which we now know was critical to those who had reason to want to keep British-regulated businesses clear of a tightening of European Union regulation.

The Government showed no hint of embarrassment when the first person to be hit with one of their much-trumpeted unexplained wealth orders turned out to be an east European multimillionaire whose immigration and UK citizenship applications had been fast-tracked purely because of the amount of money they owned—money the source of which was as unexplained and dodgy when they were allowed into the country as it was when the National Crime Agency finally caught up with them. Of course, even now the Government are mired in scandal over who really put up the cash for the spiffing up of the Prime Minister's flat. Over the weekend, there were persistent claims, which went noticeably unanswered, that the money might originally have come from an unauthorised donor and that, in effect, the money might have been laundered.

There is no indication of what, if anything, the Government are doing to address the fact that seven of the 21 countries on the high-risk list are members of the Commonwealth, and another is trying to join. How can anyone have confidence in the super influence that global Britain is supposed to have if it cannot even fix corruption in its own Commonwealth? It gets worse, because another name on that list is that of the Cayman Islands, a British overseas territory. The Government have at their disposal the constitutional tools to put an end to the Cayman Islands' grim reputation, but they

choose not to use them. In fact, recent events have suggested that the Government would rather use their muscle to prevent the Scottish Government from giving children the full protection of a United Nations convention than use it to free one of their few remaining colonies from dodgy business practices that—who knows?—may well have been learned from former colonial masters in the first place.

There may well be legitimate and honourable reasons why a company that never does any business in the Cayman Islands would choose to have its brass nameplate on a door there, rather than in the United Kingdom, North America or wherever the business is genuinely based, but we are talking about 100,000 company registrations in a place the population of which is lower than that of my constituency. As well as answering the questions from the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East, will the Minister tell us what he thinks attracts so many British companies to create wholly artificial structures to link them to Cayman Islands? If it is not tax dodging or money laundering, or to evade legitimate laws on business ethics and transparency, what on earth does he think they do it for? If he cannot think of a reason, perhaps he should ask some of his colleagues why they choose to register companies there. If you have the Companies House register and the Register of Members' Financial Interests open side by side on a computer screen, it does not take very many clicks of a mouse to find some very senior Tories who do exactly that.

As well as welcoming the regulations, the SNP will continue to keep up the pressure on the UK Government to bring in the further measures needed to clean up the entire financial services sector. The SNP can already claim a number of significant successes in forcing the Government to match their rhetoric with action and, for as long as there are MPs from Scotland in this place, we will continue to keep up that pressure.

12.10 am

John Glen: I thank the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East (Mr McFadden) and the hon. Member for Glenrothes (Peter Grant) for the points they raised. I shall try to address some of them. As I outlined earlier, the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Amendment) (High-Risk Countries) Regulations introduce a new autonomous high-risk third countries list, which will ensure that UK legislation to protect the financial system from money laundering and terrorist financing remains up to date.

The right hon. Gentleman raised a number of points. He first mentioned the FinCEN files, which are largely historic, but I will write to him about anything further I can on that. I met Spotlight on Corruption recently to be challenged on a number of aspects. He mentioned Companies House reform, on which work is ongoing, and there will be further announcements in due course.

The regulations represent the UK's new approach to high-risk third countries. It will allow the UK to take its own view on which countries are high risk without referencing EU legislation and to remain in line with international standards in the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing. The UK is internationally recognised as having some of the strongest controls worldwide for tackling money laundering and terrorist financing.

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (The Cotswolds) (Con): Who will be responsible for maintaining the list? Will it be Her Majesty's Treasury? What will be the procedure to review it so that countries may come on to it and existing countries may come off it if they no longer meet the criteria?

John Glen: I thank my hon. Friend for his reasonable question about the updating of the list. The Financial Action Task Force meets three times a year to determine the countries identified on its public lists. As such, the UK's new autonomous high-risk third countries list could be updated up to three times a year to mirror the decisions made by FATF. We will look at that carefully. FATF monitors the UK—indeed, it did a mutual evaluation of the UK in December 2018 and gave us one of the highest ever rankings—and constantly updates countries who are high risk around the world.

I will make a few points in response to the right hon. Member for Wolverhampton South East. In recent years, the Government have taken a number of actions to combat economic crime, including creating a new National Economic Crime Centre to co-ordinate the law enforcement response to economic crime, and passing the Criminal Finances Act 2017, which introduced new powers, including unexplained wealth orders and account freezing orders, and established the Office for Professional Body Anti-Money Laundering Supervision to improve the oversight of anti-money laundering compliance in the legal and accountancy sectors. In 2019, the Government and the private sector jointly published a landmark economic crime plan that outlines a comprehensive national response to economic crime such as fraud and money laundering, as mentioned by the right hon. Gentleman. It provides a collective articulation of 52 actions being taken in both the public and private sectors in the next three years to ensure that UK cannot be abused for economic crime.

The hon. Member for Glenrothes mentioned the Cayman Islands. As of the FATF plenary in February 2021, FATF collectively agreed to include the Cayman Islands in its list of jurisdictions under increased monitoring. As that is one of the FATF public lists that the UK autonomous list mirrors, the Cayman Islands will be included in the UK's list of high-risk third countries. The outstanding issues that the Cayman Islands must address are outlined in FATF's publicly available statement.

I hope that the House has found the debate informative and will join me in supporting this important step to ensure that we have an up-to-date framework to protect the financial system from money laundering and terrorist financing.

Question put and agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (TODAY)

Ordered,

That, at this day's sitting, the Speaker shall put the Question on the Motion in the name of Keir Starmer relating to the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (England) (Amendment) (No.7) Regulations (SI, 2021, No. 150) not later than 90 minutes after the commencement of proceedings on the motion for this Order; the business on that Motion may be proceeded with at any hour, though opposed; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(*David Duguid.*)

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): We will now have a two-minute suspension for cleaning.

12.14 am

Sitting suspended.

Public Health

12.16 am

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

That the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (England) (Amendment) (No. 7) Regulations 2021 (S.I., 2021, No. 150), dated 12 February 2021, a copy of which was laid before this House on 12 February 2021, be revoked.

The House meets as the UK reaches a critical moment in our battle against the coronavirus. In the past year, the British people have shown remarkable fortitude in the face of this deadly threat and made extraordinary sacrifices to protect our NHS and save lives. The roll-out of the vaccine is now giving real hope to people that there is light at the end of this long tunnel. For that, we give thanks to the scientific excellence that enabled the vaccine to be developed so quickly, while we are indebted to the remarkable work of our NHS, military, local government, volunteers and all those frontline workers who have worked tirelessly on the roll-out. But amid this sense of optimism we know that very real dangers remain from this deadly and unpredictable virus, and one of the key threats is the importation of new strains that could threaten the efficacy of those vaccines. As restrictions loosen and people start to interact more, the opportunity for variants to spread becomes far greater. That is why protecting our borders against emerging strains of covid is such a vital challenge, and I am afraid it is a challenge that the Government are failing miserably.

That is why today we are taking this unusual step of debating Government measures that have been in place for months. I make it clear that it is not our intention to divide the House or to vote these measures down, because having them in place is better than nothing at all, but the verdict on the Government's approach to quarantine is damning. They have failed to heed warnings that their inadequate system leaves the door open to new variants of covid, and the consequences are deeply worrying. Sadly, this is in keeping with the Government's approach to protecting our borders against covid from the very start of the pandemic, with no formal quarantine until June of last year, no testing at the border until this year, and no hotel quarantining until 15 February—and then only a half-baked system. For months, Labour Members have been calling for a comprehensive hotel quarantine system to guard against variants reaching these shores and undermining the huge collective effort to defeat this virus.

As islands, we should have a natural advantage in guarding against bringing the virus into the country. Yet in the early days we allowed millions of travellers to enter the country—23 million between 1 January and 31 March last year—while cases of covid were rocketing across Europe. Millions of people coming into the UK with no tests and no formal quarantine requirements will remain a terrible case study for this Government's approach of doing too little too late, lurching from one crisis to another, devoid of strategy. It is not as if Ministers were not told: constituents were travelling to our ports and airports, raising the lack of checks and tests from the start.

Of course I accept that dealing with a pandemic is hugely challenging, but the inability to protect our borders is a systemic failing. That failure to plan has made the current quarantine system ineffective and frankly dangerous. By extending the red list to only

40 countries, the Government are leaving the door wide open for new variants to enter the UK. On 1 February we gave MPs the opportunity to vote for a comprehensive hotel quarantine system and a sector support deal for the aviation sector, which Labour has been calling on the Government to introduce for months. The Government again refused to do what was necessary to protect our borders against covid.

There are a number of key reasons why a limited list is an ineffective strategy. Labour Members have set out those reasons, and sadly the warnings have come to pass. First, the hard truth is that we have no certainty about where the next dangerous covid strain will emerge. The thoughts of the whole House will, I am sure, be with the people of India, given the heart-breaking scenes we have seen. Countries not on the red list could have new variants in circulation that are spread by travellers to the UK before they are recognised and acted on. That is exactly what happened with the variant from India, which was classed as a variant under investigation in the UK only last week. Warning No.1 was ignored, and it came to pass.

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I am listening carefully to the right hon. Gentleman. How long does he propose that his regime would be in place? By worrying about potential variants coming from overseas, he seems effectively to be arguing for a system that will be in place forever, or at least until every other country is vaccinated. What is his position?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: No, I am not suggesting for a moment that such a system should be in place forever, and clearly there has to be scientific evidence about that. However, we certainly need to be at a more advanced stage of our own roll-out before we give such consideration, as the right hon. Gentleman suggests. The comprehensive hotel quarantine system should already have been in place.

The second weakness in the current position is that there are countries with significant outbreaks of the South African and Brazilian variants that are not even on the red list. We understand that the recent South African strain discovered in south London came to the UK via a traveller from an African country not on the red list. Warning No. 2 was ignored, and it came to pass. We know that people travelling to the UK on connecting journeys from red list countries have been mixing with people from non-red list countries on planes and in airports, creating dangerous opportunities for cross-infection. We have seen that in scenes from airports in recent months. Warning No. 3 was ignored, and it came to pass.

The Government try to say that their quarantine measures are tough, but the reality suggests otherwise. It is not just the Opposition giving these warnings. Minutes from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies on 21 January show that Ministers were told

“that reactive, geographically targeted travel bans cannot be relied upon to stop importation of new variants...due to the time lag between the emergence and identification of variants of concern, and the potential for indirect travel via a third country.”

When the director general of Border Force gave evidence to the Home Affairs Committee, he set out a damning statistic that of the 15,000 people entering the country each day, only around 1% were entering hotel quarantine. That leaves 99% of visitors entering the

country with virtually no controls. It is no use the Government saying that other quarantine measures in place are working, because their own figures show that just three in every 100 people quarantining have been successfully contacted. It is a record of negligence that leaves the doors open.

We know things are in a dire state when a video exists of the Home Secretary speaking against her own quarantine policy, and even the implementation of the half-baked measures we have now has been beset by mismanagement. It took 18 days after the announcement on 27 January for hotel quarantine to begin—more time lost. Even now, I hear reports from colleagues about mismanagement of the system—people unable to book in, poor service, lack of support for disabled people, and exceptions not working as they should for people in difficult circumstances. Then there is the Government's glacial pace of adding countries to the red list.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): May I probe a bit further the point raised by my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper) about the regime the right hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) is proposing? The right hon. Gentleman said he would like to see our domestic vaccine programme a little further advanced and mentioned the figure of 99%. Let me give him another 99% figure: groups 1 to 9 on the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation list account for 99% of those who are hospitalised and then die from covid. Given that we have already vaccinated those groups and that by the end of July we will have offered a vaccination to the whole adult population, what more does he want?

Nick Thomas-Symonds: It is clearly about our own vaccination roll-out, but it is also about vaccination rates around the world, as the hon. Gentleman knows. However, I point out to him and to his right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean that this system should already have been in place, and I have been arguing for it for several months. I had the same debate with the Minister two months ago, back in February.

I think people watching this debate will be staggered to discover that travellers from India were required to isolate in hotels only from Friday, at a time when India, sadly, is in the midst of a devastating wave, with the highest recorded daily cases of covid anywhere in the world. The stakes for these failures are incredibly high. We have seen outbreaks of variants from South Africa, Brazil and India here in the UK. Until now, strict lockdown conditions are likely to have helped to halt the spread, but as lockdowns lift that handbrake comes off. The Government's blasé attitude was summed up by the Prime Minister himself when he predicted that a third wave from Europe would

“wash up on our shores”.

It does not have to be this way. Throughout the crisis, the Government should have acted more decisively to secure our borders from the first emergence of the virus to failing to act swiftly on the devastating outbreak in India. In debating this statutory instrument, we are clear that the measures are nowhere near enough to provide the protections our country needs. The hopes of our country rely on guarding against vaccine-resistant strains of the virus reaching the UK, but the Government are just not delivering the protections we need. The Government must think again; they must bring forward

the long-awaited sector support deal for our aviation industry and measures that deliver the comprehensive hotel quarantine system the country so desperately needs.

12.28 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Jo Churchill): I agreed with the right hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds) when he thanked the scientists for their unfailing work to get the vaccine, the Army for its efforts to help to deliver the vaccine, and the NHS workers up and down the country for getting the vaccine into arms. From that point onward, however, there was not a great deal with which I could agree.

On 15 February, we introduced the managed quarantine service as a proportionate approach. From that date, arrivals from countries on the red list were subject to additional measures, including a requirement to quarantine in managed hotels. We have put in place a proportionate system, which allows those with residence rights and British and Irish nationals who live in the UK to return home, but manages the risk of importing new covid variants. We have signed contracts with 29 hotels to provide accommodation for those in quarantine; as and when demand increases, we can bring on additional hotel capacity. I visited one of the hotels—the Radisson Blu—and was reassured by what I saw. To make the scheme effective, we have introduced specific and limited exemptions to manage the quarantine, and those are for the continuation of essential services, but also in very limited compassionate and medical circumstances—for example, for those visiting a dying relative or with medical evidence that they cannot safely quarantine for 10 days in a hotel. I recognise the significant impact that requiring quarantine in hotels has on individuals, not least financially.

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): Quite apart from the expense, my British Muslim constituents from Wycombe—one family in particular—who found themselves in a hotel were served bacon. That is obviously not halal food, and they found it difficult to get halal food. This of course is Ramadan, and they found it was difficult to be fed at the appropriate times for Ramadan. Will the Minister confirm that this is not the Government's policy, and that the hotel should be doing much better for people at this time?

Jo Churchill: I would be happy to confirm to my hon. Friend that it is incumbent on hotels to support Muslim guests during their time there, but particularly at this time of Ramadan to be aware of their needs. Hotels will arrange for halal and vegetarian options to ensure that people's needs are catered for, and if they are observing fasting during Ramadan, hotels will arrange to provide meals at suhoor and at iftar. They are also quite happy to support individuals who want to take their tests at an appropriate time of day as well—once fasting is broken, for example—and to provide extra clean towels in order to pray. I would be happy to speak to my hon. Friend afterwards and make sure that we can raise these matters immediately. However, I would urge his constituents and anybody else who is failing to get their requirements met to raise the matter, because it is important that we deal with them when people are in managed quarantine. This is a service, and our aim is to make it easy as possible for individuals.

Sir Charles Walker (Broxbourne) (Con): Will the Minister give way on testing?

Jo Churchill: Yes, I will, but then I would like to make a little progress.

Sir Charles Walker: Can the Minister explain to the House, when testing is done in hotels—there is now quite a good sample or quite a good group of people—what percentage of those tests over the 10-day period are picking up traces of covid, and when covid is identified, what percentage of those cases are the South African variant, the Indian variant or the Brazilian variant?

Jo Churchill: I will come on in my speech to how we are picking those up, and the fact that we have world-renowned genomic sequencing actually helps us in that. We have identified, in recent days, 132 cases of the Indian variant of interest. Obviously with those, as when we pick up any positive test on day 2, we are genomic sequencing them to ensure that we have the correct information, so that we can make sure that we are following up and contacting people if they are in quarantine at home. In a red list scenario, people are in a managed quarantine facility, and their period of isolation will be expected to start from then. For the exact differences, I will be happy to write to my hon. Friend, because I do not have all the different numbers for all the different variants on me at the moment.

As I have said, to make the scheme effective, we have made limited circumstances where exemptions can be had. On the impact financially, for those who need it there are deferred payment plans. Alongside managed quarantine, we have also introduced mandatory testing, meaning travellers are required to pre-book tests before they travel. Testing takes place on day two and day eight, and allows us, as I have said, to use our world-renowned genomic sequencing expertise to better track any new cases that might be brought into the country and detect new variants.

Travellers will have to have had a pre-departure test within 72 hours of flying, and carriers should not let individuals board without a correctly filled in passenger locator form, so that we know where people are travelling onward to, and when from a red list country, that they have booked their place in a managed quarantine facility or hotel. If the carrier does not do this, they will face fines via enforcement.

Each of the measures we have introduced adds another layer of protection against the transmission of the virus, reduces the risk of a new and dangerous strain being imported and keeps people safe. However, we do not take lightly adding any country to the red list, but keep things under constant review. In India, for example, there has been an extremely rapid rise in cases detected throughout April. Normally there is a high volume of travel between India and the UK. We have already seen 132 cases of the variant under investigation appear in the UK, and that is why we have acted. As the Prime Minister said:

“We stand side by side with India in the shared fight against COVID-19”,

and our thoughts and prayers are with them at what is the most incredibly difficult time.

These decisions are based on risk assessments produced from the Joint Biosecurity Centre, which monitors the spread of variants of concern internationally. The risk assessments cover a range of factors for each country, including surveillance, genomic sequencing, in-country community transmission, evidence of exportation of new variants and travel connectivity. Informed by evidence, including JBC’s analysis and other relevant public health input information, decisions are taken by Ministers.

It is important to note—this probably goes to the comment made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper)—that countries are also removed from the list under our particular proposals. Portugal and Mauritius, for example, have been removed from the list to allow travel to commence following evidence showing that the risk of importing a variant of concern from those areas has reduced.

Speed of action where variants of concern are found in the community, with urgent tracing and investigation, can identify and rapidly control further transmission and the variant. We believe that the combination of strong border measures, managed quarantine, testing and enforcement remains the best way to effectively reduce the public health risk of importing variants of concern, as public safety is the driving force. We recognise that the additions to the red list have meant challenging times for the airport sector—a crucial sector to the economy—and businesses across the industry can draw on the unprecedented package of economic measures that we have put in place to support them.

I am grateful for the continued efforts of individuals, airline carriers, quarantine facilities, border forces and others to help us tackle the global pandemic by helping everyone follow the rules, protecting each other and saving lives. The Government objective is to see a safe and sustainable return to international travel for business and pleasure. The current border regimes will remain in place for the time being, as will the restrictions on outward-bound international travel, because at the moment we should not be going anywhere.

The global travel taskforce is developing a framework that will facilitate greater travel when the time is right. There is no single measure that mitigates the risk entirely, and each layer we have introduced helps to reduce the risk. The managed quarantine service is complemented by testing, and those measures have been put in place for all arrivals. The mandatory testing regime improves the efficacy of the post-travel isolation period for preventing onward transmission of those imported cases.

Given the incredible progress made on the vaccination programme, as well as the hard work of British people to bring down the rates, it is more important than ever that we continue to protect people with a strong approach. As the House knows, there are restrictions on travelling abroad from England, and the individual must have a justified reason, but there are those who feel we have not gone far enough and those who feel we have gone too far. That probably indicates that we are where we need to be.

However, our rationale for this policy remains clear: we must continue to be alert and able to take swift action to mitigate any negative impact on vaccine effectiveness from the risk of variants of concern and broader public health challenges. That also includes at airports. The right hon. Member for Torfaen asked me about keeping

people separated. Every step is taken to reduce risk to minimise potential for passenger interaction, including tests before departure, social distancing, mandatory mask wearing, the cleaning of facilities and specific lanes to minimise any interaction between those who have come from red list countries and those who have come from amber list countries. A number of airports, including Britain's busiest airport, Heathrow, have introduced additional measures to separate passengers from the red list ahead of the immigration hall in order to stop them mixing, so it is not fair on those who have been working so hard to produce a system that we can live and work with to say that they are not doing anything. I know this is difficult for families who have been impacted by the introduction of hotel quarantine. However, they are part of the national effort. While we learn more about variants of concern and potential new strains, it is right that we continue to take a cautious approach, allowing us to continue with the road map and move closer to a more normal, yet covid-tinged life.

12.40 am

Mr Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con): I do not intend to detain the House for too long, but I have some questions, and I will explain to the Minister why I am raising them now. I think that they are in order. If I understand this correctly, the Government have indicated that, as of 17 May, more international travel may well be possible, subject to a review, and they have indicated that they will give people a week's notice of those changes. Mr Deputy Speaker, you will have spotted that the date for that announcement to take place is when we are expecting the House to be prorogued before the state opening of Parliament, so this is probably the last opportunity—depending on whether we have Transport questions on Thursday—for Members to ask Ministers questions about the international travel regime before it might change. I happen to think it is important that those questions are asked in the House, rather than simply being left to be asked at a press conference.

Before I set out those questions, however, let me just follow up my question to the right hon. Member for Torfaen (Nick Thomas-Symonds), who opened the debate for the Labour party. He answered one of my questions, when I could not quite work out why Labour had tabled a motion to revoke these regulations. He confirmed that Labour does not intend to press that to a vote, which makes sense, but he did not really deal with the other question I asked or with the companion question that my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine) asked. I pressed the right hon. Gentleman on how long he felt a tougher regime should be in place, and in answer to me he indicated that it should be dependent on our vaccination roll-out, whereas in answer to my hon. Friend, he seemed to suggest that it would depend on what was going on around the world.

The reason that I am labouring this point—I am going to press the Minister on it as well—relates to what the regime is trying to deliver. If this is about worrying about what is going on in the rest of the world—given that it is entirely possible, even with a fair wind, that we will not have vaccinated the adult population around the world until the end of next year, 2022—this whole travel regime could be in place for the rest of this year and the whole of next year, which has very significant implications. If, however, the regime is to stay in place

until we have vaccinated every adult in this country, that would have very different implications, as my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester pointed out, as we will have offered every adult a vaccination by July.

My question to the Minister is: will she set out for the House what the Government's current thinking is? She has indicated that the regime should stay in place for little while, but I note that the explanatory memorandum to these regulations reminds us that the overall international travel regulations will cease to have effect on 8 June this year. That is not far into the future, so the Government will have to make a decision about whether to allow those regulations to lapse on 8 June, effectively resulting in no controls on international travel or, whether—as I suspect is more likely—to bring in further regulations, in which case they will need to be clear about how long they wish those regulations to remain in place.

The exchange between myself, my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester and the right hon. Member for Torfaen illustrated this question. Is this about how well we have rolled out vaccinations in the UK and therefore protected our population from covid? The Minister will know that we already have in place very good genomic sequencing, and as I understand it, all the manufacturers and developers are ready to tweak the vaccines they have already developed, if the genomic sequencing indicates any need to do so. At the moment, although these variants are called variants of concern, none of them evades the vaccine. My understanding is that the vaccines are effective against all of them, certainly in terms of preventing serious disease, hospitalisation and death. There is, I understand, a question mark about the extent to which the vaccines protect against the South African variant as far as mild disease is concerned, but if it enables mild disease to take hold then I am not sure that is something about which we need to be enormously concerned.

I press that point because if the Government are going to take the view that they are so worried about a potential variant that does not yet exist developing somewhere in the world and undermining the efficacy of our vaccine position, then it seems to me that that means we will have to keep the regulations in place at least until the whole of the world is vaccinated and the virus is driven down to a very low level globally. That may not be until the end of next year, on a best-case scenario. That has really quite dramatic consequences for the airline industry, the travel industry and the 3 million people who work in it, and the freedoms of our population, so if the Minister could say a little bit about that, that would be helpful.

Steve Brine: Perhaps it would be helpful if the Government were to say what level of reduced efficacy they would consider to be a cause for concern. Any flu vaccine that I ever purchased when I was doing the Minister's job had about 60% efficacy. The three vaccines being used at the moment are way ahead of that, so even a reduction in efficacy of 10% would still significantly outpace the flu vaccine we currently roll out. Would it be helpful if the Government said at which level it would drop to where the indicators would flash red?

Mr Harper: That is a very good question. More widely, it would be helpful if the Government and their scientific advisers had a slightly better conversation with the public about variants and the impact they may have on vaccine efficacy, rather than this constant—I

[Mr Harper]

accept this is not always how they intend it, but it is the way it gets reported—conversation about scary variants or mutants.

Actually, at the moment—I am sure the Minister will correct me if I am wrong—all the variants we are aware of are dealt with by the existing vaccine portfolio to a greater or lesser degree. What we are concerned about is what may come along in the future, but we have a very good system in this country at least. My understanding is that none of the vaccine manufacturers yet feel they have to change the design of their vaccines to deal with any variant we are currently aware of anywhere in the world.

One further point I want to make is that how we name variants—the Kent variant, the South African variant, the Indian variant—is not actually terribly helpful. It gives the impression to the public that the variants only come from specific geographic parts of the world and if only we put in a sufficiently robust border arrangement, we could keep them out. The reality, of course, is that those variants could occur anywhere in the world, including here in the United Kingdom. I think I am right in saying that the best advice that exists is that even an incredibly tough border regime can, at best, only slow the transmission of viruses, rather than keep them out forever. At some point we will have to decide when we will allow travel to get back to normal, which is why I asked whether that would be about how the world is vaccinated or how the United Kingdom is vaccinated. I do not think that question has been sufficiently answered.

Specifically on the regulations, there is reference to the ports by which people are allowed to enter the United Kingdom. I want to ask one or two questions about ports of entry. The Minister answered some of this, in response to the concerns raised by the shadow Home Secretary, when talking about the efforts that Heathrow in particular has put in place to try to keep people separate. However, it is the case, having looked at pictures, and listened to the challenges faced by airport operators and the first-hand testimony of people travelling, that people from different countries, including red list countries and non-red list countries, are kept in airports for significant periods of time in a way that is not particularly well socially distanced. That is clearly a risk, if we then insist that they will have to spend time in quarantine, when they have just spent a considerable period of time next to people from completely different countries.

I mention that because I wonder what plans the Government have in place, as they think about increasing the volume of international travel, to automate the process. The Minister will be aware—I am, as a former Immigration Minister—that one of the ways in which we deal with the volumes going through airports is to have e-gates to automate the process of checking people's travel documents. In order to deal with a significant increase in volume, the testing information on the passenger locator form will, I think, have to be put into some digital form, if airports are to have any hope of dealing with the volume of passengers. Given a significant increase in passenger volumes, even with an increase in the number of Border Force staff, in no way will airports be able to cope with checking all that information and dealing with the volume of flights without becoming absolutely overwhelmed. If the Government might change the position in just a couple of weeks' time, will the Minister say how far forward those plans are?

My final point—you will be pleased to know, Mr Deputy Speaker—is about vaccine passports. I am not at all persuaded of domestic vaccine passports. They run a great risk of creating a two-tier society. Also, once we have vaccinated the adult population, in particular with the take-up rate among the groups so far of more than 95%, I am not at all sure what a domestic vaccine passport gets us once we have reached that level of vaccination coverage.

It seems to me that vaccine passports would be a big mistake. As the Paymaster General, who responded to the debate last Thursday, said to me, domestic vaccine passports and international ones are quite separate and should be treated separately, and it would be a mistake to run them together. I was heartened to hear that, and I hope that is the position the Government will stick to.

Internationally, however, some questions arise from the regime put in place here. I am much more relaxed about international vaccine passports than about domestic ones. We have already have precedents—people have to have yellow fever vaccinations to go to specific countries—and of course if a country requires people to be vaccinated to enter it, it is entirely up to it what rules are set for people who want to visit that country.

My first question for the Minister is because I understand that the World Health Organisation states in its most up-to-date policy paper of 5 February—the latest one on its website—that it does not recommend that countries have proof of covid vaccination to exist before they allow people to travel. The reason it sets that out is that it fears that that would in effect incentivise countries that had already had a good roll-out of vaccine to hog the global supplies for themselves, setting up some unfortunate sets of incentives. That is the organisation's latest position. Will the Minister say whether the British Government will go along with that position?

I have two questions. First, if the UK Government ease up on the travel rules in May, is their position that they will require foreign nationals to be vaccinated before they come to the United Kingdom, or will the Government stick to the testing regime? Secondly, what steps have the Government put in place, working with the International Air Transport Association and other international bodies, for any kind of international vaccine passport? Perhaps the Minister will update the House on the Government's plans.

I raise that because, if the Government announce a change to the international position in the next couple of weeks, knowing what plans are under way—and, I hope, this House being asked for its authorisation to implement such measures—would be very welcome. With those few questions, I conclude my remarks.

12.54 am

Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab) [V]: I want to highlight quickly how our poorly drawn-up covid self-isolation and quarantine regulations are causing difficulties for UK businesses in competition with EU companies that are following different regulations. That is putting UK businesses at a disadvantage.

I was contacted by David Fletcher from GEV Group, which has its headquarters in my constituency. It is a market leader in critical field repair services to the wind energy industry, specialising in wind turbine blade repair, and it exports its services all over Europe, the US and the far east. Of course, it has had to reorganise and

reprioritise services due to the pandemic, but in some cases, as hon. Members can imagine, where wind turbine blades have suffered significant damage, that cannot wait.

The company of course understands the need for covid security and taking precautions, but it finds itself at a significant disadvantage to its European competitors, which are operating under a different approach to travel for frontier workers. Essentially, the EU guidelines provide specific instructions for posted and frontier workers, noting that health screening must be carried out under the same conditions as for nationals exercising the same occupation.

GEV informs me that the UK guidelines have a much looser definition of frontier workers and do not appear to have considered all the likely circumstances they will face. The key issue for GEV is the line in the UK guidance that states that travel must be on a weekly basis. Its technicians typically travel on a fortnightly rotation, as they are stationed offshore on a vessel for that duration. That means that, upon return, they have to observe the eight-day quarantine period, which has led to most of the company's workforce not wanting to travel. As a consequence, it is losing work to its European counterparts.

I urge the Minister to look at realigning the rules with the EU so that GEV and other UK companies that export services can remain competitive. I am more than happy to write to her on this matter, and I really hope that this simple issue can be resolved very quickly.

12.56 am

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: It is late and I will be brief. Over the Easter weekend, I walked through a tragic situation concerning a constituent that reflects the insufficiency of the regulations before the House this evening. I certainly echo many of the concerns that have already been expressed in the debate.

My constituent could not travel back to the UK to see her mother because her mother was in a care home. However, her mother's condition suddenly deteriorated, so she raced back to see her. As she had taken the two vaccines and had already tested negative, she travelled through hub airports. In the first, she was completely isolated from other passengers; in the second, she mingled with red and green passengers. She then touched down in the UK.

Sadly, my constituent's mother passed away. My constituent had to go to a quarantine hotel, whereas many of the people she had been mingling with just hours before were free to travel wherever they wanted. When she arrived—obviously, she paid an extortionate amount for it—she was put in a poorly ventilated room and allowed out for only 20 minutes a day. She was in deep grief. She wanted to be at home with her father—isolating, absolutely—but that was denied. Over the Easter weekend, she had two appeals and private transport was arranged, but she could not leave that quarantine situation.

With regard to my constituent's wellbeing, she felt imprisoned, with no support. When I raised the issue of support, all I was told was that she could be assessed for suicide. She was in deep grief. She needed to be with family, isolating as she was. The only concession I was given was that her father, who was also mourning, could

travel to Birmingham from York and, at the full cost of £1,750, stay at the hotel for the full quarantine period. He had legal matters to deal with besides his grief. Other constituents have highlighted the lack of support around mental health.

My constituent is not a criminal, and she would follow all public health guidance required of her, including testing and whatever was needed by a local public health team. Her mother had just died, she was broken with grief, and no one had the capacity to find a solution, while others she met on her journey were free to go anywhere in the UK. That is why these regulations are not fit for purpose.

Further to that, my constituent was told that she would be able to go to the funeral, but if she was to do so, her father would have to drive for more than 12 hours to collect her and then return her, in the midst of his grief. That is not only dispassionate but dangerous—and she would be among 29 other people at the funeral, but she was not allowed to stay at home with just her father. Schedule B1A, paragraph 13, needs significant amendment. It is time to understand humanity and infection control. Both can be achieved, but that is not found in these regulations. So I urge the Government to get a grip of these really important issues and to get a heart.

1 am

Jo Churchill: There were a considerable number of questions from my right hon. Friend the Member for Forest of Dean (Mr Harper). I will try to cover those that I heard, but he will forgive me if I write to him on the matters for which I do not have the immediate answers. Let me say as a slight cover-all that many of the things to which he alluded will be brought forward by the global travel taskforce when it starts to lay out the approach to restarting international travel safely, aligned with the domestic road map. I appreciate that he said he felt that this was his last chance to raise this issue while the House was sitting, because, given the dates, it is highly likely that that will happen while we are prorogued or shortly after. However, this is live and dynamic at the moment, and I can give him few answers on the specific questions he raised on the global taskforce and what it will say in three weeks' time about future travel arrangements. Although I apologise for that, there is really nothing I can say to pre-empt that set of instructions as to how and when we are going to lift restrictions, and the use of a traffic light system, where countries will be categorised as red, amber or green, and how we deal with people in that space.

Mr Harper: Let us assume, based on the timings that have been announced, that the results of the global travel taskforce are going to be announced when the House is not sitting. May I get an assurance from the Minister, then, that on the first day after the state opening of Parliament that it is permitted to have a statement there will be a statement at that Dispatch Box by a Minister, so that we are able to ask questions about the results of the global travel taskforce? Will she assure me that that will take place at the earliest possible opportunity?

Jo Churchill: I thank my right hon. Friend for that. I assure him that I will take that request back. As he knows, I cannot commit to that at the Dispatch Box.

[Jo Churchill]

My right hon. Friend asked which ports of entry people can fly into, why we have chosen those ports, whether we are extending them and what happens if someone from a red list country is booking in to arrive at a non-designated port. If someone has a pre-existing booking to a non-designated port, it is the individual's responsibility to change it to a designated port. Carriers are not permitted to carry anyone who has been in a red list country in the previous 10 days to any port of entry other than those that are specified. Currently, those designated ports are clearly Heathrow, Gatwick, London City, Birmingham and Farnborough.

I ask the hon. Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) to write to me, but I gently say to her and to the hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell)—I cannot discuss the specifics of the case of her constituent, for whom I have the greatest sympathy—that the challenge here is that their Front-Bench team are asking for stricter restrictions the whole time, across the piece. If all we then do is build more and more exemptions into the system, we will have a looser system than the one we are endeavouring to make sure is proportionate, delivers in a way that manages the arrivals from red zone countries, and has a degree of flexibility to ensure that as the system changes we can build countries back into travel and restrict others where there may be a flare-up.

It is right, as I have explained, that all these measures are kept under constant review. The combination of quarantine requirements for all international arrivals means that those arriving from countries presenting with the highest risk are asked to use the Government-approved hotel quarantine facilities. There is a robust testing regime prior to departure and then again on arrival. Enforcement is put in place if required. As we still have more to learn about the virus and, as my right hon. Friend said, more understanding to acquire, we must make sure that our approach is based on the best evidence, and that it is proportionate. That is the responsible approach to take to safeguard progress in defeating the virus and to make sure that we can all get back to some degree of normality.

Mr Harper: Before my hon. Friend sits down, may I press her on one further point? I accept that she cannot set out answers to my detailed questions until the global travel taskforce has presented its outcome and Ministers have made their decisions. The central question I did ask though requires a fairly wide policy decision. It may be that that will be decided by the global travel taskforce as well. Fundamentally, is our travel regime and how much protection we are going to have based on the extent to which we have vaccinated the British public, which is obviously proceeding at pace and suggests that we would be able to relax these measures sometime during the summer, or will it be based on the extent of the virus globally, which suggests, listening to some of the best voices on this, that we will be looking more towards the end of next year. That does not seem to me to depend on what the global travel taskforce is deciding. It possibly does, but perhaps she could furnish the House with an idea.

Jo Churchill: I do hate to disappoint my right hon. Friend, but I will have to do so once again. The answer to that question will appear with the global taskforce as

we move into the coming months. In addition to that, there is a package that is linked to the work of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster on passport certification. We want to have a coherent integrated system that provides a proportionate response as we move forward.

Mr Steve Baker: On this point of coherence, I know that my hon. Friend cannot comment on the outcome of the taskforce, but does she agree that it is very important that, for all of these decisions on red listing, the evidence is clearly presented to the public so that they can see that countries are being treated fairly? Diasporas do bring with them some of their politics, and she will understand that, in particular, pairs of countries need to be seen to be treated fairly without any particular geopolitical preference. She will understand the point I am making, so can we always present to the public the evidence for the red listing?

Jo Churchill: We always try to make sure that we present the evidence with the rationale behind what we are doing. Ultimately, the driving force behind what we are doing is to make sure that we keep our residents safe and that we help other countries to keep their residents safe. The way that I will finish is that, as we all know, until everyone is safe, none of us is safe.

1.9 am

Nick Thomas-Symonds: I have already indicated that it is not my intention to push the motion to a vote. I simply thank everyone who has contributed to the debate, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle (Emma Hardy) and my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell), who spoke very movingly about the situation faced by her constituent. I urge the Minister to look at the system of exemptions, the system of booking, the standard of service and the support for people in hotel quarantine. I also once again urge the Government to change course and introduce a comprehensive system of hotel quarantine.

Question negatived.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): For those leaving the Chamber—please do so in a covid-friendly way at 10 minutes past 1 in the morning.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

EXITING THE EUROPEAN UNION (CLIMATE CHANGE)

That the draft Greenhouse Gas Emissions (Kyoto Protocol Registry) Regulations 2021, which were laid before this House on 25 February, be approved.—(*David T. C. Davies.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

That the draft Single Use Carrier Bags Charges (England) (Amendment) Order 2021, which was laid before this House on 4 March, be approved.—(*David T. C. Davies.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

PUBLIC HEALTH

That the Public Health (Coronavirus) (Protection from Eviction) (England) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (S.I., 2021, No. 362), dated 19 March 2021, a copy of which was laid before this House on 22 March, be approved.—(*David T. C. Davies.*)

Question agreed to.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (27, 28 & 29 APRIL)

Ordered,

That,

(1) at the sittings on Tuesday 27 April, Wednesday 28 April and Thursday 29 April, the Speaker shall not adjourn the House until any Message from the Lords has been received and any Committee to draw up Reasons which has been appointed at that day's sitting has reported; and,

(2) in respect of the sitting on Thursday 29 April, the Speaker shall not adjourn the House, in the event that a Message from the Lords Commissioners is expected, until that Message has been received.—(*David T. C. Davies.*)

**Emergency Services Personnel:
Awards for Next of Kin**

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(*David T. C. Davies.*)

1.11 am

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I thank Mr Speaker for allowing me to have this Adjournment debate, although it seems to be a rather two-edged weapon tonight. I thought I was in a good mood, until I saw the time that we would have to do it, but I am not alone—I am with lots of friends—and I am particularly pleased that the Minister responding, my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty), is a very good friend of mine and new in the Ministry, so he is having a bit of, shall we say, battlefield inoculation.

At about 4.30 am on 7 December 1982, I helped to pull a young woman called Tina Collins out of the wreckage of a pub called the Droppin' Well in Northern Ireland. She had recently been married to 20-year-old Clinton Collins, my company clerk, who I had promoted to lance corporal the day before. I was then a major in the Cheshire Regiment serving at Ballykelly in Ulster. To celebrate Clinton's promotion, he had taken Tina to the Droppin' Well for the evening, until, at about 10 past 11, a huge bomb blew the place apart. Tina and Clinton were together and she later told me that he had shielded her with his body when the explosion occurred. Maybe he did; I hope so.

Clinton was killed—I think, almost immediately—and Tina survived, although in great shock. I was the incident commander and it took us about five and a half hours to recover Tina from where she was lying, under concrete beside the still body of her husband. In all, 17 people were killed that evening and 11 of them were soldiers, six of them from my own company. What happened that night has marked me for life and I will never forget the horror of it.

Then, on 1 July 2009, the Defence Secretary announced in this place that recognised next of kin of service personnel killed on operations would qualify for a commemorative emblem called the Elizabeth Cross. Tina Collins, of course, received it, and it was my real honour to have her visit me in Parliament after I became an MP in 2010. Regimental headquarters of all regiments, particularly thinking of the Cheshire Regiment, have contacted most of the next of kin of their soldiers killed since 1948—the date from which the emblem has been awarded—and appropriate awards have been made. That emblem is made of a silver cross rather like the size of a Military Cross, which my father was awarded. When I sit in my office and look at my father's decorations on the wall, I always think of the Elizabeth Cross as well. The emblem comes in a large form about two inches square and a miniature form. It is accompanied by a scroll signed by Her Majesty the Queen bearing the name of the person who lost their life in the service of their country.

All I can say, and the Minister will agree with me here, is that anyone I have met who has been given this badge wears it with huge pride, and I—and we all—hope it is of some, albeit limited, succour to them. But it does not make sense to me that those who protect us in non-military uniforms, such as the police, fire and ambulance services, should not have a similar arrangement

[Bob Stewart]

for their own next of kin if they are killed in the line of duty. I think so, and so do many other colleagues in this place. To that end, I have worked alongside my right hon. Friend, and good friend, the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois) to try to get support for this, and I thank him. After all, in my view, there are far too many people killed in what we might call the blue light services who leave people behind.

Even late last week, Jack Daw, a paramedic, was killed in the village of Moreton on Lugg when answering a 999 call. An object smashed through the windscreen, killed him in the passenger seat and hurt the driver. The matter is still being investigated, but the media report that it may not have been a deliberate act and was an accident. Our own Police Constable Keith Palmer, George Medal, was killed in New Palace Yard on 22 March 2017. He had a wife and children, and I think Mrs Palmer could qualify for an award.

I gather that, between 1986 and 2013, 26 firefighters were killed attending fires in the United Kingdom. Most of them, of course, had close loved ones, so how about an award similar to the Elizabeth Cross for the blue light services? By blue light services, I mean the police, fire and ambulance services in the first instance, but the award might be expanded to include the coastguard and other organisations that rescue people, such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, as well as mountain and mine rescue teams. The award could be given to recognised next of kin with similar criteria to that necessary for the award of the Elizabeth Cross—in other words, their loved ones were killed in the line of duty. I suggest that, if this idea is taken up, the award should be of the same quality as the armed forces' Elizabeth Cross, which is somewhat splendid and much prized by those who wear it. It seems that the cross—please, not a medal; a cross is so much more distinctive—would look good in silver, designed along equivalent lines to those given to the next of kin of armed forces personnel. In short, it must stand out as special, and so it should.

I have not found one Member of Parliament who has reservations about this proposal. Surely, the next of kin of blue light service personnel who die in the service of their country are just as deserving as armed forces personnel who die for the same reason. Personally, I believe that, at this time, the award might be called the Prince Philip Cross, with the permission of Her Majesty, of course. Based on what I gather about the institution of the Elizabeth Cross in 2009, it may not need legislation, but would it not be appropriate to include it in the Queen's Speech on 11 May?

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con) *rose—*

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Order. I am sorry, Mr Francois, but to speak you needed to have the permission of both the Minister and Colonel Bob—

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Leo Docherty) *indicated assent.*

Bob Stewart *indicated assent.*

Mr Deputy Speaker: Exceptionally, then, because it is 20 past 1 in the morning and he is still here, I call Mark Francois to make a short contribution.

1.21 am

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker; I shall more than take the hint. I am grateful to be called to speak in this important debate, albeit at almost 1.30 am. I thank my right hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) for asking me to make a brief contribution in support of his excellent idea for a Prince Philip Cross.

I have only three brief points to make. First, as a former Minister for Veterans in the Ministry of Defence, I welcome the Minister for Defence People and Veterans, my hon. Friend the Member for Aldershot (Leo Docherty), to his new appointment, in which, knowing him as I do, I am sure he will excel.

Secondly, when I was the Minister for Veterans some years ago, I worked on the evolution of the military covenant into what is now known as the armed forces covenant. Similarly, the Government are now talking about introducing a policing covenant for the wider policing family. That is a very good idea, but I have one suggestion: if we really want it to catch on in a popular sense, we should call it the coppers' covenant. That seems to me to be the obvious name. If we want to give such a covenant a concrete form, what better way than to bring in the Prince Philip Cross, as explained excellently by my right hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Beckenham, to honour the next of kin of those in the police service, the fire and rescue service or the ambulance service who give their lives in the line of duty?

Thirdly, as a former Minister for Veterans, I have seen for myself the great comfort that can be brought to next of kin who receive the Elizabeth Cross if their armed forces partner has given their life in the service of their country. Given that Prince Philip's whole life was about public service, I think that, providing that the palace and, ultimately, Her Majesty the Queen approve of the concept, it would be extremely fitting to name such a cross after his Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh.

There are always many details to work out in respect of such awards, and my right hon. and gallant Friend is more than capable of doing that with the assistance of the Government. Tonight, we need to know whether the Government are prepared to give the idea a fair wind in order to honour those who have made the ultimate sacrifice not on the battlefield but in other ways, for the service of their countrymen. I hope that that is a fitting tribute and that the Government might yet agree.

1.23 am

The Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Leo Docherty): First, I put on record my thanks to my right hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Beckenham (Bob Stewart) for the tremendous compassion that he has shown and the interest he maintains, as well as for his remarkable public service in the military. He has raised an important topic tonight. It is indeed true that the emergency services are rightly held in high esteem by all Members of this House and our whole country. We are grateful for their service. I also note with great interest the parallel he drew with the awarding of the Elizabeth Cross to the families of armed forces personnel killed in action and agree with his eloquent description of the remarkable pride with which the cross is worn. I am grateful for the moving way in which he recounted

the tragic loss of Clinton Collins and the remarkable strength and courage of his wife, Tina. Tonight, we honour their sacrifice, their loss and their service.

Over the last year, during the covid-19 pandemic, the dedication of all our public services has been at the forefront of our minds. Sadly, the dedication of our public servants sometimes results in the ultimate sacrifice of their lives. As my right hon. and gallant Friend mentioned, the risks to ambulance staff were tragically demonstrated only this weekend when, on Saturday, we saw the death on duty of west midlands ambulance technician Jeremy Daw. I would like to put on record my sincere condolences and the condolences of Her Majesty's Government to his family at this extremely difficult time.

The Government acknowledge that public service in this country has a long and deep history. The diligence shown by our public services has taken many forms. It is usually quietly given, sometimes in the most extreme and difficult of circumstances, but it is always appreciated by the nation. Each death is a personal tragedy for a family, for a community and for the victim's colleagues, but each death is also a national tragedy, mourned by all who appreciate and admire the commitment made by those on the frontline to protect and support our community.

Public service takes perhaps its most urgent reform in the emergency services, and the Government are committed to supporting them. Fortunately, very few of our blue light personnel are called upon to make life-threatening sacrifices. However, that does not make fatal incidents any easier to bear. Our priority must be to prevent harm in the first place. It goes almost without saying that our emergency services do an incredibly demanding job. They face some of the most challenging situations daily, putting themselves at risk to safeguard us all, and it is vital that they have the support and protection that they need.

We can see acute risk to the emergency services in considering the statistics for the police service. I was grateful for the contribution of my right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois), with the fitting comments he made in regard to the magnificent service of our police force. Home Office figures from 2018-19 show that there were nearly 31,000 recorded assaults on police officers. Indeed, that may well underestimate the true scale of risk. Last year, when the National Police Chiefs' Council published its findings from its review into police officer and staff safety, it reported that 92 police officers lost their lives on duty between 2008 and 2019. It was fitting that my right hon. Friend the Member for Beckenham mentioned Keith Palmer, George Medal—our Keith Palmer—who lost his life so infamously here on the parliamentary estate. Work has been under way to implement the

recommendations of the review, which include measures such as overhauling personal safety training and expediting trials of new technology or equipment that could enhance safety. The aim is to ensure that officers are as well equipped as possible when faced with life-threatening situations.

I have often been struck by the bravery of our emergency services in accepting and managing the intrinsic risks of frontline service. I have been privileged to meet many of our courageous police officers. Representatives of the police, the fire and rescue service and the ambulance service are, of course, regularly celebrated through Her Majesty's honours list and through the award of Queen's medals. But the Government agree with my right hon. Friend that we must ensure full recognition where that is due, perhaps especially when the worst has happened. That is why the Home Secretary committed to reviewing the current recognition and commemoration of the police to see if we can do anything more to acknowledge our police service personnel and their families.

My right hon. Friend has proposed that it would be appropriate to consider recognition of emergency service personnel killed on duty in a manner similar to the Elizabeth Cross being given to the next of kin of military personnel killed on operations. As Members may know, the Elizabeth Cross was introduced, as he mentioned, in 2009 to, in Her Majesty the Queen's words, accord the highest respect to those who make the ultimate sacrifice. I can offer my personal testimony that it is an important symbol of tribute to those who have given their lives in the service of their country. It serves to mark the nation's acknowledgement of their family's loss. I can assure my right hon. Friend that I am supportive of the intention behind his suggestion that similar respect is due to those in our domestic uniformed services.

As Members may know, however, the honours system operates independently of the Government and under the royal prerogative. It is right that recommendations for new forms of recognition should be considered very carefully and consistently with a clear evidence basis. This takes time. It also requires close discussion with those whom we seek to acknowledge so that we can demonstrate our appreciation in appropriate ways.

Although I am unable to make any commitment with regard to my right hon. and gallant Friend's specific proposal, I want to offer my personal assurances that the Government will explore and carefully consider all options for recognition and commemoration. I remain confident that the process of review will produce meaningful ways in which we can continue to pay tribute to our magnificent emergency services.

Question put and agreed to.

1.31 am

House adjourned.

Members Eligible for a Proxy Vote

The following is the list of Members currently certified as eligible for a proxy vote, and of the Members nominated as their proxy:

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Nigel Adams (Selby and Ainsty) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bim Afolami (Hitchin and Harpenden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Adam Afriyie (Windsor) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Imran Ahmad Khan (Wakefield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nickie Aiken (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rushanara Ali (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Tahir Ali (Birmingham, Hall Green) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Lucy Allan (Telford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Rosena Allin-Khan (Tooting) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stuart Anderson (Wolverhampton South West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Caroline Ansell (Eastbourne) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tonia Antoniazzi (Gower) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Edward Argar (Charnwood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jonathan Ashworth (Leicester South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sarah Atherton (Wrexham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gareth Bacon (Orpington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Richard Bacon (South Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kemi Badenoch (Saffron Walden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Shaun Bailey (West Bromwich West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Duncan Baker (North Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steve Barclay (North East Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Hannah Bardell (Livingston) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Paula Barker (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mr John Baron (Basildon and Billericay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Baynes (Clwyd South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Margaret Beckett (Derby South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Apsana Begum (Poplar and Limehouse) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab)	Chris Elmore

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jake Berry (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Clive Betts (Sheffield South East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Saqib Bhatti (Meriden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mhairi Black (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Bob Blackman (Harrow East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Paul Blomfield (Sheffield Central) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Crispin Blunt (Reigate) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Peter Bone (Wellingborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steven Bonnar (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tracy Brabin (Batley and Spen) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Ben Bradley (Mansfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Suella Braverman (Fareham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Bridgen (North West Leicestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Bristow (Peterborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Deidre Brock (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
James Brokenshire (Old Bexley and Sidcup) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alan Brown (Kilmarnock and Loudon) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Ms Lyn Brown (West Ham) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Anthony Browne (South Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fiona Bruce (Congleton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Robert Buckland (South Swindon) (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
Dawn Butler (Brent Central) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Byrne (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Liam Byrne (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab)	Chris Elmore

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Amy Callaghan (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Jon Cruddas (Dagenham and Rainham) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Dr Lisa Cameron (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir Alan Campbell (Tynemouth) (Con)	Chris Elmore	Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP)	Carla Lockhart	Alex Cunningham (Stockton North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Janet Daby (Lewisham East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mr Alistair Carmichael (rt. hon.) (Orkney and Shetland) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	James Daly (Bury North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andy Carter (Warrington South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
James Cartlidge (South Suffolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David T. C. Davies (Monmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Miriam Cates (Penistone and Stocksbridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gareth Davies (Grantham and Stamford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alex Chalk (Cheltenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Geraint Davies (Swansea West) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Dr James Davies (Vale of Clwyd) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Douglas Chapman (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Mims Davies (Mid Sussex) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Rehman Chishti (Gillingham and Rainham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Philip Davies (Shipley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jo Churchill (Bury St Edmunds) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr David Davis (Haltemprice and Howden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Feryal Clark (Enfield North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Dehenna Davison (Bishop Auckland) (Con)	Ben Everitt
Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Mr Simon Clarke (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Thangam Debbonaire (Bristol West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Theo Clarke (Stafford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Marsha De Cordova (Battersea)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Brendan Clarke-Smith (Bassetlaw) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi (Slough) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Chris Clarkson (Heywood and Middleton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Caroline Dinenage (Gosport) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Miss Sarah Dines (Derbyshire Dales) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Thérèse Coffey (Suffolk Coastal) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Jonathan Djanogly (Huntingdon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Elliot Colburn (Carshalton and Wallington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Leo Docherty (Aldershot) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Martin Docherty-Hughes (West Dunbartonshire) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Anneliese Dodds (Oxford East) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Rosie Cooper (West Lancashire) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP)	Carla Lockhart
Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Michelle Donelan (Chippenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Dave Doogan (Angus) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Allan Dorans (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Robert Courts (Witney) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ms Nadine Dorries (Mid Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Claire Coutinho (East Surrey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Steve Double (St Austell and Newquay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ronnie Cowan (Inverclyde) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir Geoffrey Cox (Torridge and West Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Peter Dowd (Bootle) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Oliver Dowden (Hertsmere) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen Crabb (Preseli Pembrokeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Richard Drax (South Dorset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Angela Crawley (Lanark and Hamilton East) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Jack Dromey (Birmingham, Erdington) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Virginia Crosbie (Ynys Môn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
James Duddridge (Rochford and Southend East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rosie Duffield (Canterbury) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Angela Eagle (Wallasey) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Maria Eagle (Garston and Halewood) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP)	Ben Lake
Mark Eastwood (Dewsbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind)	Stuart Andrew
Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Julie Elliott (Sunderland Central) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Michael Ellis (Northampton North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Natalie Elphicke (Dover) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Bill Esterson (Sefton Central) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
George Eustice (Camborne and Redruth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Evans (Islwyn) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Dr Luke Evans (Bosworth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ben Everitt (Milton Keynes North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Michael Fabricant (Lichfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Laura Farris (Newbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance)	Wendy Chamberlain
Simon Fell (Barrow and Furness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Marion Fellows (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind)	Stuart Andrew
Katherine Fletcher (South Ribble) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Fletcher (Bolsover) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nick Fletcher (Don Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen Flynn (Aberdeen South) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Vicky Ford (Chelmsford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kevin Foster (Torbay) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Yvonne Fovargue (Makerfield) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Dr Liam Fox (North Somerset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Vicky Foxcroft (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mary Kelly Foy (City of Durham) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lucy Frazer (South East Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
George Freeman (Mid Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mike Freer (Finchley and Golders Green) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Richard Fuller (North East Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Marcus Fysh (Yeovil) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gill Furniss (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Barry Gardiner (Brent North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mark Garnier (Wyre Forest) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nick Gibb (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Patricia Gibson (North Ayrshire and Arran) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Peter Gibson (Darlington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jo Gideon (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Preet Kaur Gill (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Paul Girvan (South Antrim) (DUP)	Carla Lockhart
John Glen (Salisbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mary Glendon (North Tyneside) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mr Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Michael Gove (Surrey Heath) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Helen Grant (Maidstone and The Weald) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Peter Grant (Glenrothes) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Damian Green (Ashford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kate Green (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Lilian Greenwood (Nottingham South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Andrew Griffith (Arundel and South Downs) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nia Griffith (Llanelli) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Kate Griffiths (Burton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Grundy (Leigh) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Louise Haigh (Sheffield, Heeley) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Robert Halfon (Harlow) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Luke Hall (Thornbury and Yate) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Fabian Hamilton (Leeds North East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Greg Hands (Chelsea and Fulham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Claire Hanna (Belfast South) (SDLP)	Ben Lake
Emma Hardy (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Ms Harriet Harman (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab)	Chris Elmore

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Mark Harper (Forest of Dean) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Sir Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Carolyn Harris (Swansea East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Mark Jenkinson (Workington) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Trudy Harrison (Copeland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andrea Jenkins (Morley and Outwood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sally-Ann Hart (Hastings and Rye) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Robert Jenrick (Newark) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Hart (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Boris Johnson (Uxbridge and South Ruislip) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Helen Hayes (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir Oliver Heald (North East Hertfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gareth Johnson (Dartford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
James Heapey (Wells) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David Johnston (Wantage) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Heaton-Harris (Daventry) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Darren Jones (Bristol North West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Gordon Henderson (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr David Jones (Clwyd West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Mark Hendrick (Preston) (Lab/Cop)	Chris Elmore	Fay Jones (Brecon and Radnorshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Drew Hendry (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Gerald Jones (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Darren Henry (Broxtove) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Damian Hinds (East Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Marcus Jones (Nuneaton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Dame Margaret Hodge (Barking) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Simon Jupp (East Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mrs Sharon Hodgson (Washington and Sunderland West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mr Richard Holden (North West Durham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kate Hollern (Blackburn) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Alicia Kearns (Rutland and Melton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Gillian Keegan (Chichester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Adam Holloway (Gravesham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Barbara Keeley (Worsley and Eccles South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Paul Holmes (Eastleigh) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Liz Kendall (Leicester West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Afzal Khan (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Stewart Hosie (Dundee East) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Sir Greg Knight (East Yorkshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Howell (Henley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Julian Knight (Solihull) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Howell (Sedgefield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Danny Kruger (Devizes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nigel Huddleston (Mid Worcestershire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kwasi Kwarteng (Spelthorne) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Neil Hudson (Penrith and The Border) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Eddie Hughes (Walsall North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Robert Langan (High Peak) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tom Hunt (Ipswich) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con)	Mr William Wragg
Rupa Huq (Ealing Central and Acton) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Ian Lavery (Wansbeck) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Imran Hussain (Bradford East) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Chris Law (Dundee West) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Mr Alister Jack (Dumfries and Galloway) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Andrea Leadsom (South Northamptonshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dan Jarvis (Barnsley Central) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Ian Levy (Blyth Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sajid Javid (Bromsgrove) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck (South Shields) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mr Ranil Jayawardena (North East Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Andrew Lewer (Northampton South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Brandon Lewis (Great Yarmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Khalid Mahmood (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Clive Lewis (Norwich South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Shabana Mahmood (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Alan Mak (Havant) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Seema Malhotra (Feltham and Heston) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Kit Malthouse (North West Hampshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Julie Marson (Hertford and Stortford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Loder (West Dorset) (Con)	Anthony Mangnall	Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mark Logan (Bolton North East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julia Lopez (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jack Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Mr Jonathan Lord (Woking) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Stephen Metcalfe (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steve McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Edward Miliband (Doncaster North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Robin Millar (Aberconwy) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Karl McCartney (Lincoln) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Amanda Milling (Cannock Chase) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Siobhain McDonagh (Mitcham and Morden) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Nigel Mills (Amber Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andy McDonald (Middlesbrough) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Navendu Mishra (Stockport) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Stewart Malcolm McDonald (Glasgow South) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Mr Andrew Mitchell (Sutton Coldfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Gagan Mohindra (South West Hertfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West)	Owen Thompson
Mr Pat McFadden (Wolverhampton South East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Damien Moore (Southport) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Conor McGinn (St Helens North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Robbie Moore (Keighley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Craig Mackinlay (South Thanet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Penny Mordaunt (Portsmouth North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Jessica Morden (Newport East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Cherilyn Mackrory (Truro and Falmouth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Stephen Morgan (Portsmouth South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Anne Marie Morris (Newton Abbot) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rachel Maclean (Redditch) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David Morris (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jim McMahan (Oldham West and Royton) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Grahame Morris (Easington) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Anna McMorrin (Cardiff North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Joy Morrissey (Beaconsfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Mc Nally (Falkirk) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Dr Kieran Mullan (Crewe and Nantwich) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephen McPartland (Stevenage) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Holly Mumby-Croft (Scunthorpe) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
David Mundell (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ian Murray (Edinburgh South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
James Murray (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Mrs Sheryll Murray (South East Cornwall) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lisa Nandy (Wigan) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gavin Newlands (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Lia Nici (Great Grimsby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Nicolson (Ochil and South Perthshire) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Caroline Nokes (Romsey and Southampton North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jesse Norman (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Neil O'Brien (Harborough) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Dr Matthew Offord (Hendon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sarah Olney (Richmond Park) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain
Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Guy Opperman (Hexham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Abena Oppong-Asare (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Kate Osamor (Edmonton) (Lab/Co-op)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Kate Osborne (Jarrow) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Kirsten Oswald (East Renfrewshire) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Taiwo Owatemi (Coventry North West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sarah Owen (Luton North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Ian Paisley (North Antrim) (DUP)	Carla Lockhart
Neil Parish (Tiverton and Honiton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Priti Patel (Witham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Owen Paterson (North Shropshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matthew Pennycook (Greenwich and Woolwich) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
John Penrose (Weston-super-Mare) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Percy (Brigg and Goole) (Con)	Antony Higginbotham
Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Jess Phillips (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Bridget Phillipson (Houghton and Sunderland South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Christopher Pincher (Tamworth) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Luke Pollard (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Rebecca Pow (Taunton Deane) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lucy Powell (Manchester Central) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Victoria Prentis (Banbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mark Pritchard (The Wrekin) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jeremy Quin (Horsham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Will Quince (Colchester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Yasmin Qureshi (Bolton South East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Tom Randall (Gedling) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Angela Rayner (Ashton-under-Lyne) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Steve Reed (Croydon North) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Christina Rees (Neath) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Ellie Reeves (Lewisham West and Penge) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Rachel Reeves (Leeds West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Nicola Richards (West Bromwich East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Angela Richardson (Guildford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Ms Marie Rimmer (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Rob Roberts (Delyn) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Laurence Robertson (Tewkesbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP)	Carla Lockhart
Mary Robinson (Cheadle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Matt Rodda (Reading East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Andrew Rosindell (Romford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Douglas Ross (Moray) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lee Rowley (North East Derbyshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dean Russell (Watford) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC)	Ben Lake
Selaine Saxby (North Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Paul Scully (Sutton and Cheam) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con)	Mark Harper
Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Grant Shapps (Welwyn Hatfield) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alok Sharma (Reading West) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Mr Virendra Sharma (Ealing, Southall) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore
Alec Shelbrooke (Elmet and Rothwell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Tommy Sheppard (Edinburgh East) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Emily Thornberry (Islington South and Finsbury) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Stephen Timms (East Ham) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Edward Timpson (Eddisbury) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Skidmore (Kingswood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Kelly Tolhurst (Rochester and Strood) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andy Slaughter (Hammersmith) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alyn Smith (Stirling) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Craig Tracey (North Warwickshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Anne-Marie Trevelyan (Berwick-upon-Tweed) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chloe Smith (Norwich North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jon Trickett (Hemsworth) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Greg Smith (Buckingham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Laura Trott (Sevenoaks) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Henry Smith (Crawley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Elizabeth Truss (South West Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Julian Smith (Skipton and Ripon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Tom Tugendhat (Tonbridge and Malling) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Nick Smith (Blaenau Gwent) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Karl Turner (Kingston upon Hull East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Royston Smith (Southampton, Itchen) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Derek Twigg (Halton) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Mr Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Amanda Solloway (Derby North) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Dr Ben Spencer (Runnymede and Weybridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Matt Vickers (Stockton South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alexander Stafford (Rother Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Theresa Villiers (Chipping Barnet) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Christian Wakeford (Bury South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Chris Stephens (Glasgow South West) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Mr Robin Walker (Worcester) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Andrew Stephenson (Pendle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Mr Ben Wallace (Wyre and Preston North)	Stuart Andrew
Jo Stevens (Cardiff Central) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Dr Jamie Wallis (Bridgend) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jane Stevenson (Wolverhampton North East) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	David Warburton (Somerset and Frome) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
John Stevenson (Carlisle) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Giles Watling (Clacton) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Iain Stewart (Milton Keynes South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Suzanne Webb (Stourbridge) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Claudia Webbe (Leicester East) (Ind)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy
Sir Gary Streeter (South West Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Catherine West (Hornsey and Wood Green) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Wes Streeting (Ilford North) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Mel Stride (Central Devon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Helen Whately (Faversham and Mid Kent) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Graham Stringer (Blackley and Broughton) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	Mrs Heather Wheeler (South Derbyshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dr Alan Whitehead (Southampton, Test) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Julian Sturdy (York Outer) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Dr Philippa Whitford (Central Ayrshire) (SNP)	Owen Thompson
Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Mick Whitley (Birkenhead) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Rishi Sunak (Richmond (Yorks)) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Craig Whittaker (Calder Valley) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	John Whittingdale (Malden) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sir Desmond Swayne (New Forest West) (Con)	Mr William Wragg	Nadia Whittome (Nottingham East) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sir Robert Syms (Poole) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Sam Tarry (Ilford South) (Lab)	Chris Elmore	James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Alison Thewliss (Glasgow Central) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Craig Williams (Montgomeryshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Derek Thomas (St Ives) (Con)	Stuart Andrew		
Gareth Thomas (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op)	Chris Elmore		
Nick Thomas-Symonds (Torfaen) (Lab)	Chris Elmore		

Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy	Member eligible for proxy vote	Nominated proxy
Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC)	Ben Lake	Mike Wood (Dudley South) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Gavin Williamson (Montgomeryshire) (Con)	Stuart Andrew	Jeremy Wright (Kenilworth and Southam) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD)	Wendy Chamberlain	Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab)	Chris Elmore
Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP)	Carla Lockhart	Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Beth Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab)	Bell Ribeiro-Addy	Nadhim Zahawi (Stratford-on-Avon) (Con)	Stuart Andrew
Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP)	Owen Thompson	Daniel Zeichner (Cambridge) (Lab)	Chris Elmore

Westminster Hall

Monday 26 April 2021

[GRAHAM STRINGER *in the Chair*]

Air Ambulance Funding

Virtual participation in proceedings commenced (Order, 25 February).

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

4.30 pm

Graham Stringer (in the Chair): I remind hon. Members that there have been some changes to normal practice, in order to support the new hybrid arrangements. Timings of debates have been amended to allow technical arrangements to be made for the next debate. There will also be suspensions between each debate. I remind Members participating physically and virtually that they must arrive for the start of debates in Westminster Hall. Members are expected to remain for the entire debate. I must also remind Members participating virtually that they are visible at all times, both to each other and to us in the Boothroyd Room. If Members attending virtually have any technical problems they should email the Westminster Hall Clerks email address. Members attending physically should clean their spaces before they use them and as they leave the room. I would also like to remind Members that Mr Speaker has stated that masks should be worn in Westminster Hall—obviously not when speaking.

4.31 pm

Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP) [V]: I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 259892, relating to air ambulance funding.

The e-petition that we are considering today was submitted during the 2017-19 Parliament, and I am delighted that we have now found time to consider it, after previous scheduled debates were postponed, first because of the general election and latterly because of the pandemic. I thank the petitioner and everyone who took the time to sign the petition for their patience and understanding in relation to the delays.

The petition is entitled “The Air Ambulances to be government funded”, and it states:

“The air ambulances that operate around the UK cost around £12,000 per day to run and maintain, and are mainly funded through charity organisations. This petition is to ask the Government to fully fund the air ambulances through the emergency services.”

Of course, the funding that the petition called for was not awarded. The UK Government response was broadly dismissive of the need for change. On 3 July 2019 they stated:

“NHS ambulance services provide clinical staff and equipment to air ambulance charities. A charitable model gives charities independence to deliver specialised, specific services to each locality.

Air ambulance services are not NHS funded and are provided by 18 charitable organisations across England, with the majority of their resources supported by their own fundraising activities.”

The petition was launched by Bethany Billington, who has kindly given me permission to tell her story. On 31 March 2019, Bethany’s sister Lee-Anne Parkin and her partner were involved in a road traffic accident.

Tragically, Lee-Anne’s partner died at the scene. Lee-Anne was airlifted to the major trauma unit in Teesside where sadly she passed away one week later, never having regained consciousness. During that time the Great North Air Ambulance Service team, who had attended the accident, kept in contact with the hospital to check on Lee-Anne’s progress. The gratitude of Bethany and her family to the air ambulance crew, as well as to the wonderful hospital staff, for doing everything in their power to try to save Lee-Anne’s life, inspired the aspiration behind the petition. I am sure that all Members here today will join me in sending their condolences to Bethany and her family.

It is important that we take the time to recognise the hard work and dedication of air ambulance crews across the UK. They are committed and talented professionals, who often find themselves having to work in the most extreme circumstances. For example, they can administer general anaesthetics and even perform open heart surgery at the scene of incidents. I wish to pass on my deepest thanks to all the dedicated air ambulance crews up and down the country. Many people will know a family who have benefited from this service. It is a vital link in our emergency services.

There are 22 air ambulance organisations across the UK, the structures of which can be extremely complex. I have to admit that I was shocked to discover that all but one of the UK’s 22 air ambulance organisations are charitable organisations. Scotland is the only country in the UK to have NHS-funded air ambulance provision; the other 21 organisations are all funded by donations from generous members of the public. According to Air Ambulances UK, the UK’s air ambulances collectively make over 25,000 life-saving missions a year, at an average cost of £2,500 per mission, or, to put it another way, at an annual cost of more than £62.5 million, the vast majority of which is funded by charitable donations.

Generally, the medical teams on board air ambulances are seconded from local NHS trusts. However, some charities are responsible for employing their own medical staff. In addition, some of these organisations have chosen to lease their helicopters. However, the purchasing of helicopters has become increasingly popular in more recent times. For instance, Cornwall Air Ambulance recently bought the charity’s first helicopter in its 32-year history, while Scotland’s Charity Air Ambulance launched its second air ambulance on 3 April last year.

The number of petitioners clearly demonstrates a strong public sentiment that air ambulances should receive Government funding. However, it would be injudicious of me not to mention that Devon Air Ambulance Trust actually asked its supporters not to sign this petition, stating:

“Whilst we appreciate the sentiment behind this petition, we firmly believe it is not in patients’ best interests. As we have seen over the last decade, government-funded services face significant cuts in funding alongside policy and priorities set by the government of the day. Many aspects of our essential services have been commercialised. The UK Air Ambulance sector has an excellent aviation safety record thanks to our ability to put patients and safety at the heart of our operations. Subject to the same constraints as our other essential services, we would face a stark choice between cutting services or cutting quality. Neither is acceptable or necessary.”

This sentiment appears to have been echoed in the findings of public engagement work that the Petitions Committee carried out on this topic. An e-survey, which

[Martyn Day]

ran between August 2020 and September 2020, was distributed to air ambulance charities via the Air Ambulances UK network and received 15 out of a possible 21 responses. All but one opposed the idea that air ambulance services should be fully funded by the Government. The reason provided by one charity was:

“Air ambulances would be a low priority for government funding”.

Another stated:

“The government is never going to be able to guarantee the same level of investment. The impact of austerity on public services has gone far beyond cost efficiency savings.”

Of the 14 charities that responded and opposed Government funding, it is worth noting that three of them were in favour of the Government providing capital grants for larger costs such as helipads.

Although UK Government support for air ambulances has been minimal, it is worth noting that these organisations receive sporadic access to Government funding. In the Government’s response to this petition, they said that in 2019 the 18 air ambulance charities across England were invited to bid for a share of £10 million of funding from the Department for Health and Social Care for a range of facilities and infrastructure projects, including high-tech medical equipment for critical care teams and new helicopters and helipads. However, only nine out of the 14 English air ambulance charities that put forward bids were successful. The money that was secured was used to upgrade equipment and improve facilities.

Responding at that time, Paula Martin, chair of the UK’s Association of Air Ambulances, or AAA, said

“this funding only represents a small amount of what has to be raised”

and that air ambulance charities were still heavily reliant on the public’s “kind and generous donations”. According to an article in the March 2019 edition of the AAA’s *Airway* magazine, this funding opportunity presented charities with something of a dilemma. There were concerns that it would adversely impact on their regular donors and entirely charity-funded status. For these charities, their independence is vital.

Funding for air ambulances has not been immune to the effects of coronavirus, either. All the charities that responded to the survey stated that their finances had been impacted by covid, with the relevant figures ranging between £500,000 and £3 million and the overwhelming reason appearing to be their inability to fundraise in the same way. A £6 million covid-19 Government funding grant for air ambulance charities was therefore warmly welcomed by the organisations at this very difficult time, although several had concerns about the bidding process, described as

“tortuous as projects must be unfunded but shovel-ready, which is illogical and high risk”

and “lengthy and delayed”; it was also said that

“funding only went to a select few AAs and sadly they were mainly in the Southern half of the UK”.

As I have mentioned, Scotland is the only part of the UK to have fully NHS-funded air ambulance provision. I would like to take this opportunity to share the detail of that model. The Scottish Ambulance Service, which works closely with Scotland’s Charity Air Ambulance, has two helicopters and two planes, which are fully funded by the NHS. In 2019-20, 3,732 air ambulance

missions were undertaken by the Scottish Ambulance Service. That amounts to just over 10 per day, or one every two hours and 20 minutes. Funded centrally, air ambulance services in Scotland have been provided for well over 30 years as part of the wider healthcare provision for the country, based on its unique geography and demographics, and before any charitable helicopter services commenced elsewhere in the UK. The Scottish model shows the potential of a hybrid charity and Government-funded model of air ambulances that, if emulated, would, I believe, serve other parts of the UK well. It addresses the risk that a drop in fundraising revenue poses to charity-only models, while protecting the independence of charity-funded services. Clearly, finding the solution need not be a “one or the other” situation, as Government-funded air ambulance services can operate alongside charity services, as Scotland shows.

In conclusion, this is quite a complex subject, with a range of models and challenges. I look forward to the debate and to hearing from the Minister about a way forward on this important matter.

4.42 pm

Imran Ahmad Khan (Wakefield) (Con) [V]: It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer. I thank the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day) for his considered speech. I am delighted, given that my constituents are so passionate about air ambulances, that this debate is taking place. This year alone, 13 incidents have been attended in Wakefield, and dozens more in the wider Yorkshire area, by the air ambulance helicopter or the rapid response vehicle. Yorkshire Air Ambulance is located at Nostell Priory, just outside Wakefield city centre, and has been marked as one of the best air ambulance facilities in the UK by the Civil Aviation Authority. It is therefore no surprise that the constituents of Wakefield hold their air ambulance in high regard.

Yorkshire Air Ambulance works closely with NHS emergency services, using a similar operational methodology that has been adopted by the NHS emergency service dispatch system, and with emergency staff and doctors on secondment to it. The services provided by the air ambulance are vital to Wakefield and the surrounding towns and villages, and to communities across West Yorkshire, in dealing with issues that cannot be dealt with as effectively by the employment of conventional ambulances alone. Some of the most experienced and highly qualified first responders are employed, complementing rather than competing with existing NHS emergency services. The high calibre of personnel employed by Yorkshire Air Ambulance means that bespoke responses can be delivered to meet the specific needs of Yorkshire’s most critically injured and unwell. Emergency surgery—including caesarean sections and open heart surgery—has on occasion, as we have heard, been conducted in the field.

The people of Wakefield, together with the rest of the United Kingdom, have rightly recognised in the petition that there is a clear need for a well-funded air ambulance. Bringing those services under the umbrella of emergency services could, however, result in a number of unintended consequences. First, doing so could unintentionally degrade the autonomy and flexibility that an independent regional air ambulance provides. If one compares Yorkshire Air Ambulance with London’s Air Ambulance, for example,

one will see that there is a stark difference in the requirements needed, specific treatments provided and even frequency of use. London's Air Ambulance predominantly focuses on violent injuries such as shootings and stabbings, while Yorkshire's focuses more on road traffic accidents and cardiac arrests.

Even the geographical differences, such as terrain and urban density, make significant differences. A serious road traffic accident on the motorway network in my constituency could lead to simultaneous tailbacks on the M1, M62 and M621 into Leeds, and the A1/A1(M). The ability to land a helicopter directly at the scene means that lives can be saved in minutes. To the north of Yorkshire Air Ambulance's operating area, it could be flying deep into the dales where there are no roads whatsoever.

As charities with their own independent operating procedures tailored to their specific local requirements, air ambulances have the ability to be flexible and to determine how they want their services to run. They are not subject to the constraints under which the public sector must, by necessity, operate, which is a constant issue facing the NHS when it comes to both day-to-day operations and emergency life-and-death situations. Rather, Yorkshire Air Ambulance is clearly a willing and constructive partner with its NHS colleagues, but critically does not form part of the NHS's organisational structure.

Her Majesty's Government have importantly made significant funds available to air ambulances, from LIBOR fines to recent financial support for their vital work throughout the pandemic. Upon inquiring, it has been made abundantly clear to me that Yorkshire Air Ambulance, as we have already heard from many of its colleagues around the UK, such as in Devon, is grateful for the stability that central Government grant funding provides, and would undoubtedly welcome further grants, but not if they are to come at the expense of its operational independence.

4.48 pm

Alex Norris (Nottingham North) (Lab/Co-op): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Stringer, and to respond to the debate on behalf of the Opposition. I thank the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day) for leading it. I always admire the skill with which members of the Petitions Committee introduce a broad range of topics for discussion in Westminster Hall. His point about the extreme circumstances that crews face not just in transit but in what they find when they make their extraordinary journeys was really well made.

We often think most visibly about air ambulances landing in all sorts of places, whether that is motorways, as the hon. Member for Wakefield (Imran Ahmad Khan) just said, or playing fields. We perhaps do not think so much about the extraordinary care that they give on the other end, whether that is caesarean sections, as we heard, open heart surgery or general anaesthetics—all sorts of things. It really is an incredible range of skills to be able both to get to the right place and then to provide the right care. We are truly lucky to have these individuals in our country.

The biggest thanks, of course, must go to Bethany Billington, who started the petition. I pay tribute to her sister, Lee-Anne Parkin, who tragically lost her

life alongside her partner, Steve Carroll, in March 2019, as we have heard. It happened seven days after being taken to the trauma unit in Teesside following a motorcycle accident. Great North Air Ambulance was on the scene within minutes of the accident, and Bethany has praised its incredible efforts, and followed those words with actions of her own. She can be very proud of herself, and her sister's legacy.

There are lots of parliamentary e-petitions, but it takes one that is truly special to get the 100,000 signatures required for a debate to be considered. In this case, there were more than 130,000 signatures before the e-petition closed prior to the last general election, which seems a long time ago. Bethany managed to secure this debate, and we are glad that she did.

I commend the hon. Member for Wakefield for his typically thoughtful contribution. He spoke about Wakefield and the many ways in which his constituents might need these services. There are significant parallels with my constituency in Nottingham, not least in that many of the roads that he mentioned also serve my community, and that his constituents' high regard for these services mirrors that of my own. Our constituents will want us, their parliamentarians, to address the petition seriously and constructively, as we are doing today.

Let me start by stating how brilliant a contribution air ambulances make. Across the UK, there are about 70 life-saving missions each day. That is an extraordinary service provided to people who, by definition, really need it. A lot of loved ones are saved and lives are changed. In politics, we are never meant to say that we feel conflicted or have thoughts on both sides of an issue. We are supposed to have a firm and unequivocal view, but I do not have that on this issue; I find it quite conflicting.

One thing that makes this country so special is our national health service, which is there for us whoever we are, whatever we need and whenever we might need it. It is free at the point of need and funded by our taxes. I confess to having always found it a little odd that really important services, such as air ambulances and hospices—they are both, I believe, fundamental parts of the health service—are funded principally through charity. In reality, I am conscious that this is, to some extent, going to be a mixed economy. In 2018, the then Chancellor announced £10 million of capital funding to support air ambulances. I hope the Minister will update us on how this was used, its impact and any future plans, because clearly there is demand for such support.

The service is not cheap. The petition says that it costs about £12,000 each day to run; it may well be more. Air Ambulances UK says that each mission costs about £2,500. If there are 70 missions a day, that would put the daily figure at more than 10 times the one suggested in the petition. The real answer may be somewhere in between; either way, we can all agree that the work is priceless and we would never countenance it stopping because of a lack of money.

That gives me a certain confliction about whether air ambulances should be funded as a core NHS service. Happily, whatever my conflictions, the sector has rather resolved the issue for me. It says that it does not want to change its operating model, so I certainly shall not advocate that. If it wants to run the model in this way, and if it thinks that that gives it the best of both worlds

[Alex Norris]

and enables it to keep doing the wonderful things that it does—well, it is the expert. It is doing this great job, and it has my full backing.

The Government, via NHS England, still have an important role. At a minimum, they are a backer of last resort. Since the petition closed, events have put extraordinary pressures on charities and charitable giving. The Government were right—we supported them—to give air ambulances a £6 million covid-19 grant. That will have ensured that services that could have been under pressure will have been able to continue. Hopefully, when we get back to normal fundraising activities—perhaps the Minister will announce that he is running the London marathon to raise money for such causes; I will leave that space open for him—it will not be necessary to rely on Government support. Nevertheless, Governments across the UK should always commit to standing behind this crucial sector, in good times and in bad. I hope the Minister will affirm that today.

To conclude, one thing I have held in my head is the profound understanding that—given the volume of missions every day—while we have been having this debate, multiple people will have had to rely on air ambulance services. That is how important this is, and how much of a difference it makes to such individuals and the people who care about them. That is why this petition and this debate are so important. Air ambulances are there for us, and we must continue to support them in their work.

4.54 pm

The Minister for Health (Edward Argar): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Stringer. I thank the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day). As the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Nottingham North (Alex Norris), said, when members of the Petitions Committee turn their hands to giving extremely well-informed and erudite speeches on whatever topics come through the Committee, they display a certain dexterity. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk for his thoughtful speech, as ever, and to my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield (Imran Ahmad Khan) and the shadow Minister, who made typically measured, sensible and thoughtful contributions to this important debate. Although what goes on in the main Chamber may attract more public attention, I often think that if more people were aware of what goes on in this Chamber, they would find that the tone of many debates is different from the one at the Dispatch Box in the Chamber, and that there is a genuinely constructive exchange of views.

As the shadow Minister said, to date more than 130,000 people have signed this petition, and I thank them all for highlighting this important issue for debate. Like him, I pay particular tribute to Bethany for her work in getting such a huge number of signatures for this petition and echo the words of other hon. Members in sending our sympathies to her family. If I may slightly crave your indulgence, Mr Stringer, although this is not directly related to air ambulances, I will take this opportunity—I suspect it may be the only chance I have to do so before Prorogation—to put on the record the condolences and sympathies of all in the House to the family and friends of ambulance technician Jeremy Daw, who was tragically killed at the weekend when on duty when his

ambulance was hit by an object. It is important to put on the record our sympathies and condolences to his family and friends.

I pay tribute, as others have done, to the air ambulance charities and to their critical care teams of doctors and paramedics, who are among some of the most highly skilled pre-hospital clinicians in the world. They are capable of performing life-saving hospital-level procedures on patients at the roadside and saving lives. That includes administering general anaesthetic and, indeed, open heart surgery. When a life-threatening injury or medical emergency happens, patients need to be transferred to hospital as quickly as possible. In some cases, survival can depend entirely upon the vital life-saving work of the UK's air ambulance charities. Air Ambulances UK figures show that, on average, air ambulance charities across the UK collectively complete more than 25,000 of these life-saving missions a year. To put that another way, as the shadow Minister did, every 10 minutes an air ambulance helicopter takes off somewhere to attend an accident or medical trauma.

Last year, I had the huge privilege of visiting the amazing charity London's Air Ambulance. I saw at first hand the amazing work of the crew who undertake their life-saving missions day in and day out, working alongside the staff of the Royal London Hospital and the London ambulance service to care for the most critically ill patients. I pay tribute to the team there who showed me around—their comms team includes a former member of a member of my staff who now works there, Kirsty McKellar—for their forbearance as I displayed, shall we say, certain symptoms of vertigo while I climbed a ramp to the top of the hospital to see the helicopter on its pad.

The shadow Minister highlighted the cost of every take-off and every mission, so he will be reassured to hear that I did not avail myself of an opportunity to go up in the helicopter; that would not have been a good use of funds. However, I was able to talk to the team and to see their work at first hand. They were clear that they are incredibly proud of their charitable status and their work as a charity. They quite rightly raised a number of issues with me, one of which I will put on the record now: they ask that councils in London and those who have open spaces are always mindful of the need to try to keep those spaces accessible for London's air ambulances so they can find somewhere to land in this busy city in which we stand today. I was incredibly grateful to the team not only for showing me around the air ambulance and showing me their procedures, but for their amazing work day in and day out. Indeed, I put on the record my gratitude to all the air ambulance charities.

We recognise that air ambulances provide an invaluable service to our NHS. They support the NHS emergency response on the ground and ensure patients get specialised care in both urban settings and hard-to-reach rural areas. Air ambulances also provide additional support to on-road ambulances at times of high demand through the use of critical care cars to increase capacity and ease pressures on NHS services. Additionally, air ambulance services have supported the national covid-19 response by using their aircraft to transfer patients, doctors and equipment, including medical supplies, between hospitals.

I turn now to the heart of the petition and the debate. Although air ambulances provide services to the NHS, it is right that they are not directly funded by the NHS,

and that the majority of their resources are drawn from their fundraising activities. That is something that the air ambulance charities support, as hon. Members, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Wakefield, have alluded to. As the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk set out, it is not about the predictability or certainty of Government funding; there are other things that make the charities support the current model. For example, Anna Perry, the chief executive of the Great Western Air Ambulance Charity, said, “In terms of funding and our day-to-day costs, we value the independence our charitable funding provides us. If we identify that our patients need a different kind of treatment or approach, then we can be responsive to those needs. We cover a diverse area, from the Forest of Dean to Cirencester, and from Bath to Weston-super-Mare, and our funding means we remain flexible and innovative in responding to what our communities need from our life-saving service.”

Similarly, the chief exec of the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance said, “While there are benefits to being Government-funded, as an independent, highly regulated charity, we greatly value the ability to be flexible to the changing needs of our patients—for example, by having the ability to quickly adapt to new technologies and medicines. The Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance”—I believe it covers the constituency of the hon. Member for Nottingham North—“is very much a part of the communities we serve. We are funded by them and are accountable to them.”

I will share a final quote to emphasise the view from the charities. Amanda McLean, who is the chief executive of Thames Valley Air Ambulance, said, “Operating within a charitable model allows air ambulance charities up and down the country to provide efficient, responsive and tailored care to best meet the needs of their communities. By working independently, embedded within our local areas, we are able to collaborate and share best practice while offering a service that is targeted to meet the specific challenges we each face.”

Those are a few examples, and hon. Members have given similar examples from different chief executives of different charities. As the shadow Minister said, it is important that we listen to what the charities that run the air ambulances are telling us.

As has been alluded to, that is not to say that the Government do not provide significant support to the sector. In 2019, the Department of Health and Social Care launched a three-year capital grant programme, which allocated £10 million to nine air ambulance charities across England. These capital schemes provide a range of new equipment and upgrades to support air ambulance services to move towards 24/7 operations, allowing more patients in need of an emergency response to be reached. The funding will also support the modernisation of facilities at seven air bases across England, including building interactive training suites to better prepare crews for challenging conditions, with the addition of seven new critical care cars and a new helicopter.

As hon. Members have mentioned, last year the Government announced a further £6 million of covid-19 emergency funding for Air Ambulances UK to distribute to the air ambulance charities in order to ensure that each charity could continue to provide its life-saving services during the pandemic. Like the shadow Minister

and hon. Members who have spoken, I believe that was the right thing to do, as the charitable fundraising activities that they would normally undertake were clearly impacted on by the constraints imposed by the pandemic and the restrictions that were necessary to tackle it. Of course, we support air ambulances through close collaboration with the NHS. For example, NHS ambulance services commonly provide key clinical staff and medical equipment to support air ambulance operations.

Given how vital such services are, it is not surprising that our electors—the public—are keen to see them funded by the Government as part of the NHS. Having listened to the sector, however, our view remains that the charitable model for air ambulances remains the right one—a view that, as I say, is shared by the sector’s independent professional body, Air Ambulances UK. That model has been a long-standing success; London’s Air Ambulance was established as a charity as far back as 1989, and I believe it has now helped more than 40,000 patients.

Decisions on the provision of services for the safe delivery of care are best made at local level. Maintaining a charitable model gives charities and the air ambulance the independence they need, as I alluded to in the earlier quotes, to deliver specialised services tailored to the needs of patients in each locality. A charitable model is also, in many ways, a more feasible way to fund the high capital and revenue costs associated with helicopter emergency medical services, including purchasing and maintaining helicopters. It also gives charities the independence to raise funds through commercial activity and sponsorship with their commercial partners.

Before the pandemic struck, I had the privilege of visiting and—for a brief period—helping in the Birstall air ambulance shop in my constituency, which supports the Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Rutland Air Ambulance service. It would be remiss of me not to take the opportunity to put on record my gratitude to it, as my local air ambulance service, for the amazing work it does, day in and day out, across that part of the east midlands. Indeed, even during the pandemic last year, two new helicopters were delivered to help to support that service. I believe it is the only air ambulance service that delivers a children’s air ambulance service. Let me put on record my gratitude for and recognition of the amazing work it does.

I believe, and the charities believe, that the current model still represents the best route to funding our air ambulances—those cherished institutions—because it gives them local flexibility to do what they need to do. In future, we want to build on the success of air ambulance services and their contribution to the delivery of safe and effective care to the nation. As part of transforming how urgent and emergency care operates, NHS England and NHS Improvement have been working with ambulance services on new ways to deliver care to patients. For example, rather than conveying all patients to hospitals, ambulance services are developing new ways to give healthcare advice through video consultations and by referring patients to a greater number of services in primary care in the community. As we move to a new model of integrated care, each system will have the duty to collaborate with health and care organisations in

[Edward Argar]

their local area, including considering how air ambulances can best contribute to their network of urgent and emergency care services.

Essential public donations combined with significant funding contributions from Government—be it for capital or in extremis, as we saw during the covid pandemic—will ensure that the air ambulance charities can continue to provide their world-class care for a patient-centred approach that works for the population they serve. Both the Government and Air Ambulances UK strongly believe that that is best achieved through a charitable model. I encourage everyone to support their local air ambulance charities, even if I do not give in to the gentle temptation offered by the shadow Minister to run the London marathon.

During these unprecedented times, I reiterate my unreserved thanks, and the thanks of all hon. Members who spoke and from across the House, to the staff at the air ambulance charities for continuing to provide their world-leading, life-saving care to patients and their local communities across the UK. They are genuinely inspirational to us all. There is a reason why so many people donate so generously to their air ambulance charities: they know that one day, they could be the one who needs that air ambulance. I suspect that across the country, there is the same huge admiration and gratitude for the fantastic work that these charities do every day.

5.9 pm

Martyn Day: We have had a thoughtful and informed debate. I hope we have successfully highlighted the tremendous work of air ambulances throughout these islands, and I hope we have given them a publicity boost for their charitable work and the donations they require. As I discovered in my research, this is a very complex matter, with a range of models across the country, and perhaps a one-size-fits-all solution is not what is needed. There are a lot of lessons we can still learn, and I look forward to finding out more in the weeks and months ahead.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered e-petition 259892, relating to air ambulance funding.

5.10 pm

Sitting suspended.

Rights to Protest

[JAMES GRAY *in the Chair*]

6.15 pm

James Gray (in the Chair): Before the debate begins, I remind the House that any live legal cases connected with recent protests will engage the House's sub judice resolution and should not be raised. Members are advised to exercise restraint and to try to avoid remarks that may prejudice the legal processes in any way.

Matt Vickers (Stockton South) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 579012, relating to right to protest.

I thank the petition creator Samantha Hurst, and all those who signed the petition, for creating this opportunity to debate what I am sure we all consider an important issue. As of 19 April, the petition had received more than 248,000 signatures from across the UK. It has attracted a lot of attention; rightly, there is a lot of concern about anything that could be perceived as interfering with the right to protest.

The petition begins by stating:

“The right to peaceful assembly and protest are fundamental principles of any democracy”.

All Members will wholeheartedly agree with and believe in that. Our history and way of life have been shaped by protests and the right of people across the country to express their opinions. That freedom must be protected at all costs. The right to peaceful protest cannot, however, come at the expense of the rights of others: the rights of thousands of people to get to work; for an ambulance to get to a hospital; for a newspaper to be printed; or for a public transport network to operate. It is regrettable that during this incredibly challenging year, some protesters have adopted disruptive tactics, creating a huge impact on thousands of people trying to go about their daily lives. They have placed huge additional pressures on our incredible emergency service workers and have created a huge drain on public funds.

During the Extinction Rebellion protests in April and October 2019, areas of London were brought to a standstill. The cost of policing those protests was a staggering £37 million. Imagine how that police time could be put to better use, or what we could do in our constituencies with that money. Imagine how that money could have been used to tackle climate change or help to decarbonise our economy. Over the summer of 2020, 172 Metropolitan Police officers were assaulted by a violent minority during a Black Lives Matter protest. That was not a peaceful protest. That is why the Government need to give our frontline police officers the power they need to ensure that does not happen again.

Strengthening the powers of the police to safely manage legitimate protests benefits not only wider society but specifically those who wish to undertake meaningful peaceful protest. When someone's son, daughter, husband or wife tells them they are off to a protest, they should not be filled with dread that they could be hurt or subject to abuse, or that they might get mixed up in something. For the interests of legitimate protesters, we must look at what is needed to prevent some of the violent and abusive behaviour we have seen at protests in the last year. There are serial protesters out there who choose to go along to legitimate demonstrations, sometimes even

fuelled by drink or drugs. They go along to disrupt and to abuse others. They undermine our meaningful protests and can tarnish causes and the reputations of others who wish to promote such causes. It is right that the Government give the police powers to ensure that protests are not hijacked by small minorities who adopt abusive, violent and disruptive tactics.

I understand that concerns about the Bill are possibly based in some ways on misconceptions and misinformation around a few specific points, and I am sure that the Minister will add clarity on those today. There are loony-lefty, wokey-cokey social media accounts out there that would have people believe that the Government were removing any meaningful right to protest. I am sure that those who took the time to look at the detail will be aware that that is not the case. The right to protest remains rightfully protected, and the vast majority of protests and protesters will be entirely unaffected by these measures.

There are suggestions that the measures ban protests that are annoying. That is not the case. The Bill does not introduce a power to ban protests and annoyance is not a concept plucked from thin air. The public nuisance offence looks to capture behaviour that causes the public or a section of the public to suffer serious annoyance. This is consistent with the existing common-law offence of public nuisance and does not connote merely feeling annoyed.

There have also been suggestions that the measures will ban protests outside Parliament and I hope that the Minister will confirm that that will not be the case. Many causes and characters should rightly continue to be represented here, at the heart of our democratic system. However, the powers should and will mean that police officers have the power to prevent elected representatives and those with business being prevented from entering the estate, and rightly so—to prevent access to Parliament is to deny rightful democratic process.

I think the provisions within the Bill are necessary, but we should continue to have robust debates, such as the one that I am sure we are about to see, and discussions about the right to protest. The Government must protect protesters from abusive and violent thugs who seek to hijack their causes. Similarly, the Government must protect the rights of citizens to go about their daily lives, unaffected by the protests of others.

6.21 pm

Kerry McCarthy (Bristol East) (Lab) [V]: Thank you, Sir James. It is rather disappointing—

James Gray (in the Chair): Order. The hon. Lady may know something that I do not, but I regret to say that it is just “Mr Gray”. One day, perhaps—you never know.

Kerry McCarthy: It is long overdue; I find it very hard to believe that it is not already the case. Sorry, Mr Gray.

As I was saying, it is disappointing that the hon. Member for Stockton South (Matt Vickers) has chosen to frame the debate in the way that he has done, with talk of loony lefties and other pejoratives. I do not think that is at all helpful, and I hope that today we can try to have a measured debate about what is a very sensitive—indeed, controversial—topic.

Being a Bristol MP, I thought that it was important to speak in this debate, given that three of the top four constituencies in terms of the number of signatures to this petition are Bristol seats: there were 3,615 signatories from Bristol West, which comes as no surprise, as it usually tops the charts on these occasions; 1,455 signatories from Bristol South; and 1,343 signatories from my own constituency of Bristol East. Bristol North West was a little further down the list with 972 signatories.

In addition, I had lots of emails from constituents about the Second Reading of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. Some of them touched on other elements of the Bill, for example the provisions that would affect Gypsies and Travellers, and those that perhaps would have an impact on ramblers. Others called for stronger protections in the Bill against violence directed towards women and girls, which are notable by their absence. However, the majority of the emails I received were from people who were alarmed and angry about the public order provisions in part 3 of the Bill, which have given rise to the petition that we are debating today.

Bristol has a proud radical tradition. In 1788, we were the first city outside London to set up a committee for the abolition of the slave trade. The first petition that that committee set up received some 800 signatures. Actually, if we think about that time, long before the days of social media, that was no mean feat; I think it more than rivals the number of signatures that the petition we are debating has received in this day and age. It is also noteworthy that that campaign was one of the first political campaigns in which women were allowed to be involved. More recently, in the 1960s the Bristol bus boycott led to the first UK racial equality legislation, spearheaded by one of my predecessors in this seat, Tony Benn. Last summer, we saw the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston, a slave trader, during Black Lives Matter protests in the city. All those protests were significant moments, historically and in a local sense.

There have been many more protests of less significance in the city that have not sparked international debate or led to change—or, at least, not yet. In some cases, such as the school climate strikes, the significance is in being a tiny part of a greater global movement. Young people in particular feel that, just maybe, they can make a difference by making banners, painting their faces, taking to the streets and making their voices heard. That is hugely important for young people. It is too easy to look at what appears to be vast global indifference to the fate of the planet and despair, so I applaud all those who have not given up hope.

Of course, it is easy to celebrate the school climate strikers, and the chances are that this legislation would not be used against them, but that is why clauses 54 to 60 of the Bill are so dangerous, because a subjective element starts to creep in in terms of what is deemed to be acceptable and, in the words of the hon. Member for Stockton South, legitimate protest, and what is deemed to be not acceptable and not legitimate. As I read through those clauses, I could see the appeal in invoking some of the provisions against, for example, the far-right thugs who occasionally attempt to march—in pitiful numbers, it has to be said—in Bristol, but there will be others who see exactly the same opportunities when it comes to Black Lives Matter protesters.

[Kerry McCarthy]

The problem with the Bill is that it gives the police and the courts powers to decide what is acceptable, what is troublesome, what is annoying and what is too noisy. The police have a difficult enough time as it is when it comes to policing protests, and this Bill means that there is huge potential for political interference and for pressure on the police to intervene. As was said on Second Reading, the definition of “nuisance” could apply to almost any protest outside Parliament.

I want to say a little about the recent protests in Bristol. I have made clear my condemnation of the violence, particularly on 21 March, and my concern about some policing tactics on 26 March. I do not want to revisit that here, other than to say that, since then, I have spent the best part of a day with the police at Silver command during one of the more recent protests, observing the decisions that were made on crowd control and so on. There had been a very peaceful, positive protest during the late afternoon, but a group of people stayed on very late and at one point tried to block the motorway by having a sit-down, and they were having a bit of a rave too. In general, I think the police have got it right when it comes to policing these protests, but I appreciate that theirs is not an easy job.

I want to say this to the protesters, and I preface it by saying that I absolutely want people in Bristol to take part in peaceful protest. People have a right to be heard and to get out on the streets and express their views, but as I have said when I have met representatives of various groups that oppose this Bill—and as the Mayor of Bristol has told them too—“Think about what you are trying to achieve. Think about who you need to win over. Think about how you can best do that. If you are protesting against this Bill, educate yourself about the parliamentary process and when the crucial votes will come.”

If people are campaigning for the right to assemble and protest, and trying to stop the introduction of laws that are predicated upon the—in my view, false—assertion that we have a problem in this country with uncontained, out-of-hand, destructive political demonstrations, it is entirely counterproductive to take part in a protest that culminates in people throwing eggs, fireworks and other missiles at the police, torching police vehicles and attempting to trash a police station. It is not acceptable for very many reasons. It is not acceptable in itself, but it is tactically stupid too, and it plays entirely into the hands of the Home Secretary and others who are attempting to stir up division and exploit fear and prejudice. Dare I say it, if people live somewhere with a Tory MP within travelling distance of Bristol, it might be an idea to focus their political activity—their peaceful protest—there, instead of coming to Bristol to join in a much larger protest here, given that the Bristol Labour Mayor and the four Bristol Labour MPs are all committed to opposing the Bill.

It is also worth saying that even policing a peaceful protest costs the city a lot of money and diverts resources away from other police activities. Blocking the streets in the city centre not only causes inconvenience to motorists. My main worry when I went along and observed the operation with Silver command was that I learned that the buses were all on divert through the city centre. When key workers and people in low-paid jobs have to

walk home alone through city streets late at night because the buses are on divert and they have to go some distance to get to a bus stop, it comes to a point when those protesting have had their say and it is time to let people resume their normal lives.

While I entirely respect people’s right to protest, I urge them to exercise that right wisely and well. I believe that with concerted action, by joining together, by making the arguments and by peaceful protest using democratic and peaceful means, we can stop part 3 of this Bill becoming law. Let us all try to work together to do that and not play into the Home Secretary’s hands by abusing the rights that we have.

6.30 pm

Caroline Lucas (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green) [V]: It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Gray. I join the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) in dissociating myself from what I think were, frankly, smears from the hon. Member for Stockton South (Matt Vickers). There is no misunderstanding about what the Bill will do, and it is quite condescending to suggest otherwise. The vast majority of protesters are entirely peaceful. They represent a cross-section of our constituents, and they know that there is a proud history of peaceful protest in this country that needs to be defended.

I am grateful for the opportunity to speak in this debate and to add to what I said on Second Reading of the Bill—namely that this legislation is dangerous, undemocratic and disproportionate. It is clear that huge numbers of our constituents feel the same: nearly 2,500 Brighton, Pavilion residents signed the petition opposing any restrictions on our right to peaceful protest. I know from my inbox that there is grave concern about giving the police new powers to undermine what are treasured and critical fundamental rights in any democracy. Handing more draconian powers to the police would be troubling at any time. It is especially dangerous when too much of the police response to the outpouring of anger and grief at the murder of Sarah Everard has been characterised by bad judgment, heavy-handedness and tone deafness. Footage of women apparently being wrestled to the ground by male police officers at vigils to protest male violence and to remember a woman killed by a police officer sent shockwaves around the country.

Moreover, this Bill has been tabled at a time when, as a recent police watchdog report makes clear, the police have responded to the demands of the pandemic and the frightening lack of clarity from Ministers about what was and was not a criminal offence by overreaching and with overzealousness. A review from the Crown Prosecution Service suggests that the Coronavirus Act 2020 has been misapplied by the police 232 times since last year; in fact, that is every single time it has been used to charge someone. Throughout the pandemic, heavy-handed police interpretation has not only been sanctioned but has been encouraged by Ministers.

Let us be clear: the Bill is a blatant and biased attack on the long-standing right to protest from a Government that have a track record of dismissing the rule of law, the truth, legal obligations and human rights as disposable inconveniences. As an aside, I remind colleagues that the Government are also seeking to change how judicial review works—further evidence of their ongoing opposition

to future accountability and the rule of law. The Bill is about protecting those with power, and presumably with the Prime Minister's mobile number on speed dial, from being challenged or held to account by the citizens of this country. It will do that through a range of restrictions on the right to freely assemble and to express dissent.

For example, the Bill seeks to extend the practice of handing out harsh sanctions as a disincentive to those considering organising protests to anyone simply taking part, which is insidious. At the same time, Ministers want to increase almost fourfold the length of time organisers could potentially be imprisoned. Those and countless other proposals are chilling. Put simply, everyone in this country risks being criminalised simply for exercising their democratic rights if the Bill becomes law. Friends of the Earth warn of the particular barriers that will be created for those from marginalised communities to having their voices heard, such as people of colour, who already have disproportionately negative experiences of policing and the criminal justice system. The hostile measures contained in part 4 of the Bill and which will clearly be used to target the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community appear nothing short of racist in their intention.

The Bill is about silencing our constituents and communities, metaphorically and indeed literally, with clauses that would allow a protest to be severely restricted by the police in anticipation that it might be too noisy and thereby disrupt those at whom it is aimed. But right now the voices of our constituents, and of campaigners clamouring for the Bill to be scrapped, are echoed far and wide. The opposition is cross-party and it is growing. Critics of aspects of part 3 of the Bill include two former Home Secretaries, Lord Blunkett and the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). A former Greater Manchester police chief constable, a former Durham constabulary chief constable and a former Metropolitan police commander have all warned of the dangers this legislation poses to British democracy and to safe policing by consent in our communities. So will the Government stop and listen?

When I spoke on the Bill on Second Reading, I noted that it would have made Greta Thunberg, sitting alone with a placard, a potential criminal, likewise all the brave and passionate youngsters who know that the future of humanity and our planet depends on peaceful protest, exposing just how inadequate Government action is compared with the scale of the climate and nature emergencies.

As one of the few MPs to be arrested during a peaceful protest and subsequently, after a week's court case, acquitted of any wrongdoing, I have first-hand experience of the power of non-violent direct action. My protest was against fracking, as part of a movement that has secured an effective moratorium on that technology. Protest works; it changes things. Throughout the long history of this country, people have assembled to express their dissent and have changed the course of that history.

I remember when Members from all parties were falling over themselves to be associated with the Suffragettes on the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act 1918. Back then, protest was suddenly not a dirty word. Now, when the protests are a little closer to home, whether that is Black Lives Matter or Extinction Rebellion, it seems the right to protest is no longer quite

so universally celebrated. Fundamental rights are not like multiple choice; we don't get to pick the most convenient and carelessly ditch the rest. They are universal and they should be defended in their entirety.

I end by calling on the Minister to tell us the truth and answer this question honestly: are the Government committed to upholding the human rights and civil liberties set out in articles 10 and 11 of the European convention on human rights? He recently affirmed:

"The right to peaceful protest is a fundamental tool of civic expression and will never be curtailed by the Government."—[*Official Report*, 7 September 2020; Vol. 679, c. 385.]

Yet the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill seeks to do exactly that. He and his Government either need to level with the British public about the facts or put this dangerous, undemocratic and disproportionate Bill where it belongs—on the scrap heap.

6.37 pm

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD) [V]: It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Gray. I congratulate those who started the petition. Clearly, there are people out there who care about our democracy; it is debatable whether the Government care about democracy in the same way as those people. It is unbelievable that we need to be here today to debate the right to protest.

I too dissociate myself from the comments made by the hon. Member for Stockton South (Matt Vickers). It was unfortunate that this important debate was introduced in that way. The Government's draconian Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is a timely reminder that we must never take our democratic rights for granted. The section of the Bill that amends the Public Order Act 1986 is an assault on our civil liberties and it must go.

This petition has been signed by a quarter of a million people, including more than 1,000 of my constituents in Bath. As they know and so clearly say, protest is a fundamental part of any functioning democracy. It is a way for every one of us to stand up for what we believe in, to have our voices heard and to speak truth to power. The Government say that this Bill is about protecting communities from the most destructive protest, but let us not be deceived. The Bill aims to quite literally silence protest and criminalise those who take part in and organise demonstrations.

More than 700 legal scholars have warned about the Bill's anti-protest measures. There is no evidence to show that demonstration tactics have become more disruptive or more extreme. In fact, according to legal academics, mass arrest at protests very frequently leads to lower conviction rates. Indeed, we have just heard from the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) about her experience of being arrested and then found to have done nothing wrong.

Peaceful protest can be noisy, inconvenient and cause disruption, and not everybody agrees on which issues to pick when protesting, but it should not be for the Government or the police to decide what people should be allowed to protest about. The whole idea of protest and of the protections in law is that the people pick the issues on which they want their voices heard. There is no reason to stifle protest. The whole purpose of a demonstration is to have one's voice heard and to get the attention of those who make decisions.

[Wera Hobhouse]

Time and again, the right to protest has been a driver for positive change. Thanks to the right to protest, we now have a moratorium on fracking. Thanks to the right to protest, the UK's anti-apartheid movement kept apartheid on the British political agenda. Let us not forget that thanks to the right to protest, women achieved the right to vote. The Government should not seek to shut down that legitimate way of holding the powerful to account.

The measure before us is a thinly veiled reaction to the climate protests that we have seen over the past few years, not just around Parliament, but in towns and cities across the country. The climate emergency has evoked strong feelings, especially among young people. Curtailing their voices would be absolutely the wrong thing to do, as it is the next generation especially who will bear the brunt of a climate catastrophe if the Government fail to act now. Every generation has to fight again for its freedoms, and each generation faces different challenges, but a diversity of voices from all sections of our society makes our democracy stronger. Those voices should never be silenced or suppressed.

The right to protest is fundamental to our democracy. To limit or curtail it would simply be undemocratic, and the Government should be ashamed for even proposing that. The proposals in the Bill must go.

6.41 pm

Kim Johnson (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab) [V]: It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Gray. I am pleased to contribute to this important debate as, like other Members, I have received a high number of emails about the Bill. I also dissociate myself from the derogatory comments made by the hon. Member for Stockton South (Matt Vickers).

Liverpool has a long history of peaceful protests and campaigns for social justice. The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is just one of a number of recent profoundly concerning moves in this Government's calculated and authoritarian agenda to sweep aside democracy, stifle dissent and strengthen the hand of the state against the people. The recent Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021 provides immunity to state agents breaking the law in our country. Last week, we debated the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill, which—now in its final stages—will create an unprecedented two-tier legal system of human rights. We will soon face a voter suppression Bill that will restrict the right to vote of black, working class and other disadvantaged communities, as well as plans to limit the judicial review process to stop the public challenging the Government's decisions in court.

The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill gives unprecedented powers to police and the Home Secretary to criminalise people standing up for social justice. Those powers include draconian punishment of up to 10 years in prison for anyone who poses a risk of serious annoyance or who causes a public nuisance. Those provisions strike at the heart of our democracy and the trade union movement, and they severely erode the public's right to protest and hold the Government to account for their actions.

Working people throughout history have campaigned with protest and demonstrations for democratic rights in the face of exploitation and oppression by employers and Governments. In the last year, we have seen widespread and popular demonstrations around the Black Lives Matter movement, violence against women, environmental concerns and more. If the Bill passes into law, all those actions will come under threat.

The petition has received nearly a quarter of a million signatures, and there are more than 14,000 responses to the linked online survey, which shows the strength of people's disgust about the content of the Bill. More than 250 civil society organisations have signed a letter warning that the Bill represents an attack on some of the most fundamental rights of our citizens. Those signatories span from human rights organisations to environmental campaign groups and homelessness organisations; from Gypsy, Roma and Traveller rights groups to trade unions representing millions of people.

The right to protest is the lifeblood of any democracy, and the provisions in the Bill will not make us safer. Instead, they strengthen the hand of the state against all who oppose or fall foul of it, and most concerningly for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, as the police will be given powers to break up so-called unauthorised encampments and needlessly push people into the criminal justice system.

Last week, campaigners forced the Government into a significant U-turn by making them exclude torture, genocide and crimes against humanity from the scope of the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill. That victory shows that the fight is not yet over. We must, and we will, do this again and force the Government to drop the crackdown on our rights to collectively organise against injustice.

6.45 pm

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Gray. The hon. Member for Stockton South (Matt Vickers) made some slightly misguided remarks about what we are debating today. It is perhaps a bit insulting to his constituents who enjoy the right to protest, and to mine.

On my screen, I am looking at four very powerful women who are in Parliament and have contributed to the debate. The hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) mentioned the Suffragettes. Dorinda Neligan, who was a headteacher in Croydon and a great Suffragette, got arrested several times in Parliament in 1909 and 1910. I am sure that if she was watching today, she would say, "Well, it's a jolly good thing that we got the vote and that these powerful women are here today making a case for British democracy," which is what we are standing up for today—no more and no less than that. I hope the hon. Member for Stockton South will reflect on his comments.

All the speeches that we have heard have made powerful cases. I do not know what is in the water in Bristol, but there are a lot of protests there. There are many active members of the community, and my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) made a powerful case by saying that the police have pretty much got things right during this difficult past year, but that we have to protect the right to protest. People have to think wisely and well about how they do that and how they win arguments.

The hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion made a very powerful case when she said that our fundamental rights are not multiple choice. As she says, we cannot pick and choose which ones we like and which we do not. I have not been arrested, and I am not much of a protester, but I absolutely and fundamentally believe that we must protect the right to protest. Every six weeks, I meet a group in my constituency—they are largely women in their 50s, 60s and 70s—who are active campaigners on climate change. The last time I met them, they were absolutely adamant that the changes would be very damaging to them and their rights to make their case, which they want to do powerfully and peacefully, for more action on climate change.

We talked a bit about the petition. A quarter of a million people have signed it, which is a significant number. The Petitions Committee used an online survey to ask petitioners for their views, and 95% of respondents were concerned that proposals to increase police powers would prevent the public from being able to hold the Government to account. Three quarters of the respondents were also concerned that the proposals could result in restrictions being imposed on protests, prevent protests from going ahead and result in people who take part in protests facing criminal charges. Respondents said that peaceful protest is democratic, a human fundamental and a basic right, and they were concerned that increased police powers would limit opportunities for people to express dissent, hold the Government to account and bring about positive change. Respondents were also concerned that the Bill would curtail peaceful, well-managed protests and, in doing so, risk increasing unorganised violent protests.

As hon. Members of different political parties have pointed out, the right to protest is a fundamental freedom—a hard-won democratic tradition that we are deeply proud of.

Throughout our history, as we have heard, protests have led to significant change for the better. The Government's proposals are risky and unnecessary and will be damaging to the traditions at the heart of our democracy.

The arguments have been well made, but I want to make four broad points. First, the Bill is incredibly broad and vague. It has already been mentioned that the measures target protesters for causing “serious unease” and “serious annoyance”. Such measures would definitely have prevented the great protests of history, and that vague term “serious unease” seems a low threshold for police-imposed conditions. It is hard to imagine our society as one where the police can impose directions on a protest for simply being noisy, but that is what the Bill would do. There is also a penalty in the Bill for someone who breaches a police-imposed condition on a protest when they “ought to know” that the condition existed. If someone attends a protest and the police have placed conditions on the number of people allowed to attend, how will those attending know that they are the 101st person to join, and that they are therefore breaching the conditions? The clause could effectively criminalise people who do not know that they are breaching conditions.

Currently, protest must involve at least two people to engage police powers, but the new measures would allow the police to issue conditions on a one-person protest; so if one person protesting causes another person in the vicinity to suffer

“serious unease, alarm or distress”

or the noise that the protesting person generates may have a

“relevant impact on persons in the vicinity of the protest”

the police are able to impose conditions. Those powers are clearly too broad. Steve Bray's shouts of “Stop Brexit!” were incredibly irritating for all of us, I suspect, but that does not mean he should not have been able to make his point, or that he was causing any damage or harm by doing what he did.

The point of protests, as has been said, is to capture the attention of people and of the Government. Sometimes—pretty much always—protests are noisy. That is the point of them. Sometimes they are annoying; but they are as fundamental to our democracy as Parliament and the courts are. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), made that point on Second Reading, expressing concern about the proposals, and pointing out the risk of their going against the right to freedom of speech. Sir Peter Fahy, a respected former chief constable of Greater Manchester police said:

“People need to be really worried about this...the right to protest, the right to gather, the right to have a voice is fundamental to our democracy, and particularly British democracy.”

He spoke about the bringing in of legislation

“on the back of the Black Lives Matter and Extinction Rebellion demonstrations, rushing that legislation through, putting in some really dodgy definitions which the police are supposed to make sense of”,

and said that if one thing had been learned from the coronavirus legislation it was that

“rushed legislation and unclear definitions cause huge confusion for the public and for the police having to enforce it.”

That brings me to my second point. The Bill would put the police in a difficult situation, having to make judgment calls for every protest and no doubt getting the blame because those judgments would be seen as political choices. I support the police. As shadow Policing Minister I think they have done a good job through covid times, in difficult circumstances, with legislation that was brought in at the very last minute, which they had to try to understand. They had to try to police draconian legislation as they had never had to before.

It cannot be right for the police to be attacked or assaulted. We have seen attacks on police and other emergency services increasing in recent years, and more needs to be done about that. At the weekend police officers in the Met were injured as they dispersed crowds during an anti-lockdown protest. Violent protest is never right, but the new powers are so vague that they will force the police to make political decisions about which completely non-violent protests they are under pressure to deem unlawful. That is extremely concerning and will put the police and the public in a difficult position. Why do the Government want to make the police the gatekeepers of public protest?

The public order measures in the Bill risk putting the police in a difficult position more often and creating more disorder and disruption. The Government should not be putting the police in that position. Where the rules are too confusing and too broad, they will only create more flashpoints. It is also worth pointing out that the Government have decided to introduce this contentious legislation restricting the right to protest in

[Sarah Jones]

the middle of a pandemic, when we have very difficult laws that the police are trying to implement. Why make a decision that potentially puts public health at risk by forcing the public to protest against their freedom to protest being taken away from them in the middle of a pandemic?

My third point, which again has been well rehearsed, is that the changes give dangerous powers to the Home Secretary to make regulations about the meaning of “serious disruption”. The former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead, made a really important point in her speech on Second Reading. She said:

“It is tempting when Home Secretary to think that giving powers to the Home Secretary is very reasonable, because we all think we are reasonable, but future Home Secretaries may not be so reasonable.”—[*Official Report*, 15 March 2021; Vol. 691, c. 78.]

The idea of giving the Home Secretary such a big power to impose their own perspective on what lawfully constitutes annoying or too noisy is deeply alarming.

If there is a peaceful protest outside the Home Office that the Home Secretary does not like, will they criminalise everyone for shouting too loud? If the Minister wanted to protest about a cause that he cared deeply about, would he really want the Home Secretary ultimately to decide whether what he was saying was right or wrong, or whether the protest was too loud? I know that I would not.

Finally, and really importantly, the existing legislation is sufficient to cover the concerns that have been raised. The Public Order Act 1986 and other powers appear on the statute book to police protests. I am not sure why that legislation is not enough. There are probably questions about when and how it is implemented, but the laws are there. They are really clear, and they are plenty strong enough to stop disruptive or violent protests—the kind of protests that the police would need to be able to stop. The police have the power to break up protests that cause harm or serious public disorder, serious damage to property, or serious disruption to the life of the community.

As the Member for Brighton, Pavilion mentioned, Michael Barton, who is the former chief constable of Durham police, compared the measures in the Bill to that of a paramilitary-style police force, and asked whether the Government are

“happy to be linked to the repressive regimes currently flexing their muscles via their police forces”.

That seems like strong words, but there is a delicate balance between the need for the police to keep order and ensure that protests are peaceful, and the legitimate right to protest on the causes that we all care about.

The police officers I speak to do not want to undermine that balance. They want our respect. They want fair pay. They do not want to be assaulted. They want to get on with their jobs. They want to fight crime, but they understand those Peelian principles. The right to express our thoughts collectively through protest is one of the cornerstones of our British tradition. It would be of great concern if the Government passed laws to protect them from any public proclamation of criticism.

The police are the people and the people are the police. The co-operation of the public diminishes proportionately to the necessity of the use of force. Can the Minister tell us what “serious unease” or “annoyance” is? Can he tell

us what too much noise sounds like? Which protests would he have stopped under the new legislation, and can he tell us why the Government are introducing rushed, undefined, broad measures that will inevitably undermine the right to protest? Finally, will he reflect on the words of the former Prime Minister, senior police officers, and a quarter of a million petitioners, who are asking him to think again?

6.59 pm

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): Mr Gray—soon to be Sir James—it is a great pleasure to appear under your wise and beneficent guidance today for what I think it is fair to say has been a binary debate, with not much nuance between the two sides.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South (Matt Vickers)—the first son of Stockton South—on his speech and on leading the debate about this petition. I thank other Members for contributing, not least the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), who unwittingly made a strong case for the legislation, and the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas), who gave us the hilarious routine of criticising my hon. Friend for his remarks, and then indulging in such hyperbole and invective that she neatly illustrated why, unlike in Germany, the Greens will always be a fringe party in this country.

Obviously, those who signed this petition are concerned about the impact that the new measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill may have on peaceful protest. I start by reaffirming the Government’s firm commitment to the right to peaceful protest. It is, as the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion pointed out, a fundamental tool of civic expression. I also wish to reaffirm our commitment to the European convention on human rights, namely articles 10 and 11, which set out everyone’s right to freedom of expression, assembly and association, and they are my rights as well as the rights of others. However, the very same human rights legislation makes it clear that these rights are not absolute and must be balanced with the rights and freedoms of others.

The hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), the Opposition spokesperson, said that we have put the police in a difficult position, yet it was the police who asked for a number of these measures. The Metropolitan Police Service and the National Police Chiefs’ Council have expressed concerns that existing public order legislation, which has not been updated for 35 years, is no longer appropriate for responding to the highly disruptive protest tactics that we have considered today.

In fact, in order to understand how effectively the police manage protests and how legislation could be updated to improve police effectiveness without eroding the right to protest, the Government commissioned Her Majesty’s inspectorate of constabulary to conduct an inspection of the policing of protests. The report found that too often:

“The balance may tip too readily in favour of protesters when—as is often the case—the police do not accurately assess the level of disruption caused, or likely to be caused, by a protest. These and other observations led us to conclude that a modest reset of the scales is needed.”

The disruption caused by those protests is made clearer when we examine the cost to the taxpayer. As my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton South pointed

out, during the Extinction Rebellion protests of April and October 2019, some of London's busiest areas were brought to a standstill for several days. That had a disproportionate impact on commuters, small businesses and ambulance services, with the policing operation for the two extended protests costing £37 million—more than twice the annual budget of London's violent crime taskforce.

In another example, on 4 September 2020 protesters blocked the entrances and exits for the printing presses of News UK, which estimated that it lost over £1 million and was unable to send out 60% to 70% of its print run that day. These highly disruptive protests required police officers from around the country to step away from their regular responsibilities to police them instead. During Extinction Rebellion's two-week so-called autumn uprising, in addition to thousands of Metropolitan police officers, nearly 1,100 officers were drawn from across England, Scotland and Wales. Instead, they could have been protecting the communities they are supposed to serve.

What is more, on top of this drain on resources, police officers are often threatened, verbally abused, assaulted and injured when policing protests. In London, a total of 23 Met police officers were seriously injured in the line of duty during a single weekend of protest in June last year, and Avon and Somerset police are investigating assaults on 40 officers and one member of the media during the recent disgraceful "Kill the Bill" protests in Bristol. This behaviour from extreme elements of the "Kill the Bill" protests, as well as from equally violent elements of other groups, is totally unacceptable and should be condemned by all right-thinking people.

Given the results of the inspectorate's report, the spiralling cost to the taxpayer and the increasing pressure on and violence towards police officers and indeed others, it is imperative that the Government act.

I turn to the impact that these measures will have on protests. It is not the case that they will unnecessarily restrict civil liberties. The impact that these measures will have has been misinterpreted, and the majority of protesters in the UK, who behave lawfully, will be entirely unaffected by the changes. This misinterpretation and hyperbole has been repeated across all of the public order measures in the Bill, and is unjustified. It is not the case that these measures allow the police to ban protests. It is not the case that these measures will criminalise protesters who are annoying. Public nuisance is already an existing offence, and we are simply stating it in statute to provide certainty for everybody.

It is not the case that these measures will ban protests outside of Parliament. You will remember, Mr Gray, because you were here at the time, that it was a Labour Government in 2005 that banned protests outside of Parliament, resulting on one famous occasion in the arrest of an individual woman reading the names of the war dead from Iraq outside the Cenotaph. The clause in our Bill merely relates to the passage of vehicles into and out of the parliamentary estate, allowing elected representatives to exercise their democratic rights and conduct our democracy in the way people would expect. Nor is it the case that these measures will ban noisy protests. The police will only be able to impose conditions on unjustifiably noisy protests that cause harm to others or prevent an organisation from operating, for example if a business has to shut down because of the noise being created.

We did, in fact, put forward several legislative measures to Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary for its consideration. These included, for example, a measure to enable the police to stop and search protesters. The inspectorate concluded that

"with some qualifications, all five proposals would improve police effectiveness without eroding the right to protest."

It went on to recommend that the Government consider further measures to require organisers of public assemblies to notify the police of their intention to assemble, and to enable the police, in exceptional circumstances, to apply for the prohibition of public assemblies. However, following careful consideration of the impact of these measures on the police's ability to manage protests, as well as on civil liberties, we are not proceeding with the full range of measures that the inspectorate has supported. We therefore think that we have struck a balance between the legitimate and fundamental right to protest, and the rights of others to go about their business unmolested.

In short, these measures have been portrayed by some as draconian, and as a dismantling of our civil liberties. This is misinformed at best and misleading at worst. These measures simply seek to improve the balance of the rights of protesters with the rights of others, as I say, to go about their business unhindered, and will allow the police to take a more proactive approach in managing these disproportionately disruptive protests, but will not grant them sweeping powers to override their obligations. When using these measures or existing public order powers, the police must be able to demonstrate that their use is necessary and proportionate. They will also need to be able to show due regard to human rights obligations. This highlights our continued commitment to the absolutely fundamental right of peaceful protest, balanced against the rights of others to go about their business.

I commend the Government's response to this e-petition.

7.8 pm

Matt Vickers: Once again, I thank all the petitioners who have provided us with this opportunity to debate this very important topic. I would also like to thank all the Members who participated for a robust debate, and the Minister for his response and for the Government's commitment to protect the right to protest.

Given the public interest in this topic and the passion with which everyone has made their argument, it is clear that this is something that we all care deeply about. While we have our disagreements on this issue, I look forward to us being able to have our say on this vital piece of legislation as it continues its progress through Parliament. I hope that we can get the balance right, for those who want to get to work; for ambulances that want to get to hospital; for those who want to print or read a newspaper or use public transport; and, moreover, for those who want to protest safely without their cause being hijacked by those who seek to cause disruption or harm.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered e-petition 579012, relating to right to protest.

7.9 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 26 April 2021

BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

Post Office Court of Appeal Judgment

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (Paul Scully): This House is well aware of the issues with the Post Office Horizon IT System and the hugely negative impact it has had on the lives of affected postmasters. The Government welcomes the Court of Appeal's decision last Friday, 23 April, to quash the convictions of 39 postmasters. This is in addition to six convictions quashed by the Crown Court in December 2020.

The Court's decision is also another important step towards bringing resolution for these postmasters. The impact this ordeal has had on affected postmasters, their lives and livelihoods cannot be overstated. The Government will come back with a fuller oral statement tomorrow, 27 April, to update the House in more detail on these cases, owing to the scale of the miscarriage of justice we have seen here.

[HCWS940]

TREASURY

Kalifa Review of UK FinTech

The Chancellor of the Exchequer (Rishi Sunak): Innovation is at the forefront of our vision for the future of UK financial services. The Government are committed to ensuring that the UK remains at the global cutting edge of technology and innovation in financial services. Creating the conditions needed for our FinTech businesses to grow and compete, both here and abroad, is central to delivering on this ambition. This is why, at Budget 2020, I asked Ron Kalifa OBE to carry out an independent review of the UK FinTech sector.

The Kalifa review of UK Fintech (the Review) ^[1] was published on 26 February 2021. It made a number of recommendations aimed at Government, regulators, and industry across five areas: policy and regulation, skills and talent, investment, international attractiveness and competitiveness, and national connectivity. At publication, HM Treasury welcomed the review and highlighted key recommendations including:

A Centre for Finance, Innovation and Technology to strengthen national co-ordination across the FinTech ecosystem to boost growth.

A regulatory "scale-box" to provide additional support to growth stage FinTech.

Amendments to UK listings rules to make the UK a more attractive location for initial public offerings (IPOs).

Improvements to tech visas to attract global talent and boost the FinTech workforce.

Here we have set out the actions that Government and regulators are taking in response to the review's recommendations.

Centre for Finance, Innovation and Technology

The Government recognise the potential for a private sector-led Centre for Finance, Innovation and Technology (CFIT) as an accelerator for FinTech sector growth. It can achieve this through research, thought leadership, and working with regional FinTech hubs and national FinTech bodies to identify and address barriers to growth to the benefit of the sector across the whole of the UK. I have confirmed that the Government support the creation of this centre and will work closely with the FinTech community to make it a reality.

Regulatory scale-box

The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has also welcomed the Kalifa review and has set out steps it will be taking to deliver against the review's idea for a "regulatory scale-box", by enhancing its existing regulatory toolkit. These actions include:

Launching "Always Open" to make the regulatory sandbox available on a rolling basis.

Clarifying the scope of qualifying propositions for the regulatory sandbox to ensure as many firms as possible are able to access support.

Launching, in conjunction with the City of London Corporation, the second phase of the Digital Sandbox pilot, inviting applications to test proof of concepts to solve sustainability and climate change financial challenges.

Considering how to provide a "one-stop shop" for growth-stage firms to dock in and easily navigate what sources of FCA support are available to them.

Working with industry over coming months to identify further solutions for supporting firms manage the journey to scale.

The FCA has also announced plans to create a regulatory "nursery" for enhanced oversight of newly authorised firms, enabling an opportunity for additional support as firms become used to the requirements of regulatory compliance.

Listings regime

The Lord Hill Listings review, which was published at Budget 2021 and made recommendations to boost the UK as a destination for IPOs and optimise the capital raising process on UK markets, addresses a number of the Kalifa review's recommendations for attracting more FinTech listings to the UK. The Government set out details of their response to Lord Hill's review in a written ministerial statement on 19 April [HCWS919]. In parallel, the FCA plans to consult on issues raised by the Kalifa review including reducing the minimum "free float" a company must have when it lists, and whether premium listed companies can have dual share class structures.

Scale-up visa

The Government demonstrated their support for attracting international talent to the UK at Budget 2021 by announcing creation of a "scale-up visa stream". The new stream will be created within a new elite points-based route that will allow employees with a job offer at the required skills level from a recognised UK scale up, including FinTechs, to qualify for a fast-track visa, without the need for sponsorship or third-party endorsement. The Government will set out further details by July and the new route will be implemented by March 2022.

International competitiveness

The Department for International Trade (DIT) has announced it will create two new FinTech initiatives in response to the review. The first is a new FinTech cohort within DIT's Export Academy initiative. This will provide bespoke, 1-2-1 advice to eligible UK FinTechs who are ready to scale into key markets such as North America, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Tailored advice will cover topics such as legal, tax, regulation, accounting, and market entry matters, all of which will support the international expansion ambitions of FinTechs on the programme. This is in addition to the wide range of existing DIT export support services currently available for UK businesses. DIT will also establish a FinTech champions scheme, comprising of leading UK FinTech advocates who are successfully exporting. DIT FinTech champions will fly the flag for UK FinTech overseas and support the next generation of UK FinTech in their growth journeys through mentoring and peer to peer learning. Both initiatives will enhance UK FinTech overseas, further elevating the UK's status as a world leading FinTech hub.

Regulation for digital finance

The review also made recommendations more broadly for the Government to develop a regulatory framework for digitalisation and emerging technology in financial services. The Government are taking forward a number of initiatives in these areas:

Along with the Bank of England, HM Treasury has launched a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) Taskforce to co-ordinate the exploration of a potential UK CBDC—the Government and the Bank of England have not yet made a decision on whether to introduce a CBDC in the UK. A CBDC would be a new form of money that would exist alongside cash and bank deposits, rather than replacing them; the Government recognise that cash remains important to millions of people across the UK, and have committed to legislating to protect access to cash.

HM Treasury and the Bank of England are launching a CBDC Engagement Forum to gather strategic input on all non-technology aspects of CBDC.

The Bank of England is also launching a CBDC Technology Forum to gather input on all technology aspects of CBDC.

The Bank of England has launched a new account type that will allow access to central bank money by innovative financial market infrastructure providers to allow them to provide enhanced wholesale payment and settlement.

The Government have announced a financial market infrastructure (FMI) sandbox for firms exploring how to use technologies, such as distributed ledger technology (DLT), to innovate in the settlement of financial securities. This regime will aim to support firms, which are developing this new technology, with a more flexible and tailored approach to meeting requirements in current legislation, while appropriately balancing any risks to financial stability, market integrity and consumer protection. This new regime will be inspired by the FCA's sandbox and HM Treasury will work together with the Bank of England and the FCA to deliver this.

In 2020 the Government committed to creating a framework of standards, governance, and legislation to enable a UK digital identity market. The Department

for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) published a draft trust framework for consultation in February this year which sets out the Government's vision for the rules governing the future use of digital identities. A next iteration is expected to be published this summer.

The Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy is taking forward work on smart data and has committed to bringing forward legislation to better enable data sharing across sectors, including open finance. The FCA published a call for input on open finance in 2019 and published a feedback statement in March this year. This set out that the FCA will work closely with the Government as it takes forward the work on legislation as well as assessing the regulatory framework that would be needed to support open finance.

Tax

The review also highlighted the benefits of tax incentive schemes in supporting FinTech growth and at Budget 2021 the Government announced steps it is taking to ensure the schemes work as efficiently as possible, including:

A call for evidence on the enterprise management incentive scheme to seek views on whether the scheme is meeting its objectives, and examine whether more companies should be able to access the scheme.

A review of R&D tax reliefs which follows the consultation last year on expanding the qualifying expenditures to include cloud computing and data.

The Kalifa review also makes various recommendations that Government consider industry is best placed to take forward and I am grateful to Ron Kalifa for bringing these to my attention.

I would like to conclude by thanking Ron Kalifa and his team for their exceptional work in producing this seminal review. Ron has succeeded in producing insightful analysis, and garnering widespread support from industry for a suite of proposals that keep us on track for the continued success of UK FinTech.

I look forward to taking forward the steps I have outlined today.

^[1]https://www.assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/978396/KalifaReviewofUKFintech01.pdf.

[HCWS938]

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Fan-Led Review of Football Governance

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nigel Huddleston): The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport announced an independent fan-led review of football governance on 19 April. This will be chaired by my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch).

This manifesto commitment followed a number of high profile club collapses in recent years, including Bury Football Club which resulted in its expulsion from the English Football League. Football clubs are integral parts of our local communities and it is vital that they are protected. The European Super League proposals, which would have been detrimental to the entire football pyramid, demonstrated that now is the right time to launch the review.

The Government have now published the terms of reference for the review. It will seek to make recommendations on ways to improve the governance, ownership and financial sustainability of clubs in English football, building on the strengths of the football pyramid. This will include examining the owners and directors tests, exploring ownership models from other countries, and assessing the merits of an independent regulator.

Football begins and ends with fans and we have seen that passionately displayed over the past few days, with clubs being the beating heart of their communities. This review will help put football on a firmer footing for the future and ensure that supporters' voices are heard.

A copy of the terms of reference will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

Attachments can be viewed online at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2021-04-26/HCWS939/>.

[HCWS939]

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions

The Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs and First Secretary of State (Dominic Raab): I have today laid before Parliament, under the powers of the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Act 2018, the Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions Regulations 2021.

The sanctions regime established by these regulations seeks to prevent and combat serious corruption around the world by allowing for asset freezes and travel bans to be imposed on individuals or organisations involved in serious corruption. It is a smart tool allowing the Government to target corrupt actors and their enablers. It will prevent those responsible from entering the UK or laundering their ill-gotten assets here. These sanctions will help to ensure that the UK is not a safe haven for those involved in serious corruption, including those who profit from it.

The global anti-corruption sanctions regime will stand alongside the global human rights sanctions regime and give the UK an additional, powerful device to prevent and combat serious corruption around the world.

Today, I will also give an oral statement to set out the new sanctions regime and publish the first persons to be designated under it.

[HCWS936]

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Contingent Liabilities Notification: NIHR National Biosample Centre

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Matt Hancock): My noble Friend the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Innovation (Lord Bethell of Romford) has today made the following written ministerial statement:

The National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) National Biosample Centre is a state-of-the-art bio-sample storage and processing facility. It was established in 2014 through a capital grant from the then Department of Health to the University of Oxford, with the aim of enhancing the nation's capability and capacity to support medical, health and life sciences research into disease mechanisms, new diagnostics and treatments. The NIHR National Biosample Centre remains a key national asset in the context of the Government's commitment to the life sciences and, since April 2020, it has also served as the Milton Keynes lighthouse lab for covid-19 testing.

To help ensure the long-term financial viability of the NIHR National Biosample Centre, and following consideration of several options, I have approved the transfer of the assets and leasing business from the University of Oxford to the Department of Health and Social Care; in return, the Department will pay £1 and provide the University of Oxford with two indemnities relating to its ownership.

I have today presented a departmental minute notifying Parliament of the two contingent liabilities arising from the provision of these indemnities. Details of the contingent liabilities are set out in the minute.

[HCWS937]

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