

**Tuesday
11 May 2021**

**Volume 695
No. 1**



**HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES**

(HANSARD)

Tuesday 11 May 2021

House of Commons

Alphabetical List of Members

[Returned at the General Election, 17 December 2019]

A

Abbott, Rt Hon. Diane Julie (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)
Abrahams, Deborah Angela Elspeth Marie (Oldham East and Saddleworth)
Adams, Nigel (Selby and Ainsty)
Afolami, Abimbola (Hitchin and Harpenden)
Afriyie, Adam (Windsor)
Ahmad Khan, Imran Nasir (Wakefield)
Aiken, Nicola Jane (Cities of London and Westminster)
Aldous, Peter James Guy (Waveney)
Ali, Rushanara (Bethnal Green and Bow)
Ali, Tahir (Birmingham, Hall Green)
Allan, Lucy (Telford)
Allin-Khan, Rosena Chantelle (Tooting)
Amesbury, Michael Lee (Weaver Vale)
Amess, Sir David Anthony Andrew (Southend West)
Anderson, Fleur (Putney)
Anderson, Lee (Ashfield)
Anderson, Stuart Paul (Wolverhampton South West)
Andrew, Rt Hon. Stuart James (Pudsey)
Ansell, Caroline (Eastbourne)
Antoniazzi, Antonia Louise (Gower)
Argar, Edward John Comport (Charnwood)
Ashworth, Rt Hon. Jonathan Michael Graham (Leicester South)
Atherton, Sarah Elizabeth (Wrexham)
Atkins, Victoria (Louth and Horncastle)

B

Bacon, Gareth Andrew (Orpington)
Bacon, Richard Michael (South Norfolk)
Badenoch, Olukemi Olufunto (Saffron Walden)
Bailey, Shaun Stephen (West Bromwich West)
Baillie, Siobhan Kathleen (Stroud)
Baker, Duncan Charles (North Norfolk)
Baker, Steven John (Wycombe)
Baldwin, Harriett Mary Morison (West Worcestershire)
Barclay, Rt Hon. Stephen Paul (North East Cambridgeshire)
Bardell, Hannah Mary (Livingston)
Barker, Paula (Liverpool, Wavertree)
Baron, John Charles (Basildon and Billericay)
Baynes, Simon Robert Maurice (Clwyd South)
Beckett, Rt Hon. Margaret Mary (Derby South)
Begley, Órfhlaith Acife (West Tyrone)
Begum, Apsana (Poplar and Limehouse)
Bell, Aaron Stuart (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
Benn, Rt Hon. Hilary James (Leeds Central)
Benton, Scott Lloyd (Blackpool South)
Beresford, Sir Alexander Paul (Mole Valley)
Berry, Rt Hon. James Jacob Gilchrist (Rossendale and Darwen)
Betts, Clive James Charles (Sheffield South East)
Bhatti, Mohammad Saqib (Meriden)
Black, Mhairi (Paisley and Renfrewshire South)
Blackford, Rt Hon. Ian (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Blackman, Kirsty Ann (Aberdeen North)
Blackman, Robert John (Harrow East)

Blake Dagnall, Olivia Frances (Sheffield, Hallam)
Blomfield, Paul Christopher (Sheffield Central)
Blunt, Crispin Jeremy Rupert (Reigate)
Bone, Peter William (Wellingborough)
Bonnar, Steven (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill)
Bottomley, Sir Peter James (Worthing West)
Bowie, Andrew Campbell (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine)
Brabin, Tracy Lynn (Batley and Spen)
Bradley, Benjamin David (Mansfield)
Bradley, Rt Hon. Karen Anne (Staffordshire Moorlands)
Bradshaw, Rt Hon. Benjamin Peter James (Exeter)
Brady, Sir Graham Stuart (Altrincham and Sale West)
Brady, Michael (Newry and Armagh)
Braverman, Rt Hon. Sue-Ellen Cassiana (Fareham)
Brennan, Kevin Denis (Cardiff West)
Brereton, Jack Edgar (Stoke-on-Trent South)
Bridgen, Andrew James (North West Leicestershire)
Brine, Stephen Charles Brine (Winchester)
Bristow, Paul (Peterborough)
Britcliffe, Sara Alice (Hyndburn)
Brock, Deidre Leanne (Edinburgh North and Leith)
Brokenshire, Rt Hon. James Peter (Old Bexley and Sidcup)
Brooks-Osborne, Katharine Helen (Jarrow)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)
Brown, Lyn Carol (West Ham)
Brown, Rt Hon. Nicholas Hugh (Newcastle upon Tyne East)
Browne, Anthony Howe (South Cambridgeshire)
Bruce, Fiona Claire (Congleton)
Bryant, Christopher John (Rhondda)
Buchan, Felicity Christiana (Kensington)
Buck, Karen Patricia (Westminster North)
Buckland, Rt Hon. Robert James (South Swindon)
Burghart, Michael Alex (Brentwood and Ongar)
Burgon, Richard (Leeds East)
Burns, Rt Hon. Conor (Bournemouth West)
Butler, Dawn Petula (Brent Central)
Butler, Robert (Aylesbury)
Byrne, Ian Robert (Liverpool, West Derby)
Byrne, Rt Hon. Liam Dominic (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)

C

Cadbury, Ruth Margaret (Brentford and Isleworth)
Cairns, Rt Hon. Alun Hugh (Vale of Glamorgan)
Callaghan, Amy (East Dunbartonshire)
Cameron, Lisa (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow)
Campbell, Rt Hon. Sir Alan (Tynemouth)
Campbell, Gregory Lloyd (East Londonderry)
Carden, Daniel Joseph (Liverpool, Walton)
Carmichael, Rt Hon. Alexander Morrison (Orkney and Shetland)
Carter, Andrew John (Warrington South)
Cartlidge, James Roger (South Suffolk)
Cash, Sir William Nigel Paul (Stone)
Cates, Miriam Joy (Penistone and Stocksbridge)
Caulfield, Maria Colette (Lewes)

Chalk, Alexander John Gervase (Cheltenham)
 Chamberlain, Wendy Anne (North East Fife)
 Champion, Sarah Deborah (Rotherham)
 Chapman, Douglas (Dunfermline and West Fife)
 Charalambous, Charalambos (Enfield, Southgate)
 Cherry, Joanna Catherine (Edinburgh South West)
 Chishti, Atta-Ur-Rehman (Gillingham and Rainham)
 Chope, Sir Christopher Robert (Christchurch)
 Churchill, Johanna Peta (Bury St Edmunds)
 Clark, Feryal Demirci (Enfield North)
 Clark, Rt Hon. Gregory David (Tunbridge Wells)
 Clark, Rebecca Faye (Taunton Deane)
 Clarke, Simon Richard (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland)
 Clarke, Theodora Roosevelt (Stafford)
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan (Bassetlaw)
 Clarkson, Christopher Mark (Heywood and Middleton)
 Cleverly, Rt Hon. James Spencer (Braintree)
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey Robert (The Cotswolds)
 Coffey, Rt Hon. Thérèse Anne (Suffolk Coastal)
 Colburn, Elliot (Carshalton and Wallington)
 Collins, Damian Noel Thomas (Folkestone and Hythe)
 Cooper, Daisy (St Albans)
 Cooper, Rosemary Elizabeth (West Lancashire)
 Cooper, Rt Hon. Yvette (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford)
 Corbyn, Rt Hon. Jeremy Bernard (Islington North)
 Costa, Alberto Castrenze (South Leicestershire)
 Court, Robert Alexander (Witney)
 Coutinho, Claire Coryl Julia (East Surrey)
 Cowan, Ronald Jack (Inverclyde)
 Cox, Rt Hon. Sir Charles Geoffrey (Torridge and West Devon)
 Coyle, Neil (Bermondsey and Old Southwark)
 Crabb, Rt Hon. Stephen (Preseli Pembrokeshire)
 Crawley, Angela (Lanark and Hamilton East)
 Creasy, Stella Judith (Walthamstow)
 Crosbie, Virginia Ann (Ynys Môn)
 Crouch, Tracey Elizabeth Anne (Chatham and Aylesford)
 Cruddas, Jonathan (Dagenham and Rainham)
 Cryer, John Robert (Leyton and Wanstead)
 Cummins, Judith Mary (Bradford South)
 Cunningham, Alexander (Stockton North)

D

Daby, Janet Jessica (Lewisham East)
 Daly, James Barry (Bury North)
 Davey, Rt Hon. Edward Jonathon (Kingston and Surbiton)
 David, Wayne (Caerphilly)
 Davies, David Thomas Charles (Monmouth)
 Davies, Gareth Mark (Grantham and Stamford)
 Davies, Geraint Richard (Swansea West)
 Davies, James Michael (Vale of Clwyd)
 Davies, Miriam Jane Alice (Mid Sussex)
 Davies, Philip Andrew (Shipley)
 Davies-Jones, Alexandra Mary (Pontypridd)
 Davis, Rt Hon. David Michael (Haltemprice and Howden)
 Day, Martyn (Linlithgow and East Falkirk)
 De Cordova, Marsha Chantol (Battersea)
 Debonnaire, Thangam Elizabeth Rachel (Bristol West)
 Dhesi, Tanmanjeet Singh (Slough)
 Dinenage, Caroline Julia (Gosport)
 Dines, Sarah Elizabeth (Derbyshire Dales)
 Djanogly, Jonathan Simon (Huntingdon)
 Docherty, Leo (Aldershot)
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin John (West Dunbartonshire)

Dodds, Anneliese Jane (Oxford East)
 Donaldson, Rt Hon. Sir Jeffrey Mark (Lagan Valley)
 Donelan, Michelle Emma May Elizabeth (Chippenhams)
 Doogan, David Michael (Angus)
 Dorans, Allan Hopkins (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock)
 Dorries, Nadine Vanessa (Mid Bedfordshire)
 Double, Stephen Daniel (St Austell and Newquay)
 Doughty, Stephen John (Cardiff South and Penarth)
 Dowd, Peter Christopher (Bootle)
 Dowden, Rt Hon. Oliver James (Hertsmere)
 Doyle-Price, Jacqueline (Thurrock)
 Dromey, John Eugene Joseph (Birmingham, Erdington)
 Drummond, Felicia Jane Beatrix (Meon Valley)
 Duddridge, James Philip (Rochford and Southend East)
 Duffield, Rosemary Clare (Canterbury)
 Duguid, David James (Banff and Buchan)
 Duncan Smith, Rt Hon. Sir George Iain (Chingford and Woodford Green)
 Dunne, Rt Hon. Philip Martin (Ludlow)

E

Eagle, Dame Angela (Wallasey)
 Eagle, Maria (Garston and Halewood)
 Eastwood, Colum (Foyle)
 Eastwood, Mark Simon (Dewsbury)
 Edwards, David Jonathan (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr)
 Edwards, Ruth Rosamond (Rushcliffe)
 Efford, Clive Stanley (Eltham)
 Elliott, Julie (Sunderland Central)
 Ellis, Rt Hon. Michael Tyrone (Northampton North)
 Ellwood, Rt Hon. Tobias Martin (Bournemouth East)
 Elmore, Christopher Philip James (Ogmore)
 Elphicke, Natalie Cecilia (Dover)
 Eshalomi, Florence (Vauxhall)
 Esterson, William Roffen (Sefton Central)
 Eustice, Rt Hon. Charles George (Camborne and Redruth)
 Evans, Christopher James (Islwyn)
 Evans, Luke Morgan (Bosworth)
 Evans, Rt Hon. Nigel Martin (Ribble Valley)
 Evennett, Rt Hon. Sir David Anthony (Bexleyheath and Crayford)
 Everitt, Ben (Milton Keynes North)

F

Fabricant, Michael Louis David (Lichfield)
 Fareham, Dehenna Sheridan (Bishop Auckland)
 Farris, Laura Rose (Newbury)
 Farron, Timothy James (Westmorland and Lonsdale)
 Farry, Stephen Anthony (North Down)
 Fell, Simon Richard James (Barrow and Furness)
 Fellows, Marion (Motherwell and Wishaw)
 Ferrier, Margaret (Rutherglen and Hamilton West)
 Finucane, John (Belfast North)
 Fletcher, Colleen Margaret (Coventry North East)
 Fletcher, Katherine (South Ribble)
 Fletcher, Mark Peter (Bolsover)
 Fletcher, Nicholas Anthony (Don Valley)
 Flynn, Stephen Mark (Aberdeen South)
 Ford, Victoria Grace (Chelmsford)
 Foster, Kevin John (Torbay)
 Fovargue, Yvonne Helen (Makerfield)
 Fox, Rt Hon. Liam (North Somerset)
 Foxcroft, Victoria Jane (Lewisham, Deptford)
 Foy, Mary Kelly (City of Durham)
 Francois, Rt Hon. Mark Gino (Rayleigh and Wickford)

Freeman, George William (Mid Norfolk)
 Freer, Michael Whitney (Finchley and Golders Green)
 Fuller, Richard Quentin (North East Bedfordshire)
 Furniss, Gillian (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough)
 Fysh, Marcus John Hudson (Yeovil)

G

Gale, Rt Hon. Sir Roger James (North Thanet)
 Gardiner, Barry Strachan (Brent North)
 Garnier, Mark Robert Timothy (Wyre Forest)
 Gibb, Rt Hon. Nicolas John (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton)
 Gibson, Patricia (North Ayrshire and Arran)
 Gibson, Peter Alexander (Darlington)
 Gideon, Joanna Mary (Stoke-on-Trent Central)
 Gildernew, Michelle Angela (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
 Gill, Preet Kaur (Birmingham, Edgbaston)
 Gillan, Dame Cheryl Elise Kendall (Chesham and Amersham) [*Died, April 2021*]
 Girvan, William Paul (South Antrim)
 Glen, John Philip (Salisbury)
 Glindon, Mary Theresa (North Tyneside)
 Goodwill, Rt Hon. Robert (Scarborough and Whitby)
 Gove, Rt Hon. Michael Andrew (Surrey Heath)
 Grady, Patrick John (Glasgow North)
 Graham, Richard Michael John Ogilvie (Gloucester)
 Grant, Helen (Maidstone and The Weald)
 Grant, Peter (Glenrothes)
 Gray, James Whiteside (North Wiltshire)
 Gray, Neil Charles (Airdrie and Shotts) [*Resigned, March 2021*]
 Grayling, Rt Hon. Christopher Stephen (Epsom and Ewell)
 Green, Christopher James (Bolton West)
 Green, Rt Hon. Damian Howard (Ashford)
 Green, Katherine Anne (Stretford and Urmston)
 Greenwood, Lilian Rachel (Nottingham South)
 Greenwood, Margaret (Wirral West)
 Griffith, Andrew (Arundel and South Downs)
 Griffith, Nia Rhiannon (Llanelli)
 Griffiths, Kate Elizabeth (Burton)
 Grundy, James Nelson (Leigh)
 Gullis, Jonathan Edward (Stoke-on-Trent North)
 Gwynne, Andrew John (Denton and Reddish)

H

Haigh, Louise Margaret (Sheffield, Heeley)
 Halfon, Rt Hon. Robert Henry (Harlow)
 Hall, Luke Anthony (Thornbury and Yate)
 Hamilton, Fabian (Leeds North East)
 Hammond, Stephen William (Wimbledon)
 Hancock, Rt Hon. Matthew John David (West Suffolk)
 Hands, Rt Hon. Gregory William (Chelsea and Fulham)
 Hanna, Claire Aisling (Belfast South)
 Hanvey, James Neale (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath)
 Hardy, Emma Ann (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle)
 Harman, Rt Hon. Harriet Ruth (Camberwell and Peckham)
 Harper, Rt Hon. Mark James (Forest of Dean)
 Harris, Carolyn (Swansea East)
 Harris, Rebecca Elizabeth Scott (Castle Point)
 Harrison, Trudy Lynne (Copeland)
 Hart, Sally-Ann (Hastings and Rye)
 Hart, Simon Anthony (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire)

Hayes, Helen Elizabeth (Dulwich and West Norwood)
 Hayes, Rt Hon. Sir John Henry (South Holland and The Deepings)
 Hazzard, Christopher John (South Down)
 Heald, Rt Hon. Sir Oliver (North East Hertfordshire)
 Healey, Rt Hon. John (Wentworth and Dearne)
 Heappey, James Stephen (Wells)
 Heaton-Harris, Christopher (Daventry)
 Henderson, Gordon Leonard (Sittingbourne and Sheppey)
 Hendrick, Sir Mark Phillip (Preston)
 Hendry, Andrew Egan Henderson (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey)
 Henry, Darren George (Broxtowe)
 Higginbotham, Antony (Burnley)
 Hill, Michael Robert (Hartlepool) [*Resigned, March 2021*]
 Hillier, Margaret Olivia (Hackney South and Shoreditch)
 Hinds, Rt Hon. Damian Patrick George (East Hampshire)
 Hoare, Simon James (North Dorset)
 Hobhouse, Wera Benedicta (Bath)
 Hodge, Rt Hon. Dame Margaret Eve (Barking)
 Hodgson, Sharon (Washington and Sunderland West)
 Holden, Richard John (North West Durham)
 Hollern, Catherine Malloy (Blackburn)
 Hollinrake, Kevin Paul (Thirsk and Malton)
 Hollobone, Philip Thomas (Kettering)
 Holloway, Adam James Harold (Gravesham)
 Holmes, Paul John (Eastleigh)
 Hopkins, Rachel Louise (Luton South)
 Hosie, Rt Hon. Stewart (Dundee East)
 Howarth, Rt Hon. Sir George Edward (Knowsley)
 Howell, John Michael (Henley)
 Howell, Paul (Sedgefield)
 Hoyle, Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Harvey (Chorley)
 Huddleston, Nigel Paul (Mid Worcestershire)
 Hudson, Neil Peter Hammerton (Penrith and The Border)
 Hughes, Edmund Francis (Walsall North)
 Hunt, Jane Marion (Loughborough)
 Hunt, Rt Hon. Jeremy Richard Streynsham (South West Surrey)
 Hunt, Thomas Patrick (Ipswich)
 Huq, Rupa Asha (Ealing Central and Acton)
 Hussain, Imran (Bradford East)

J

Jack, Rt Hon. Alister William (Dumfries and Galloway)
 Jardine, Christine Anne (Edinburgh West)
 Jarvis, Daniel Owen (Barnsley Central)
 Javid, Rt Hon. Sajid (Bromsgrove)
 Jayawardena, Ranil Malcolm (North East Hampshire)
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard Christison (Harwich and North Essex)
 Jenkinson, Mark Ian (Workington)
 Jenkyns, Andrea Marie (Morley and Outwood)
 Jenrick, Rt Hon. Robert Edward (Newark)
 Johnson, Rt Hon. Alexander Boris de Pfeffel (Uxbridge and South Ruislip)
 Johnson, Caroline Elizabeth (Sleaford and North Hykeham)
 Johnson, Rt Hon. Dame Diana Ruth (Kingston upon Hull North)
 Johnson, Gareth Alan (Dartford)
 Johnson, Kim Marie (Liverpool, Riverside)
 Johnston, David Mervyn (Wantage)
 Jones, Andrew Hanson (Harrogate and Knaresborough)
 Jones, Darren Paul (Bristol North West)

Jones, Rt Hon. David Ian (Clwyd West)
 Jones, Fay Alicia (Brecon and Radnorshire)
 Jones, Gerald (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney)
 Jones, Rt Hon. Kevan (North Durham)
 Jones, Marcus Charles (Nuneaton)
 Jones, Ruth Lorraine (Newport West)
 Jones, Sarah Ann (Croydon Central)
 Jupp, Simon James (East Devon)

K

Kane, Michael Joseph Patrick (Wythenshawe and Sale East)
 Kawczynski, Daniel Robert (Shrewsbury and Atcham)
 Kearns, Alicia Alexandra Martha (Rutland and Melton)
 Keegan, Gillian (Chichester)
 Keeley, Barbara Mary (Worsley and Eccles South)
 Kendall, Elizabeth Louise (Leicester West)
 Khan, Mohammed Afzal (Manchester, Gorton)
 Kinnock, Stephen Nathan (Aberavon)
 Knight, Rt Hon. Sir Gregory (East Yorkshire)
 Knight, Julian Carlton (Solihull)
 Kruger, Daniel Rayne (Devizes)
 Kwarteng, Rt Hon. Kwasi Alfred Addo (Spelthorne)
 Kyle, Peter John (Hove)

L

Laing, Rt Hon. Dame Eleanor Fulton (Epping Forest)
 Lake, Ben Morgan (Ceredigion)
 Lammy, Rt Hon. David Lindon (Tottenham)
 Lamont, John Robert (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk)
 Largan, Robert (High Peak)
 Latham, Pauline Elizabeth (Mid Derbyshire)
 Lavery, Ian (Wansbeck)
 Law, Christopher Murray Alexander (Dundee West)
 Leadsom, Rt Hon. Andrea Jacqueline (South Northamptonshire)
 Leigh, Rt Hon. Sir Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough)
 Leigh, Lucy Claire (South East Cambridgeshire)
 Levy, Ian (Blyth Valley)
 Lewell-Buck, Emma Louise (South Shields)
 Lewer, Andrew Iain (Northampton South)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Brandon (Great Yarmouth)
 Lewis, Clive Anthony (Norwich South)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Julian Murray (New Forest East)
 Liddell-Grainger, Ian Richard Peregrine (Bridgwater and West Somerset)
 Linden, David Melvyn (Glasgow East)
 Lloyd, Anthony Joseph (Rochdale)
 Lockhart, Carla Rebecca (Upper Bann)
 Loder, Christopher Lionel John (West Dorset)
 Logan, Mark Rory (Bolton North East)
 Long-Bailey, Rebecca (Salford and Eccles)
 Longhi, Marco (Dudley North)
 Lopez, Julia Louise (Hornchurch and Upminster)
 Lopresti, Giacomo Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke)
 Lord, Jonathan George Caladine (Woking)
 Loughton, Timothy Paul (East Worthing and Shoreham)
 Lucas, Caroline (Brighton, Pavilion)

M

MacAskill, Kenny Wright (East Lothian)
 McCabe, Stephen James McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak)

McCarthy, Kerry Gillian (Bristol East)
 McCartney, Jason (Colne Valley)
 McCartney, Karl (Lincoln)
 McDonagh, Siobhain Ann (Mitcham and Morden)
 McDonald, Andrew Joseph (Middlesbrough)
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm (Glasgow South)
 McDonald, Stuart Campbell (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East)
 McDonnell, Rt Hon. John Martin (Hayes and Harlington)
 McFadden, Rt Hon. Patrick Bosco (Wolverhampton South East)
 McGinn, Conor Patrick (St Helens North)
 McGovern, Alison (Wirral South)
 Mackinlay, Craig (South Thanet)
 McKinnell, Catherine (Newcastle upon Tyne North)
 Mackrory, Cheryllyn (Truro and Falmouth)
 McLaughlin, Elizabeth Anne (Glasgow North East)
 Maclean, Rachel Helen (Redditch)
 McMahan, James (Oldham West and Royton)
 McMorrin, Anna Rhiannon (Cardiff North)
 Mc Nally, John Joseph (Falkirk)
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar)
 McPartland, Stephen Anthony (Stevenage)
 McVey, Rt Hon. Esther Louise (Tatton)
 Madders, Justin Piers Richard (Ellesmere Port and Neston)
 Mahmood, Khalid (Birmingham, Perry Barr)
 Mahmood, Shabana (Birmingham, Ladywood)
 Mak, Alan (Havant)
 Malhotra-Saluja, Seema (Feltham and Heston)
 Malthouse, Christopher Laurie (North West Hampshire)
 Mangnall, Anthony James Holland (Totnes)
 Mann, Scott Leslie (North Cornwall)
 Marson, Julie (Hertford and Stortford)
 Maskell, Rachael Helen (York Central)
 Maskey, Paul John (Belfast West)
 Matheson, Christian John Patrick (City of Chester)
 May, Rt Hon. Theresa Mary (Maidenhead)
 Mayhew, Jerome Patrick Burke (Broadland)
 Maynard, Paul Christopher (Blackpool North and Cleveleys)
 Mearns, James Ian (Gateshead)
 Menzies, Mark Andrew (Fylde)
 Mercer, John Luther (Plymouth, Moor View)
 Merriman, Huw William (Bexhill and Battle)
 Metcalfe, Stephen James (South Basildon and East Thurrock)
 Miliband, Rt Hon. Edward Samuel (Doncaster North)
 Millar, Robin John (Aberconwy)
 Miller, Rt Hon. Maria Frances Lewis (Basingstoke)
 Milling, Rt Hon. Amanda Anne (Cannock Chase)
 Mills, Nigel John (Amber Valley)
 Mishra, Navendu Prabhat (Stockport)
 Mitchell, Rt Hon. Andrew John Bower (Sutton Coldfield)
 Mohindra, Gagan (South West Hertfordshire)
 Molloy, Francis Joseph (Mid Ulster)
 Monaghan, Carol Frances (Glasgow North West)
 Moore, Damien (Southport)
 Moore, Robert Peter (Keighley)
 Moran, Layla Michelle (Oxford West and Abingdon)
 Mordaunt, Rt Hon. Penelope Mary (Portsmouth North)
 Morden, Jessica Elizabeth (Newport East)
 Morgan, Stephen James (Portsmouth South)
 Morris, Anne Marie (Newton Abbot)
 Morris, David Thomas (Morecambe and Lunesdale)
 Morris, Grahame Mark (Easington)
 Morris, James (Halesowen and Rowley Regis)
 Morrissey, Joy Inboden (Beaconsfield)

Mortimer, Jillian Wendy (Hartlepool) [*By-election, May 2021*]
 Morton, Wendy (Aldridge-Brownhills)
 Mullan, Kieran John (Crewe and Nantwich)
 Mumby-Croft, Holly (Scunthorpe)
 Mundell, Rt Hon. David Gordon (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale)
 Murray, Ian (Edinburgh South)
 Murray, James Stewart (Ealing North)
 Murray, Sheryll (South East Cornwall)
 Murrison, Rt Hon. Andrew William (South West Wiltshire)

N

Nandy, Lisa Eva (Wigan)
 Neill, Sir Robert James MacGillivray (Bromley and Chislehurst)
 Newlands, Gavin Andrew Stuart (Paisley and Renfrewshire North)
 Nichols, Charlotte Louise (Warrington North)
 Nici-Townend, Lia (Great Grimsby)
 Nicolson, John MacKenzie (Ochil and South Perthshire)
 Nokes, Rt Hon. Caroline Fiona Ellen (Romsey and Southampton North)
 Norman, Rt Hon. Alexander Jesse (Hereford and South Herefordshire)
 Norris, Alexander James Jordan (Nottingham North)

O

O'Brien, Neil John (Harborough)
 Offord, Matthew James (Hendon)
 O'Hara, Brendan (Argyll and Bute)
 Olney, Sarah Jane (Richmond Park)
 Onwurah, Chinyelu Susan (Newcastle upon Tyne Central)
 Opperman, Guy Thomas (Hexham)
 Oppong-Asare, Abena (Erith and Thamesmead)
 Osamor, Kate Ofunne (Edmonton)
 Oswald, Kirsten Frances Oswald (East Renfrewshire)
 Owatemi, Taiwo (Coventry North West)
 Owen, Sarah Mei Li (Luton North)

P

Paisley, Ian Richard Kyle (North Antrim)
 Parish, Neil Quentin Gordon (Tiverton and Honiton)
 Patel, Rt Hon. Priti Sushil (Witham)
 Paterson, Rt Hon. Owen William (North Shropshire)
 Pawsey, Mark Julian Francis (Rugby)
 Peacock, Stephanie Louise (Barnsley East)
 Penning, Rt Hon. Sir Michael (Hemel Hempstead)
 Pennycook, Matthew Thomas (Greenwich and Woolwich)
 Penrose, John David (Weston-super-Mare)
 Percy, Andrew Theakstone (Brigg and Goole)
 Perkins, Matthew Toby Perkins (Chesterfield)
 Phillips, Jessica Rose (Birmingham, Yardley)
 Phillipson, Bridget Maeve (Houghton and Sunderland South)
 Philp, Chris Ian Brian Mynott (Croydon South)
 Pincher, Rt Hon. Christopher John (Tamworth)
 Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax, Richard Grosvenor (South Dorset)
 Pollard, Luke (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport)
 Poulter, Daniel Leonard James (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)
 Powell, Lucy Maria (Manchester Central)

Prentis, Victoria Mary Boswell (Banbury)
 Pritchard, Rt Hon. Mark Andrew (The Wrekin)
 Pursglove, Thomas Christopher John (Corby)

Q

Quin, Jeremy Mark (Horsham)
 Quince, William James (Colchester)
 Qureshi, Yasmin (Bolton South East)

R

Raab, Rt Hon. Dominic Rennie (Esher and Walton)
 Randall, Thomas William (Gedling)
 Rayner, Rt Hon. Angela (Ashton-under-Lyne)
 Redwood, Rt Hon. Sir John Alan (Wokingham)
 Reed, Steven Mark Ward (Croydon North)
 Rees, Christina Elizabeth (Neath)
 Rees-Mogg, Rt Hon. Jacob William (North East Somerset)
 Reeves, Eleanor Claire (Lewisham West and Penge)
 Reeves, Rachel Jane (Leeds West)
 Reynolds, Jonathan Neil (Stalybridge and Hyde)
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bellavia Janet (Streatham)
 Richards, Nicola Faye (West Bromwich East)
 Richardson, Angela Joy (Guildford)
 Rimmer, Marie Elizabeth (St Helens South and Whiston)
 Roberts, Robert Joseph (Delyn)
 Robertson, Laurence Anthony (Tewkesbury)
 Robinson, Gavin James (Belfast East)
 Robinson, Mary Josephine (Cheadle)
 Rodda, Mathew Richard Allen (Reading East)
 Rosindell, Andrew Richard (Romford)
 Ross, Douglas Gordon (Moray)
 Rowley, Lee Benjamin (North East Derbyshire)
 Russell, Dean (Watford)
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd (Brighton, Kemptown)
 Rutley, David Henry (Macclesfield)

S

Sambook, Gary William (Birmingham, Northfield)
 Saville Roberts, Rt Hon. Liz (Dwyfor Meirionnydd)
 Saxby, Selaine Rachel (North Devon)
 Scully, Paul Stuart (Sutton and Cheam)
 Seely, Robert William Henry (Isle of Wight)
 Selous, Andrew Edmund Armstrong (South West Bedfordshire)
 Shah, Naseem Akhtar (Bradford West)
 Shannon, Richard James (Strangford)
 Shapps, Rt Hon. Grant (Welwyn Hatfield)
 Sharma, Rt Hon. Alok Kumar (Reading West)
 Sharma, Virendra Kumar (Ealing, Southall)
 Sheerman, Barry John (Huddersfield)
 Shelbrooke, Rt Hon. Alec (Elmet and Rothwell)
 Sheppard, Thomas (Edinburgh East)
 Siddiq, Tulip Rizwana (Hampstead and Kilburn)
 Simmonds, David Timothy (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner)
 Skidmore, Rt Hon. Christopher James (Kingswood)
 Slaughter, Andrew Francis (Hammersmith)
 Smith, Alyn Edward (Stirling)
 Smith, Catherine Jane Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood)
 Smith, Chloe Rebecca (Norwich North)
 Smith, Greg (Buckingham)
 Smith, Henry Edward Millar (Crawley)
 Smith, Jeffrey (Manchester, Withington)

Smith, Rt Hon. Julian Richard (Skipton and Ripon)
 Smith, Nicholas Desmond John (Blaenau Gwent)
 Smith, Royston Matthew (Southampton, Itchen)
 Smyth, Karin Marguerite (Bristol South)
 Sobel, Alexander David (Leeds North West)
 Solloway, Amanda Jane (Derby North)
 Spellar, Rt Hon. John Francis (Warley)
 Spencer, Ben (Runnymede and Weybridge)
 Spencer, Rt Hon. Mark Steven (Sherwood)
 Stafford, Alexander Paul Thomas (Rother Valley)
 Starmer, Rt Hon. Sir Keir (Holborn and St Pancras)
 Stephens, Christopher Charles (Glasgow South West)
 Stephenson, Andrew George (Pendle)
 Stevens, Joanna Meriel (Cardiff Central)
 Stevenson, Andrew John (Carlisle)
 Stevenson, Jane Fiona Catherine (Wolverhampton North East)
 Stewart, Iain Aitken (Milton Keynes South)
 Stewart, Rt Hon. Robert Alexander (Beckenham)
 Stone, Jamie Hume (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross)
 Streeter, Sir Gary Nicholas (South West Devon)
 Streeting, Wesley Paul William (Ilford North)
 Stride, Rt Hon. Melvyn John (Central Devon)
 Stringer, Graham Eric (Blackley and Broughton)
 Stuart, Graham Charles (Beverley and Holderness)
 Sturdy, Julian Charles (York Outer)
 Sultana, Zarah (Coventry South)
 Sunak, Rt Hon. Rishi (Richmond (Yorks))
 Sunderland, James (Bracknell)
 Swayne, Rt Hon. Sir Desmond Angus (New Forest West)
 Syms, Sir Robert Andrew Raymond (Poole)

T

Tami, Rt Hon. Mark Richard (Alyn and Deeside)
 Tarry, Samuel Peter (Ilford South)
 Thewliss, Alison Emily (Glasgow Central)
 Thomas, Derek Gordon (St Ives)
 Thomas, Gareth (Harrow West)
 Thomas-Symonds, Rt Hon. Nicklaus (Torfaen)
 Thompson, Owen George (Midlothian)
 Thomson, Richard Gordon (Gordon)
 Thornberry, Rt Hon. Emily (Islington South and Finsbury)
 Throup, Margaret Ann (Erewash)
 Timms, Rt Hon. Stephen Creswell (East Ham)
 Timpson, Anthony Edward (Eddisbury)
 Tolhurst, Kelly Jane (Rochester and Strood)
 Tomlinson, Justin Paul (North Swindon)
 Tomlinson-Mynors, Michael James (Mid Dorset and North Poole)
 Tracey, Craig Paul (North Warwickshire)
 Trevelyan, Rt Hon. Anne-Marie Belinda (Berwick-upon-Tweed)
 Trickett, Jon Hedley (Hemsworth)
 Trott, Laura (Sevenoaks)
 Truss, Rt Hon. Elizabeth Mary (South West Norfolk)
 Tugendhat, Thomas Georg John (Tonbridge and Malling)
 Turner, Karl (Kingston upon Hull East)
 Twigg, John Derek (Halton)
 Twist, Mary Elizabeth (Blaydon)

U

Ul-Ghani, Nusrat Munir (Wealden)

V

Vara, Shailesh Lakhman (North West Cambridgeshire)
 Vaz, Rt Hon. Valerie Carol Marian (Walsall South)
 Vickers, Martin John (Cleethorpes)
 Vickers, Matthew Alexander (Stockton South)
 Villiers, Rt Hon. Theresa Anne (Chipping Barnet)

W

Wakeford, Christian (Bury South)
 Walker, Sir Charles Ashley Rupert (Broxbourne)
 Walker, Robin Caspar (Worcester)
 Walker-Lynch, Holly Jamie (Halifax)
 Wallace, Rt Hon. Robert Ben Lobban (Wyre and Preston North)
 Wallis, Jamie Hamilton (Bridgend)
 Warburton, David John (Somerton and Frome)
 Warman, Matthew Robert (Boston and Skegness)
 Watling, Giles Francis (Clacton)
 Webb, Suzanne (Stourbridge)
 Webbe, Claudia Naomi (Leicester East)
 West, Catherine Elizabeth (Hornsey and Wood Green)
 Western, Matthew Raymond (Warwick and Leamington)
 Whately, Helen Olivia Bicknell (Faversham and Mid Kent)
 Wheeler, Heather Kay (South Derbyshire)
 Whitehead, Alan Patrick Vincent (Southampton, Test)
 Whitford, Philippa (Central Ayrshire)
 Whitley, Michael (Birkenhead)
 Whittaker, Craig (Calder Valley)
 Whittingdale, Rt Hon. John Flasby Lawrance (Maldon)
 Whittome, Nadia Edith (Nottingham East)
 Wiggin, William David (North Herefordshire)
 Wild, James Oliver (North West Norfolk)
 Williams, Alun Craig (Montgomeryshire)
 Williams, Hywel (Arfon)
 Williamson, Rt Hon. Gavin Alexander (South Staffordshire)
 Wilson, Munira (Twickenham)
 Wilson, Rt Hon. Samuel (East Antrim)
 Winter, Bethan Winter (Cynon Valley)
 Winterton, Rt Hon. Dame Rosalie (Doncaster Central)
 Wishart, Peter (Perth and North Perthshire)
 Wood, Michael Jon (Dudley South)
 Wragg, William Peter (Hazel Grove)
 Wright, Rt Hon. Jeremy Paul (Kenilworth and Southam)

Y

Yasin, Mohammad (Bedford)
 Young, Jacob (Redcar)

Z

Zahawi, Nadhim (Stratford-on-Avon)
 Zeichner, Daniel Stephen (Cambridge)

House of Commons

Alphabetical List of Members

[Returned at the General Election, 17 December 2019]

A

Abbott, Rt Hon. Diane Julie (Hackney North and Stoke Newington)
Abrahams, Deborah Angela Elspeth Marie (Oldham East and Saddleworth)
Adams, Nigel (Selby and Ainsty)
Afolami, Abimbola (Hitchin and Harpenden)
Afriyie, Adam (Windsor)
Ahmad Khan, Imran Nasir (Wakefield)
Aiken, Nicola Jane (Cities of London and Westminster)
Aldous, Peter James Guy (Waveney)
Ali, Rushanara (Bethnal Green and Bow)
Ali, Tahir (Birmingham, Hall Green)
Allan, Lucy (Telford)
Allin-Khan, Rosena Chantelle (Tooting)
Amesbury, Michael Lee (Weaver Vale)
Amess, Sir David Anthony Andrew (Southend West)
Anderson, Fleur (Putney)
Anderson, Lee (Ashfield)
Anderson, Stuart Paul (Wolverhampton South West)
Andrew, Rt Hon. Stuart James (Pudsey)
Ansell, Caroline (Eastbourne)
Antoniazzi, Antonia Louise (Gower)
Argar, Edward John Comport (Charnwood)
Ashworth, Rt Hon. Jonathan Michael Graham (Leicester South)
Atherton, Sarah Elizabeth (Wrexham)
Atkins, Victoria (Louth and Horncastle)

B

Bacon, Gareth Andrew (Orpington)
Bacon, Richard Michael (South Norfolk)
Badenoch, Olukemi Olufunto (Saffron Walden)
Bailey, Shaun Stephen (West Bromwich West)
Baillie, Siobhan Kathleen (Stroud)
Baker, Duncan Charles (North Norfolk)
Baker, Steven John (Wycombe)
Baldwin, Harriett Mary Morison (West Worcestershire)
Barclay, Rt Hon. Stephen Paul (North East Cambridgeshire)
Bardell, Hannah Mary (Livingston)
Barker, Paula (Liverpool, Wavertree)
Baron, John Charles (Basildon and Billericay)
Baynes, Simon Robert Maurice (Clwyd South)
Beckett, Rt Hon. Margaret Mary (Derby South)
Begley, Órfhlaith Acife (West Tyrone)
Begum, Apsana (Poplar and Limehouse)
Bell, Aaron Stuart (Newcastle-under-Lyme)
Benn, Rt Hon. Hilary James (Leeds Central)
Benton, Scott Lloyd (Blackpool South)
Beresford, Sir Alexander Paul (Mole Valley)
Berry, Rt Hon. James Jacob Gilchrist (Rossendale and Darwen)
Betts, Clive James Charles (Sheffield South East)
Bhatti, Mohammad Saqib (Meriden)
Black, Mhairi (Paisley and Renfrewshire South)
Blackford, Rt Hon. Ian (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Blackman, Kirsty Ann (Aberdeen North)
Blackman, Robert John (Harrow East)

Blake Dagnall, Olivia Frances (Sheffield, Hallam)
Blomfield, Paul Christopher (Sheffield Central)
Blunt, Crispin Jeremy Rupert (Reigate)
Bone, Peter William (Wellingborough)
Bonnar, Steven (Coatbridge, Chryston and Bellshill)
Bottomley, Sir Peter James (Worthing West)
Bowie, Andrew Campbell (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine)
Brabin, Tracy Lynn (Batley and Spen)
Bradley, Benjamin David (Mansfield)
Bradley, Rt Hon. Karen Anne (Staffordshire Moorlands)
Bradshaw, Rt Hon. Benjamin Peter James (Exeter)
Brady, Sir Graham Stuart (Altrincham and Sale West)
Brady, Michael (Newry and Armagh)
Braverman, Rt Hon. Sue-Ellen Cassiana (Fareham)
Brennan, Kevin Denis (Cardiff West)
Brereton, Jack Edgar (Stoke-on-Trent South)
Bridgen, Andrew James (North West Leicestershire)
Brine, Stephen Charles Brine (Winchester)
Bristow, Paul (Peterborough)
Britcliffe, Sara Alice (Hyndburn)
Brock, Deidre Leanne (Edinburgh North and Leith)
Brokenshire, Rt Hon. James Peter (Old Bexley and Sidcup)
Brooks-Osborne, Katharine Helen (Jarrow)
Brown, Alan (Kilmarnock and Loudoun)
Brown, Lyn Carol (West Ham)
Brown, Rt Hon. Nicholas Hugh (Newcastle upon Tyne East)
Browne, Anthony Howe (South Cambridgeshire)
Bruce, Fiona Claire (Congleton)
Bryant, Christopher John (Rhondda)
Buchan, Felicity Christiana (Kensington)
Buck, Karen Patricia (Westminster North)
Buckland, Rt Hon. Robert James (South Swindon)
Burghart, Michael Alex (Brentwood and Ongar)
Burgon, Richard (Leeds East)
Burns, Rt Hon. Conor (Bournemouth West)
Butler, Dawn Petula (Brent Central)
Butler, Robert (Aylesbury)
Byrne, Ian Robert (Liverpool, West Derby)
Byrne, Rt Hon. Liam Dominic (Birmingham, Hodge Hill)

C

Cadbury, Ruth Margaret (Brentford and Isleworth)
Cairns, Rt Hon. Alun Hugh (Vale of Glamorgan)
Callaghan, Amy (East Dunbartonshire)
Cameron, Lisa (East Kilbride, Strathaven and Lesmahagow)
Campbell, Rt Hon. Sir Alan (Tynemouth)
Campbell, Gregory Lloyd (East Londonderry)
Carden, Daniel Joseph (Liverpool, Walton)
Carmichael, Rt Hon. Alexander Morrison (Orkney and Shetland)
Carter, Andrew John (Warrington South)
Cartlidge, James Roger (South Suffolk)
Cash, Sir William Nigel Paul (Stone)
Cates, Miriam Joy (Penistone and Stocksbridge)
Caulfield, Maria Colette (Lewes)

Chalk, Alexander John Gervase (Cheltenham)
 Chamberlain, Wendy Anne (North East Fife)
 Champion, Sarah Deborah (Rotherham)
 Chapman, Douglas (Dunfermline and West Fife)
 Charalambous, Charalambos (Enfield, Southgate)
 Cherry, Joanna Catherine (Edinburgh South West)
 Chishti, Atta-Ur-Rehman (Gillingham and Rainham)
 Chope, Sir Christopher Robert (Christchurch)
 Churchill, Johanna Peta (Bury St Edmunds)
 Clark, Feryal Demirci (Enfield North)
 Clark, Rt Hon. Gregory David (Tunbridge Wells)
 Clark, Rebecca Faye (Taunton Deane)
 Clarke, Simon Richard (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland)
 Clarke, Theodora Roosevelt (Stafford)
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan (Bassetlaw)
 Clarkson, Christopher Mark (Heywood and Middleton)
 Cleverly, Rt Hon. James Spencer (Braintree)
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey Robert (The Cotswolds)
 Coffey, Rt Hon. Thérèse Anne (Suffolk Coastal)
 Colburn, Elliot (Carshalton and Wallington)
 Collins, Damian Noel Thomas (Folkestone and Hythe)
 Cooper, Daisy (St Albans)
 Cooper, Rosemary Elizabeth (West Lancashire)
 Cooper, Rt Hon. Yvette (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford)
 Corbyn, Rt Hon. Jeremy Bernard (Islington North)
 Costa, Alberto Castrenze (South Leicestershire)
 Court, Robert Alexander (Witney)
 Coutinho, Claire Coryl Julia (East Surrey)
 Cowan, Ronald Jack (Inverclyde)
 Cox, Rt Hon. Sir Charles Geoffrey (Torridge and West Devon)
 Coyle, Neil (Bermondsey and Old Southwark)
 Crabb, Rt Hon. Stephen (Preseli Pembrokeshire)
 Crawley, Angela (Lanark and Hamilton East)
 Creasy, Stella Judith (Walthamstow)
 Crosbie, Virginia Ann (Ynys Môn)
 Crouch, Tracey Elizabeth Anne (Chatham and Aylesford)
 Cruddas, Jonathan (Dagenham and Rainham)
 Cryer, John Robert (Leyton and Wanstead)
 Cummins, Judith Mary (Bradford South)
 Cunningham, Alexander (Stockton North)

D

Daby, Janet Jessica (Lewisham East)
 Daly, James Barry (Bury North)
 Davey, Rt Hon. Edward Jonathon (Kingston and Surbiton)
 David, Wayne (Caerphilly)
 Davies, David Thomas Charles (Monmouth)
 Davies, Gareth Mark (Grantham and Stamford)
 Davies, Geraint Richard (Swansea West)
 Davies, James Michael (Vale of Clwyd)
 Davies, Miriam Jane Alice (Mid Sussex)
 Davies, Philip Andrew (Shipley)
 Davies-Jones, Alexandra Mary (Pontypridd)
 Davis, Rt Hon. David Michael (Haltemprice and Howden)
 Day, Martyn (Linlithgow and East Falkirk)
 De Cordova, Marsha Chantol (Battersea)
 Debonnaire, Thangam Elizabeth Rachel (Bristol West)
 Dhesi, Tanmanjeet Singh (Slough)
 Dinenage, Caroline Julia (Gosport)
 Dines, Sarah Elizabeth (Derbyshire Dales)
 Djanogly, Jonathan Simon (Huntingdon)
 Docherty, Leo (Aldershot)
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin John (West Dunbartonshire)

Dodds, Anneliese Jane (Oxford East)
 Donaldson, Rt Hon. Sir Jeffrey Mark (Lagan Valley)
 Donelan, Michelle Emma May Elizabeth (Chippenhams)
 Doogan, David Michael (Angus)
 Dorans, Allan Hopkins (Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock)
 Dorries, Nadine Vanessa (Mid Bedfordshire)
 Double, Stephen Daniel (St Austell and Newquay)
 Doughty, Stephen John (Cardiff South and Penarth)
 Dowd, Peter Christopher (Bootle)
 Dowden, Rt Hon. Oliver James (Hertsmere)
 Doyle-Price, Jacqueline (Thurrock)
 Dromey, John Eugene Joseph (Birmingham, Erdington)
 Drummond, Felicia Jane Beatrix (Meon Valley)
 Duddridge, James Philip (Rochford and Southend East)
 Duffield, Rosemary Clare (Canterbury)
 Duguid, David James (Banff and Buchan)
 Duncan Smith, Rt Hon. Sir George Iain (Chingford and Woodford Green)
 Dunne, Rt Hon. Philip Martin (Ludlow)

E

Eagle, Dame Angela (Wallasey)
 Eagle, Maria (Garston and Halewood)
 Eastwood, Colum (Foyle)
 Eastwood, Mark Simon (Dewsbury)
 Edwards, David Jonathan (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr)
 Edwards, Ruth Rosamond (Rushcliffe)
 Efford, Clive Stanley (Eltham)
 Elliott, Julie (Sunderland Central)
 Ellis, Rt Hon. Michael Tyrone (Northampton North)
 Ellwood, Rt Hon. Tobias Martin (Bournemouth East)
 Elmore, Christopher Philip James (Ogmore)
 Elphicke, Natalie Cecilia (Dover)
 Eshalomi, Florence (Vauxhall)
 Esterson, William Roffen (Sefton Central)
 Eustice, Rt Hon. Charles George (Camborne and Redruth)
 Evans, Christopher James (Islwyn)
 Evans, Luke Morgan (Bosworth)
 Evans, Rt Hon. Nigel Martin (Ribble Valley)
 Evennett, Rt Hon. Sir David Anthony (Bexleyheath and Crayford)
 Everitt, Ben (Milton Keynes North)

F

Fabricant, Michael Louis David (Lichfield)
 Fareham, Dehenna Sheridan (Bishop Auckland)
 Farris, Laura Rose (Newbury)
 Farron, Timothy James (Westmorland and Lonsdale)
 Farry, Stephen Anthony (North Down)
 Fell, Simon Richard James (Barrow and Furness)
 Fellows, Marion (Motherwell and Wishaw)
 Ferrier, Margaret (Rutherglen and Hamilton West)
 Finucane, John (Belfast North)
 Fletcher, Colleen Margaret (Coventry North East)
 Fletcher, Katherine (South Ribble)
 Fletcher, Mark Peter (Bolsover)
 Fletcher, Nicholas Anthony (Don Valley)
 Flynn, Stephen Mark (Aberdeen South)
 Ford, Victoria Grace (Chelmsford)
 Foster, Kevin John (Torbay)
 Fovargue, Yvonne Helen (Makerfield)
 Fox, Rt Hon. Liam (North Somerset)
 Foxcroft, Victoria Jane (Lewisham, Deptford)
 Foy, Mary Kelly (City of Durham)
 Francois, Rt Hon. Mark Gino (Rayleigh and Wickford)

Freeman, George William (Mid Norfolk)
 Freer, Michael Whitney (Finchley and Golders Green)
 Fuller, Richard Quentin (North East Bedfordshire)
 Furniss, Gillian (Sheffield, Brightside and Hillsborough)
 Fysh, Marcus John Hudson (Yeovil)

G

Gale, Rt Hon. Sir Roger James (North Thanet)
 Gardiner, Barry Strachan (Brent North)
 Garnier, Mark Robert Timothy (Wyre Forest)
 Gibb, Rt Hon. Nicolas John (Bognor Regis and Littlehampton)
 Gibson, Patricia (North Ayrshire and Arran)
 Gibson, Peter Alexander (Darlington)
 Gideon, Joanna Mary (Stoke-on-Trent Central)
 Gildernew, Michelle Angela (Fermanagh and South Tyrone)
 Gill, Preet Kaur (Birmingham, Edgbaston)
 Gillan, Dame Cheryl Elise Kendall (Chesham and Amersham) [*Died, April 2021*]
 Girvan, William Paul (South Antrim)
 Glen, John Philip (Salisbury)
 Glindon, Mary Theresa (North Tyneside)
 Goodwill, Rt Hon. Robert (Scarborough and Whitby)
 Gove, Rt Hon. Michael Andrew (Surrey Heath)
 Grady, Patrick John (Glasgow North)
 Graham, Richard Michael John Ogilvie (Gloucester)
 Grant, Helen (Maidstone and The Weald)
 Grant, Peter (Glenrothes)
 Gray, James Whiteside (North Wiltshire)
 Gray, Neil Charles (Airdrie and Shotts) [*Resigned, March 2021*]
 Grayling, Rt Hon. Christopher Stephen (Epsom and Ewell)
 Green, Christopher James (Bolton West)
 Green, Rt Hon. Damian Howard (Ashford)
 Green, Katherine Anne (Stretford and Urmston)
 Greenwood, Lilian Rachel (Nottingham South)
 Greenwood, Margaret (Wirral West)
 Griffith, Andrew (Arundel and South Downs)
 Griffith, Nia Rhiannon (Llanelli)
 Griffiths, Kate Elizabeth (Burton)
 Grundy, James Nelson (Leigh)
 Gullis, Jonathan Edward (Stoke-on-Trent North)
 Gwynne, Andrew John (Denton and Reddish)

H

Haigh, Louise Margaret (Sheffield, Heeley)
 Halfon, Rt Hon. Robert Henry (Harlow)
 Hall, Luke Anthony (Thornbury and Yate)
 Hamilton, Fabian (Leeds North East)
 Hammond, Stephen William (Wimbledon)
 Hancock, Rt Hon. Matthew John David (West Suffolk)
 Hands, Rt Hon. Gregory William (Chelsea and Fulham)
 Hanna, Claire Aisling (Belfast South)
 Hanvey, James Neale (Kirkcaldy and Cowdenbeath)
 Hardy, Emma Ann (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle)
 Harman, Rt Hon. Harriet Ruth (Camberwell and Peckham)
 Harper, Rt Hon. Mark James (Forest of Dean)
 Harris, Carolyn (Swansea East)
 Harris, Rebecca Elizabeth Scott (Castle Point)
 Harrison, Trudy Lynne (Copeland)
 Hart, Sally-Ann (Hastings and Rye)
 Hart, Simon Anthony (Carmarthen West and South Pembrokeshire)

Hayes, Helen Elizabeth (Dulwich and West Norwood)
 Hayes, Rt Hon. Sir John Henry (South Holland and The Deepings)
 Hazzard, Christopher John (South Down)
 Heald, Rt Hon. Sir Oliver (North East Hertfordshire)
 Healey, Rt Hon. John (Wentworth and Dearne)
 Heapey, James Stephen (Wells)
 Heaton-Harris, Christopher (Daventry)
 Henderson, Gordon Leonard (Sittingbourne and Sheppey)
 Hendrick, Sir Mark Phillip (Preston)
 Hendry, Andrew Egan Henderson (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey)
 Henry, Darren George (Broxtowe)
 Higginbotham, Antony (Burnley)
 Hill, Michael Robert (Hartlepool) [*Resigned, March 2021*]
 Hillier, Margaret Olivia (Hackney South and Shoreditch)
 Hinds, Rt Hon. Damian Patrick George (East Hampshire)
 Hoare, Simon James (North Dorset)
 Hobhouse, Wera Benedicta (Bath)
 Hodge, Rt Hon. Dame Margaret Eve (Barking)
 Hodgson, Sharon (Washington and Sunderland West)
 Holden, Richard John (North West Durham)
 Hollern, Catherine Malloy (Blackburn)
 Hollinrake, Kevin Paul (Thirsk and Malton)
 Hollobone, Philip Thomas (Kettering)
 Holloway, Adam James Harold (Gravesham)
 Holmes, Paul John (Eastleigh)
 Hopkins, Rachel Louise (Luton South)
 Hosie, Rt Hon. Stewart (Dundee East)
 Howarth, Rt Hon. Sir George Edward (Knowsley)
 Howell, John Michael (Henley)
 Howell, Paul (Sedgefield)
 Hoyle, Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Harvey (Chorley)
 Huddleston, Nigel Paul (Mid Worcestershire)
 Hudson, Neil Peter Hammerton (Penrith and The Border)
 Hughes, Edmund Francis (Walsall North)
 Hunt, Jane Marion (Loughborough)
 Hunt, Rt Hon. Jeremy Richard Streynsham (South West Surrey)
 Hunt, Thomas Patrick (Ipswich)
 Huq, Rupa Asha (Ealing Central and Acton)
 Hussain, Imran (Bradford East)

J

Jack, Rt Hon. Alister William (Dumfries and Galloway)
 Jardine, Christine Anne (Edinburgh West)
 Jarvis, Daniel Owen (Barnsley Central)
 Javid, Rt Hon. Sajid (Bromsgrove)
 Jayawardena, Ranil Malcolm (North East Hampshire)
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard Christison (Harwich and North Essex)
 Jenkinson, Mark Ian (Workington)
 Jenkyns, Andrea Marie (Morley and Outwood)
 Jenrick, Rt Hon. Robert Edward (Newark)
 Johnson, Rt Hon. Alexander Boris de Pfeffel (Uxbridge and South Ruislip)
 Johnson, Caroline Elizabeth (Sleaford and North Hykeham)
 Johnson, Rt Hon. Dame Diana Ruth (Kingston upon Hull North)
 Johnson, Gareth Alan (Dartford)
 Johnson, Kim Marie (Liverpool, Riverside)
 Johnston, David Mervyn (Wantage)
 Jones, Andrew Hanson (Harrogate and Knaresborough)
 Jones, Darren Paul (Bristol North West)

Jones, Rt Hon. David Ian (Clwyd West)
 Jones, Fay Alicia (Brecon and Radnorshire)
 Jones, Gerald (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney)
 Jones, Rt Hon. Kevan (North Durham)
 Jones, Marcus Charles (Nuneaton)
 Jones, Ruth Lorraine (Newport West)
 Jones, Sarah Ann (Croydon Central)
 Jupp, Simon James (East Devon)

K

Kane, Michael Joseph Patrick (Wythenshawe and Sale East)
 Kawczynski, Daniel Robert (Shrewsbury and Atcham)
 Kearns, Alicia Alexandra Martha (Rutland and Melton)
 Keegan, Gillian (Chichester)
 Keeley, Barbara Mary (Worsley and Eccles South)
 Kendall, Elizabeth Louise (Leicester West)
 Khan, Mohammed Afzal (Manchester, Gorton)
 Kinnock, Stephen Nathan (Aberavon)
 Knight, Rt Hon. Sir Gregory (East Yorkshire)
 Knight, Julian Carlton (Solihull)
 Kruger, Daniel Rayne (Devizes)
 Kwarteng, Rt Hon. Kwasi Alfred Addo (Spelthorne)
 Kyle, Peter John (Hove)

L

Laing, Rt Hon. Dame Eleanor Fulton (Epping Forest)
 Lake, Ben Morgan (Ceredigion)
 Lammy, Rt Hon. David Lindon (Tottenham)
 Lamont, John Robert (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk)
 Largan, Robert (High Peak)
 Latham, Pauline Elizabeth (Mid Derbyshire)
 Lavery, Ian (Wansbeck)
 Law, Christopher Murray Alexander (Dundee West)
 Leadsom, Rt Hon. Andrea Jacqueline (South Northamptonshire)
 Leigh, Rt Hon. Sir Edward Julian Egerton (Gainsborough)
 Leigh, Lucy Claire (South East Cambridgeshire)
 Levy, Ian (Blyth Valley)
 Lewell-Buck, Emma Louise (South Shields)
 Lewer, Andrew Iain (Northampton South)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Brandon (Great Yarmouth)
 Lewis, Clive Anthony (Norwich South)
 Lewis, Rt Hon. Julian Murray (New Forest East)
 Liddell-Grainger, Ian Richard Peregrine (Bridgwater and West Somerset)
 Linden, David Melvyn (Glasgow East)
 Lloyd, Anthony Joseph (Rochdale)
 Lockhart, Carla Rebecca (Upper Bann)
 Loder, Christopher Lionel John (West Dorset)
 Logan, Mark Rory (Bolton North East)
 Long-Bailey, Rebecca (Salford and Eccles)
 Longhi, Marco (Dudley North)
 Lopez, Julia Louise (Hornchurch and Upminster)
 Lopresti, Giacomo Lopresti (Filton and Bradley Stoke)
 Lord, Jonathan George Caladine (Woking)
 Loughton, Timothy Paul (East Worthing and Shoreham)
 Lucas, Caroline (Brighton, Pavilion)

M

MacAskill, Kenny Wright (East Lothian)
 McCabe, Stephen James McCabe (Birmingham, Selly Oak)

McCarthy, Kerry Gillian (Bristol East)
 McCartney, Jason (Colne Valley)
 McCartney, Karl (Lincoln)
 McDonagh, Siobhain Ann (Mitcham and Morden)
 McDonald, Andrew Joseph (Middlesbrough)
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm (Glasgow South)
 McDonald, Stuart Campbell (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East)
 McDonnell, Rt Hon. John Martin (Hayes and Harlington)
 McFadden, Rt Hon. Patrick Bosco (Wolverhampton South East)
 McGinn, Conor Patrick (St Helens North)
 McGovern, Alison (Wirral South)
 Mackinlay, Craig (South Thanet)
 McKinnell, Catherine (Newcastle upon Tyne North)
 Mackrory, Cheryllyn (Truro and Falmouth)
 McLaughlin, Elizabeth Anne (Glasgow North East)
 Maclean, Rachel Helen (Redditch)
 McMahan, James (Oldham West and Royton)
 McMorris, Anna Rhiannon (Cardiff North)
 Mc Nally, John Joseph (Falkirk)
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan (Na h-Eileanan an Iar)
 McPartland, Stephen Anthony (Stevenage)
 McVey, Rt Hon. Esther Louise (Tatton)
 Madders, Justin Piers Richard (Ellesmere Port and Neston)
 Mahmood, Khalid (Birmingham, Perry Barr)
 Mahmood, Shabana (Birmingham, Ladywood)
 Mak, Alan (Havant)
 Malhotra-Saluja, Seema (Feltham and Heston)
 Malthouse, Christopher Laurie (North West Hampshire)
 Mangnall, Anthony James Holland (Totnes)
 Mann, Scott Leslie (North Cornwall)
 Marson, Julie (Hertford and Stortford)
 Maskell, Rachael Helen (York Central)
 Maskey, Paul John (Belfast West)
 Matheson, Christian John Patrick (City of Chester)
 May, Rt Hon. Theresa Mary (Maidenhead)
 Mayhew, Jerome Patrick Burke (Broadland)
 Maynard, Paul Christopher (Blackpool North and Cleveleys)
 Mearns, James Ian (Gateshead)
 Menzies, Mark Andrew (Fylde)
 Mercer, John Luther (Plymouth, Moor View)
 Merriman, Huw William (Bexhill and Battle)
 Metcalfe, Stephen James (South Basildon and East Thurrock)
 Miliband, Rt Hon. Edward Samuel (Doncaster North)
 Millar, Robin John (Aberconwy)
 Miller, Rt Hon. Maria Frances Lewis (Basingstoke)
 Milling, Rt Hon. Amanda Anne (Cannock Chase)
 Mills, Nigel John (Amber Valley)
 Mishra, Navendu Prabhat (Stockport)
 Mitchell, Rt Hon. Andrew John Bower (Sutton Coldfield)
 Mohindra, Gagan (South West Hertfordshire)
 Molloy, Francis Joseph (Mid Ulster)
 Monaghan, Carol Frances (Glasgow North West)
 Moore, Damien (Southport)
 Moore, Robert Peter (Keighley)
 Moran, Layla Michelle (Oxford West and Abingdon)
 Mordaunt, Rt Hon. Penelope Mary (Portsmouth North)
 Morden, Jessica Elizabeth (Newport East)
 Morgan, Stephen James (Portsmouth South)
 Morris, Anne Marie (Newton Abbot)
 Morris, David Thomas (Morecambe and Lunesdale)
 Morris, Grahame Mark (Easington)
 Morris, James (Halesowen and Rowley Regis)
 Morrissey, Joy Inboden (Beaconsfield)

Mortimer, Jillian Wendy (Hartlepool) [*By-election, May 2021*]
 Morton, Wendy (Aldridge-Brownhills)
 Mullan, Kieran John (Crewe and Nantwich)
 Mumby-Croft, Holly (Scunthorpe)
 Mundell, Rt Hon. David Gordon (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale)
 Murray, Ian (Edinburgh South)
 Murray, James Stewart (Ealing North)
 Murray, Sheryll (South East Cornwall)
 Murrison, Rt Hon. Andrew William (South West Wiltshire)

N

Nandy, Lisa Eva (Wigan)
 Neill, Sir Robert James MacGillivray (Bromley and Chislehurst)
 Newlands, Gavin Andrew Stuart (Paisley and Renfrewshire North)
 Nichols, Charlotte Louise (Warrington North)
 Nici-Townend, Lia (Great Grimsby)
 Nicolson, John MacKenzie (Ochil and South Perthshire)
 Nokes, Rt Hon. Caroline Fiona Ellen (Romsey and Southampton North)
 Norman, Rt Hon. Alexander Jesse (Hereford and South Herefordshire)
 Norris, Alexander James Jordan (Nottingham North)

O

O'Brien, Neil John (Harborough)
 Offord, Matthew James (Hendon)
 O'Hara, Brendan (Argyll and Bute)
 Olney, Sarah Jane (Richmond Park)
 Onwurah, Chinyelu Susan (Newcastle upon Tyne Central)
 Opperman, Guy Thomas (Hexham)
 Oppong-Asare, Abena (Erith and Thamesmead)
 Osamor, Kate Ofunne (Edmonton)
 Oswald, Kirsten Frances Oswald (East Renfrewshire)
 Owatemi, Taiwo (Coventry North West)
 Owen, Sarah Mei Li (Luton North)

P

Paisley, Ian Richard Kyle (North Antrim)
 Parish, Neil Quentin Gordon (Tiverton and Honiton)
 Patel, Rt Hon. Priti Sushil (Witham)
 Paterson, Rt Hon. Owen William (North Shropshire)
 Pawsey, Mark Julian Francis (Rugby)
 Peacock, Stephanie Louise (Barnsley East)
 Penning, Rt Hon. Sir Michael (Hemel Hempstead)
 Pennycook, Matthew Thomas (Greenwich and Woolwich)
 Penrose, John David (Weston-super-Mare)
 Percy, Andrew Theakstone (Brigg and Goole)
 Perkins, Matthew Toby Perkins (Chesterfield)
 Phillips, Jessica Rose (Birmingham, Yardley)
 Phillipson, Bridget Maeve (Houghton and Sunderland South)
 Philp, Chris Ian Brian Mynott (Croydon South)
 Pincher, Rt Hon. Christopher John (Tamworth)
 Plunkett-Ernle-Erle-Drax, Richard Grosvenor (South Dorset)
 Pollard, Luke (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport)
 Poulter, Daniel Leonard James (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich)
 Powell, Lucy Maria (Manchester Central)

Prentis, Victoria Mary Boswell (Banbury)
 Pritchard, Rt Hon. Mark Andrew (The Wrekin)
 Pursglove, Thomas Christopher John (Corby)

Q

Quin, Jeremy Mark (Horsham)
 Quince, William James (Colchester)
 Qureshi, Yasmin (Bolton South East)

R

Raab, Rt Hon. Dominic Rennie (Esher and Walton)
 Randall, Thomas William (Gedling)
 Rayner, Rt Hon. Angela (Ashton-under-Lyne)
 Redwood, Rt Hon. Sir John Alan (Wokingham)
 Reed, Steven Mark Ward (Croydon North)
 Rees, Christina Elizabeth (Neath)
 Rees-Mogg, Rt Hon. Jacob William (North East Somerset)
 Reeves, Eleanor Claire (Lewisham West and Penge)
 Reeves, Rachel Jane (Leeds West)
 Reynolds, Jonathan Neil (Stalybridge and Hyde)
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bellavia Janet (Streatham)
 Richards, Nicola Faye (West Bromwich East)
 Richardson, Angela Joy (Guildford)
 Rimmer, Marie Elizabeth (St Helens South and Whiston)
 Roberts, Robert Joseph (Delyn)
 Robertson, Laurence Anthony (Tewkesbury)
 Robinson, Gavin James (Belfast East)
 Robinson, Mary Josephine (Cheadle)
 Rodda, Mathew Richard Allen (Reading East)
 Rosindell, Andrew Richard (Romford)
 Ross, Douglas Gordon (Moray)
 Rowley, Lee Benjamin (North East Derbyshire)
 Russell, Dean (Watford)
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd (Brighton, Kemptown)
 Rutley, David Henry (Macclesfield)

S

Sambook, Gary William (Birmingham, Northfield)
 Saville Roberts, Rt Hon. Liz (Dwyfor Meirionnydd)
 Saxby, Selaine Rachel (North Devon)
 Scully, Paul Stuart (Sutton and Cheam)
 Seely, Robert William Henry (Isle of Wight)
 Selous, Andrew Edmund Armstrong (South West Bedfordshire)
 Shah, Naseem Akhtar (Bradford West)
 Shannon, Richard James (Strangford)
 Shapps, Rt Hon. Grant (Welwyn Hatfield)
 Sharma, Rt Hon. Alok Kumar (Reading West)
 Sharma, Virendra Kumar (Ealing, Southall)
 Sheerman, Barry John (Huddersfield)
 Shelbrooke, Rt Hon. Alec (Elmet and Rothwell)
 Sheppard, Thomas (Edinburgh East)
 Siddiq, Tulip Rizwana (Hampstead and Kilburn)
 Simmonds, David Timothy (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner)
 Skidmore, Rt Hon. Christopher James (Kingswood)
 Slaughter, Andrew Francis (Hammersmith)
 Smith, Alyn Edward (Stirling)
 Smith, Catherine Jane Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood)
 Smith, Chloe Rebecca (Norwich North)
 Smith, Greg (Buckingham)
 Smith, Henry Edward Millar (Crawley)
 Smith, Jeffrey (Manchester, Withington)

Smith, Rt Hon. Julian Richard (Skipton and Ripon)
 Smith, Nicholas Desmond John (Blaenau Gwent)
 Smith, Royston Matthew (Southampton, Itchen)
 Smyth, Karin Marguerite (Bristol South)
 Sobel, Alexander David (Leeds North West)
 Solloway, Amanda Jane (Derby North)
 Spellar, Rt Hon. John Francis (Warley)
 Spencer, Ben (Runnymede and Weybridge)
 Spencer, Rt Hon. Mark Steven (Sherwood)
 Stafford, Alexander Paul Thomas (Rother Valley)
 Starmer, Rt Hon. Sir Keir (Holborn and St Pancras)
 Stephens, Christopher Charles (Glasgow South West)
 Stephenson, Andrew George (Pendle)
 Stevens, Joanna Meriel (Cardiff Central)
 Stevenson, Andrew John (Carlisle)
 Stevenson, Jane Fiona Catherine (Wolverhampton North East)
 Stewart, Iain Aitken (Milton Keynes South)
 Stewart, Rt Hon. Robert Alexander (Beckenham)
 Stone, Jamie Hume (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross)
 Streeter, Sir Gary Nicholas (South West Devon)
 Streeting, Wesley Paul William (Ilford North)
 Stride, Rt Hon. Melvyn John (Central Devon)
 Stringer, Graham Eric (Blackley and Broughton)
 Stuart, Graham Charles (Beverley and Holderness)
 Sturdy, Julian Charles (York Outer)
 Sultana, Zarah (Coventry South)
 Sunak, Rt Hon. Rishi (Richmond (Yorks))
 Sunderland, James (Bracknell)
 Swayne, Rt Hon. Sir Desmond Angus (New Forest West)
 Syms, Sir Robert Andrew Raymond (Poole)

T

Tami, Rt Hon. Mark Richard (Alyn and Deeside)
 Tarry, Samuel Peter (Ilford South)
 Thewliss, Alison Emily (Glasgow Central)
 Thomas, Derek Gordon (St Ives)
 Thomas, Gareth (Harrow West)
 Thomas-Symonds, Rt Hon. Nicklaus (Torfaen)
 Thompson, Owen George (Midlothian)
 Thomson, Richard Gordon (Gordon)
 Thornberry, Rt Hon. Emily (Islington South and Finsbury)
 Throup, Margaret Ann (Erewash)
 Timms, Rt Hon. Stephen Creswell (East Ham)
 Timpson, Anthony Edward (Eddisbury)
 Tolhurst, Kelly Jane (Rochester and Strood)
 Tomlinson, Justin Paul (North Swindon)
 Tomlinson-Mynors, Michael James (Mid Dorset and North Poole)
 Tracey, Craig Paul (North Warwickshire)
 Trevelyan, Rt Hon. Anne-Marie Belinda (Berwick-upon-Tweed)
 Trickett, Jon Hedley (Hemsworth)
 Trott, Laura (Sevenoaks)
 Truss, Rt Hon. Elizabeth Mary (South West Norfolk)
 Tugendhat, Thomas Georg John (Tonbridge and Malling)
 Turner, Karl (Kingston upon Hull East)
 Twigg, John Derek (Halton)
 Twist, Mary Elizabeth (Blaydon)

U

Ul-Ghani, Nusrat Munir (Wealden)

V

Vara, Shailesh Lakhman (North West Cambridgeshire)
 Vaz, Rt Hon. Valerie Carol Marian (Walsall South)
 Vickers, Martin John (Cleethorpes)
 Vickers, Matthew Alexander (Stockton South)
 Villiers, Rt Hon. Theresa Anne (Chipping Barnet)

W

Wakeford, Christian (Bury South)
 Walker, Sir Charles Ashley Rupert (Broxbourne)
 Walker, Robin Caspar (Worcester)
 Walker-Lynch, Holly Jamie (Halifax)
 Wallace, Rt Hon. Robert Ben Lobban (Wyre and Preston North)
 Wallis, Jamie Hamilton (Bridgend)
 Warburton, David John (Somerton and Frome)
 Warman, Matthew Robert (Boston and Skegness)
 Watling, Giles Francis (Clacton)
 Webb, Suzanne (Stourbridge)
 Webbe, Claudia Naomi (Leicester East)
 West, Catherine Elizabeth (Hornsey and Wood Green)
 Western, Matthew Raymond (Warwick and Leamington)
 Whately, Helen Olivia Bicknell (Faversham and Mid Kent)
 Wheeler, Heather Kay (South Derbyshire)
 Whitehead, Alan Patrick Vincent (Southampton, Test)
 Whitford, Philippa (Central Ayrshire)
 Whitley, Michael (Birkenhead)
 Whittaker, Craig (Calder Valley)
 Whittingdale, Rt Hon. John Flasby Lawrance (Maldon)
 Whittome, Nadia Edith (Nottingham East)
 Wiggin, William David (North Herefordshire)
 Wild, James Oliver (North West Norfolk)
 Williams, Alun Craig (Montgomeryshire)
 Williams, Hywel (Arfon)
 Williamson, Rt Hon. Gavin Alexander (South Staffordshire)
 Wilson, Munira (Twickenham)
 Wilson, Rt Hon. Samuel (East Antrim)
 Winter, Bethan Winter (Cynon Valley)
 Winterton, Rt Hon. Dame Rosalie (Doncaster Central)
 Wishart, Peter (Perth and North Perthshire)
 Wood, Michael Jon (Dudley South)
 Wragg, William Peter (Hazel Grove)
 Wright, Rt Hon. Jeremy Paul (Kenilworth and Southam)

Y

Yasin, Mohammad (Bedford)
 Young, Jacob (Redcar)

Z

Zahawi, Nadhim (Stratford-on-Avon)
 Zeichner, Daniel Stephen (Cambridge)

HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

MEMBERS OF THE CABINET

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

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND MINISTER FOR THE UNION—
The Rt Hon. Boris Johnson, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT AFFAIRS AND FIRST SECRETARY OF STATE—
The Rt Hon. Dominic Raab, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT—The Rt Hon. Priti Patel, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE FOR JUSTICE—The Rt Hon. Robert Buckland, QC, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DEFENCE—The Rt Hon. Ben Wallace, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE—The Rt Hon. Matt Hancock, MP

COP26 PRESIDENT—The Rt Hon. Alok Sharma, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY—The Rt Hon. Kwasi Kwarteng, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE, AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN
AND EQUALITIES—The Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS—The Rt Hon. Dr Thérèse Coffey, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR EDUCATION—The Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS—The Rt Hon. George Eustice, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT—The Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT—The Rt Hon. Grant Shapps, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND—The Rt Hon. Brandon Lewis CBE, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND—The Rt Hon. Alister Jack, MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES—The Rt Hon. Simon Hart, MP

LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS AND LORD PRIVY SEAL—The Rt Hon. Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT—The Rt Hon. Oliver Dowden CBE, MP

MINISTER OF STATE, CABINET OFFICE—The Rt Hon. Lord Frost CMG

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt Hon. Amanda Milling, MP

DEPARTMENTS OF STATE AND MINISTERS

Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Kwasi Kwarteng, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Anne-Marie Trevelyan, MP (Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth)
Lord Grimstone of Boscobel, Kt (Minister for Investment) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Nadhim Zahawi, MP §
Amanda Solloway, MP
Paul Scully, MP
Lord Callanan

Cabinet Office—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND MINISTER FOR THE UNION—
The Rt Hon. Boris Johnson, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER AND MINISTER FOR THE CABINET OFFICE—The Rt Hon. Michael Gove, MP

COP26 PRESIDENT—The Rt Hon. Alok Sharma, MP

MINISTER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO—The Rt Hon. Amanda Milling, MP

PAYMASTER GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Penny Mordaunt, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Lord Frost CMG
Chloe Smith, MP (Minister for the Constitution and Devolution)
Lord Agnew of Oulton (Minister for Efficiency and Transformation) §
Lord True CBE

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARIES—

Julia Lopez, MP
Leo Docherty, MP (Minister for Defence People and Veterans) §

Defence—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Ben Wallace, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Jeremy Quin, MP (Minister for Defence Procurement)
Baroness Goldie DL

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

James Heappey, MP (Minister for the Armed Forces)
 Leo Docherty, MP (Minister for Defence People and Veterans) §

Digital, Culture, Media and Sport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Oliver Dowden CBE, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Caroline Dinenage, MP (Minister for Digital and Culture)
 The Rt Hon. John Whittingdale, MP (Minister for Media and Data)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Matt Warman, MP
 Nigel Huddleston, MP §
 Baroness Barran MBE

Education—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Gavin Williamson CBE, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Michelle Donelan, MP (Minister for Universities)
 The Rt Hon. Nick Gibb, MP (Minister for School Standards)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Vicky Ford, MP
 Gillian Keegan, MP
 Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose §

Environment, Food and Rural Affairs—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. George Eustice, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Rebecca Pow, MP
 Lord Gardiner of Kimble
 Victoria Prentis, MP

Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE AND FIRST SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Dominic Raab, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. James Cleverly, MP (Minister for the Middle East and North Africa)
 The Rt Hon. Lord Goldsmith of Richmond Park (Minister for the Pacific and the Environment) §
 Nigel Adams, MP (Minister for Asia)
 Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon (Minister for South Asia and the Commonwealth)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

James Duddridge, MP
 Wendy Morton, MP

Health and Social Care—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Matt Hancock, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Edward Argar, MP (Minister for Health)
 Helen Whately, MP (Minister for Care)
 Nadine Dorries, MP (Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health)

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Jo Churchill, MP
 Lord Bethell of Romford
 Nadhim Zahawi, MP (Minister for Covid Vaccine Deployment) §

Home Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Priti Patel, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. James Brokenshire, MP (Minister for Security)
 Kit Malthouse, MP (Minister for Crime and Policing) §
 Baroness Williams of Trafford
 Lord Greenhalgh (Minister for Building Safety and Communities) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Victoria Atkins, MP
 Kevin Foster, MP
 Chris Philp, MP §

Housing, Communities and Local Government—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Robert Jenrick, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Luke Hall, MP (Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government)
 The Rt Hon. Christopher Pincher, MP (Minister for Housing)
 Lord Greenhalgh (Minister for Building Safety and Communities) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Eddie Hughes, MP

International Trade—

SECRETARY OF STATE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE, AND MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND EQUALITIES—
The Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

The Rt Hon. Greg Hands, MP (Minister for Trade Policy)
Lord Grimstone of Boscobel, Kt (Minister for Investment) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Graham Stuart, MP
Ranil Jayawardena, MP
Kemi Badenoch, MP (Minister for Equalities) §
Baroness Berridge of the Vale of Catmose (Minister for Women) §

Justice—

LORD CHANCELLOR AND SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Robert Buckland, QC, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Kit Malthouse, MP (Minister for Crime and Policing) §

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Alex Chalk, MP §
Chris Philp, MP §
Lord Wolfson of Tredegar, QC

Law Officers—

ATTORNEY GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Michael Ellis, QC, MP

SOLICITOR GENERAL—The Rt Hon. Lucy Frazer, QC, MP

ADVOCATE GENERAL FOR SCOTLAND—Lord Stewart of Dirleton, QC

ATTORNEY GENERAL (MINISTER ON LEAVE)—The Rt Hon. Suella Braverman, QC, MP

Leader of the House of Commons—

LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS—The Rt Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP

Leader of the House of Lords—

LORD PRIVY SEAL AND LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt. Hon. Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

DEPUTY LEADER OF THE HOUSE OF LORDS—The Rt Hon. Earl Howe CBE

Northern Ireland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Brandon Lewis CBE, MP

MINISTER OF STATE—Robin Walker, MP

Scotland Office—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Alister Jack, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Iain Stewart, MP
David Duguid, MP §

Transport—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Grant Shapps, MP

MINISTERS OF STATE—

Chris Heaton-Harris, MP
Andrew Stephenson, MP

PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—

Robert Courts, MP
Rachel Maclean, MP
Baroness Vere of Norbiton

Treasury—

PRIME MINISTER, FIRST LORD OF THE TREASURY, MINISTER FOR THE CIVIL SERVICE AND MINISTER FOR THE UNION—
The Rt Hon. Boris Johnson, MP

CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER—The Rt Hon. Rishi Sunak, MP

CHIEF SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Stephen Barclay, MP

FINANCIAL SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Jesse Norman, MP

MINISTER OF STATE— Lord Agnew of Oulton (Minister for Efficiency and Transformation) §

ECONOMIC SECRETARY—John Glen, MP

EXCHEQUER SECRETARY—Kemi Badenoch, MP §

PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY—The Rt Hon. Mark Spencer, MP

LORDS COMMISSIONERS—

James Morris, MP
Rebecca Harris, MP
David Rutley, MP
Maggie Throup, MP
Michael Tomlinson, MP
Alan Mak, MP

ASSISTANT WHIPS—

Scott Mann, MP
 David T. C. Davies, MP §
 Alex Chalk, MP §
 Tom Pursglove, MP
 Maria Caulfield, MP
 Nigel Huddleston, MP §
 David Duguid, MP §

UK Export Finance—

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE—The Rt Hon. Elizabeth Truss, MP
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—Graham Stuart, MP

Wales Office —

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Simon Hart, MP
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARY OF STATE—David T. C. Davies, MP §

Work and Pensions—

SECRETARY OF STATE—The Rt Hon. Dr Thérèse Coffey, MP
 MINISTER OF STATE—Justin Tomlinson, MP (Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work)
 PARLIAMENTARY UNDER-SECRETARIES OF STATE—
 Mims Davies, MP
 Guy Opperman, MP
 Will Quince, MP
 Baroness Stedman-Scott OBE, DL

Her Majesty's Household—

LORD CHAMBERLAIN—The Rt Hon. Lord Parker of Minsmere, KCB
 LORD STEWARD—The Earl of Dalhousie
 MASTER OF THE HORSE—Lord de Mauley
 TREASURER—The Rt Hon. Stuart Andrew, MP
 COMPTROLLER—Mike Freer, MP
 VICE-CHAMBERLAIN—Marcus Jones, MP
 CAPTAIN OF THE HONOURABLE CORPS OF GENTLEMEN-AT-ARMS—The Rt Hon. Lord Ashton of Hyde
 CAPTAIN OF THE QUEEN'S BODYGUARD OF THE YEOMEN OF THE GUARD—Earl of Courtown
 BARONNESSES IN WAITING—
 Baroness Penn
 Baroness Scott of Bybrook OBE
 Baroness Bloomfield of Hinton Waldrist
 LORDS IN WAITING—
 Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay
 Viscount Younger of Leckie

§ *Members of the Government listed under more than one Department*

SECOND CHURCH ESTATES COMMISSIONER, REPRESENTING THE CHURCH COMMISSIONERS—Andrew Selous, MP
 REPRESENTING THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE ON THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION—Christian Matheson, MP
 REPRESENTING THE SPEAKER'S COMMITTEE FOR THE INDEPENDENT PARLIAMENTARY STANDARDS AUTHORITY—
 Sir Charles Walker, MP
 REPRESENTING THE HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—Sir Charles Walker, MP
 REPRESENTING THE PARLIAMENTARY WORKS SPONSOR BODY—The Rt Hon. Damian Hinds, MP
 CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMISSION—The Rt Hon. Sir Edward Leigh, MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

THE SPEAKER—The Rt Hon. Sir Lindsay Hoyle, MP

CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt Hon. Dame Eleanor Laing, MP

FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt Hon. Dame Rosie Winterton, MP

SECOND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF WAYS AND MEANS—The Rt Hon. Mr Nigel Evans, MP

PANEL OF CHAIRS—

Rushanara Ali, Sir David Amess, Hannah Bardell, Mr Clive Betts, Mr Peter Bone, Sir Graham Brady, Ms Karen Buck, Sir Christopher Chope, Judith Cummins, Geraint Davies, Philip Davies, Peter Dowd, Dame Angela Eagle, Clive Efford, Julie Elliott, Yvonne Fovargue, The Rt Hon. Sir Roger Gale, Ms Nusrat Ghani, James Gray, Sir Mark Hendrick, Mr Philip Hollobone, The Rt Hon. Stewart Hosie, The Rt Hon. Sir George Howarth, Dr Rupa Huq, The Rt Hon. Sir Edward Leigh, Steve McCabe, Siobhain McDonagh, The Rt Hon. Esther McVey, The Rt Hon. Maria Miller, The Rt Hon. David Mundell, Mrs Sheryll Murray, The Rt Hon. Caroline Nokes, Ian Paisley, The Rt Hon. Mark Pritchard, Christina Rees, Mr Laurence Robertson, Andrew Rosindell, Mr Virendra Sharma, Sir Gary Streeter, Graham Stringer, Derek Twigg, Sir Charles Walker

SECRETARY—Chris Stanton

HOUSE OF COMMONS COMMISSION—

The Rt Hon. The Speaker (Chairman), Ian Ailles (Director General of the House of Commons), Dr John Benger (Clerk of the House and Head of the House of Commons Service), Thangam Debbonaire, MP, Dr Rima Makarem (External Member), The Rt Hon. Jacob Rees-Mogg, MP (Leader of the House), Sir Charles Walker, MP, The Rt Hon. Dame Rosie Winterton, MP, Pete Wishart, MP

SECRETARY TO THE COMMISSION—Marianne Cwynarski CBE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY—Robert Cope

ADMINISTRATION ESTIMATE AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS ESTIMATE AUDIT COMMITTEE—

Dr Rima Makarem (Chair), Harriett Baldwin, MP, Mr Clive Betts, MP, Frances Done, Sir Charles Walker, MP

SECRETARY TO THE COMMITTEE—Hannah Bryce

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CHAMBER BUSINESS

STRATEGIC DIRECTOR—Matthew Hamlyn

Public and Private Bill Office—

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CLERK OF BILLS—Chris Stanton

EXAMINER OF PETITIONS FOR PRIVATE BILLS AND TAXING OFFICER—Chris Stanton

CLERK OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS—Adam Mellows-Facer

CLERKS: Joanna Dodd, Sarah Ioannou, Adam Mellows-Facer, Kevin Maddison, Seb Newman, Rob Page, Yohanna Sallberg, Sarah Thatcher, Huw Yardley

OFFICE MANAGER—Natalie Flanagan

Committees—

COURT OF REFEREES: CLERK—Chris Stanton
 SELECTION: CLERK—Yohanna Sallberg
 STANDING ORDERS, UNOPPOSED BILLS: CLERK—Laura-Jane Tiley

Journal Office—

CLERK OF THE JOURNALS—Eve Samson
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OFFICIAL REPORT

IN THE SECOND 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 695

FIRST VOLUME OF SESSION 2021-2022

House of Commons

Tuesday 11 May 2021

*The House met at twenty-five minutes past
Eleven o'clock*

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

MESSAGE TO ATTEND HER MAJESTY

*Message to attend Her Majesty delivered by the
Lady Usher of the Black Rod.*

*The Speaker, with the House, went up to attend
Her Majesty; on their return, the Speaker suspended the
sitting.*

2.30 pm

On resuming—

NEW MEMBER

*The following Member took and subscribed the Oath
required by law:*

Jillian Wendy Mortimer, for Hartlepool.

Mr Speaker: I am now suspending the House for about one minute to enable the necessary arrangements for the next business to be made.

2.31 pm

Sitting suspended.

Speaker's Statement

2.33 pm

Mr Speaker: The House has directed the Speaker to make a statement at the beginning of each Session about the duties and responsibilities of hon. Members.

I begin by reminding hon. Members of their duty to observe the code of conduct agreed by the House, and to behave with civility and fairness in all their dealings. The behaviour code applies to Members as it applies to

others who visit or work in Parliament, and provides clear guidance. Unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with seriously, independently and with effective sanctions.

The House asserts its privilege of freedom of speech. That privilege is enjoyed by Members of Parliament only in their work in this House: as private individuals, we are equal under the law with those whom we represent. It is there to ensure that our constituents can be represented by us without fear or favour. It is an obligation upon us all to exercise that privilege responsibly.

The Speaker does not have the power to police the accuracy of Members' contributions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon Members to be accurate in what they say in this House. But if a Member is inaccurate by mistake, they should correct that mistake as soon as possible. Members must be mindful of the impact of what they say, not only on other Members, but on others who follow our proceedings; and Members should be heard courteously, whatever their views. In this place we are honourable Members and the language we use about each other should reflect that.

If a Member falls short of the standards expected of us all, there are ways of dealing with that, but it is not by accusations made as sideswipes during questions or debates. If we fail to treat each other with respect in debate, that diminishes our work and risks raising the temperature of discussions outside this place, particularly on social media, that already too often descend into online abuse.

I want all Members and everyone in the parliamentary community to be able to go about their work safely both online and here in Westminster. The security of this building and those who work here depends on us all. We have a duty to be vigilant and to assist those whose job it is to maintain this place as a safe place to work.

Before moving to the first business of the new Session, I would like to express my very best wishes to all hon. Members and all those who work in this House.

OUTLAWRIES BILL

A Bill for the more effectual preventing Clandestine Outlawries was read the First time, and ordered to be read a Second time.

Queen's Speech

Mr Speaker: I have to acquaint the House that this House has this day attended Her Majesty in the House of Peers, and that Her Majesty was pleased to make a Most Gracious Speech from the Throne to both Houses of Parliament, of which I have, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy.

I shall direct that the terms of the speech be printed in the Votes and Proceedings. Copies are already available in the Vote Office.

The Gracious Speech was as follows:

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

My Government's priority is to deliver a national recovery from the pandemic that makes the United Kingdom stronger, healthier and more prosperous than before.

To achieve this, my Government will level up opportunities across all parts of the United Kingdom, supporting jobs, businesses and economic growth and addressing the impact of the pandemic on public services.

My Government will protect the health of the nation, continuing the vaccination programme and providing additional funding to support the NHS. My Ministers will bring forward legislation to empower the NHS to innovate and embrace technology. Patients will receive more tailored and preventative care, closer to home. Measures will be brought forward to support the health and wellbeing of the nation, including to tackle obesity and improve mental health. Proposals on social care reform will be brought forward.

My Government will build on the success of the vaccination programme to lead the world in life sciences, pioneering new treatments against diseases like cancer and securing jobs and investment across the country.

My Ministers will oversee the fastest ever increase in public funding for research and development and pass legislation to establish an advanced research agency.

Following the unprecedented support provided to businesses during the pandemic, proposals will be brought forward to create and support jobs and improve regulation.

My Government will strengthen the economic ties across the union, investing in and improving national infrastructure. Proposals will be taken forward to transform connectivity by rail and bus and to extend 5G mobile coverage and gigabit capable broadband.

Legislation will support a lifetime skills guarantee to enable flexible access to high quality education and training throughout people's lives.

Measures will be introduced to ensure that support for businesses reflects the United Kingdom's strategic interests and drives economic growth. Laws will simplify procurement in the public sector. Eight new freeports will create hubs for trade and help regenerate communities.

My Government will ensure that the public finances are returned to a sustainable path once the economic recovery is secure.

Measures will be brought forward to ensure that children have the best start in life, prioritising their early years. My Ministers will address lost learning during the pandemic and ensure every child has a high quality education and is able to fulfil their potential.

My Government will help more people to own their own home whilst enhancing the rights of those who rent. Laws to modernise the planning system, so that more homes can be built, will be brought forward, along with measures to end the practice of ground rents for new leasehold properties. My Ministers will establish in law a new Building Safety Regulator to ensure that the tragedies of the past are never repeated.

Measures will be brought forward to address racial and ethnic disparities and ban conversion therapy.

Legislation will support the voluntary sector by reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and releasing additional funds for good causes.

My Government will invest in new green industries to create jobs, while protecting the environment. The United Kingdom is committed to achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and will continue to lead the way internationally by hosting the COP26 Summit in Glasgow. Legislation will set binding environmental targets. Legislation will also be brought forward to ensure the United Kingdom has, and promotes, the highest standards of animal welfare.

My Government will strengthen and renew democracy and the constitution. Legislation will be introduced to ensure the integrity of elections, protect freedom of speech and restore the balance of power between the executive, legislature and the courts. My Ministers will promote the strength and integrity of the union. Measures will be brought forward to strengthen devolved Government in Northern Ireland and address the legacy of the past.

My Government will introduce measures to increase the safety and security of its citizens.

Legislation will increase sentences for the most serious and violent offenders and ensure the timely administration of justice. Proposals will be brought forward to address violence, including against women and girls, and to support victims. Measures will be brought forward to establish a fairer immigration system that strengthens the United Kingdom's borders and deters criminals who facilitate dangerous and illegal journeys.

My Government will lead the way in ensuring internet safety for all, especially for children, whilst harnessing the benefits of a free, open and secure internet.

My Ministers will provide our gallant Armed Forces with the biggest spending increase in thirty years, taking forward their programme of modernisation and reinforcing the United Kingdom's commitment to NATO. My Ministers will honour and strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant, placing it in law. Measures will be introduced to provide National Insurance contribution relief for employers of veterans.

Legislation will be introduced to counter hostile activity by foreign states. My Ministers will implement the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy.

The United Kingdom will host the G7 Summit and lead the global effort to secure a robust economic recovery from the pandemic. My Ministers will deepen trade ties in the Gulf, Africa and the Indo-Pacific.

My Government will continue to provide aid where it has the greatest impact on reducing poverty and alleviating human suffering. My Government will uphold human

rights and democracy across the world. It will take forward a global effort to get 40 million girls across the world into school.

Members of the House of Commons

Estimates for the public services will be laid before you.

My Lords and Members of the House of Commons

Other measures will be laid before you.

I pray that the blessing of Almighty God may rest upon your counsels.

Debate on the Address

[1ST DAY]

Mr Speaker: Before I call the mover and seconder, I want to announce the proposed subjects of debate during the remaining days on the Loyal Address, which are: tomorrow—better jobs and a fair deal at work; Thursday—a bright future for the next generation; Monday—safe streets for all; Tuesday—affordable and safe housing for all; and Wednesday—the NHS and social care.

I shall first call Shailesh Vara to move, and then Katherine Fletcher to second, the Address.

2.37 pm

Shailesh Vara (North West Cambridgeshire) (Con): I beg to move,

That an humble Address be presented to Her Majesty, as follows:

Most Gracious Sovereign,

We, Your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

It is indeed a great honour and privilege for me and my constituents to move the Loyal Address, especially in this, Her Majesty's 96th year. Her Majesty's commitment and dedication to service of our nation is an example to all of us. Given Her Majesty's age, may I say that by comparison the rest of us are no more than mid-career?

I also take this opportunity to welcome our new colleague to the House—my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer), with whom I, for one, very much look forward to working.

We meet at a time unprecedented in our history—a time when there is a dark shadow over not only our country but across the globe as we deal with the covid-19 pandemic. Far too many lives have been lost and far too many people have suffered, both in the UK and across the world. When this is over—and it will be, at some point—the family of nations must work together so that if something similar happens again in the future we are better prepared. The heartbreaking scenes on our television screens from India are a constant reminder that no one is safe until we are all safe. Sadly, there are similar outbreaks in other countries too, such as Nepal, Thailand and Cambodia.

As we continue our fight against the virus, I am pleased that we have been able to offer help to others. We were the first country in the world to provide India with practical help, sending vital medical equipment to save precious lives. It is good that the UK has committed £548 million to the global COVAX initiative.

Over the past year, new speaking arrangements have meant that often when Members put in to speak, they do not get called, or if they are called, they have no more than about three minutes to say their piece. Mindful of the 17 speeches I was unable to give, and mindful of the broad nature of the Gracious Speech and the fact that there is no time limit on me today, I would like to put on the record those 17 speeches. On second thoughts, Mr Speaker, that look in your eye tells me that perhaps I had better save it for another day, when I very much hope I will be called.

Today marks the 11th anniversary of the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition being formed in 2010. Since then, the Conservatives have cemented their position as the party of Government, Labour as the party of protest, and the Lib Dems as a party that can all gather in this Chamber and still maintain social distancing.

When the Chief Whip asked me to propose the Gracious Speech, as well as being hugely honoured, I also felt a sense of humility. All of us have had our own individual journeys in being elected to this House. In my case, I was born in Uganda at a time when Uganda was still part of the British empire. My family came here in the early 60s, when I was still a young child, unable to speak a word of English. We settled in a deprived area in inner-city Birmingham, where I went to a local primary school. My father worked as a joiner on building sites. Those were tough times. It was legal to discriminate against people on grounds of race, and people did. Racial intolerance and prejudice were rife. The Prime Minister of the day was Harold Wilson, leading a Labour Government.

Getting elected to Parliament was not without incident. When I was a candidate in 2000 in Northampton South, the sitting Labour MP, Tony Clarke, tried to use my race and my Hindu faith against me in his efforts to get re-elected. Not surprisingly, he was roundly criticised in the national media. On the subject of my faith, there is a memorable moment that I have from when I was a Northern Ireland Minister, before I resigned over Brexit. I recall one particular visit in Belfast, when I was with a group of people, and we were discussing each other's faiths. When I mentioned that I was a Hindu, a kindly looking gentleman smiled and asked me, "Mr Vara, would that be a Protestant Hindu or a Catholic Hindu?" Fortunately for me, we were distracted by the barman, who brought another round of drinks.

It has been a real privilege to serve the people of North West Cambridgeshire since 2005. It is because they selected me that I was able to be the Conservative party's first non-white Minister in the House of Commons, and the party's first non-white person to speak from the Dispatch Box. The point I am making is very simple: for someone with my background to be proposing the Loyal Address shows what a truly great and magnificent country we all live in.

North West Cambridgeshire is a relatively new constituency, and I am only its second Member of Parliament. As with all constituencies, it has its high and low points. In fact, on the low side, Holme fen is 7 metres below sea level and is the lowest point in Britain, and it is in my constituency. On the high side, it is wonderful that Peterborough United, otherwise known as Posh, have just been promoted to the championship. That being said, my other team, Arsenal, are clearly on a low point. Along with many others, we just live in hope.

My constituency is steeped in history. In 969 AD, Ramsey Abbey was founded, and it prospered for many centuries—that is, until news of its wealth reached King Henry VIII and his chief minister, Thomas Cromwell, who dissolved the monastery in 1539, and its possessions were claimed by the Treasury. I suppose that that was the 16th century precursor to nationalisation.

We also have the Bell Inn in Stilton, one of England's oldest and most famous coaching inns. As well as its association with Stilton cheese, it is where the infamous

highwayman Dick Turpin is believed to have hidden for nine weeks while on the run in the 18th century. I am reliably informed that his ghost still resides at the inn. He will doubtless be pleased with the Government's pledge to give greater protection to tenants. His ghost, however, is not on the electoral roll, and getting an ID card will be a serious problem, but he certainly continues to bring in the tourists.

Moving to modern times, there is a strong military presence, with RAF Molesworth in the south and RAF Wittering in the north. The size of my constituency is some 300 square miles, with plenty of farms producing the finest food in the country. My constituents are good, decent, hard-working people, ambitious for themselves and their families. They want a society that has equality of opportunity and allows them to rise as high as their ability and talent will take them, irrespective of their background.

This Gracious Speech delivers for the people. It is in the tradition of Conservative Governments, who have always sought to better people's lives, especially the working class and the underprivileged. In the 19th century, the Conservative Lord Shaftesbury was leading the way. He pushed through various pieces of legislation to improve conditions for the mentally ill and children who were forced to work under appalling conditions, as well as championing education for poor children. An interesting point is that, in Shaftesbury's first three years in Parliament, he saw four Conservative Prime Ministers: Lord Liverpool, George Canning, Viscount Goderich and the Duke of Wellington. I suspect that the 2015 intake can sympathise with the frequent turnaround of Conservative Prime Ministers, although I should make it clear that this Prime Minister is not going anywhere for a very long time. Disraeli spoke passionately about one nation Conservatism, and Margaret Thatcher encouraged home ownership for people who would otherwise be paying rent all their lives.

This Gracious Speech is for all the four nations: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. After the massive financial support during the pandemic, I welcome the measures to create more jobs and drive economic growth, and the drive to build back better and level up opportunities across the country. On the health front, there will be additional funds for the NHS, tailored care for individual patients closer to home and improved mental health services, and the UK will lead the world in seeking new treatments for diseases such as cancer.

Education is for everyone at all stages of life. That means prioritising the early years and ensuring that the pupils who have missed out in the past year will be able to catch up during this parliamentary term, and 11 million adults will be able to benefit from the lifetime skills guarantee.

With COP26 in Glasgow later this year, it is great to see that the UK is leading the world in promoting new green initiatives to help to safeguard the environment. Protecting their citizens is a key role for any Government. I welcome the tough new measures that will be introduced, including the new draft victims bill, legislation for greater internet safety and a fairer immigration system, and tough measures to deal with people smugglers.

Speaking on the subject of law and order, I am reminded of the Chief Whip. Earlier today, he basically said to me that, if I were to cause a constitutional crisis

today, it would be the Tower of London for me and execution. Actually, my constituency has form with the Tower of London and executions. In 1941, Josef Jakobs, a German spy, parachuted and landed near Dovehouse farm outside Ramsey in my constituency. Unfortunately for him, he broke an ankle and was unable to move. The following morning, he was found by two local farmers, who handed him over to the local Home Guard. Jakobs was tried and then executed at the Tower of London, but the significant point is that he was the last person to be executed at the Tower of London. I appreciate that it is the season of by-elections, but I have no intention of causing a constitutional crisis and adding to the Chief Whip's woes.

Turning to the Gracious Speech again, I was also very pleased with the Government's continued support for our armed forces and our strengthening of trade links with the rest of the world as we pursue our interests of global Britain. This Gracious Speech recognises the work required to deal with the pandemic. It respects our manifesto and the trust placed in my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and his Government by the public.

I have known the Prime Minister since well before we were elected to this House. I have shared debating platforms with him, campaigned with him and campaigned for him. In all those years, one thing has been clear: he stands out because he really gets it and, importantly, he delivers. He really understands the working people of this country, what drives them, what their aspirations are for themselves and what they want for their country. That is why the people trust him. They did so when he was elected twice as Mayor of London, and when he led the Brexit campaign and then delivered on Brexit. At the last election, they trusted him by giving him the largest Conservative majority since Margaret Thatcher's victory in 1987. In the same election, the Conservative party received the largest number of votes ever received by a single British political party in history. Over the past few days, in various electoral contests, that trust in my right hon. Friend has been reinforced, including in the recent by-election in Hartlepool; I referred earlier to my new hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool.

This House is at its best when we work together. All of us are in the business of improving the lives of our fellow citizens. We may differ in our approach, but the aim is the same. There are on both sides many Members who have experienced inequality, poverty, racism and much more. So let us recognise that fact, and direct our energies less in divisive arguments and less on personal attacks, and more on constructive engagement. That is not to say that we should not have robust and challenging debate in order to deliver the best for the people of our country, whom we are here to serve. As for personal attacks, let us remember what Margaret Thatcher said:

"if they attack one personally, it means they have not a single political argument left."

At this critical time in our history, it is especially important that we work together to rebuild as the United Kingdom emerges from this dreadful pandemic. There is every reason for optimism, and with this ambitious legislative programme, set out in the Gracious Speech, we have a bright and prosperous future. I commend the Gracious Speech to the House.

2.55 pm

Katherine Fletcher (South Ribble) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara). Yet again he has demonstrated the wisdom, world view and passion from which the people of North West Cambridge have benefited for many years. It is also an honour to second the Humble Address to Her Majesty, who, despite a difficult year—let’s face it—is still flippin’ ace.

Being proud of Lancashire and South Ribble, I looked at previous speakers in this role, only to discover none from central Lancashire—ever. Other bits of Lancashire pop up. In 1919, we had Lieutenant-Commander Percy Dean and in 1924 we had Lord David Balneil. Well, in the 21st century, this untitled and unentitled woman is happy to report back to South Ribble: many things have changed, not least the people who represent you and, as always, I promise to always do my best for you.

It is traditional during this address to speak about place and policy, and I will, but I want to focus on the thing that these extraordinary times have highlighted as vital to this Chamber and to all of us—the thing that we miss so much: people. The covid pandemic has been awful for us all. We have lost too many people before their time to a nasty new disease and, to stop that number being much higher, we have all, as a country, sacrificed much that is truly important to keep others safe. These empty Benches should be occupied by a seething wall of humanity—the bricks from all over our wonderful United Kingdom.

This Queen’s Speech shows that the Government have not focused solely on infection prevention and vaccine roll-out—they have kept going with plans to build back better for all the people who sent us here. We in this place also changed our ways to keep people safe, and it is not any easier to do. Think of the poor Chief Whip, my right hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood (Mark Spencer), who was charged with corralling MPs’ votes in a socially distanced way. It reminds me of Alan Rickman in that ’90s Robin Hood film: “You, 10:30; you, 10:35 and don’t bring a friend.” I bet the Chief Whip is now regretting that this is not a virtual contribution in which he can accidentally stand on the plug. However, after those socially distanced sacrifices, the people of South Ribble and beyond want the Government’s actions in the measures outlined today, which the Chief Whip will steer through Parliament. Those are the foundations truly to deliver on our promises for this country.

I have detected worries in some areas with money that other parts of the country have their hands out, expecting something for nothing. That is not levelling up in my book. Across swathes of the regions, we have not had attention or the seed investment for decades. We do not want a handout, or a shiny white elephant scheme to keep the natives happy that is here today, gone tomorrow. We do not want a fish—frankly, we are too proud to take it. We want a fishing rod to help us to grow our economies for the benefit of everybody. In broad strokes, we need better infrastructure, rail, buses and broadband, to enable more people to access more jobs. While I do not speak for all, I speak for many when I say: “Invest in us and we will pay you back with innovation and practical nous, which will ultimately deliver tax revenues from our valued services.” For example, my brilliant business idea is to export T-shirts with “You’re on mute.” That will save everyone a lot of bother if we have to go through this again.

This will take time, but history has a long arc. Industrial areas such as the midlands and the north did it before the second world war. Are you going to bet that we can’t do it again? The measures outlined today start to address decades of problems that, for many, mean it is harder to get private investment and public investment, pump-priming capital to enable global trade and business sector leadership, ultimately creating well-paid jobs.

All of us—all of us—want homes our kids can afford or rent securely. The Government are reforming planning, so it is more in the hands of locals, properly agreed in advance. We need to protect our green spaces, have a say in where we build homes, and regenerate disused shops or brownfield sites. We do not need to be sitting around in cold draughty rooms arguing again and again about overly long documents.

So, to all the people of these great isles—north, south, east and west—let me return to the theme of people. Why do I stand here confident today that we will deliver on our promises, given time? As the marvellous returning Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, highlighted in his acceptance speech at the weekend, while individual people are important it is teamwork that really makes the difference. So may I take the opportunity to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer) to this team? [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”] Like all of us when we first get here, I bet her head is spinning, so may I offer her, and the thousands of people across the country who lent this team their vote, a brief explainer of what you have actually got here.

The Queen’s Speech introduces important measures to protect animal welfare—a theme close to all our hearts—so let me run with an analogy regarding this place. The 2019 intake have bounded into Westminster politics like spaniels in a wood enthusiastically sniffing every tree. All glassy-eyed and tongues flapping, they must appear to more seasoned observers, above the Westminster bracken, as bouncily passionate about the places they are from, pushing with enthusiastic energy to level up and make lasting change. However, as any upland farmer will tell you on the fell gather, you need the bouncy pups but you also need the grey-chinned old dogs, sitting imperiously looking for problems of years past and scanning the horizon for new ones. The slight eye roll. The small aside—“My dear, don’t do that. It was tried 20 years ago and it failed because...”. I have had months of work saved by this wisdom, although I will confess surprise that it was ever possible to walk into a village pub and order while having two loaded shotguns strapped to your back.

Those elected more recently, most not really of the Westminster bubble, are fiercely proud of place, passionate about their hometowns and their communities because they live there—they are their homes. We want what you want because we aren’t other, we are you—truly part of our places. We have kick-ass ladies, lovely mums, ex-Spads, lads, gents, gay and straight, businessmen, servicemen, all available in a variety of colours of melanin. It is the sheer diversity of this Team Tory that will strike my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool when she takes her place. And I know that all those, straight and gay, who have worked together will be delighted with the measures announced today to ban the abhorrent practice of conversion therapy, while, importantly, protecting private prayer. Institutional knowledge coupled with life experience—that is this Team Tory.

When me and the red wall lads go out for a pint after work, they revel in that diversity, too. We joke about woke, or whether they are the gammons, representatives of many. Hilarious, I thought, enjoying the crack over a beer—all good fun, until my hon. Friend the Member for Warrington South (Andy Carter) pointed out that if they were the conversation's gammons, that made me the ring of pineapple on top.

On the pub theme, someone should quickly administer smelling salts to the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and his ministerial colleagues. After the number of messages they received from those on the Conservative Benches about the European Super League and its affront to the football pyramid, they definitely need them. To be clear, the messages were not only received from those colleagues possessed in the correct way of saying “bath”, although I concede that my hon. Friend the Member for Orpington (Gareth Bacon) may differ on that topic. So, to the DCMS team, sorry but not sorry, but stopping the anti-football league in its tracks has not distracted the Secretary of State from bringing forward Bills to sort out 5G, broadband and preventing online harms. Bringing a football view of what is important to this place: Team Tory.

But that is not all. The Government is a system in its own right. You need people who have worked in it and know how to get things done. These pure-breed hounds team up with the Heinz 57 mutts to work for you. Ex-insiders and former special advisers who have offered help and advice without a hint of condescension, but who occasionally twitch with a slightly panicky, “Don't do that!”, have already helped to get legislation passed to protect children from plastic surgery and women from violence. And it is a two-way street, like when my hon. Friends the Members for Darlington (Peter Gibson), for Stockton South (Matt Vickers) and for Redcar (Jacob Young) explain nicely, again, what a chicken parmo is and why it is important.

In fact, all the Team Tory leadership are investing in practical advice and support, because it is the delivery that is important. For example, I think of the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, when faced with another zingy piece of newbie enthusiasm: the deep sigh, the fold of the arms, “Well—”. Some of the people in South Ribble have no faith in politicians and say, “You're all the same.” No, we are not. What you have here is true representative democracy, and what this produces is not just passionate government, but effective government from this Team Tory.

Right; is there anyone I have not mildly insulted yet?

Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con): The Home Secretary.

Katherine Fletcher: I am not that daft, plus I have not got the box that my right hon. Friend would need to stand on to properly give me the look! I know how the criminals running illegal immigration rackets feel. This Government have Bills here to stop them, and if you commit violent crime, this Queen's Speech means the Home Secretary will throw both the book and the look at you—this Team Tory, keeping our communities safer.

And think of the poor Prime Minister, heading up this mixed pack, this rabble—the grey-haired, the ginger, brown or curly black-haired, the no-haired, the pineapple blonde, the actually blonde. He crafts his speeches with great learning, but when he says “Homer”, more likely these days he will get the answer “Simpson” from these

Benches rather than classical allusions. Now I know why he plays with his hair so much—it is pure exasperation. Sorry, boss, but we get the general gist and so do the people we represent, because what the people of South Ribble, and the people we represent, want is what the Bills in this Queen's Speech lay the foundations for—better infrastructure, so we can get to our work quicker; skilled jobs in the green revolution of the 21st century; the ability to get the training we need to access those jobs with a lifetime skills guarantee; and levelling up, not by taking money from other places but by investing, so that through global trade and key industries we can grow our economies, reinvigorating those places, with the practical history and the pride to deliver.

Commentators would have these Benches at war with each other, as different packs with nothing in common; not from what I have seen, although I do not know whether that sounds familiar to any Opposition Members. This Team Tory are focused on not forgetting anyone, not taking anyone for granted, rubbing along, laughing at each other, helping each other and working together for our whole United Kingdom, to level up and build back better. It is my privilege to commend Her Majesty's Speech to the House.

3.8 pm

Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): Before I turn to the Address, I want to pay tribute to Her Majesty. This was Her Majesty's 67th Queen's Speech. At a time of incredible personal loss for Her Majesty, it must have been one of the hardest to deliver, as she did this morning.

I congratulate the mover and the seconder for what were both fine speeches. The Address was moved by the hon. Member for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara). He was typically erudite and engaging, and I should not have been surprised, because I am told he is a former winner of the coveted “rising star” award at the Conservative party conference, although I think that was in the year 2000. Perhaps his star has risen again today. As a season ticket holder at Arsenal, I am very glad to learn that he supports the reds. I am also told that he has a black belt in taekwondo, so I now know who to call on at the next shadow Cabinet meeting.

The seconder of the Address, the hon. Member for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher), showed why she also is tipped as a rising star. She gave a fine, passionate speech. She is surely the only Member of Parliament who is also a qualified safari ranger, and once survived being charged by a rhino. Her speech showed how those skills have transferred nicely to the Westminster jungle.

We also remember those Members of this House who passed away in the last Session. In April we lost Cheryl Gillan, who served Chesham and Amersham with such distinction—I look up, because in this place I would normally see Cheryl sitting up there on the Back Bench. As a new Back Bencher in 2015, I had the privilege of working closely with Cheryl on a cross-party basis, and we quickly developed a mutual respect and friendship; I know that many hon. Members would say the same and will remember Cheryl, as I do, with warmth and affection.

It is a tradition during these debates to welcome new Members to this House, so of course I congratulate the new hon. Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer) on

[Keir Starmer]

her victory. She now has the huge honour of representing that great town; I hope that she will forgive me if I say that I hope it is not for too long. I wonder what plans she has for the 40-foot inflatable of the Prime Minister.

I turn to the Address. After a year of sacrifice, this is a seminal moment in our national story. As the hon. Member for North West Cambridgeshire spoke about the pandemic, let me start with this point. Even before the pandemic, Britain needed transformative change to reset our economy, to rebuild our public services and to strengthen our Union and our democracy for decades to come. That is because, even before the pandemic, there were 5.7 million people in low-paid or insecure work and 4.2 million children growing up in poverty. Class sizes were at their highest for 20 years, one in seven adults were unable to get the social care that they need, and Britain had one of the worst levels of regional inequality in Europe. Most shockingly of all, life expectancy stalled, for the first time in a century. Let that sink in: life expectancy stalled, for the first time in a century.

That is the record of the last 10 years. That is the record that the Prime Minister is trying to run away from today. We can see why: because in the past year, the pandemic has brutally exposed the consequences of that decade of neglect. Tragically, the pandemic has shown that if you live in low-quality, overcrowded housing, if you are trapped in insecure work, if you are one of the millions of people who are one pay cheque away from hardship, this pandemic will have been harder for you than for most.

Today we needed a Queen's Speech that rose to the scale of the moment, that rewarded the sacrifices of the past year and rebuilt the foundation. Instead, this Queen's Speech merely papers over the cracks. It is packed with short-term gimmicks and distant promises—this Government are never short of those—but it misses the urgency and scale of the transformation that is needed in our economy, in our public services and in our society, and it lacks the ambition or a plan to achieve it.

At the heart of this Queen's Speech should have been a jobs plan—a plan to tackle unemployment, particularly the shocking levels of youth unemployment, and also to change how the economy works. That is not impossible. Just look across the Atlantic. There we see the kind of plan that is needed: a plan for long-term investment; a plan to make the economy more resilient, greener and more dynamic; and a plan to halve child poverty, to deliver a fairer tax system and to grow the economy from the middle out, not from the top down. But what do we see on this side of the Atlantic? A Queen's Speech that pits regions against each other in a fight for limited funding, an economy still driven by chronic short-termism, a Government preparing to take money out of the pockets of working people and a Chancellor saddling businesses with debt when they need to invest.

This address spoke of plans to increase infrastructure spending. Well, about time! Britain should be leading the world on investment, but after 11 years of Conservative Government we are 124th out of 186 countries when it comes to capital investment in our economy, and the scale of what was in this address will not turn that around. This Queen's Speech should also have provided a plan for better work. For too long, millions of people

across Britain have worked longer for lower pay, so where was the employment Bill that was promised in the last Queen's Speech and repeatedly promised by Ministers? Nowhere to be seen. What was needed was a game-changing employment Bill to end fire and rehire, to give proper rights to every worker from day one and to raise the living wage to at least £10 an hour and go further as quickly as possible. That measure alone would have boosted pay for 8.6 million workers. That is what a Labour Queen's Speech would have delivered, alongside a green stimulus to create 400,000 jobs and a jobs promise for all 16 to 24-year-olds.

This address should also have included a clear long-term recovery plan for our NHS, but with waiting lists at a record high of 4.7 million, what we have heard today will come nowhere near the scale of the change needed. And it is unforgivable that there is no clear plan to fix social care. I remind the House that it is now 657 days since the Prime Minister stood on the steps of Downing Street and said that

“we will fix the crisis in social care once and for all...with a clear plan we have prepared”.

Yet 657 days on from that promise, what did we hear in this address?

“Proposals on social care reform will be brought forward.”

No legislation, no new funding, no details, no timescale. Failure to act for a decade was bad enough, but failure to act after the pandemic is nothing short of an insult to the whole nation.

It is a similar story on skills and education. I care passionately about this. My dad was a toolmaker who worked on the factory floor all his life, and I know that it is only through world-class skills training, sustained investment and changing the way we think about vocational training that Britain can compete in the 2020s and 2030s. The Prime Minister's rhetoric on lifetime skills is all very well, but the reality is different. Over the last 10 years, funding on adult education has been slashed by a fifth, and the number of apprenticeships fell by 200,000 in the three years to 2020, so we will judge the Government on their record, not on the rhetoric that we hear today.

It is the same story on crime and policing. Since 2015, recorded violent crime has doubled and antisocial behaviour has gone up in every area of England and Wales, yet the Conservatives call themselves the party of law and order. Violent crime has doubled and antisocial behaviour is on the up in every area in England and Wales. They have been in government for 11 years. And our courts now have a record backlog, meaning victims waiting years to get justice. Yet the Queen's Speech will do nothing to address this. I know there is draft legislation now promised on a victims law, but the promise of a victims law has been in the last three Conservative manifestos. Six years ago, I introduced a private Member's Bill for a victims law, with legally enforceable rights. It had cross-party support. There is cross-party support now. So it is not a draft Bill we need—it is urgent legislation.

The address also promised much on housing, but for many home ownership is further out of reach than ever. Among the under-45s home ownership has fallen by 800,000 in the last decade—a decade of neglect. House building targets are almost never hit, and rough sleeping has more than doubled since 2010. I see nothing in

today's address that will buck that trend or even attempt to repair the damage of the last decade. If the Prime Minister wanted to act, there is one area where he is guaranteed cross-party support: the cladding scandal. The Grenfell tragedy was four years and three Queen's Speeches ago, yet thousands of people are still trapped in unsafe buildings, and hundreds of thousands of leaseholders are caught up in homes they cannot sell or afford. People are facing bankruptcy and great anxiety. If anybody needed any reminder of the danger of this, they should look no further than the fire in a block of flats in east London last week. There is no excuse for the Prime Minister's inaction on cladding; that should have been in this address.

At a time when the United Kingdom is divided and public trust in our democracy is shaken, this Queen's Speech was also an opportunity to rebuild the foundations of our democracy. Instead, what does it do? The electoral integrity Bill would make it harder for people to vote, it tramples on civil liberties and it discriminates. The Prime Minister must know that by introducing compulsory voter ID he will suppress turnout; it will disproportionately impact ethnic minorities and it will weaken our democracy. Labour will have no part in that. We also oppose plans in the judicial review Bill to weaken the power of our courts and curtail the right of judicial review. This Government simply fail to understand that our independent judiciary are a strength for our country, not a weakness.

And where is the legislation to fix the broken lobbying laws? The Prime Minister has chosen instead to put his faith in the Transparency of Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Act 2014—the Cameron Act. Where did that end? It ended with a Conservative Prime Minister being paid huge amounts of money by dodgy companies almost immediately after leaving office. Come to think of it, given the state of the Prime Minister's current finances, I can see why he is reluctant to change that bit of legislation.

There are parts of the Queen's Speech we will look to work with the Government on. Legislation to ban conversion therapy is long overdue. Conversion therapy is always wrong and indefensible, so we will look very carefully when legislation is brought forward, which must be done soon. We will also look carefully at the draft online safety Bill. That has been much delayed, and we need urgent and effective legislation. And we are always willing to work, on a cross-party basis, to end violence against women and girls. We will bring forward our own proposals on this in the coming days, but of course we will look at any legislation the Government bring forward in this area. Action on Russian and hostile state interference is also long overdue, and progress has been promised for nearly two years. So we will look closely at the promised counter-state threats Bill to see whether we can work constructively to bring about the change that is needed. But those are small glimmers in a Queen's Speech that shows that the Government still do not understand what went wrong in the past decade and have no plan for the next.

This is the time for a transformative agenda to rebuild Britain's foundations after a decade of neglect and a year of national sacrifice—to change the foundation of our economy, invest in the future, solve the social care crisis, clean up our politics and clean up the mess that this Government have created over a decade—but, once again, it is a chance that has been squandered.

3.25 pm

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): In a matter of five months this country has inoculated more than 35 million people—two thirds of the adult population—with the biggest and fastest programme of mass vaccination in British history, which has helped us to take step after decisive step on our road map to freedom. As life comes back to our great towns and cities, like some speeded-up Walt Disney film about the return of spring to the tundra, we can feel the pent-up energy of the UK economy—the suppressed fizz, like a pressurised keg of beer about to be cautiously broached in an indoor setting on Monday.

I know how hard pubs, restaurants and other businesses have worked to get ready and about everything they have been through, and I thank them, as I thank the whole British people. I can tell them that the Government have been using this time to work flat out to ensure that we can not just bounce back but bounce forward, because this Government will not settle for going back to the way things were. The people of this country have shown, by their amazing response to covid, that we can do better than that, and the people of this country deserve better than that.

The purpose of the Queen's Speech is to take this country forward with superb infrastructure—worth £640 billion, I can tell the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras (Keir Starmer)—and with a new focus on skills, technology and gigabit broadband. By fighting crime and being tough on crime, by investing in our great public services, above all our NHS, and by helping millions of people to realise the dream of home ownership, we intend to unite and level up across the whole of our United Kingdom, because we one nation Conservatives understand—

Christian Matheson (City of Chester) (Lab) *rose*—

Peter Kyle (Hove) (Lab) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: In a moment.

We understand this crucial point: we find flair, imagination, enthusiasm and genius distributed evenly throughout this country, while opportunity is not. We mean to change that, because it is not just a moral and social disgrace, but an economic mistake and a criminal waste of talent. Although we cannot for one moment minimise the damage that covid has done—the loss of learning, the NHS backlogs, the court delays and the massive fiscal consequences—we must use this opportunity to achieve a national recovery so that jabs, jabs, jabs becomes jobs, jobs, jobs. That is our plan. We will address the decades-old problems that have held us back, and transform the whole United Kingdom into a stronger, fairer, greener and healthier nation. That is the central aim of the Queen's Speech.

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I give way with pleasure to my colleague.

Felicity Buchan: Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Conservative party believes in opportunity and equality of opportunity, and that the legislative mandate we have set out today seeks to achieve that, particularly through the skills revolution, which will turbo-charge our economic recovery?

The Prime Minister: Yes, indeed. One man who I know believes passionately in opportunity and skills is my hon. Friend the Member for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara), who proposed so well the Loyal Address.

Christian Matheson *rose*—

Chris Bryant (Rhondda) (Lab) *rose*—

The Prime Minister: No, no, no.

My hon. Friend the Member for North West Cambridgeshire is a kindly man and a lawyer, but unlike some other lawyers in this House he is tough on crime. In fact, he is so tough that when three thugs were so rash as to attack him in Covent Garden, he transformed himself like Hong Kong Phooey and floored all three with moves that have earned him—I can tell the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras—not just a black belt but a Blue Peter badge.

Peter Kyle: Will the right hon. Gentleman give way?

The Prime Minister: No.

My hon. Friend has served in many distinguished political roles and can be proud of his campaigns on behalf of sufferers from breast cancer, on behalf of homeowners who surprise nocturnal intruders with cricket bats and, as he said, on behalf of the Cambridgeshire village of Stilton, where the eponymous cheese originated and where, he claimed, local cheesemakers were forbidden from calling the cheese of Stilton “Stilton cheese”—a bizarre prohibition that he blamed on Brussels. That is understandable, although I have yet to discover whether he was altogether right about that and whether he has actually solved the problem by getting Brexit done. I think you will agree, Mr Speaker, that he spoke with pungency and maturity—he spoke for Stilton—and he made a speech in the best traditions of this House.

He was ably seconded by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher), a palaeontologist, a biologist and—as the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras said—a former safari guide. She knows that in any pride of lions, it is the male who tends to occupy the position of titular, nominal authority, while the most dangerous beast, the prize hunter of the pack, is in fact the lioness. That is a point that I am sure the right hon. and learned Gentleman bears in mind as he contemplates his right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner), the deputy leader, shadow First Secretary of State, shadow Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and shadow Secretary of State for the Future of Work—though the more titles he feeds her, the hungrier, I fear, she is likely to become. Judging by her excellent speech, my hon. Friend has a long and successful career ahead of her as we work together to deliver for South Ribble, and for everywhere else in Lancashire and the whole United Kingdom.

However, as the right hon. and learned Gentleman said, we are all poorer for the absence of my right hon. Friend the Member for Chesham and Amersham. During her long career in the House, Dame Cheryl Gillan introduced what became the Autism Act, which helped many vulnerable people, and served as Secretary of State for Wales. She always stood up for her constituents, including by securing important concessions on HS2 on their behalf. Cheryl was both an effective and an extremely

popular Member of this House, and she was my Whip for many years. She was kindly, protective, and supernaturally well informed about my whereabouts. I am sure I speak for the whole House when I say that we will miss her deeply. [HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear.”]

I also know that Cheryl was a one nation believer in the Conservatives as the party of hope, change and opportunity, as my hon. Friend the Member for North West Cambridgeshire has just said. She therefore would have been as thrilled and proud as I am to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer) to her place and congratulate her on her victory, and to thank everyone who has placed their trust in this Government, many thousands of them for the first time in their and their family’s history. Across this country, Conservative councillors were elected in areas that my party has seldom had the honour of representing, alongside Conservative mayors, Conservative London Assembly members, Conservative police and crime commissioners—70% of whom are now Conservatives, reflecting the importance we place on fighting crime—and Conservative Members of the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Senedd.

Labour’s response to these events is best summed up by the outgoing Labour leader of Amber Valley Borough Council, who said these immortal words:

“The voters have let us down. I hope they don’t live to regret it.”

There you go, Mr Speaker: yet again, Labour’s bonkers solution in the face of any electoral setback is to wish they could dissolve the electorate and call for another one, while we get on with our work, taking forward our programme of change and regeneration filled with obligation towards those we serve, who have every right to hold us to account with the wisdom and common sense that the British people have always exemplified. We will get on with safeguarding the health of the nation, pressing on full tilt with our vaccination programme until the job is done and our people are as safe as science can make them. We will accelerate the recovery of our public services from the crisis of the past year, investing in our NHS and introducing vital reforms, making it easier for the different arms of the health and care system to work together to provide the best service by means of the health and care Bill. I can tell the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras and his colleagues that later this year, we will bring forward proposals on adult social care, so that every person receives the dignity and security they deserve in old age.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: I give way to the hon. Lady with pleasure.

Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab): A cross-party Select Committee report concluded that the Government should not be in the business of profiting from miners’ pensions, but £4.4 billion has been taken out of the mineworkers’ pension scheme. Given that the Prime Minister made a commitment on this issue during the general election, will he deliver on that promise now and implement the recommendations of the cross-party Select Committee report?

The Prime Minister: I am happy to study that report, but it is this party and this Government who stick up for people across all walks of life: they stick up for pensioners and they stick up for the low-paid. It was very interesting to hear the right hon. and learned Gentleman talk about the living wage, but who introduced the living wage? It was the Conservatives. Who raised it by record sums? It was this one-nation Conservative Government.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: No, no.

We will get on with our work. We will build on the expertise and originality of our scientists who have allowed Britain to contribute more to the global struggle against covid than any other comparable country, providing an object lesson in the value of British life sciences. We are determined to harness the concentration of knowledge and excellence in this country to secure Britain's place as a science superpower, so we will invest nearly £15 billion in research and development this year alone. The Queen's Speech includes a Bill to create an advanced research and invention agency charged with backing scientific discovery in new ways and ensuring that the breakthroughs of the future happen here in the UK, as they have so repeatedly done in the past. With those breakthroughs will come jobs, opportunities and new enterprises in fields that we can, at present, scarcely imagine. It is our levelling-up mission to spread those jobs across the UK.

Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): On behalf of bereaved families across the country, will the Prime Minister tell the House whether, during this Session of Parliament, he will set up the public inquiry into the Government's handling of covid that he promised me in this House last June?

The Prime Minister: I can certainly say that we will do that within this Session—yes, absolutely. I have made that clear before. It is essential that we have a full, proper public inquiry into the covid pandemic, and I have been clear about that with the House.

Chris Bryant: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, thank you.

We will establish a new UK infrastructure bank headquartered in Leeds, with £40 billion to invest as part of the greatest renewal of British national infrastructure since the Victorian age. We will ensure that the British people derive maximum benefit from the £300 billion of their money that the Government spend every year on public procurement by creating a wholly new system, consolidating 350 separate regulations into one regime, so that public investment can be even more effective as an instrument for levelling up the country.

We will use the sovereignty that we regain from the European Union to establish at least eight freeports, including in Teesside. Now that we are free of EU state aid rules, the Queen's Speech proposes a new national subsidy system—

Virginia Crosbie (Ynys Môn) (Con) *rose*—

Chris Bryant: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: I will give way in a minute to my hon. Friend the Member for Ynys Môn (Virginia Crosbie).

The Queen's Speech proposes a new national subsidy system, allowing the Government of the devolved Administrations to spur the creation of jobs and businesses.

Virginia Crosbie: My right hon. Friend is most gracious. Brexit has created huge opportunities in the form of freeports. Does he agree that freeports in places such as Anglesey will turbocharge the economy and give us thousands of jobs, investment and opportunity across the UK in places where it is desperately needed?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend is completely right. Anglesey could have no more powerful or effective champion than her not just on the matter of freeports, but on nuclear power as well, which she was probably also going to mention.

Chris Bryant: Will the Prime Minister give way?

The Prime Minister: No, I will not take an intervention from the hon. Gentleman just yet.

We will use the powers that we have recovered from the EU to strengthen our borders and reform the asylum system, cracking down on the criminal gangs that profit from trafficking in human beings, by ensuring that, for the first time, the fact of whether people have entered the UK legally or illegally will have an impact on their asylum claim. At the same time, we will uphold Britain's great tradition of providing a haven for those facing persecution and repression, opening our arms to our friends the British nationals in Hong Kong safe in the knowledge that our Government have recaptured overall power to control our borders.

As the compassionate one-nation Conservative Government, we know that crime falls disproportionately on the poorest and the most deprived parts of our country and our communities. That is why the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill in the Queen's Speech will end the outrageous injustice—the right hon. and learned Member for Holborn and St Pancras voted against this—of serious sexual and violent offenders being automatically released halfway through a standard sentence of between four and seven years. The Bill will support our police with new powers to deal with highly disruptive protests and—

Several hon. Members *rose*—

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Member for Hove (Peter Kyle) opposes that, he can let me know. Perhaps he would like to tell me.

Peter Kyle: Perhaps the Prime Minister can answer this. In the last three Tory manifestos and every humble Address since 2016, his Government have promised a victims Bill. It is in the Humble Address again, and we are grateful for that. Will he assure us that it will be delivered this year? It has not been published, and there are no details of what will be in it. We hear rumours that it will just put a code of conduct on to statute, but will he promise that he will take the Labour approach of going much further, empowering victims, giving rights to victims that are enforceable by law, and that there will be consequences for those in the criminal justice system who do not uphold them? Will he promise that?

The Prime Minister: We will not only stick up for victims for the first time, which Labour failed to do in all its years in office, just as it failed to do anything at all about social care—Labour Members berate the Government about social care, but they did nothing at all during 13 years in office. We will take the interests of victims to heart, and we will address that matter. I hope that the hon. Gentleman will also support our proposals to increase sentences for serious sexual and violent offenders, which he voted against. I hope that Labour will also support our proposal to double the maximum sentence for assaults on emergency workers.

We will work to improve our neighbourhoods by making them safer, and we will help people to achieve the dream of home ownership—not just with 95% mortgages, but by modernising the planning system, most of which remains unchanged since the 1940s. We will introduce a lifetime skills guarantee, as several of my colleagues have already pointed out, allowing anyone to train and retrain and acquire new expertise whenever they wish.

Christian Matheson *rose*—

The Prime Minister: If the hon. Gentleman wants to dispute the merits of that proposal, let him do so now.

Christian Matheson: I am grateful to the Prime Minister for giving way. He is lauding the merits of home ownership, but what is the point in it when some homeowners and leaseholders are trapped because the Government refuse to help them with any kind of fire safety measures for things were not their fault in the first place?

The Prime Minister: We have put £5 billion into supporting homeowners who face the problems of cladding in buildings over 18 metres, and we are supporting leaseholders at every level. This is a massive problem, which the Government are undertaking to deal with using all our resources. However, if the hon. Gentleman is now saying that the Labour party is in favour of home ownership, that it is the first time I have heard of it. Labour is resolutely opposed to measures that allow people to own their own homes, and they have been ever since I have been in politics. That is one of the crucial differences between them and us. I had hoped that the hon. Gentleman was going to support our measures to allow people to train and retrain and acquire new skills.

Everything we do will be done as one United Kingdom, combining the genius of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland—joined together by blood and family tradition and history in the most successful political, economic and social union the world has ever known. In all its centuries, the Union has seldom proved its worth more emphatically than during this pandemic, when the United Kingdom—the fifth-biggest economy in the world—had the power to invest over £407 billion to protect jobs and livelihoods and businesses everywhere in these islands, including one in three jobs in Scotland, safeguarded by the combined resources of Her Majesty's Treasury under my right hon. Friend the Chancellor.

Now, as we build back better, greener and fairer, we shall benefit as one United Kingdom from the free trade agreements that we have regained the power to sign, opening up new markets across the world. Only last week, I agreed an enhanced trade partnership with

the Prime Minister of India, covering a billion pounds of trade and investment and creating more than 6,500 jobs across the UK.

As one United Kingdom, we will be a force for good in the world, leading the campaigns at next month's G7 summit in Cornwall for global vaccination, education for girls and action on climate change. As one United Kingdom, we will host the UN climate change conference in Glasgow and help to rally ever more countries to follow our example and pledge to achieve net zero by 2050. As one United Kingdom, we will continue with ever-greater intensity to connect talent with opportunity, mobilising the ingenuity and resourcefulness of the British people to achieve their full potential at last. It is an enormous task, made more difficult by the pandemic and yet more urgent, but it is the right task for this country now. I know the country can achieve it, and this Queen's Speech provides us with the essential tools to do it. I commend the Queen's Speech to the House.

3.45 pm

Ian Blackford (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I thank Her Majesty for coming to the Houses of Parliament today to deliver the Queen's Speech. Our thoughts remain with her, given the sad passing of her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, some weeks ago. I also welcome the new hon. Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer) to her place.

It was a joy to hear the hon. Member for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara) proposing the motion. I have some friendship with him: he and I served together when he was the Pensions Minister six years ago and I was the SNP pensions spokesperson. I remember, at the first meeting that we had in his office, the look of horror on his face when we were met by Baroness Altmann. He said, "Good grief. Are the two of you friends?" And, of course, we were. I am delighted to say that we had a very warm and cordial relationship when he was the Minister, and we worked together over a number of matters. He delivered a typically erudite, humorous and passionate speech this afternoon, and I cannot help thinking that it was an application for a job in Government again, if the Prime Minister was listening to him.

I also thank the hon. Member for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher) for what was a tour de force and a ramble round the Tory Benches. I am sure that she, too, will have an outstanding career as a Member of Parliament on the Tory Benches.

This new Session of the Westminster Parliament comes at a time of huge challenge and crisis, but equally a time of fundamental choice for people right across these islands. The covid pandemic has seen our world rapidly change over the course of the past year. This year and into the future, people's clear desire and demand is that we change things profoundly and for the better. That is exactly why the electoral results of the past week represent such a historic and defining moment. Last Thursday, the people of Scotland turned out in record numbers—the highest turnout at a Scottish parliamentary election—to re-elect the SNP Government for a fourth consecutive term. They turned out to support the message of hope and change so brilliantly characterised by our First Minister. It was an election that broke nearly every record in the book, and the result will continue to reverberate.

That electoral earthquake opens the democratic path that will shape Scotland's future. Let us be clear: that future will be in Scotland's hands, and it will be the choice of the people and nobody else.

Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): The right hon. Gentleman mentions the record-breaking election, but he did not mention that it was the Scottish Conservatives' record-breaking election: there were more votes for the Scottish Conservatives than at any time in the history of devolution, making us the definite party of the main Opposition in Scotland. He talks about Scotland's choice, but four days before the election on Thursday, the First Minister of Scotland was on the BBC saying that it was not an election about independence. Barely hours after the polls closed, she was calling for another referendum. Why did she mislead the Scottish people four days before we went to the polls?

Ian Blackford: I have to say that I am disappointed in the hon. Gentleman. It is going to be important over the coming weeks and months that we can debate properly the choices for the future of Scotland. I make this offer to him: all of us who have Scotland's interests at heart should be able to debate rationally and honestly what those choices are. Let us respect the electorate in doing that.

Everybody knows that the Scottish National party is the party of independence, and everybody knows—without prevarication, without doubt—that the SNP stood on a very clear manifesto commitment of giving the people of Scotland the choice to have that debate and to have a say in their future. It was clearly contained in our manifesto. We said to the people of Scotland, “Put us back into government again and allow us to lead the country through the pandemic,” but the promise that we made to the people of Scotland was that if they voted for us in that election and delivered a majority for independence in that Parliament, nobody—not the Prime Minister and certainly not the hon. Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine (Andrew Bowie)—would stop them having their democratic choice.

The hon. Gentleman has to recognise what happened. Let us look at this in the context that Westminster looks at it—on the basis of the first-past-the-post system. Now, we do not support that system; we support proportional representation. But there are 73 first-past-the-post constituencies in the Scottish Parliament and the Scottish National party won 62 of them. We won 85% of the constituencies on 48% of the vote—the highest number of constituencies ever won by any party and the highest share of the vote ever won by any party. For the Conservatives to try to argue that black is white and they won the election, if we listen to the hon. Gentleman—frankly, nothing could be further from the truth. The truth is that the ambition of the Conservative party in Scotland is to be in opposition. The ambition of the Scottish National party is to govern and to take our people to independence.

Chris Bryant: If we are talking about victories, could the right hon. Gentleman add to his speech a little bit of a reference to Wales, in particular the 19% swing to Labour from Plaid Cymru in the Rhondda and the fact that Adam Price completely overplayed his hand? Nationalism is a false chimera—I suppose every chimera is false—and he should not put all his trust in one line.

Ian Blackford: I believe that the people in Wales should determine their own destiny, and of course I congratulate the Labour party in Wales on going back into government because that is the right thing to do.

We were told when we had the independence referendum in 2014 that we would be respected in this House and we were to lead the United Kingdom. I say to the Prime Minister and everybody else in this House that they cannot deny democracy; they cannot deny the right of the people of Scotland, who have voted in 72 Members of the Scottish Parliament who have a commitment of delivering an independence referendum. *[Interruption.]* I hear people saying “2014”, but the point is that we were told in 2014 that if we stayed in the United Kingdom our rights as EU citizens would be respected. We were told that Scotland was to be respected. And we know what happened.

In the Brexit referendum in 2016, Scotland voted by 62% to stay in the European Union and we were simply told by this House, “Well, tough; there is nothing that we are going to do for you. You're going to lose that access to the single market that you have craved. You're going to lose that right that you have had to work, live and get an education in Europe, because the Prime Minister and the Conservative Government are going to decide for the people of Scotland.” Well, the people of Scotland have given their verdict on that, because the message is very clear: there is a mandate for an independence referendum. Let me put this House on notice that it is the people of Scotland and our Parliament who will determine when that independence referendum will take place. *[Interruption.]* I hear the mocking that is going on.

Katherine Fletcher: You didn't win!

Ian Blackford: “We didn't win”—can you believe it? We have just taken two seats from the Conservatives in the election: Edinburgh Central and Ayr. I do not know what the hon. Member calls winning when, by the Westminster rules, we win 62 of the 73 seats, and by the warped logic of Conservative Back Benchers, we have not won. The hon. Member lives in a parallel universe if that is what she believes.

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): I am sure that the right hon. Gentleman will join me in wondering how the House will hold Welsh Labour to account, which has moved its manifesto so much that it can talk about parking its tanks on Plaid Cymru's lawn, but Plaid Cymru made that lawn.

Ian Blackford: I thank the right hon. Lady for that intervention. Hopefully the light that we have shone in Scotland gives an example to the people of Wales and Plaid Cymru that they should follow us and find their way back into Europe as an independent country.

Putting on the record the scale of the SNP victory and achievement and the verdict of the Scottish people is especially important given today's context, because today this Tory Government put forward their policy programme for the new Session. The Prime Minister gained the authority and the mandate to do so when his party was re-elected to office in 2019—re-elected, I might add, with a significantly smaller vote share than was achieved by the SNP in Scotland last week. In that election, the Prime Minister put forward a manifesto with the policies that he said he and his party would

[*Ian Blackford*]

implement. Those of us on the Opposition Benches have the right to oppose many of those policies, and we will do so and do so forcibly, but if the Prime Minister secures a majority in this House, that mandate from the manifesto will be legally implemented. It is a pretty fundamental principle and should be a simple concept—it is called parliamentary democracy.

Yet, a few short days after a landslide victory in Scotland, it is that very basic principle of democracy—that right of Governments to propose and implement their manifesto commitments—that this Tory Government are threatening to undermine. By doing so, they are threatening a new low level of hypocrisy and disrespect. The defeated Scottish Tory leader has said that the SNP seeking to implement a fundamental manifesto promise—a commitment to give our people a choice on their own future—should be treated as illegal. Before the results had even been completed, the Prime Minister himself told his favourite newspaper, *The Daily Telegraph*, that he would try to block a post-pandemic independence referendum.

On today of all days, I genuinely urge the Prime Minister and his Government to think again. He is looking away and looking disinterested, but this is important, because it is about democracy. It is about the rights of people. [*Interruption.*] People will be watching this, and they can hear Conservative MPs laughing about our desire to make sure that democracy is delivered. That is the contempt that I have talked about.

Let me say to the Prime Minister that any confrontation will not be with the SNP. If the Government seek to deny Scottish democracy, their confrontation will be with the people of Scotland. Secondly, the Prime Minister needs to reflect on this reality: a fight with democracy is a fight he will never, not ever win. I know that the Prime Minister does not want to hear this, but he might try to show some interest in what is going on, because what we are seeing is this Government's contempt for Scotland.

Today's Queen's Speech and this Tory policy programme emphasise another important point. Last week's elections brought into stark focus the chasm in the political choices being made in different parts of the United Kingdom. The differing values in leadership between the Prime Minister and our First Minister and the tale of two Governments in London and Edinburgh have crystallised the choice of two futures. Time and again, the majority of people in Scotland back a progressive, inclusive, outward-looking vision for the future of our nation. This has been our direction of travel since we gained some powers through devolution, yet in this Westminster Parliament we are facing many more years of right-wing, Brexit-obsessed Tory Governments we did not vote for taking us in a direction we have not chosen. That clear divergence in political direction is simply not sustainable: Scotland has chosen a different path.

As we look beyond the pandemic and build the recovery, our alternative to these Tory values and their vision is set out in our manifesto. Unlike this Tory Government, the SNP manifesto has the support of the Scottish people. The policy programme the SNP put before the people of Scotland will move our country forward, making it fairer, greener and more prosperous.

The First Minister is already back at work and getting on with the job. Our alternative to this Queen's Speech is already in action.

With health and social care services being won on the frontline of the pandemic, this new elected SNP Government will now deliver a 20% increase in frontline NHS spending, a total of £2.5 billion. While this Tory Government dither and delay on reforms to social care, the new SNP Government will move to establish a national care service, backed by a 25% increase in social care investment. While the Conservatives dither, the SNP Government in Edinburgh act. This will include significant investment in the staff themselves. The Tories continue to laugh while we talk about investment in the NHS. Unlike the insult of the 1% offered by the Tories, in Scotland NHS staff have been offered an average—an average, Prime Minister—of a 4% pay increase. The new national care service, backed by £800 million, will enable the Government to offer a national living wage to all care staff. It is little wonder that the Prime Minister hangs his head in shame, and so he should.

To invest in the next generation, the SNP Government will invest over £1 billion over the next Parliament to close the school attainment gap and to recruit 3,500 additional teachers and classroom assistants. [*Interruption.*] I do not think that if the hon. Member for West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine was back in school he would behave the way he is behaving in this House. He really ought to calm down.

This Tory Government have to be shamed by a professional footballer into providing free school meals. In contrast, the Scottish Government will get on with providing free school breakfasts and lunches to every primary school pupil year round and a device for every child in Scotland to get online. For families, the SNP Scottish Government will build a wraparound childcare system to help support working parents, with the least well-off families paying nothing. While this Tory Government threaten to rip away the lifeline of the £20-a-week uplift to universal credit, the new SNP Government will double the game-changing Scottish child payment over the lifetime of their Parliament. That is a Scottish Government delivering on the people's priorities.

The context of the covid crisis makes the choices made now all the more critical, because in seeking to build economic recovery in the aftermath of this pandemic, it is vital that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. But the Budget in March and this Queen's Speech are clearly laying the grounds for more Tory austerity and more Tory cuts. It is also important to point out that no party and no Government who forced through a job-destroying Brexit in the middle of a pandemic can credibly claim to be focused on recovery.

With the powers we have, the SNP Scottish Government are doing everything they can to mitigate this damage and seeking to protect our businesses. We believe a fair recovery should follow the example of the Biden Administration: it must be investment-led. At the centre of the SNP's recovery plans is an economic transformation that would have fair work and the climate emergency at its heart. This will include an investment of £500 million to support new jobs and to retrain people for the jobs of the future, as well as funding the young person's guarantee of a university, college, apprenticeship or training place or a job for every young person who wants it. The SNP

Government will also embark on a massive programme of capital investment. Over £33 billion will be invested over the next five years in our national infrastructure, directly supporting 45,000 jobs. An SNP Government will deliver a further 100,000 homes by 2032, with investment of £3.5 billion over this Parliament, which will support 14,000 jobs a year.

Ahead of the COP26 conference in Glasgow in November, enhancing and expanding our world-leading climate action policies will be a key priority. The SNP Government will deliver a green transport revolution by providing free bikes to all school-age children who cannot afford them, removing the majority of fossil-fuel buses from public transport, ramping up investment in active travel, and bringing ScotRail into public ownership with the aim of decarbonising the rail network by 2035. There is also a commitment to decarbonising the heating of 1 million homes by 2030.

This is the vision and these are the values that we will use to fuel the recovery with the limited powers of devolution we now hold. However, the covid crisis has laid bare the need to equip our Parliament with the full powers that are needed to drive our long-term recovery. If we are to fully build the kind of country we want to see, it is clearer than ever before that we need the full powers that we can only deliver with independence—powers to borrow and invest in our economy and in our people. Only then can we build the country that truly and fully reflects our choices, our values and our priorities: a country that lifts children out of poverty instead of wasting sums of money on yet more nuclear warheads; a country that gives our young people the ability to travel, instead of stopping their freedom of movement across the European continent; a country that welcomes the world instead of imposing a hostile immigration policy that damages our economy; and a country that respects and values refugees—refugees who were allowed to vote in our elections of last week—instead of proposing a law in this Queen’s Speech that will rip up the refugee convention.

Just as it is right to point out the opportunity before us, it is also right that we are honest about the risks to recovery if we remain trapped in a broken Westminster system—because hidden in this new legislative programme from the Tories lies a familiar threat. Just as the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 was a blatant assault on devolution, this Queen’s Speech doubles down on that agenda with further power grabs on state aid and other aspects of devolved spending and powers. Only yesterday there were more media reports of the UK Government seeking to spend money directly in devolved areas in a desperate attempt to shore up support for the Union. The Tory plan has now been obvious for some time: it is to hand this Prime Minister and his Government more powers to control our choices and dictate our future. It is one more powerful reason for Scotland to choose a very different future.

Post Brexit and post pandemic, Scotland now has the choice of two futures. We know the past Westminster has imposed and we now know the future that it will inflict. Westminster has chosen its future: a job-destroying Brexit, a return to austerity cuts, and more attacks on devolution. Today’s legislative agenda confirms and cements that choice. For Scotland, the choice over our own future is now ever clearer and ever closer. We have repeatedly said that our immediate priority is to steer

people safely through this pandemic and to kick-start the recovery. We remain true to that commitment. But when this crisis has passed, there is now a fresh democratic commitment to give the Scottish people the right to choose an independent future. The Prime Minister would do well to listen to the First Minister: an independence referendum is now a question of when and not if. On the SNP Benches, we relish the opportunity for debate and democratic decision that that now-inevitability awakes, and we look forward to Scotland rejoining the independent nations of the European Union.

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

4.8 pm

Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con): On Advent Sunday 1978, I asked Archbishop Óscar Romero what he thought about the prospect of being killed standing up for the victims of human rights atrocities. With a half-smile, he said: “We can agree that worse things have happened to better people than me.” His death date, 24 March, is now International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims.

I think today we ought to recognise the 10 people who were killed between 9 and 11 August 1971 at Ballymurphy. They were Father Hugh Mullan, Frank Quinn, Noel Phillips, Joseph Murphy, Joan Connolly, Daniel Teggart, Eddie Doherty, Joseph Corr, John Laverty and John McKerr. The inquest was held after the Attorney General in 2011 said that the fresh evidence justified it. The coroner’s inquest started about three years ago and has now reported, and I hope that at some stage this House will have the opportunity to consider what lessons can be learned and how to treat the various other inquiries going on regarding those who died at the hands of all sorts of people, whether authorities or the paramilitaries—the disloyalists or the IRA.

Turning to the right hon. Member for Ross, Skye and Lochaber (Ian Blackford), who spoke for the SNP, my job is to try to make him smile, but with him wearing a mask, I cannot be sure whether I will succeed. He has taken one of my lines by saying himself that the separation parties got 48% of the vote. Some 51% or 52% said that they wanted the Union to continue, and it is worth remembering that in the 2017 general election, the SNP got a smaller share of the vote in Scotland than the Conservatives got in the whole of the United Kingdom.

Ian Blackford *rose*—

Sir Peter Bottomley: I give way to the right hon. Gentleman. It is nice to see that the smile is there.

Ian Blackford: I am grateful. I am very fond of the Father of the House, as he well knows, but for the purposes of being accurate, the SNP achieved 48% under first past the post. In the list votes, independence-supporting parties actually had a very small majority.

Sir Peter Bottomley: It shows that we can go on having these exchanges. Sometimes I will speak before the right hon. Gentleman, sometimes afterwards. He has now done both, so I congratulate him on that.

[*Sir Peter Bottomley*]

I turn to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and congratulate him on the general success of the elections on Thursday. In trying to deliver the sorts of things that people want, we should recognise that there is good on all sides, and where the parties can overlap for progress it is best. If there is a contest of ideas, let the people decide.

In my constituency, the Labour party did better than some people expected. It is our job to try to find out what we can do to match it, although we took seats from other people, as well as Labour taking some seats from us. It is the kind of contest where if the Liberals are on the up in my area, Labour is down, and if Labour is on the up, the Liberals are down. Conservatives have control and responsibility for most of the decisions made for the quiet, undramatic provision of local services, which is what most of the local elections were about. They were not national elections. They were across the country, but they were about providing services to local people.

In this Queen's Speech, there are many points to welcome. If I may say to the Prime Minister, one thing is not in the Queen's Speech, and I am glad it is not there. When the Chancellor had to come to the House and announce he was cutting the official overseas aid budget, he said there would be legislation. I am glad that has changed. One of the points of leadership is being prepared to change one's mind.

Will my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister lead his Government in re-establishing that target of 0.7% on aid and getting there as soon as possible? We know that the coronavirus epidemic has hurt us. It has hurt other parts of the world and hit the poorer people much, much harder, and our job is to try to help them to raise their standards.

Turning to building safety, there was a major fire at the end of last week. Three storeys caught fire. The builders who two years ago should have taken the dangerous Grenfell-style cladding off the building—that work actually started two weeks ago—said that the affected cladding did not catch fire. I think that was by chance, not design. The only people who have got no absolute right to sue the builders, the regulators and the component suppliers are the residential leaseholders themselves.

The only people who are being asked to pay the extra £10 billion—that is on top of the £5 billion that the Government have rightly started as their contribution towards the costs—are the leaseholders. They are left carrying £10 billion, with no right to sue those who are responsible. Will the Prime Minister kindly have a summit on fire safety with the affected groups—the cladding groups, the National Leasehold Campaign, the Leasehold Knowledge Partnership and the officers of the all-party group on leasehold and commonhold reform—and then put to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, together with the Chancellor, this simple point: provide all the money that is needed, whether the building is above or below 18 metres, and then find out who can sue those who are actually responsible?

What the Government are doing with levy and taxes is one thing, but that £10 billion outstanding makes people's lives impossible. They have homes that are

not safe, that are not saleable, that cannot be funded and that they cannot afford. If we want to know the effectiveness of the waking watch, we should remember that for a fire in daylight it was not effective. The Government have to step in, although not necessarily to say that the taxpayer will pay the money in the end—it can come from those who were responsible. It is partly a public responsibility on regulation, but it is mostly the responsibility of those who designed, built and went on selling components that were known not to be safe, or were not known to be safe.

I say to media people, "Do appoint a housing editor," because when housing stories come up, it is too bad when each individual producer or reporter has to learn from scratch what is happening. This is as important an issue as health, so it needs an approach that is consistent, effective and fast, and that works.

I turn to some small issues. One is the VAT treatment of yachts that are being brought back to this country—it may be a small point, but I think that the Treasury or VAT people should look at it. If VAT is paid on a yacht that is then kept abroad for more than three years, it has to be paid again when the yacht is brought back. That will not produce any revenue, because no one will bring their boats back.

All our important nautical brokerage in this country depends on those yachts being here, so we should either bring in a marine passport or lower the rates that are above 5%. We should have talks with the Royal Yachting Association and get on with finding a solution, not just say, "It is the way the thing has to be." It is not the way the thing has to be; it is not right, and it will not work. I confess an interest, but my boat is an open canoe, not a boat that is affected by the 5% rate or the 20% suggestion.

I know that many hon. Members want to speak, but I turn briefly to the importance of the Government's approach to levelling up. More and more young families and households are coming to the south coast and living there as happily as those in more mature households, who may be of retirement age but are not inactive. All of them need the kinds of things that I think are now being provided with the support of all parties.

Education is now much better than it was. The prospects of people getting training and apprenticeships and moving on to further and higher education are good; I pay tribute to the Under-Secretary of State for Education, my hon. Friend the Member for Chichester (Gillian Keegan), who has been doing the media round today and putting forward the Government's approach.

Chris Bryant: Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Sir Peter Bottomley: Is this Wales again?

Chris Bryant: No; I am sure that the hon. Gentleman was not going to ban Wales from the conversation, but this is on levelling up. I will ask the question that I was going to try to ask the Prime Minister, which is about acquired brain injury.

Children in the poorest houses are four times more likely to suffer a traumatic brain injury before the age of five years. The significant effects that that will have for the rest of their lives—and the problems with concussion in sport, which leads to so many sportspeople in this country suffering early onset dementia—surely mean

that it is about time we had proper legislation to make sure that everybody gets a decent chance when they have had a brain injury.

Sir Peter Bottomley: I think that the House will approve that approach.

If I may, I will conclude with a sensitive issue; I say this having put it on record that in my extended family and connections, over 100 died in the holocaust. At some stage, a decision will be made by the Government on the inspector's recommendations—the inspector was not allowed to make a conclusion—on the proposed holocaust memorial and learning centre in Victoria Tower Gardens. The decision was supposed to be made by the Minister of State, because the Secretary of State is the applicant. I ask the Prime Minister to ask advice on whether the September 2015 specifications for the proposed memorial and learning centre are met in any way by the present proposal put forward by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government. They are not.

Secondly, will the Prime Minister ask for a briefing on the area of central London that was then thought to be acceptable, which ran from the west of Regent's Park across to Spitalfields and down to the Imperial War Museum? Will he then consider having a meeting with Baroness Deech, with the architect Barbara Weiss, and with the people who are proposing the present monument, which has a design very similar to one that was not accepted as the Canadian national memorial? Will they see whether it is possible to stop this system of trying to push something through when it is not justified; get a proper memorial and a proper learning centre, probably using the one at the Imperial War Museum; and make sure that we can be proud of what we do?

For the sake of those who died in the holocaust and in other genocides, I say in public to the Prime Minister what I have said to as many people as I can in private: what is being put forward now is the wrong proposal in the wrong place in the wrong style. I ask everyone to reconsider it, starting with the specifications made in September 2015.

4.19 pm

Meg Hillier (Hackney South and Shoreditch) (Lab/Co-op): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

Today we see a Queen's Speech full of headlines. This Government are good at painting headlines, yet those headlines are often lacking when it comes to detail. I spend my time—privileged as I am to be Chair of the Public Accounts Committee—doing the maths. We have levelling up, but does that mean levelling down for cities such as mine, here in London, and an attack on the poorest there? We have promises of high-quality education in the Gracious Speech, while teachers are being laid off and children who are in touch with social services are more in need than ever before. Both those budgets are stretched to squeaking point.

We have a promise of more homes, but every housing programme that the Public Accounts Committee has looked at over the past six years or more has shown a lack of delivery, and a failure of that promise. The Gracious Speech mentions finances being returned to a sustainable path, but there is a sting in the tail because

until we see the detail of how that will be paid for, none of the other promises can be guaranteed. I do the maths, and I will continue to do them. I will support bits of the Gracious Address. I will support any policy that benefits my constituents, but I will watch like a hawk the detail, the money and the delivery, because the delivery is what matters.

On fire safety, we need the new building safety regulator, and I welcome the fact that that is in the Gracious Address. However, as the Public Accounts Committee has highlighted, along with our sister Committee, the Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, we need skilled people to do the safety work. We are already four years on from the tragedy of Grenfell, yet there are not enough people to do the work, assess the need, and carry out remediation. The cost to leaseholders is extraordinary. It is damaging their futures, it is putting their lives on hold, and I concur completely with the hon. Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley): we must tackle this issue now. The Government need to step up, be more imaginative, and ensure that those homeowners who have sunk their life savings into their future and their homes are rescued. This is a generational failure in fire safety and regulation, and it must be tackled. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman and I are the beginnings of a campaign on that issue, so the Prime Minister had better watch out.

So we need more homes. Again, that is something I want to support, but will they be affordable? Rights for renters—yes, but that can come with a sting in the tail if not done well. It must be properly done. On homes and homelessness, in the past week alone I have been on the doorsteps of two women whose story I should tell. One is a victim of domestic violence, with the glass on her front door still broken. She is living in a one-bedroom flat, with her 13-year-old son still having to share her bed. Another woman, who I have met before said, "Now you are on my doorstep, see my big boys." Her teenage sons came to the door. She lives in a one-bedroom flat with her two teenage sons and her husband. That is not unusual in my constituency.

It is a living tragedy that people go through their whole childhood and adolescence, and into adulthood, sometimes sharing a bed with a parent, and certainly living in severely overcrowded conditions. At any one time, we have more than 3,000 people in temporary accommodation—a number that has grown exponentially. The promise of new housing rings hollow to those people, and the Prime Minister needs to look at the reality of people's lives, not just in some parts of the country but particularly in its expensive parts, such as the city where he was Mayor and where he believed that "affordable" housing was 80% of private rents—80% of £1,500 or more a month for a one-bedroom flat.

In my borough, a typical new two-bedroom property comes in at £750,000. If we take a generous view of house prices, the average house price is 17 times the average local salary. We must bear in mind that in my constituency there are some generous local salaries in the mix; the City workers will make that figure lower. The poorest—people in a good retail job or working as a nurse in a hospital—just cannot afford a new home. So renting is out of reach for many people; they need that good-quality, properly affordable housing in order to keep our city going. If levelling up means anything, it does not mean levelling down or keeping people in my

[Meg Hillier]

constituency and in London squeezed into inappropriate and overcrowded accommodation, in order to build nice, identikit, three-bedroom houses with gardens elsewhere. Of course, I want everybody to have opportunity, but not at the expense of those in London.

I welcome some of the changes on leasehold reform. I declare an interest, in that I am a leaseholder and I live in a property with dangerous cladding—happily, my developer is removing it and paying for the whole thing, so I am one of the lucky ones. I welcome the ground rents reform, which is long overdue, but where is the wider leasehold reform? We need to see that. It is not mentioned in the Queen's Speech, and I hope that is just because it is not in enough detail. I think I have made my point on unsafe cladding.

One of the great hopes, and a cross-party one, was that we would finally see some movement on social care, which we have been discussing for 30 years and more—we have seen multiple reports of that. Again, we see the headlines from the Government—the promise of something, at some time. It was a promise made in 2015 by a Conservative Prime Minister. It was a promise made by this Prime Minister in 2017, yet four years on and ticking, there is nothing to be seen. It is crucial that we start this now and that we reach across the Aisle and find cross-party consensus to tackle this, especially because of the shameful approach to social care and care homes in the pandemic, whereby people were exported from hospital with covid, spreading it rapidly through care homes. As the Public Accounts Committee said, they were thrown to the dogs. Let us also not forget domiciliary care; more of us will have care in the home than institutional care, and we need to make sure that is wrapped up in the mix as well. The PAC has a list of asks on this issue, which I commend to the Prime Minister.

I want to touch briefly on identity checking for elections. I was the passport and identity card Minister in the last Labour Government. We concluded then—and the Act of Parliament that set up the ID cards was very clear—that having an ID card would never be required to access a public service. Yet we see this Government proposing what seems to be a plethora of alternative paperwork that is costly and out of reach for, as I recall, about 10% of the population: passports, which are more than £90 each; and driving licences, which people cannot have unless they can learn to drive and have a car, or have the money to do that. They will need those in order to vote—to access a public service.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): On that subject, we have had the rules in place for some time; we have had ID cards, which the Northern Ireland Assembly brought in, with a small charge of £2 to £3. So there are ways of doing this that are suitable for people's pockets. It has worked in Northern Ireland, and we should take that as an example.

Meg Hillier: The hon. Gentleman and I could have a completely separate conversation about ID cards, but I absolutely agree with what he says; I used to use that as an example of how it can be done affordably and well. But we have a disconnect in government on this issue. We have discussions about vaccine passports and talk about ID, but not ID cards. We have talk about vaccine

passports by an app, but without ID. If vaccine passports are ever going to work, we need some form of verifying ID card. So it seems to me that the Government are arguing, counter to their 2010 position, for abolishing not just ID cards but fingerprints in passports, which took us way below the international standards on identity verification. We need to see a proper, coherent approach to this, not an approach that just stops the poorest from voting and cuts people out of exercising their basic democratic right, when the percentage of in-person fraud is minuscule. Yes, we could do more to tackle postal fraud and the harvesting of votes, but not this.

I want to touch on some of the environmental issues that are touched on in the Bill, although we do not yet know the detail. I am pleased that the Environment Bill is being carried over, but let us hope that we see more detail and more meaningful steps towards action on this issue. The Public Accounts Committee has spent some time over the last year looking at environmental and climate change issues, and we have found the Government wanting. They have been promising the Earth with big broad-brush headlines, but potentially really damaging the Earth through their inaction. There is no planet B, so we have to get it right now. Ambitious projects such as stopping production of petrol and diesel cars within nine years make great headlines, but there is a lot to be done in the nine years between now and then, and very little detail. So it is vital that that is got right, and I think that there is, or should be, cross-party consensus across the aisle that we need to tackle this generational issue for our planet.

On green jobs, again the Government make promises, but I have been looking at this for at least a decade. With COP26 on the way, we can expect a flurry of stage-managed headlines, but the detailed plans to achieve all these things are not there. Over the last decade or so, we have seen the privatisation of the UK Green Investment Bank, and even the removal of its absolute requirement to deliver green investment; we have seen the failed green deal, which cost over £100,000 per loan; and we have seen a fourth contest launch for carbon capture and storage, which would help to tackle some of our energy intensive industries. The first three fell at the first hurdle.

I want to touch on immigration. I proudly represent a constituency that is the world in one borough. We hear tough talk from the Home Secretary on this, and then we hear talk about how she is going to support the Windrush victims. We should be proud of our record of accepting people from the old empire, from the Commonwealth and from across the world when they are fleeing persecution to come to this country. We need to continue to support those people to find sanctuary where they are fleeing challenge, but we also need to better support those who are legally here but are unable to fully participate as citizens because of the barriers that are put up.

The cost and complications of our immigration system have gone through the roof. When I was elected 16 years ago, people had to apply for indefinite leave to remain. They then got five years and they could then apply for citizenship. It then went down to three years, so they had to apply twice to reach their five years for citizenship. They now have to apply three times, each time paying a fee. The Prime Minister talks about making Britain great again and about Britain having a big place in the world,

so why is it that when someone comes from outside Britain to contribute to our country, we put these barriers in their way and make life difficult for them and, worse still, for their children?

I am proud to be working with We Belong and with my constituent, Chrisann Jarrett. This organisation represents young people who arrived in this country as toddlers or young children and who have now found that, because they are unable to pay these fees and their citizenship fee, they are excluded from university and often from the workplace. They are legitimately here in most cases, but they are being priced out. That is a crying shame and a stain on our country.

This Queen's Speech has bits in it that I want to support, but I want to see the detail and I want to see delivery. I want to see movement on social care, on housing and on green jobs, of course, but on the basis of the last 11 years, we have seen failure after failure, promises made and not delivered and—crucially, from a public accounts point of view—lessons not learned and mistakes repeatedly made. Cheap headlines over substance just let people down. I will back what is good for my constituents, but on the basis of this Government's record, and despite the Prime Minister talking about hope, change and opportunity, I am not very hopeful.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): Before I call the next speaker, can I just ask for some self-discipline on the length of contributions, because I would like to get through the debate without putting a time limit on contributions later on?

4.33 pm

Mrs Theresa May (Maidenhead) (Con): I applaud and welcome the aim of measures in the Queen's Speech to deliver not just a national recovery from the pandemic but a recovery that makes the United Kingdom stronger, healthier and more prosperous than before—a country that truly works for everyone. As ever, the Queen's Speech contains a number of commitments to legislation and other measures. I welcome the commitment to measures to improve mental health, but I note that yet again we do not have a specific reference to a new mental health Bill. I hope the Government have made it clear that they intend to bring a new Bill forward. I hope that that intent is still there and that we have not seen the timetable slipping further away from us because this is an important Bill for the Government to bring forward.

I welcome the commitment to legislate to deliver the lifetime skills guarantee. That delivers on the recommendations of the Augar report. Once again, I thank Sir Philip Augar and all his team for the work they did in that area. The issue of providing opportunities, as my hon. Friend the Member for Kensington (Felicity Buchan) indicated earlier, lies at the heart of what we believe in as Conservatives: the concept of everybody having the opportunity of an education throughout their life and developing their skills, and a Government who create the environment in which jobs are created. That is core conservatism. We believe that people should be given the opportunity to go as far in their life as their talents and hard work will take them.

I welcome the reference to the UK leading the way on ensuring internet safety for all, especially children. Again, I note there is no specific reference to the online harms

Bill, but I hope we will not see further delay on that Bill because, by bringing that legislation forward, the United Kingdom can truly show its leadership on this issue.

I welcome what I believe lies behind the references to legislation on elections: the abolition of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011. It had its moment in 2010. It was necessary to calm markets and provide a degree of certainty, but as I found with my dealings with the Act it is perhaps now best consigned to the wastepaper bin.

Overseas aid was mentioned earlier by the Father of the House. The Queen's Speech refers to a Government commitment

“to provide aid where it has the greatest impact on reducing poverty and alleviating human suffering.”

The aid budget would have been cut significantly anyway because of the fall in our GNI, but it is the Government's intention to cut it further, from 0.7% to 0.5%. This will have an impact across the board, but particularly in an area that I am interested in: modern slavery. I know that the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery is already concerned that its funding from the Government has been cut by 80%. So projects helping to alleviate and to deal with modern slavery will be cut. I urge the Government to look again at this reduction because it is having an impact on the poorest and on suffering across the world. If we really want to show our values as a country, we should be doing everything we can to uphold those commitments.

I am pleased with the reference in the Queen's Speech to “invest in new green industries to create jobs, while protecting the environment.”

That shows what we as Conservatives know: the old argument that we can either deal with climate change and protect the environment, or have economic growth, is completely false. As this country has shown in recent years, we can have economic growth, and deal with our emissions and protect our environment. That is what we will be doing in the future.

I want, very briefly, to refer to three other issues. The Gracious Speech contains a commitment, referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher) in her excellent seconding of the motion, to bring forward laws to modernise the planning system. May I just say that we saw some of the best of the House of Commons today in the proposer, my hon. Friend the Member for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara), and the seconder of the motion? On modernising the planning system to enable more homes to be built, of course we need to build more homes, but if the laws are based on the proposals in the White Paper, I fear this is less about modernisation than about giving developers greater freedom. Underpinning the proposals seems to be the concept that the reason more homes are not being built is the planning system. In fact, the last figure I saw from the Local Government Association showed that 1 million homes have been given planning permission but have yet to be built, so the issue is not just about the planning system.

A key issue in the White Paper proposals was the division of the area of a local authority into three different areas—we read that this may now be two: of growth and protection. In the growth area, outline planning permission was automatically to be given to developers. I have discovered that I have a slight difference of opinion with my hon. Friend the Member for South

[Mrs Theresa May]

Ribble on this issue. Maybe we need to go for one of those drinks she was talking about. [Interruption.] Two drinks! You're buying me two drinks.

Katherine Fletcher *indicated assent.*

Mrs May: I think my hon. Friend felt that the proposal would bring greater local involvement. In fact, the White Paper proposals would bring less local involvement. They would reduce local democracy, remove the opportunity for local people to comment on specific developments, and remove the ability of local authorities to set development policies locally. I think the White Paper proposals would also lead to fewer affordable homes, because they hand developers a get-out clause.

We need more homes to be built. We need the right homes to be built in the right places. I fear that, unless the Government look again at the White Paper proposals, what we will see is not more homes, but, potentially, the wrong homes being built in the wrong places.

Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD): The right hon. Lady is absolutely right. Does she agree that this will particularly impact on the delivery of green homes and getting to net zero?

Mrs May: I am grateful to the hon. Member for her intervention, but I remind her of the commitment that the Government have already shown to the issue of green homes for the future in their proposals. There are issues that have yet to be looked at, such as retrofitting in relation to heating systems, but the Government are already starting to show the way forward on this. However, it is important, in looking at the planning system proposals, that those issues are also taken into account.

The Gracious Speech commits the Government to bringing forward proposals on social care reform. This commitment has been made by Governments of all colours over the last two decades, and it is a bit rich for the Leader of the Opposition and other Labour Members to complain about the Government on this issue, given that they were 13 years in government and had, I think, six or seven different proposals, but never actually delivered anything on this. I know it is not an easy issue. I put forward a plan. It was comprehensively rejected, so I recognise the difficulty in trying to come forward with something here, but it is an issue that we need to grasp. The pandemic, and the issues around social care that came up in the pandemic, have shown the importance of this and of reform that genuinely provides a sustainable social care system into the future. However, it also needs to be a system that does not exacerbate intergenerational divisions.

Chris Bryant: I completely agree with what the right hon. Lady is saying on this. I just wonder whether we do not actually need to look at the issues that lead to dementia, making sure that there is more research, in particular, on acquired brain injury and concussion in sport, which does seem to have had a dramatic effect on the number of people who are now suffering from dementia, and whether that needs to feed into the process of looking at the issue of social care.

Mrs May: The hon. Gentleman has been very adept in bringing into this debate an issue—acquired brain injury—on which he has been a doughty campaigner. I fully agree that the question of some of the issues around acquired brain injury—he mentioned brain injury in sport, which has particularly been raised in relation to rugby union recently—is an important one that needs to be considered.

Alongside the issue of social care, there is legislation on the NHS. One important issue will be the future of integrated care systems, and this feeds into the question of social care. The White Paper suggested that the Government were going to take a bureaucratic approach of requiring the boundaries of integrated care systems to mirror local authority boundaries. Currently, that would mean breaking up one of the most effective and high-performing ICS groupings—Frimley ICS—and doing that would adversely affect my constituents and others in east Berkshire or elsewhere, so I urge the Government, in looking at these issues, to allow for networks that make practical sense in delivering for people, rather than being hidebound by existing lines on a map. Groups that grow organically and work are surely of greater benefit than groups that happen to fit some bureaucratic idea of neatness.

Finally, I want to touch on—I recognise that today, particularly, this is a difficult issue—the references in the Gracious Speech to the Government's intent to bring forward measures to deal with legacy in Northern Ireland. Today, we have heard—as the Father of the House, my hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West (Sir Peter Bottomley) said—that the coroner's verdict in the Ballymurphy inquest is that the 10 individuals concerned were all innocent victims, so this is a particularly difficult time to be looking at the issue of legacy in Northern Ireland. I grew up watching TV news reports of the troubles in Northern Ireland. Too many people died, the majority at the hands of terrorists. Too many were injured, too many lives were shattered, too many people lived in fear, too many families live wondering what has happened to their loved ones, and too many were left longing for justice. Today, as I say, the families of the 10 who were considered in the Ballymurphy inquest have learned what happened to their loved ones—that they were innocent victims.

The arguments in this place on the question of legacy in Northern Ireland have generally focused on the passionate arguments put by some of my right hon. and hon. Friends about the issue of veterans being prosecuted and brought to court years after the event. Of course we stand up for our armed forces, but as a country we live by certain standards and values, and by the rule of law. We should not wilfully ignore the breaking of the rule of law, including by members of the armed forces.

The argument for the protection of veterans has consistently failed to understand one basic point: we cannot legislate simply to protect British soldiers from prosecution; any legislation to protect British soldiers will cover terrorists as well. It is a very simple fact, but it seems impossible for many people to accept. Once we recognise the position, the options become clearer: either we continue to investigate, leading to prosecutions for everyone, including veterans, or we draw some sort of line.

I want to see Northern Ireland moving on, and I think that Northern Ireland will truly have a bright future only when it is able to look forward and not over its shoulder at the past. That is easy for me to say because I did not live there through the troubles—as I said, I just saw them on a television screen on the night, often night after night—and the reaction from politicians in Northern Ireland and the Irish Government to the proposals the Government have put forward have so far been negative. I simply say that our overwhelming interest, throughout this House, should be in a bright future for Northern Ireland. There comes a point at which we have to say, “Can we find a way to draw that line, to turn and look forward and to work together for a better future for all?”

4.46 pm

Ed Davey (Kingston and Surbiton) (LD): The Queen’s Speech comes at a time like no other—after a year in which so many families have suffered the tragic loss of a loved one, when we have all experienced isolation from friends and family, and when so many have lost businesses, jobs and hard-earned savings. That is why we are all so grateful to the scientists, NHS staff, care workers and community volunteers who have delivered the vaccine roll-out and given us all hope. We owe them an enormous debt of gratitude.

Before I move on to the Gracious Speech, let me join in the tributes to the people this Parliament has lost in the past year. I shall focus on two remarkable women. The first is our friend Dame Cheryl Gillan, who sadly passed away last month. She was a truly dedicated public servant, warm, friendly, and liked and respected in all parts of the House. My thoughts are with her family and friends at this sad time.

The second is Shirley—Shirley Williams. The Liberal Democrat family are not alone in mourning the loss of Shirley. Shirley was a giant of British politics for over half a century. She combined a remarkable intellect and a wholehearted compassion with fierce determination like no one else I have known. Shirley was at once a wonderful human being and an unstoppable force of nature. We already miss her wise counsel, forceful arguments and boundless energy.

I pay tribute to the hon. Members for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara) and for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher). The proposer’s speech was mostly excellent, although I was slightly disappointed by two omissions. First, the hon. Gentleman omitted to tell the House how the Liberal Democrats have removed the Conservatives from power in his county of Cambridgeshire. Secondly, he was a distinguished Northern Ireland Minister, resigning on principle against the withdrawal agreement negotiated by the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). He argued—I quote his resignation letter—that her withdrawal agreement would mean Northern Ireland being

“subject to a different relationship with the EU from the rest of the UK”.

I was hoping to hear an analysis of how the EU trade deal and the Brexit deal was impacting Northern Ireland, because he voted for that despite the fact that its impact on Northern Ireland is worse than that of the withdrawal agreement.

The speech by the hon. Member for South Ribble was entertaining, but, given her stated passion for a beer, I wish she had told us more about her time as

a biology student at the University of Nottingham—my hometown, where there is a great night-time economy, which I am sure she enjoyed. Wikipedia tells us that during her student days she worked as a nursing assistant in an elderly care home, so I hope we can look forward to her support as Liberal Democrats press the Government to deliver on their promises on long-delayed social care reform.

The Government’s programme needed to heal the nation, learn the lessons from the pandemic and prepare our country for the enormous economic, social and environmental challenges ahead. I regret to say that, with this programme, the Conservative Government have failed on every single account. To heal the nation, we first needed to look after people who have been bereaved, especially children. I have been campaigning for a better deal for bereaved families for many years, drawing on my own experience of losing my father at the age of four, when my mother was widowed in her 30s with three boys under 10.

With this pandemic, the need to help bereaved children in our country has never been greater, especially those whose mums and dads were unmarried and who currently get no help at all after losing a parent. The Childhood Bereavement Network estimates that about 3,000 children have lost an unmarried mum or dad during covid. A caring Government would give them support now, yet I have to tell the House that this Government are dragging their feet on even basic help for such children who have lost their mums and dads. They have even fought two court cases to prevent bereavement support from going to families, just because their parents were unmarried—as if the parents’ marital status was the fault of the grieving children. Fortunately the Government lost twice in the courts, thanks to the Human Rights Act—the Act that they ominously want to undermine with their threat in the Queen’s Speech to judicial review.

Even though the Government lost in the courts, Ministers have still tried to escape the rule of law, dragging their feet on obeying the court ruling, so that many children who lost their mum or dad to covid have gone without. That is a scandal. I have raised it with the Prime Minister himself time and again, most recently in a face-to-face meeting last month. He promised me action, but there is nothing in the Queen’s Speech for bereaved families or children. So, I am working on a cross-party basis to amend the Queen’s Speech so that the Prime Minister is forced to obey the rule of law—forced by the courts and this House to help children whose mum or dad has died during covid.

Liberal Democrats want us to emerge from covid as a more caring country. The Liberal Democrat vision of a fairer, greener, more caring country is the programme that our country needs now. Fairer, with an economic recovery that leaves no one behind. Backing small businesses to create jobs of the future, so that people have genuine opportunities, wherever they live. Supporting the self-employed, instead of cruelly excluding 3 million people from Government help during the pandemic. Greener, with investment in secure, well-paid green jobs of the future in every part of the UK, and a climate change action programme far more ambitious than the rhetoric of a Prime Minister who once wrote that a wind turbine “couldn’t pull the skin off a rice pudding”.

The Prime Minister was opposing renewable power when Liberal Democrat Ministers were fighting his Conservative colleagues, and winning, to make Britain the world leader in offshore wind power.

Wera Hobhouse: The Government are good on promises but very poor on delivery. Does my right hon. Friend agree that we need very tough, short-term targets and an independent body that has the power and resources to hold the Government to account over their climate actions?

Ed Davey: I could not agree more. Having overseen the carbon budgets as Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change, and having had to work with some colleagues on the Benches opposite, I know we have to hold them to account, as they will wriggle out of the law.

Liberal Democrats are proud to have the best record on climate change action of any party in this country, and we will keep campaigning for more action on climate.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Does the right hon. Gentleman recall that it was his party that authorised the changing of Drax B power station to wood pellets, which are now harvested from virgin forests in America and brought across to the United Kingdom, and now require a subsidy of £1 billion a year? Is that the kind of green energy that he talks about?

Ed Davey: I am happy to reassure the right hon. Gentleman that by getting rid of coal in this country, the UK is leading the way. We did that through a whole range of measures—whether it is the things he talks about at Drax, or making our country the world leader in offshore wind, nearly quadrupling Britain’s renewable power.

We want a more caring country, too—yes, for the bereaved families and children I have talked about, but also by strengthening our NHS, reforming social care and properly supporting Britain’s 11 million unpaid carers looking after loved ones at home. As such, I am genuinely saddened to see that the Government’s agenda bears little resemblance to such challenges, or to the concerns of people up and down the country. Alarming, this Queen’s Speech will instead erode individual freedom, snatch powers away from local people and undermine our very democracy.

Take the planning reforms mentioned by the former Prime Minister, the right hon. Member for Maidenhead—I agreed with her points about those. The Conservative Government’s proposals for new planning laws will ride roughshod over the views of local people and create a developer-led free-for-all. As millions of pounds of campaign donations from property developers pour into Conservative party coffers, local communities will be silenced. That is not democratic, and it is not right. There is a much better way to get the homes we need. The local neighbourhood planning reforms that Liberal Democrats champion would produce a community-led planning system, not a developer-led one; where it has been tried, it has been hugely successful. Neighbourhood plans put the houses where communities want them, with the facilities and infrastructure that those communities need. Those undemocratic planning reforms are, I am afraid, just another example of this authoritarian Government. Their plans to crack down on protests, restrict judicial review and undermine the Human Rights Act are about taking power away from individuals, undermining the rule of law and silencing any opposition to this Government.

Then there is the plan to force people to show identity papers just in order to vote—a plan ripped straight from the Donald Trump playbook—despite, or maybe because of, the clear evidence that it will disproportionately impact ethnic minorities, older people and those on lower incomes, who are just trying to vote. Coming hot on the heels of the Government’s unworkable, expensive and divisive plans for covid ID cards, people can now see that this is an illiberal Government—cracking down on protests because they make the Government’s life uncomfortable, weakening the courts because they sometimes rule against Ministers, and making it harder for people to vote because they do not always vote for them. These are the actions of despots, not democrats. Liberal Democrats will fiercely oppose these plans, defend British democratic traditions and defend individual freedom and the individual’s ability to challenge Ministers and participate fully in our democracy.

The service of those working in the NHS during the pandemic moved the nation to stand on our doorsteps, week after week, to applaud them. However, the Government’s failure to fund our NHS before the pandemic was thrown into the sharpest relief imaginable, as our nurses and doctors had to struggle so hard at the beginning of the pandemic. It is scary to think what would have happened without the tireless sacrifices of our NHS and care staff under unbelievable pressures. So it is simply unacceptable that the warm words and applause of Ministers for NHS workers are not being followed up with a fair pay deal. With the vacancies and shortages of NHS and care staff made worse by Brexit and by the pandemic, to deny NHS staff a better pay deal is bad for patients. Only today we have seen the latest warning from the Royal College of Anaesthetists, showing that nine out of 10 hospitals have at least one vacancy for an anaesthetist, with the Royal College warning of a “workforce disaster” threatening millions of operations. This Government’s support for the NHS disappears when it comes to paying NHS workers properly.

Then we come to social care. There is nothing of substance in the Queen’s Speech to address the huge and growing crisis in social care. This pandemic has reminded everyone that caring for people’s health does not stop at the hospital exit or the GP’s surgery door. We can improve the NHS only if we fix social care too. If we care about the NHS, we must care about care, and yet the Government say in the Queen’s Speech:

“Proposals on social care reform will be brought forward”—

no detail, no timetable. The Prime Minister’s last Queen’s speech said that

“Ministers will seek cross-party consensus on proposals for long-term reform of social care.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 19 December 2019; Vol. 801, c. 7.]

Well, I have written to the Prime Minister three times in an attempt to build that cross-party consensus, and I am still waiting for a reply. The Queen’s Speech before that one said:

“My Government will bring forward proposals to reform adult social care in England to ensure dignity in old age.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 14 October 2019; Vol. 800, c. 2.]

There is nothing but promises, promises, and delay and delay. Meanwhile, people go without care.

The Conservatives’ failure to implement the social care reforms that Liberal Democrat Ministers passed into law based on the Dilnot commission has meant more than 1 million people missing out on care. The

uncaring party opposite should be ashamed: instead of action, which we put forward, we see council budgets in crisis, care services stretched to breaking point, and more than 11 million unpaid carers left to shoulder the burden. This pandemic has shown that we are a nation of carers. There are millions of carers looking after their loved ones at home facing big challenges every single day—challenges made harder by covid. These family carers deserve our support, but they are being forgotten and ignored by this Government, as shown by the fact that they were not mentioned even once in the Queen's Speech. Let me help. The Government can begin to correct that by including unpaid carers explicitly in the forthcoming health and care Bill, with a duty on the NHS to identify and support them. I urge Ministers not to miss that opportunity.

Another reason why I find this programme for government so dreadfully disappointing is that it further entrenches the Government's isolationist tendencies. It is not just the recovery-threatening EU trade deal that is bad for Britain and bad for business, but the shockingly poor diplomacy ahead of hosting COP26—the crucial international climate change talks. Having led the UK delegation at three UN climate change talks and helped the UK and the EU to create their position ahead of the most successful climate change talks ever, in Paris in 2015, I am deeply alarmed by what I see and hear about the preparations for Glasgow.

Let me give some examples. Diplomatic relations with the EU ahead of COP26: throw some insults, send a warship. Relations with the US now that, thankfully, we now have a President who gets climate change: reduce the size of our Army and ignore President Biden's warning over Northern Ireland. Relations with the developing world: slash our aid budget in the middle of a global pandemic. To cut foreign aid—to hurt the world's poorest—is disgraceful in and of itself, but it is shocking during a pandemic. To undermine Britain's global leadership just when the world's future depends on it the most is nothing short of a catastrophe.

Then we have the disgraceful proposal in the new sovereign borders Bill to make it even harder for the world's most vulnerable people—people in unimaginable hardship who are fleeing their home because of war or persecution—to find sanctuary in the United Kingdom, against all British tradition. The idea that this Government think it is a priority to make it even harder for people to claim asylum is sickeningly cruel and uncaring.

The Liberal Democrats want a plan for recovery that is fair, green and more caring, with no one left behind. Anyone who has seen their business fail or who has lost their job must be supported to get back on their feet. Any young person who has been robbed of months of their education must be supported with educational and emotional recovery. We want to see investment in reliable, well-paid green jobs, not only to tackle the climate emergency, but to power our recovery. We want a well-resourced NHS and social care system ready to meet the challenges of the future, and we want proper recognition of and support for the 11 million carers in our country to help heal our nation, not least for bereaved families and children.

I am sorry that this Government's programme simply does not deliver the fairer, greener, more caring plan for recovery that our country needs. The Liberal Democrats will oppose it.

5.5 pm

Sir Roger Gale (North Thanet) (Con): I applaud the manner in which my hon. Friends the Members for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara) and for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher) moved the Loyal Address. I say to my young friend from South Ribble, as one of the balding geriatrics to whom she referred, that if she wants my advice it is always available to her, and provided that she studiously ignores it, she probably has a great career ahead of her. I also welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer), who took her seat earlier this afternoon and who is understandably absent now, and I again express my commiserations to the family of a very dear friend of yours, Mr Deputy Speaker, and mine—Cheryl Gillan. She is sadly missed.

When Her Majesty acceded to the throne, Winston Churchill was Prime Minister and William Morrison was sitting in the Speaker's Chair. During her reign, Her Majesty has seen 14 Prime Ministers and 10 Speakers. We are debating her 67th Queen's Speech, and that is an extraordinary achievement by a very great lady. Like most Queen's Speeches, there is much of value in this one, and the measures to do with education, healthcare and the recovery of the economy are hugely welcome. However, like all Queen's Speeches, which are of course written by the Government of the day, this one is like the curate's egg: it is good in part. In the time available—I want to be very brief—I will concentrate not on the pluses, but on some concerns.

I share the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) about the dangers in the proposed planning Bill. As she said, roughly a million planning consents have been granted for houses that are as yet unbuilt. That 1 million would make a huge difference. A vast swath of brownfield land is available to be built upon, and the Members of Parliament for Kent will not stand idly by and vote for measures that will turn the garden of England into a building site. I have said it to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister before, and I will say it again now: we should not be using arable land—grade 1 arable land in particular—for development before all the other available sites, particularly in cities, have been utilised and all the planning consents have been used up. The Members of Parliament for Kent want a moratorium on the use of agricultural land for development until all the other options have been exhausted. We shall fight that and vote against the planning Bill if necessary.

It will not surprise you, Mr Deputy Speaker, to know that I applaud the measures relating to animal welfare that are contained in the Gracious Speech: the fact that the Ivory Act 2018 is going to be implemented and that measures to control puppy farming are going to be strengthened. There is a raft of other indications. This is all good news for animal welfare.

The animals abroad Bill, as I understand it is now to be called, incorporates the proposed ban on the import of hunting trophies. We have to make it plain that there cannot be a get-out clause that allows rich people to murder animals in the phoney interests of phoney conservation. If there is to be a ban on trophies, it must be unequivocal—a total ban. I hope and believe that that is what we shall see.

[*Sir Roger Gale*]

I wanted to refer to omissions, but in fact there is a reference to a social care Bill in the Gracious Speech. It says that the Government will bring forward “proposals”. I am afraid that we have heard that before, but if I understood the Prime Minister correctly as he spoke from the Front Bench this afternoon, he committed to legislation on social care in this Parliament. If that is correct, it is very good news indeed, but in my view it was not signalled loudly enough in the Gracious Speech. I hope that the Prime Minister—perhaps tomorrow afternoon at Question Time—will confirm that the social care Bill will be enacted in this Parliament and will address the very real issues that we all know face the care particularly of elderly, but not only elderly, people.

I hope that the measures relating to electoral reform will encompass lifetime votes for expat United Kingdom citizens. The doughty campaigner Harry Shindler, who is the oldest living member of the Labour party—and, by the way, a dear friend of mine—celebrates his 100th birthday this summer. The way Harry behaves, it is highly likely that he will, in fact, be alive to vote at the next general election, but I am not sure that we can take that for granted. It would be magnificent if Harry Shindler were to know that, on the statute book, there was the Bill that gives him and many other expats—loyal United Kingdom citizens around the world—the right to vote in our general elections.

The Prime Minister referred to his concern about pensions and for pensioners. I am delighted to hear that. I hope that that concern will extend to unfreezing the frozen pensions of, again, so many expat United Kingdom citizens around the world, some of whom, because their pensions were frozen when they left the United Kingdom, are now living in semi-poverty.

I am pleased that the Government are going to restore the balance of power between the Executive, the legislature and the courts. When I am at liberty to do so, I shall have a great deal more to say about that.

The Queen’s Speech has to be seen in the context of the duties of Members of Parliament. The third of those duties, outlined in the code of conduct for Members, says that we must represent the liberties and rights of those who elected us, and earlier this afternoon Mr Speaker said, “without fear or favour”. I believe that that is absolutely right, and that is a code of conduct that we have, effectively, sought to abide by since Speaker Lenthall sat in the Speaker’s Chair. No matter how high, no matter how mighty, we have to do what we believe to be right, and this Member of Parliament will continue to do it.

Finally—you will be relieved to hear that, Mr Deputy Speaker—the Queen’s Speech states:

“other measures will be laid before you.”

I hope that the Prime Minister will commission and, if necessary, enact the legislation to see a British royal yacht, the Duke of Edinburgh, built.

5.15 pm

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson (Lagan Valley) (DUP): It is a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for North Thanet (*Sir Roger Gale*). He and I worked closely together in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council

of Europe. I enjoyed our time together there, and I thank him for the contribution that he and others have made to the debate.

This year marks the centenary of Northern Ireland—an opportunity for all of us who cherish our homeland to look back, to reflect, to celebrate what is good but also to look to the future. Many did not believe that Northern Ireland would achieve a centenary, and yet it has, and I believe it is testimony to the strength and resilience of the people of Northern Ireland that we have made it to our centenary. No doubt, as we look back over the past 100 years, there have been times of success and times of celebration but, sadly, also times of considerable sorrow, tragedy and division.

On this, our 100th year, our vision and our firm commitment must be to work together to ensure a prosperous and peaceful future for everyone in Northern Ireland. In that task, we must face the immediate challenges, in particular recovery from the pandemic that we have been passing through. We are committed to working with Her Majesty’s Government to address the terrible impact that the pandemic has had on our economy and on our people and their way of life. But while we have been enduring the pandemic, we in Northern Ireland have also faced a further challenge which is perhaps unique to our part of the United Kingdom, and that is, of course, the Northern Ireland protocol and its impact on our economy and on our place within the United Kingdom.

This House needs to understand fully how strongly we in Northern Ireland feel about the impact of that protocol, because it cuts across our entire society. It impacts on consumers and businesses in a way that we believe is entirely unacceptable. We want to see the Government address that, and it is a matter of regret that in the Gracious Speech today we did not hear about measures that will be introduced to address the impact of the protocol on the Northern Ireland economy and on our place within the United Kingdom. I urge the Prime Minister and the Government to bring forward measures to do so. Even the protocol itself allows for that. Under both article 13 and article 16, it provides for the UK Government to introduce measures to address the impact of the protocol on our economy and on our society and to tackle any diversion of trade that results from it.

I hear regularly from businesses in my constituency, in places such as Lisburn, Dromore, Moira and Hillsborough, that the protocol is impacting on their ability to trade with the rest of the United Kingdom. They are encountering great difficulty with their supply chains from Great Britain, just as ordinary citizens are encountering difficulties in acquiring goods and products that previously were freely available to them from suppliers in Great Britain but now are not. For my colleagues and I, that is simply unacceptable. We do not accept that the protocol should continue in its current form, or indeed in any way that interferes with our ability to trade within the United Kingdom. The protocol should be replaced with measures that fully respect Northern Ireland’s place within the UK internal market. That is what the Government promised us, but have not yet delivered. It will continue to be an absolute priority for us in Northern Ireland to address the protocol’s impact and to remove it and its harmful effect on Northern Ireland.

Jim Shannon: Just this week, I had the example of a farmer who is selling his cattle in the Carlisle markets. He has been told that if he does not sell his four pedigree cattle, he will have to house them in veterinary premises in Carlisle in the UK for six weeks at a cost of £50 per piece because of the Northern Ireland protocol. Is that not ludicrous?

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson: I know that the Prime Minister places a high premium on strengthening the Union, and we welcome the measures in the Gracious Speech that are designed to strengthen the Union. We embrace the levelling-up agenda—we want to see Northern Ireland benefit from it, and we want investment in our infrastructure—but my hon. Friend makes a powerful point. If our farmers, our businesses and our citizens find that doing business with the rest of the United Kingdom is becoming increasingly difficult, that is a levelling down for Northern Ireland, not a levelling up. Great Britain is our biggest market, and the supply chains between Great Britain and Northern Ireland are vital to the economy.

The European Union has stated that its desire is to protect the Belfast agreement and the peace process in Northern Ireland—yet, as I have warned in this House, harming the economy of Northern Ireland and undermining our ability to deliver prosperity for the people of Northern Ireland undermines the peace process, because peace and prosperity go hand in hand. It pains me to see young people out once again on the streets of Northern Ireland, engaging in violence against the police. It pains me to see the instability that is arising because of concerns around the protocol. To be clear, violence is not the way to address this, but politics has to be seen to be working.

The Government must listen to those of us who have a political voice, heed what we are saying on behalf of the people who represent us, and understand the depth of concern that exists in Northern Ireland about the protocol, its impact on Northern Ireland and our economy, and its impact in undermining our place within the United Kingdom. Article 1 of the Belfast agreement is clear: there shall be no

“change in the status of Northern Ireland save with the consent...of its people”.

There is no consent for the Northern Ireland protocol; indeed, the consent mechanism within the Northern Ireland Assembly has been changed by the protocol in a way that diminishes the safeguards that were built into the agreement in the first place. That is intolerable, and the Government need to address it in their current and proposed legislative programme.

I value the Union, like the rest of my colleagues in the Democratic Unionist party, and I want to see Northern Ireland prosper within the Union. The world's fifth largest economy is the United Kingdom, and our United Kingdom provides us with the support and resilience that we need through difficult times, and with incomparable opportunities when times are good. I believe that the case for the Union is strong. It is a case that I want to make and that my colleagues want to make, but the protocol undermines that case in a way that is harmful to Northern Ireland's place within the United Kingdom.

The Gracious Speech also touches on the matter of legacy—the legacy of our troubled past in Northern Ireland. We recognise it as an issue that needs to be tackled.

For too long, the innocent victims of the dreadful violence that we endured in Northern Ireland have not been given the priority that they deserve within the context of the peace process. Today, we have had a verdict delivered in the coroner's court in Belfast on the inquests in the cases of what have been described as the Ballymurphy families. They have waited many years for this moment, and the coroner has issued his verdict today. We recognise that there is a desire across all innocent victims in Northern Ireland, whatever their background, to get to a moment where they can have a better understanding of what happened to their loved ones and to pursue justice.

We believe it would be wrong to deny people the opportunity of pursuing justice. That is why we will oppose any measure that seeks to introduce an amnesty in Northern Ireland for crimes such as murder. Sadly, our troubled past is marked at times with injustice that has occurred in Northern Ireland. The act of terrorism itself is a great injustice, and the hurt, the pain and the tragedy that it has inflicted on people in Northern Ireland and on many families is an injustice, but we must not compound injustice with further injustice.

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): I thank my very good friend for allowing me to intercede. I take it that the right hon. Member will fully support the cessation of vexatious claims against veteran soldiers, veteran policemen and veteran security personnel in Northern Ireland. What he was referring to is terrorism, which is entirely different.

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson: I thank the hon. Member for his intervention, and he anticipated the point I was about to make. Where there is evidence that someone has committed murder or potentially committed murder, we are very clear that no one is above the law, but I am concerned, for example, about the case we saw last week in Belfast. Yet again, veterans of our armed forces were dragged before the courts, with no new evidence, having previously been subjected to article 2-compliant investigations, and were put through the agony and the distress, in their latter days, of having to go to court and defend themselves. That is what the hon. Member was referring to when he talked about vexatious prosecutions, and we opposed that.

We are clear that the veterans of our armed forces and our police officers who courageously served on the frontline and who defended our entire community against the ravages of terrorism should not be subjected to such vexatious prosecutions. There has been far too much focus—far too much focus—on our veterans and our retired police officers. We need a process that brings the spotlight on to those who caused by far the greater amount of hurt and suffering in Northern Ireland, who are those who stepped outside the law and were part of paramilitary terrorist organisations.

Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP): I thank the right hon. Member very much for giving way. Can I just ask him one question: how many members of the security forces have been prosecuted to date?

Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson: Well, very few have been prosecuted to date for this reason: the forces of law and order, whether they be our armed forces or police, were acting to protect the community. I am very clear that if a member of the armed forces steps outside the law, of

[*Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson*]

course they are amenable to the law—I am clear about that—but what I am not prepared to accept are our veterans being targeted in the way that they have been in being singled out and pursued through the courts when there is no new evidence and when they have previously been subjected to article 2-compliant investigations. That is unfair, it is wrong, and it must stop. The Government must bring forward legislation to protect veterans and retired police officers from those kinds of vexatious prosecutions. We need a proper process to deal with legacy that enables the innocent victims of terrorism, in particular, to have access to justice so as to have their cases examined. That is why we would not be in favour of measures that would close off the prospect of innocent victims having access to justice.

Northern Ireland has come a long way in the past 100 years, through very difficult and challenging times, but in good times as well. I end by paying tribute to the many hundreds of thousands of people in Northern Ireland who continue to carry the scars of our troubled past. I want to see a Northern Ireland and a future for our people that enables us all to move forward. We cannot forget the past. We cannot pretend it did not happen. But we can take the steps that are required to ensure that it never happens again and that in the next century the mark of Northern Ireland—our place in the world—will be to be known for what we can achieve in realising the full potential of all our people in building a shared future for everyone in Northern Ireland. That is what we want. That is what we desire for our people. We learn from the past and we understand our history, but we look to the future. I have outlined measures that the Government can take to help us build that shared future to create a Northern Ireland where there is peace and prosperity for all. Let us remove the barriers to achieving those objectives.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): We now go to the first of our video links—Sir John Redwood.

5.31 pm

John Redwood (Wokingham) (Con) [V]: I have declared my business interests in the register.

I begin by saying how much I agree with our colleagues from Northern Ireland who rightly want Northern Ireland to be as fully part of our internal market as it always has been and as the Northern Ireland protocol says it should be. I urge the Government, with our Northern Ireland colleagues, to urgently negotiate a solution with the EU so that we can have full access to and from Northern Ireland for normal commerce, or, if the EU is determined not to allow that to happen, to take the administrative steps necessary to make sure that our internal market works smoothly and argue the case that the Northern Ireland protocol states that that is part of its objective and so should be enforced.

I welcome many things in the Gracious Speech. I am glad that the Government give great priority to providing the resources to support the innovations and new ideas in the health service. The health service needs to build itself back on all the non-covid-19 treatments and procedures after its valiant fight against this awful illness, and it will take those extra resources that the Government are promising. There are innovations in

the way that healthcare can be delivered, treatment offered and investigations undertaken following the covid-19 period that I am sure our Secretary of State will be very keen to ensure the NHS works up professionally to make a better service.

However, I urge the Government to address a series of problems that seem to be cropping up in various parts of the country relating to some surgeries that are not up to the standards of the best or the good regarding access to healthcare and appointments. I think everybody wants the reassurance that as the NHS gets back to a better balance in its working, everyone who feels they need an appointment can get through on the phone or on the internet and have early triage and early settlement in a suitable online or face-to-face appointment, depending on their needs. We are hearing about cases at some surgeries around the country where people cannot get through, where the phone lines are restricted, where the timing of the phone calls is limited, or where there are not enough appointments on offer and no forward booking. I hope that there can be guidelines on minimum standards so that people everywhere feel that they have access to excellent NHS care just as most people do who have good surgeries and good doctors.

I welcome the animal welfare measures in the proposals. One of benefits of making more of our own decisions is that we can and should set higher welfare standards, and I am glad that the Government are taking that up.

I welcome the wish to do more for veterans, and we must ensure that the covenant is properly legislated for. I hope the Government will consider the whole issue of housing, because one unsatisfactory feature of some service careers and lives is that when people leave after many years of good service, they have no deposit for a house and there is no availability of one, because they have been living in service-provided accommodation for many years. I hope the Government will consider more imaginative schemes that either support service personnel to buy a home of their own while still in the services, or help them with savings and the necessary arrangements to get the right combination of deposit and mortgage when they leave after many years of good service. We want our veterans to be better housed, and not to fall through the cracks because of the service they have given and their dependence on state-provided accommodation that lasts only as long as their service.

I hope the Government will take a stronger line on defending our fish and restoring our fishing industry. We must do lots of work before the so-called transition is over. Many Brexit voters look to the Government to provide that back-up to our fishing industry, and to ensure proper standards, regulation and control of our fishing grounds, and that our own industry is properly looked after.

I also hope we will soon get some VAT reductions or cancellations. VAT was imposed on a range of items that, if left to its own devices, the UK Parliament probably would not have chosen. That should be part of the Brexit bonus.

I hope the Government will work more, as the Gracious Speech implied, on national resilience. That issue is becoming common—indeed, President Biden is working hard on that in the United States of America. We have seen how, if we become too dependent on overseas interests, we must be careful in the field of energy. We have seen our French neighbours threatening Jersey

over the energy supply that it currently receives from an interconnector to France. I hope the Government will learn a lesson from that. Interconnectors under the sea are vulnerable if other countries are hostile to us, because of the physical location of the cable. We should move our policy from one of increasing dependence on more interconnectors to import energy, to one of wanting self-sufficiency and capacity in the United Kingdom. We always used to have that, and surely it would be a good source of jobs and investment if we set ourselves the target of getting back to meeting our own needs in whatever suitable style the Government wish.

I am glad the Government are talking about broadband and threats to the internet. We must ensure that, with the right amount of Government support and a great deal of private-led investment, we get fast broadband throughout the country, for both business and home use, as that is a big part of our future. We saw how dependent we have become on broadband as we made special arrangements for the pandemic, and many of those changes will live on in whole or in part. We therefore need that much better capacity and performance. The national resilience strategy must ensure some of the building blocks. Indeed, we literally need more building blocks, basic materials and capacity for the construction industry, but we must also produce enough of things such as steel and aluminium to have that resilience should problems emerge in the world's supply system.

I am pleased that the Government will consider public procurement. Now that we are free to make more of our own decisions, it is right to review the huge sums of money that the Government spend on buying in goods and services, and ask ourselves whether, while preserving sensible competitive process, we can ensure that more of that money is well spent on United Kingdom supply. In some areas I feel that we resort too easily to the overseas option, and at a time when other great countries around the world are taking steps to ensure more of their own internal capacity, the United Kingdom must do that as well. Building back better should be about making sure, with that right mixture of public demand—perhaps sometimes with public pump-priming, but more often with a lot of private investment—that we start to replace some of that lost capacity and substitute for some of those imports, because our balance of payments deficit is still very large.

I was very interested to see a quote from the Labour deputy leader, the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner), in recent days, where she said:

“Working-class people don't want a handout or someone telling us what we should think. We want the opportunities to do it for ourselves.”

I think those are a great couple of sentences. In a way, the Government have got there first, and quite a few of the things that the Government are saying and some of the things that the Government are doing in this Gracious Speech are about just that. Levelling up is not about making people more dependent on the state throughout the country with a sort of competitive bidding process to see who can get the most money from the state; it is about spending state money intelligently and making state interventions intelligently where only the state can go in areas such as transport and support for those in difficulty, while at the same time generating many more good private sector jobs, allowing many more businesses to flourish and allowing many more people to gain

skills and trade for themselves. Through that we can have a more diverse, more private sector-led economy in the areas of the country that have not been as prosperous or have had higher unemployment than we would like.

I welcome everything in the Queen's Speech, which promotes a great recovery and offers many more hand-ups for people, so that they do not need so many handouts. We need to have that active promotion of success and ensure that people feel they have opportunities. We have to make sure that companies feel they have opportunities, that there will be more better-paid jobs, that we help people who wish to train for them and that training is available so that people can go on that journey from a less well paid job to a better-paid job.

Above all, we need more measures—tax and otherwise—to help people expand their own small businesses or to see that self-employment is a good option that might give them a better life and a higher income. We do that by lower taxes, by smarter regulations and by a Government who spend their money on buying great UK products and services and allow some of that spending to filter into small companies, as well as into the usual large companies that provide so much of the public procurement that is domestically provided.

I welcome the Queen's Speech. I want to see a rapid and strong recovery. I want a recovery that is all about many more better-paid jobs, harnessing a lot more private investment, expanding our industrial and service provision capacity and widening people's boundaries and opportunities. I trust that our freeports, when they come, will have wide boundaries and a very generous offer, because they could be some of the pioneers of the enterprise spirit we will need in the places that we wish to level up. I wish to see the right repairs and improvements to the public estate, so that it is something of which we are proud. That goes alongside the levelling up, which will entail a lot of private investment and private job creation. That surely is the future. By all means level up; let us do it by promoting great investment and by having excellence in the public sector, where only the public sector can operate.

5.43 pm

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind) [V]: Post-covid Britain has demonstrated a number of things. One is the fantastic sense of community solidarity that exists all over the country, where so many people have joined in mutual aid groups and done so much to support each other and to look after fellow citizens who are using food banks in unprecedented numbers. It has demonstrated the levels of poverty that existed in Britain before covid, which have now become much worse as many people's income has been cut by 20% on furlough and many sadly are looking at job losses in the future. The pandemic has also exposed the mental health crisis that affected Britain before covid and is now much worse. It has demonstrated the value of public sector workers, cleaners and delivery workers and the fantastic work that they have done to keep us safe and get through this crisis.

Surely the way out of this pandemic now has to be to recognise that we live in a deeply unequal society and that many people do not achieve their full potential because of the poverty in which they live, the bad housing in which they live and the inadequate training that they get. Surely the way out is through investment in public services, in infrastructure and in sustainable—in economic

[Jeremy Corbyn]

as well as environmental terms—industries and jobs. That means legislation, which should be in the Queen's Speech but I am not sure is there, to end the disgraceful practice of fire and rehire. Many companies are firing a whole workforce and then reinstating them on lower pay and with worse conditions. What a disgraceful way to treat loyal, long-serving workers.

This is also about those who deliver care. The Queen's Speech includes references to the care service; I am not exactly sure what the Government's plans are, but no doubt we will hear them soon. We have to treat social care as if it is part of the NHS, with the same principle of universal access to care when it is needed and decent pay and conditions for care workers. That has not been delivered by the plethora of private sector organisations and companies that have been delivering the service; it would and could be much better delivered by local authorities and the public sector as a whole.

I am glad that the Queen's Speech includes references to mental health, because we have to recognise the mental health crisis that we face, the stigma attached to people who go through a mental health crisis, and the very long delays to get any kind of talking therapy, which means that too often people in a crisis resort to suppressant drugs rather than the necessary talking therapies and support. It is also about changing the attitudes that everyone has towards mental health and mental illness, and supporting people to get through such crises.

I am proud to represent an inner-city constituency, Islington North, and I am proud of its strength and diversity and the way in which the communities come together. But I am not proud of the housing conditions in which so many people, particularly those in the private sector, currently live. The Queen's Speech mentions something about the private rented sector and guarantees within it. Well, a third of my constituents live in the private rented sector and they need to know that their rents are controlled, that their tenancies are long term, if not permanent, and that they have a chance, later on, of getting council housing. That means giving local authorities the finance and power to build, rather than having to go through the most arcane negotiations to get some degree of social housing from each development site.

In my constituency, buying a place is impossible for anyone on average earnings, twice average earnings or even three times average earnings. It is simply not possible. For so many, the only way out of the housing crisis is council housing. As we have seen throughout the covid pandemic, too many children have been stuck at home in small, overcrowded flats, with insufficiency of computer access, unable to achieve what others can achieve in school. If we improve housing for all children throughout the country, we will improve the life chances and educational opportunities for all those children.

The Queen's Speech includes some depressing passages on civil liberties. I always thought that the Prime Minister was a sort of right-wing civil libertarian. I have always thought he was right wing—he would not be too worried about being called that—but he is not actually a libertarian at all. If he was, why would he attempt for a second time to push through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, with its control over the right to protest and

the right to assembly and its requirement for those who wish to protest or assemble to seek police permission? We would condemn such legislation in any other part of the world and it should be condemned here. Those who turned out on Clapham common did so for a vigil but ended up being driven off the common by the police, who saw it as an illegal demonstration. These are dangerous precedents. We need to have the right of free speech and the right of assembly enshrined in the very being of our legislation in this country.

The idea that we somehow have to bring in a system of identification before we vote is under consideration, but it was not that long ago the Prime Minister said he would eat an ID card rather than show it to somebody. Most people do not carry ID with them, and there is no ID card system in this country. I believe that the Prime Minister and many others voted against the ID card idea, as did I, when it came up some years ago, so let us drop the idea. It seems to me that it is looking to solve a problem that does not exist. The levels of voter fraud are less than minuscule in elections in this country, and I am pleased about that, so there is no need to bring this in. All it seems to be is voter suppression, as has happened in so many states in the USA.

The Government said in the Queen's Speech that they were going to carry through the security review. There are 80 million people on this planet who are refugees. That is 80 million people with no place to call home, no place that they know is safe, and no future in which they know what is going to happen to them. They are stuck in refugee camps, they are stuck on borders and they are stuck in desperate levels of poverty. I am not defending people traffickers or smugglers or anything like that, but they are the symptom, not the cause. Refugees undertake dangerous journeys because they are desperate and they are in a dangerous situation. We have to look at the causes. The wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Libya, the oppression of the Rohingya people in Myanmar, the way in which militia groups in the Congo have driven people off their land to make way for mining corporations, and the way in which people in Colombia have been driven off their land to make way for land-grabbing by global corporations—these things exist all over the world. The causes of instability are the inequalities on this planet.

When the Government propose to dramatically increase expenditure on defence and armaments and turn their back on the possibility of a global treaty to ban nuclear weapons, and at the same time cut overseas aid, they are not dealing with the problems of the world; they are ignoring them or, indeed, making them worse. The levels of hunger in the world have gone up. The famine that is now going on for many people in Madagascar and other places in something that our aid, as well as United Nations aid, could help to deal with. This is a question of dealing with the causes of conflict and the causes of human rights abuses around the world. That means having challenging conversations with every Government, whatever their colour and whatever kind of Government they are, if they are abusing human rights in any form. This has to be a universal.

The news over the last couple of days has been heavily dominated by what is happening in Jerusalem and what is happening now in Gaza. Some years ago, I went to Sheikh Jarrah in Jerusalem, a place of Palestinian homes. It has been a place of Palestinian homes for

almost all of my lifetime. Settlers are trying to drive the people out of those homes, and this is emblematic of the way in which settlers all across the west bank have taken over Palestinian land, divided up farms, created settler roads and created the quite correct anger of the Palestinian people against the occupation. Surely the way forward is to end the occupation, end the siege of Gaza and ensure that there is peace in the future. I say that because I believe very strongly in it, and if anyone doubts the horrors of what it is like to live under occupation, I urge them to look at a film called “The Present”, which demonstrates just how difficult life can be for people trying to undertake an ordinary thing like going out to buy a present. I have taken part in many conferences, calls and discussions with people from Israel, from Palestine and from different organisations all over the world. Peace will not be achieved by bombardment or by land-grabbing; peace will be achieved only by the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people and an end to the occupation.

I finish with this: the world is at a crossroads. It is at a crossroads of inequality, injustice and poverty, which covid has shown. It has shown us the need for universal healthcare around the world, to make us all healthy. It has also shown the need for us to urgently address the environmental crisis. The Paris COP went some way forward, in that most countries signed up for it, although they have not fully implemented it. We need net zero by 2030, but we also need investment to ensure that the jobs that are created tomorrow are environmentally sustainable, as well as economically sustainable, and that we have economic planning that has sustainability at its heart and is not about destroying biodiversity, and polluting our rivers and oceans. This is about putting recycling, reusing and protecting our natural world at the very heart of what we do. I was proud on 1 May 2019 to propose to Parliament that we declare a climate emergency. It was agreed, without a vote. We were the first Parliament in the world to do this. Let us go to COP saying that we have carried that out, that we will achieve net zero by 2030, and that we will share the technologies around the world and have a trade and economic strategy that sustains the world, rather than damages it.

When we deal with the Queen’s Speech, it is the start of the parliamentary Session. There is a whole legislative programme ahead and a lot of debates coming up, but we should have in our minds the kind of country we, as MPs, have been elected to represent. It is not a happy place. There is massive disillusionment and division, and there are massive levels of poverty and of underachievement. That can be changed, but it means tackling injustice and inequality. It means chasing down the tax avoiders in the tax havens. It means investing in public services for tomorrow and in the jobs for tomorrow. In short, it means creating a country fit for the next generation, where we say that our core principles are supporting people, opposing those who would wish to divide our society—the far right and the racists—and, above all, investing for a future that works for everybody. That is the task before us and no doubt in all these debates all these issues are going to come to the fore. That is our job as MPs: to try to articulate the problems that people face and, above all, to find solutions to them. I do not think they are going to be found in any ideas of free market economics; it is only about what the public can do for the public.

5.57 pm

Sir David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): I am delighted to be able to participate in the Queen’s Speech debate and it is good to be back here in the Chamber participating in person. Since the last Queen’s Speech our country has suffered so much with the pandemic, but with the success of the vaccine programme and the Government policies the future begins to look brighter now, and we are all grateful for that.

I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer) on her election to this place and wishing her every success in her career. I am sure she will be very successful and dynamic for us, and we look forward to hearing her speeches. I also congratulate and praise the proposer of the Loyal Address, my hon. Friend the Member for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara). He has been a long-standing friend of mine since 2005, and today’s statesmanlike speech is a real credit to him. I also congratulate the seconder of the Loyal Address, my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher), on the powerful and effective way in which she delivered an interesting and invigorating speech. By comparison, I fear that the speeches from Opposition leaders have not been so good.

The Leader of the Opposition’s speech was disappointing in content, unconvincing and uninspiring. The Scottish National party leader seems to have only one speech, which he repeats regularly. He hardly mentioned the contents of the Loyal Address or Queen’s Speech. The Liberal Democrats always promise everything and talk a good talk, but do not seem to have any policies or actions to take us forward. By comparison, the Queen’s Speech is constructive and comprehensive, and I know it will gain favour across the whole UK.

As we start to come out of the pandemic and the lockdowns, the Government will have a lot of issues to tackle—we all know that. I strongly support the Government’s approach and the dynamic leadership we have seen from my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister. He has risen to the challenges of the past year and deserves credit for his leadership. That was acknowledged by the voters—[*Interruption.*] It is no good our having sedentary comments from the Opposition Members, as they have nothing constructive to put forward. He deserves the credit and that was what was acknowledged by the voters last Thursday, who believe that the Government will successfully deliver on the people’s priorities, which include housing, the economy, employment, education, training and crime, among other things. Those are the issues that affect people in their day-to-day lives and the Queen’s Speech outlines a coherent strategy to deal with them.

Today, I want to focus on the measures for education, and particularly on skills and post-16 training and education. I eagerly look forward to the skills and post-16 education Bill. The skills revolution that the Government promised is absolutely fundamental to the success of global Britain post Brexit.

Outside politics, I have worked as a teacher and a lecturer, so I have seen at first hand the importance of good education and training for young people and for not-so-young people. My time lecturing at Bexley College showed me the real value of further education colleges and how they have been regrettably undervalued by all Governments in the last couple of decades. They are

[*Sir David Evennett*]

absolutely fundamental to increasing skills and opportunities across our country. I passionately believe that every child and young person deserves a good start in life, regardless of their background, or where they live. Access to excellent schools is essential to build the foundations for opportunities and success in later life.

Conservative Governments of the last 10 or 11 years have done much to improve our schools and we are grateful for the real achievements we have seen. However, we have a skills shortage in this country and I believe we can rectify that through post-16 education. I would highlight finance as an issue in further education. Colleges need more resources and support to be able to act as an engine for social mobility. I also believe that FE lecturers should be paid more to ensure that we get the best people and we show we really value our FE lecturers.

I know the Government will look at this issue, but we must ensure that young people are encouraged to engage with education and understand the long-term benefits. That is why I strongly welcome the actions to provide more lifelong learning opportunities through colleges and universities across our country, such as by making studying part time more easily accessible to people. That is so important.

I also strongly support the lifetime skills guarantee, which provides adults in England without an A-level or equivalent qualification the opportunity to take up a free, fully funded college course. Alongside that, it is very important to make education loans more flexible and allow people to space out their study across their lifetime and take more high-quality vocational courses. The lifetime skills guarantee will transform the provision of skills across this country and help people to get the skills they need at every stage of their lives. This long-term plan will ensure that, as the nature of work changes—we live in a world that is frequently and rapidly changing—people have the skills to retrain and find new, better jobs. There are going to be many more new, different jobs in the future. We have to have the workforce and the opportunities for people to be able to study and train so that they can take up those opportunities.

I have long advocated that local employers should work more closely with further education providers to align training more closely with employer needs. That is so important and I am afraid that it has not happened. I regularly speak to and visit businesses across my borough of Bexley and elsewhere in the country when I go on speaking and meeting engagements. One issue that is often raised is that children are not getting the required skills in school. They are not then taking them to college and they do not leave college with the standard of skills that employers require. That is disappointing. It is not just the Government who are at fault here; it is also the employers not participating and making their views known more readily. As a result, often, small and medium-sized businesses—the backbone of our economy, employing the majority of people in our country—have struggled to access and retain employees with the skills they need. That significantly impacts on productivity and growth.

That is why it is essential that businesses are placed at the heart of skills plans and work with further education colleges to address skill shortages in local areas. I therefore welcome the plans for employers to have a statutory

role in planning publicly funded training programmes with education providers through a skills accelerator programme. All that will contribute to better lifelong upskilling opportunities, so that people can take on better paid jobs in their local areas, and it will encourage innovation and entrepreneurs. That is so important. Businesses and colleges are in the community and they know what the local needs, and the local workforce needs, are.

The skills revolution announced today will support the nation's recovery from the ongoing pandemic, while building on the progress made so far to level up the country and ensure equal opportunities for all people, wherever they live. In London, as in other parts of the country, we have skill shortages. There are inequalities of opportunity. As well as education, housing is important—the opportunity for people to have a decent home. I remember well in the 1980s under Margaret Thatcher the determination to have more homes and for people to own their own homes. My grandparents lived in social housing. They would have loved the opportunity in the 1960s in Harlow to buy their own property and feel that they had a stake in the community. Margaret Thatcher made that a reality. We are now looking at a new generation. We need more people to be homeowners, to have a stake in the community and to value that opportunity.

The Queen's Speech also deals with something of which I am very supportive: ending fixed-term Parliaments. The Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 was needed at a particular time, but it is not needed now. As we know, the issues that have arisen from it in the last few years are many and varied. This change will restore the status quo and ensure the constitution operates properly, so we cannot have the absurd situation we had in 2019 where the Prime Minister was unable, because of the law, to call a general election. It was surprising, of course, that the Opposition did not want to vote for an election at that time. It was the first time in my long political career that an Opposition did not want to call for a general election.

The Act was needed in 2010 because the coalition Government faced huge problems left by the last Labour Government and we had to have stability. We could not be in a position where the Government were always wondering whether they were going to survive and whether there would have to be a general election. It was needed at that particular time, but that time has passed. We now need to look at the opportunities for going back to the tradition where the Prime Minister, of whatever party, has the right to determine when he asks Her Majesty the Queen to go to the country to renew the Government's mandate. It is therefore only right that we get rid of this anachronism that is not necessary at this time.

I will conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, as you did not want us to speak for too long. There is much in this Queen's Speech that is to be commended. It is a programme for the next year. It is going to keep us busy, but it is going to transform our country and ensure we make global Britain a real success. For the last year and a half, the world has been dominated by the covid-19 pandemic, but I believe we are now looking to the end of restrictions on 21 June and we can return to some sort of normality.

It was disappointing that the Leader of the Opposition did not commend the Prime Minister for the fact that we are slowly unlocking and going forward to get back

to normality, because it has been a success story in this country compared with other countries. It is regrettable that we cannot have some bipartisanship and say when things are good. I always understood that an Opposition praised what was right and supported it but then criticised what they disagreed with. I did not hear any of that today; it was all disagreement and criticism. That is very disappointing.

The country proved with its voting last week that it wants to go forward, it wants to be constructive and it wants to move on. That is what this Queen's Speech does in so many fields. In so many areas, we are looking to deal with the problems facing ordinary people every day of their lives, and that is to be commended. The issues people are concerned about are being dealt with in this Queen's Speech, and it will pave the way for us to build back better, putting jobs, skills and businesses at the heart of our recovery. It is the way forward. I commend the Queen's Speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I know that everybody is enjoying the luxury of there being no time limit at the moment, but if Members could aim for sub-10-minute contributions, we will be a lot fairer to those who speak later on.

6.10 pm

Liz Saville Roberts (Dwyfor Meirionnydd) (PC): Diolch yn fawr iawn, Mr Dirprwy Lefarydd. Mi wnai fy ngorau—I will do my best.

It was very interesting to listen to what the right hon. Member for Bexleyheath and Crayford (Sir David Evennett) had to say, because I previously worked in further education as well. We are all good at talking about parity of esteem between academic education and vocational training and skills, but it is about how we realise that and, particularly, the sort of curriculum that we provide. It is easy to provide the same old curriculum, but it is very challenging to look at the transferable skills that will be needed, predict the skills that will be needed and decide who we offer those to and where.

I welcome today's Queen's Speech as an opportunity for us all to take stock of the United Kingdom, our legislative priorities and the interests of those people and nations whom we serve in this place. Wales has returned a pro-devolution Parliament, whose Government Plaid Cymru will now hold to their manifesto commitment to achieve what they styled as "far-reaching federalism"—we shall see what that actually means. Wales also thumpingly rejected those who explicitly sought to deny our democracy its very existence. Scotland has returned an SNP Government with overwhelming support and every right to hold a vote on Scotland's future.

While the Prime Minister's victory over Labour in parts of England was, indeed, impressive, it simply underscores that the Conservative party is riding high as the party of England and not the UK, yet the UK Government continue to hold powers over and withhold powers from the devolved nations and strongly regulate their budgets. That is why today's most immediately disappointing omission is the Government's failure to deliver on their manifesto pledge to reform social care in England.

In this year of all years, given the experiences that we have had of covid, we must recognise that it would be a fundamental failure not to acknowledge the dedication

of care workers paid and unpaid, the stress and distress that families have experienced over the last year and the experiences of thousands upon thousands of people who depend for their welfare on the care system. Just as Dickens looked back at his own era and decried some of the social experiences and horrors of it, we might in the future look back at this era and decry how we have run the care system and what we have been satisfied with. That is the issue that we need to address—what families have suffered, what care workers have had to endure and the low pay that they have had, and what we have regarded as being acceptable for loved ones in their homes or in care homes.

I notice that the Government have made some positive sounds. There is a will across the House and across all the Parliaments of the United Kingdom to work together on this matter. We have to work together to do it. We will have failed the people we serve if we do not address the care crisis that we have experienced in the last year, which we know has been there for years.

In Wales, the number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 44% in the next two decades, to over 1 million people—almost a third of the population. We have the oldest population of any UK nation, yet a shorter life expectancy, with poorer health outcomes. A well-funded and integrated social care system is vital for supporting the future long-term health and wellbeing of people in Wales. Increased spending is inevitable for the system in Wales, and the real choice will be whether to increase funding on a piecemeal basis or to grasp the fundamental challenge of genuine reforms.

The costs and the need are clear. Covid cost Welsh local authorities nearly £30 million in additional expenditure for providing older adult social services during the first quarter of 2020-21 alone. In the longer term, with need and cost rising, net expenditure for community care services for older people in Wales will rise by 177% in the next 15 years. Social care is devolved in Wales, but with our limited means to raise funds, both our powers and our funds are delineated and bestowed on us by Westminster. We thus face a real challenge of affordability. That is why, in this new parliamentary term, I extend a hand to the Prime Minister and his Chancellor to prove that they care for Wales. Give us both the powers and the needs-based means so that we can afford proper social care and finally address this perennial issue.

Equally pressing is the climate challenge. I hope the Government will support the cross-party climate and ecological emergency Bill to strengthen our efforts to tackle the fundamental and all-important crisis.

In that spirit, I hope the Government will recognise the need to correct the stymieing inconsistencies in the devolution settlement and devolve the Crown Estate in Wales to Wales—as has occurred, of course, in Scotland. Control over our natural resources and their rent is essential not only for their sustainable management, but to help generate the capital investment necessary to deliver our net zero future. The change would improve upon the current restrictive borrowing limits imposed by the Treasury on the Welsh Government and better connect Wales's natural heritage and resources with their sustainable use and production.

Finally, I hope that the Prime Minister will join me in welcoming Wales's decision to return a pro-devolution Parliament with a Government committed to overhauling the UK's constitutional framework. Levelling up has so

[Liz Saville Roberts]

far proved to be a ruse to centralise power in Westminster. The United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 has shown itself to undermine devolution, and the Government have already broken their manifesto promise to Wales that we would not be a penny worse off when we left Europe.

From our personal lives to our politics, actions speak louder than words, of course, and no doubt the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition will join me in echoing the comments of a Labour Senedd Member who noted that we are at a crossroads between independence and a

“polarising hard British unionism based by and large on a growing English nationalism with its epicentre in 10 Downing Street.”

We must achieve radical constitutional change, as Labour argues in Wales. Will Labour argue it here, too? A welcome first step would be further tax powers to help with our post-conflict recovery. The next must be the devolution of the policing and justice system to Wales—as suggested in evidence to the Thomas commission and as voted for by the people of Wales.

It will be a pleasure, if the opportunity arises, to work with the Leader of the Opposition to further those constitutional objectives. They were borrowed from Plaid Cymru, and the only Labour Government in the UK could strengthen their own hand considerably and further their own principles considerably if they admitted it.

In sum, our nations face pressing challenges that touch our loved ones, our homes, our climate and our nations. This parliamentary term is when we must address those challenges, and I look forward to the opportunity to work with the Government and the Opposition as best they can to find the solutions.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I thank Liz Saville Roberts, because not only did you promise to try and come in sub-10 minutes, but you delivered on your promise with seven minutes. Well done.

6.18 pm

Dr Andrew Murrison (South West Wiltshire) (Con): Mr Deputy Speaker, I will endeavour to do the same. I very much welcome the Gracious Speech. I am in awe of the person who delivered it and in awe of its delivery. How fortunate we are in our Head of State.

I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara) and for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher) on delivering wonderful speeches, full of good humour and good sense, and kind and generous.

Covid mercifully appears to be retreating in the UK, at least faster than Darius from Alexander, but every day that passes has been chipping away at our liberties, the prospects of our young people, our mental health, our health in general, the economy and our institutions great and small, including this one. It is a terrible price to pay and it is time to bring it to an end. More than two-thirds of adults have now been jabbed. One-third have been jabbed twice. Yesterday, more people will statistically have died on the roads than of covid. There is no prospect of our national health service being overwhelmed, and if I am worried about a virus this wintertime, it is seasonal flu, not a covid third wave.

The Prime Minister made it clear earlier, in answer to an intervention, that there will be a full review—a comprehensive inquiry—into the management of this pandemic, and I very much welcome that. It would be remarkable if, after all of this, we did not review what had gone on and learn the lessons from it. I do so hope that it will not be a witch hunt; there is nothing to be gained from that. Throughout this, we have been in uncharted waters; there is no route map for this, and people have done the best they can in the circumstances that face them and with the information available to them.

It is important that we learn the lesson because, just around the corner, it is more than likely that we will have a new variant or new variants. It is equally likely that something else even worse may crop up. I think it is also pretty apparent that in the early stages of this pandemic, we were not as well prepared as we should have been. I have been critical in particular of our public health institutions that were, to my mind, not fit for purpose, focused, as they were, on modern pandemics to do with lifestyle in particular, which are very important in themselves, but which I think also took our eye off the ball when it came to traditional, old-fashioned public health around infectious disease.

That is a pity, because in this country we have a very strong tradition of public health. We have a very strong history in dealing with infectious diseases, and our institutions around infectious disease, bacteriology and virology are world-beating. This country, of course, was the home to west country doctor Edward Jenner and west country farmer Benjamin Jesty—less well known—who really set the science of vaccination afoot and made this country the world leader. In recent times, perhaps, we have unfortunately not learned some of the lessons as well as we should have done, and forgotten others.

I am also very sympathetic to Health Ministers who, in the early stages of this pandemic, pulled levers and found that nothing really happened. That is a perception from the Back Benches, but it is why I think that I would likely support those things contained in the Gracious Speech that hint at strengthening the ability of Ministers to control some aspects of healthcare in this country. That is a difficult thing for me to say, because 10 years ago I was a Parliamentary Private Secretary in the Department of Health when reforms were going through that, in the full light of day, perhaps we might have done somewhat differently and, in my opinion, have not always been helpful in managing this crisis.

I am particularly keen on further reforms to public health. I think I am the only Member of Parliament with a postgraduate qualification in public health and I take a very close interest in it. There is no question in my mind but that our public health institutions need to be strengthened in order to face down more effectively the infectious disease threats of the future. This country faces many threats. It faces threats from Putin's Russia, from cyber and from fundamentalist terror. However, the greatest existential threat that this country faces at the moment is more at home in a Petri dish, and we need to make sure that we bend every sinew of our national life and institutions to protect the public from that threat in the future. Any Government who fail to do so will suffer the consequences. I am heartened by

what I have heard in this Gracious Speech and what I have heard Ministers talk about recently in relation to building those institutions, strengthening them, and making sure that we are much better placed to face down these threats in future.

I have spent the past 10 weeks or so leading vaccination teams in south-east London and the south-west of England, and will have done or supervised thousands of those vaccinations that come up on our screens every evening to tell us how we are doing. It has been one of the greatest privileges of my professional life. Through Operation Rescript and Operation Broadshare, its overseas iteration, the armed forces have, in my opinion, done extremely well. The warmth with which soldiers, sailors and airmen have been greeted in communities—many of those communities that now have a very small military footprint, and some of them communities that are not necessarily naturally sympathetic to defence—has been extraordinary. It is my view that the participation of our armed forces in helping our NHS through this pandemic has been far more effective than any number of armed forces days with which I have been associated, and has massively advanced civilian-military relations in this country. I pay tribute to all of my colleagues in the reserves and regulars for their service in support of our national health service.

I commend the Government for bringing forward an Advanced Research and Invention Agency Bill—a bit of a mouthful, but nevertheless—and I am very pleased that research features large in the Gracious Speech. I particularly commend Ministers for awarding £30 million for covid research at the MOD's Porton Down facility near Salisbury. That is money well spent: I have no doubt that it will be met with rewards in the future, not just in this country but worldwide, where we are world leaders in this technology. I am very pleased that the Gracious Speech highlighted the Government's leadership in promoting access to vaccination worldwide through COVAX and the UK's approach to vaccine development and acquisition. However, just a small word of caution: we can ship out as much vaccine as we like to developing countries, but if they do not have the infrastructure with which to deliver that vaccine programme, we will be largely wasting our time, and we will find that outside the big urban centres and the élites, our good work will not be felt. It is very important that, especially when delivering surplus vaccine, we also make sure that we use expertise in this country—particularly in the national health service, and maybe even in the armed forces—to ensure that the logistics for delivery are there.

I would like to mention Northern Ireland, a part of the United Kingdom that I have grown to love and respect very much indeed over the years. I listened with great interest, as I always do, to the comments on that subject made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). She is right: sometimes, in government, we have to do things in the greater interest that may seem alien to us, even uncomfortable. We all know the realpolitik that has caused many of us to be discomfited with the way members of the armed forces, some of them our constituents, have been handled in recent times, and none of us wants to do anything that would allow terrorists to go unpunished—allow them to get off the hook. However, that ship sailed in 1998, and we have to acknowledge that there has been a generation of relative peace since. Like my right hon. Friend, I remember those images when I was growing up, night

after night. A line must be drawn so that this wonderful, wonderful corner of our country can move on, looking to the future and not the past.

Although there was no Bill in the Queen's Speech that dealt with social care specifically, I nevertheless commend the Government for their recent language around a social care Bill. I would have liked to see a firmer commitment to it, but nevertheless I have the sense that it is a piece of work that will be done in this Parliament. I very much hope that that will mean in part a Dilnot-style cap on the cost of care. We pool risk in our national health service—that is what it is all about—but we did not do that in the 1940s. That is a piece of unfinished work, and while we will certainly debate integrated care, which is important, we also need to grasp the nettle of who pays. Mercifully, most of us will not end up needing extensive social care, but some of us will. At the moment, the costs of that fall disproportionately. The Government have an opportunity now to stamp their mark on one of the great outstanding challenges of our age. They must seize the day.

6.30 pm

Joanna Cherry (Edinburgh South West) (SNP): It is a pleasure to be back in the Chamber; it is the first time for nearly five months that I have appeared physically rather than virtually. Much as I long to see Scotland regain its independence, I recognise that this is one of the great debating chambers of the world, and it is always a privilege to speak here. It is also a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for South West Wiltshire (Dr Murrison), who speaks so knowledgeably about matters of public health.

Since the last Queen's Speech, in December 2019, the four constituent parts of the United Kingdom have been through very tumultuous times. The United Kingdom left the European Union on 31 January 2020; the pandemic almost eclipsed the end of the transition period at the tail end of last year, but that does not mean that traders, particularly those in the Scottish fishing industry, have not felt the pain of being out of the single market and the customs union.

As a result of the pandemic, many of our constituents have suffered grievous loss or serious illness. Others have suffered the associated health, social and economic impacts caused by the necessity of lockdown. In many ways, the elderly have suffered most. At the outset, there was the terrible death toll in care homes, but elderly people have also suffered the pain of being unable to see their loved ones at a time when their society and guidance was most needed. Of course, young people have suffered too: their education, social lives and mental health have been greatly disrupted. Jobs have been lost, and businesses, particularly small businesses, have struggled.

The pandemic has exacerbated the inequalities that already existed in our society, and I was disappointed to see no acknowledgment of that in the Queen's Speech. At the very least, I would have expected to hear confirmation of measures to address the September cliff edge on furlough—yes, things might be going well at the moment, but we cannot assume that they will always go well in relation to the virus. I would also have liked to see measures to address the cliff edge in self-employed support, the reduced hospitality VAT rate and the £20 uplift to universal credit. It is disappointing to see no measures to end unfair zero-hours and fire-and-rehire contracts or to deliver a living wage—a real living wage—for all.

[Joanna Cherry]

As Citizens Advice Scotland has reminded us,

“The last year has shown the vital importance of our social security safety net”,

and universal credit not featuring in the Government’s legislative agenda

“risks missing lessons from the pandemic. While UC survived the influx of new claimants—in part by easing verification procedures and conditionality—fundamental aspects of its design have continued to put people in hardship.”

They will continue to do so unless we reform them. Reform is urgently needed in that department.

The Government say in the Queen’s Speech that children must have the best start in life, but that will not happen unless we tackle the scourge of child poverty—I would have liked to see some outlining of measures to do that. The British Government might do well to take a leaf out of the Scottish Government’s book. The Scottish Government established a Scottish child payment in the last Parliament and have committed to doubling it in the next, which child poverty campaigners have described as a game changer. Can the UK Government match that sort of commitment? I wonder.

Likewise, I am sure that people in England will be disappointed still to see no concrete plans for social care. Again, the British Government might do well to take a leaf out of the Scottish Government’s book: the SNP election manifesto pledged to take forward the recommendations of the independent Feeley review and to establish a national care service for Scotland in the current parliamentary term. The service will oversee the delivery of care and improve standards in care homes. It will also improve training and, importantly, staff pay and conditions for our care workforce, and it will give support to unpaid carers.

That is the kind of concrete action that led to the SNP winning an historic fourth election victory last week, and that brings me to the constitution. The British Government say they want to

“strengthen and renew democracy and the constitution”—

those were the words used in the Queen’s Speech—and to strengthen “the integrity of elections”. Well, they would do well to start by respecting the outcome of the election that we had in Scotland last week. As I said, it was an historic fourth election victory in a row for the SNP, and it was won with a record 47.7% share of the vote and a record turnout. It was won on a very firm manifesto commitment to deliver a second independence referendum. It is no use Members on the Government Benches arguing otherwise, as the Conservative and Unionist party in Scotland put preventing a second independence referendum at the heart of its campaign and has ended up with only 21.9% of the vote and 32 seats. The SNP has twice as many. The Greens got eight seats in Scotland and also had a firm manifesto commitment to deliver a second independence referendum, so taken together the pro-independence referendum parties in the Scottish Parliament now have 72 seats to the 57 of the anti-independence referendum parties. Of course, it was the exact same position—72 seats to 57—in 2011, when David Cameron came to the negotiating table and negotiated with Alex Salmond an agreement to hold an independence referendum.

The British Government have said today that we cannot have another independence referendum, because we had one seven years ago—it is worth pausing to note that we are not saying that we want one immediately; we want one after the pandemic is over—but they would do well to listen to former senior civil servant Ciaran Martin, who oversaw the delivery of the Edinburgh agreement in 2012 and is now a professor at the University of Oxford. He said last month that if the pro-independence parties in Scotland won another majority, there would be no legitimate justification on which to resist a referendum. He is, of course, correct. I remind Government Members that in the 2019 general election the current Prime Minister secured an 80-seat majority on just 43.6% of the vote—considerably less than my party secured last week in percentage terms—and that that result has been used by the Conservative and Unionist party to justify far-reaching consequences for all of us in the United Kingdom, altering both the nature of the Union and relations with our neighbours radically. What’s sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Of course, the Scottish Government have a plan to initiate legislation for a second independence referendum in the Scottish Parliament, regardless of whether the Prime Minister gives us a section 30 order, and I am very proud to have been instrumental in persuading my party to adopt that approach. However, the Prime Minister should have the guts to come to the negotiating table, as David Cameron did in 2011, to ensure that the referendum is held on an agreed basis. The Union of Scotland and England is a union of consent; it is not a union enforced by force of law, and the British Prime Minister would do well to recognise that.

I want to say something positive about the proposals in the speech, because I would like to give a cautious welcome to the Government’s plans to protect freedom of speech. I would not wish to give their plans unqualified support without hearing more about them, but I am in no doubt that they have correctly identified that there is a problem with free speech in our universities, and I would welcome more public debate about it.

The Joint Committee on Human Rights, of which I am a member, identified issues with freedom of speech in our universities in a report that we issued in 2018. We did not find the wholesale censorship of debate in universities that media coverage has suggested, but we did find that there were issues, and we recommended some reforms. I am afraid, though, that the situation has got worse since that report. For example, while society has worked hard to tackle sexual harassment, it is common now in universities across the United Kingdom for feminist academics who speak up for women’s sex-based rights under the Equality Act 2010 to be harassed and threatened. I have previously spoken on the Floor of the House about the experiences of Professor Selina Todd, Professor Kathleen Stock and Professor Rosa Freedman.

I have recently had brought to my attention the case of a law student at a Scottish university who is facing a disciplinary investigation and potential expulsion from her course for stating during a seminar that only women have vaginas and for objecting to the statement that all men are rapists. This woman is a final-year mature law student, and she is undergoing this investigation and the threat of being thrown off her course in the middle of her final year, while doing exam work. It is farcical that a law student—a female mature law student—should

be facing disciplinary action for stating a biological fact and challenging a sweeping statement. The reality is that university authorities are under pressure from those who wish to silence feminist voices, and universities need support and encouragement to stand up against what can sometimes be very nasty and threatening campaigns. Madam Deputy Speaker, when I say nasty and threatening, I know whereof I speak.

That is as far as my support for the Government's legislative programme goes, and I just want to point out that there is no point in legislating to protect freedom of speech in universities while at the same time legislating to undermine freedom of expression and assembly, as the Government are doing in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. I implore them to look at that afresh to see what the all-party parliamentary groups on democracy and the constitution and on the rule of law, and also the Joint Committee on Human Rights, are saying about that.

Finally, looking at the international aspects of the Queen's Speech, the Government said that they want to uphold human rights and democracy across the world. If they are really committed to doing that, why do they frequently fail to do it when it comes to the Palestinian people? The inaction from the international community, including from the United Kingdom Government, to properly defend and support Palestinians in the face of Israeli Government and Israeli human rights abuses is not indicative of a country that supposedly stands for human rights and democracy abroad. The excessive force used by Israeli forces on worshippers at al-Aqsa and against families in Sheikh Jarrah in occupied East Jerusalem only prompts the mildest of criticism and zero consequences for those responsible. Those families are facing forced transfer and dispossession of their homes, which would constitute a war crime. In the past 24 hours, we have seen a grim escalation, with 24 people, including nine children, killed in Israeli attacks on Gaza. Although we should rightly condemn the rocket attacks coming from Gaza to Jerusalem, we should also condemn and take action against the events that led up to these escalations and the excessive response to them.

If the UK Government really want to be a human rights defender, they should fully support the International Criminal Court's investigation into an alleged grave crime committed in the occupied Palestinian territory, and they should not undermine it. Please can we have real meaning to the words of "upholding human rights and democracy abroad"?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): As Mr Deputy Speaker has previously said, we are trying to manage without a time limit because there is a lot of time left, but there are also many people who wish to speak. It would be courteous if people spoke for around eight minutes. If that were to happen, everyone who has indicated that they wish to speak would have an opportunity to do so, and we could manage without a time limit. Otherwise, I shall just put on a time limit. It is much better, though, if we can self-regulate without a time limit.

6.44 pm

Bob Stewart (Beckenham) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and I will be on the time limit, I hope.

I listened very carefully to the Gracious Speech, and I made the assumption that the promise to address the legacy of the past with regard to Northern Ireland refers to a Government commitment to protect veterans from vexatious and repeated prosecutions. That assurance was solidified when I looked at the media Q and A that accompanies the Queen's Speech, where it is put much more specifically. My good friend the Minister for Defence People and Veterans also promised this to me in the Chamber on 21 April, and now I expect it to happen.

Privately, I have been assured from a very high level that such action to help veterans and indeed other members of the security forces is imminent. I hope so because, honestly, it is a matter of huge importance to me. I speak as a supporter and a member of the Justice for Northern Ireland Veterans campaign. Personally, I served over three years on operations in Northern Ireland. I have been involved in several actions there, witnessed several terrorist murders, and have lost too many soldiers and friends who were working alongside me. I have also held innocent people, caught up in terrorism, who have died in my arms. It devastated me then, and it still does to this day. So to me, this commitment finally to sort out a cessation to legacy vexatious prosecutions is exceedingly personal.

I understand that the new Bill might involve introducing what could be called a qualified statute of limitations, with the presumption that no charges should be brought against security force personnel for alleged offences before the Good Friday agreement of 1998. Quite rightly, this plan is based on the fact that if no new compelling evidence against such people has been brought forward, such a prosecution ends. Let me be clear: nobody in the military, the police or the security forces supports anyone who breaks the law, and if someone does so, it is right that they face the full vigour of the legal system. That is the essential and crucial difference between a soldier and perhaps a policeman, and a terrorist. The security forces operate on behalf of and under the law, whereas terrorists do not. There is no way that soldier and terrorist should be treated equally under the law—and that must not happen.

I am delighted that, at last, we are beginning to see this matter resolved for a number of veterans, who to this day still dread a knock on the door and being hauled off to Northern Ireland from retirement—many are in their 70s and early 80s—to answer charges for actions that took place many years ago, and which were normally investigated and dismissed at the time.

The recent collapse of the trial of soldiers A and C is hugely significant, as the judge sent the prosecution packing with scathing comments about its case. However, I am worried because the word is that those people who have been charged recently or are in the process of being charged may still face prosecution in the Belfast court. Having myself given evidence in that court in 1986, when five terrorists were charged with murder, I know that it is not a prospect that veterans face with equanimity—they often say they would much prefer to be under fire. When I stood in court to give evidence for the prosecution against terrorists, I was shouted at, demeaned, threatened and told that my family were dead. That is not something that people like happening to them.

I gather that around seven more trials of veterans are in the offing, with perhaps another 16 more veterans also in the frame for prosecution. I feel that those trials

[Bob Stewart]

and prosecutions should be stopped in their tracks, and I very much hope that will happen. Perhaps the same logic that sent the prosecution in the case of soldiers A and C out of the court with its tail between its legs will prevail. We owe our veteran soldiers and, indeed, all the people who tried to preserve peace in Northern Ireland—not just soldiers—a debt. They have lived under the continual threat of prosecution for many years; we should sort it out.

Our Northern Ireland veterans do not want an amnesty. Why should they have an amnesty? They have done nothing wrong. They obeyed the law, often at great risk to themselves, and are rightly affronted when some people suggest that they are just the same as terrorists. They are not—they are most definitely not. Like me in my time, veterans were sent to Northern Ireland at the behest of predecessors of ours in this place and told that if they obeyed the laws of conflict and of this country, we would look after them. That is exactly what Jim Callaghan, as Home Secretary, said to my own platoon of the Cheshire Regiment in Londonderry during the spring of 1970. At the time, my soldiers, 36 in strength, were reduced by a third, who were in hospital with burns and broken limbs. Mr Callaghan was seriously shocked by what he saw. He promised me, my men and all our soldiers in Northern Ireland that our predecessors here in this place would look after us as long as we obeyed the law. I think it is time that we honoured that pledge given by the Home Secretary 51 years ago.

6.54 pm

Colum Eastwood (Foyle) (SDLP): Daniel Teggart was murdered by the Parachute Regiment in Ballymurphy in August 1971. These are the words of his daughter, Alice Harper: “We identified my daddy by his curly hair. Fourteen times they shot him. The next day they blackened his name and called him a gunman. Two years later my brother Bernard, with a mental age of nine, was killed by the IRA. We want no amnesty for anyone.” Who in this House is going to tell Alice that she is wrong?

Today, thankfully, after many years of campaigning, the Ballymurphy families have got the truth out there for the world to see. The inquest findings into the people who were killed in Ballymurphy in 1971 were clear. The names and the findings are as follows: Father Hugh Mullan, 38, a Catholic priest, entirely innocent; Frank Quinn, 19, a window cleaner, entirely innocent; Joan Connolly, 44, a mother of eight, entirely innocent; Joseph Murphy, 48, a rag-and-bone man, entirely innocent; Noel Phillips, 19, a window cleaner, entirely innocent; Daniel Teggart, 44, a father and husband, entirely innocent; John Laverty, 20, a city worker, entirely innocent; Joseph Corr, 43, a machinist at Shorts, entirely innocent; Edward Doherty, 31, a former soldier, entirely innocent; and John McKerr, 49, a joiner, entirely innocent.

The families of the Ballymurphy massacre have been absolutely and totally vindicated today. The truth that some people in this House will not want to accept is this: if those people were entirely innocent, the soldiers who killed them were guilty. Fifty-seven children lost a parent during the Ballymurphy massacre in August 1971. The families of those innocent victims have marched, met, lobbied and fought for decades so that the whole

world would know what they have always known: well, you did it, and I, for one, am inspired by your courage and tenacity. Will this Prime Minister now finally apologise for what those British forces did by murdering 10 entirely innocent people, or will he continue to pursue an amnesty for their killers? That is the question, that is the challenge, and that is the standard that should be met by any country that wants to call itself a democracy.

Thanks must also go to Mrs Justice Keegan for her forensic examination of the facts. Her finding that there was “basic inhumanity” in the treatment of the people of west Belfast speaks volumes. That finding was hardly surprising when victims like Mrs Connolly were shot by the British Army and left to die. “Inhumane” is the right word for it. To those Members of this House and this Government who pursue an amnesty for those who murdered Mrs Connolly and every other victim of our terrible, terrible past, regardless of who the perpetrators were, I challenge you to come with me, meet the Ballymurphy families and tell them to their face that they are not entitled to pursue truth and justice.

Six months after Ballymurphy, the Parachute Regiment came to my city of Derry. They murdered 14 innocent civil rights marchers, unarmed as they were. If Ballymurphy had been properly investigated and properly dealt with by the British Government, Bloody Sunday would not have happened, those people would not have died, and the events that came after would never have happened either. This Government need to think again and go back to Stormont House, agreed by two Governments and the majority of the parties in Northern Ireland. As difficult as it is, it is the only way to properly, morally deal with the past that we have all had to suffer. I understand that—nobody wants to move on more than the victims of our difficult past—and it is well meaning, but it is absolutely and totally naive. We have tried to move on since 1998, but by not dealing with issues of the past, where are we today? We are mired in the past. How can people be told by a democratic Government that they are not entitled to pursue truth and justice? Does anybody in this House really believe, as the Government say, that the paramilitaries—the IRA, the Ulster Defence Association, the Ulster Volunteer Force—or the British state will willingly give the victims the truth that they are entitled to? If they do believe that, let me tell them about Paul Whitters, a 15-year-old boy from my city, who was shot by a rubber bullet fired by the RUC on 15 April 1981. His file was finally released a couple of weeks ago, but half of it has been redacted and withheld until 2059. What could possibly be in that file that people need to be worried about?

Forty years ago today, Julie Livingstone, a 14-year-old from Lenadoon in west Belfast, was hit and killed by a plastic bullet fired from a British Army vehicle. Her file has been closed until 2064. What is the justification for that? How does anybody think that we are going to get to the truth by politely asking the British state or the IRA to give it to us? Why do Joanne Mathers’ family have to wait for the IRA to give them the truth? She was 29 years old in 1981 when she was murdered by the IRA for collecting a census form, leaving behind her baby son. Jean McConville’s family had to wait decades to find out where the IRA had buried their mother. Why does anybody believe that any of the state or paramilitary actors will give the victims the truth that they so desperately deserve?

I understand that we need to move on, but if we do not deal with this properly, morally and decently, we are going to entrap future generations into dealing and living with this, and into a campaign for truth and justice that will go on and on. The way to make it stop is to get at the truth, and the only way to get at the truth, as we have learned, is through proper judicial investigatory processes. That is the only way we will ever get to the truth. As uncomfortable as all of that is, that is the truth, as we have learned.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): We now go, not by video link but by audio link only, to Philip Dunne.

7.2 pm

Philip Dunne (Ludlow) (Con) [V]: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. My apologies: my internet crashed a little while ago, so I am grateful to you for letting me participate orally.

I am pleased to be able to contribute to the debate, the day after the Prime Minister has confirmed that the country will move to the next stage in the relaxation of restrictions on Monday after 14 months of covid-dominated disruption to our daily lives, and in the week after a seismic set of mid-term elections showed such strong waves of support for the Government, not just across most of England but with gains in Scotland and Wales and the blue wave, through which I am pleased to welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Hartlepool (Jill Mortimer) to these Benches.

The focus of the Government's programme is the delivery of manifesto commitments at the general election 18 months ago, meeting the aspirations of people across every part of Britain, including in rural areas that have so often been left behind. The levelling-up agenda needs to reach beyond Whitehall, and not just to the great urban centres of the north and the midlands but to rural communities everywhere. I was pleased to see the publication before Easter of the rural-proofing policy paper, and I will look for those principles to be applied to the 30 Bills outlined in the Gracious Speech as they pass through this House.

Before I turn to the main thrust of my remarks, I would like briefly to welcome the health and care Bill, which will build on the new ways of working brought in to cope with the pandemic, to improve outcomes for patients by focusing on prevention and closer collaboration within the NHS and with local authorities. On social care, however, we must make progress during this Session to develop a long-term plan and then legislate during this Parliament, as other hon. Members have said. The current funding mechanisms are putting real pressure on the families of those who require residential and domiciliary care, as well as on local authorities, whose budgets are increasingly dominated by the cost of providing care.

I particularly welcome the procurement Bill, as a former Minister with responsibility for procurement in the Ministry of Defence and the Department of Health. It will allow the public sector deliberately to buy British where that makes sense and represents value for money. We could not do that, even for food and drink, when subject to EU procurement rules.

I want to focus my remarks on environmental measures, including the focus on green jobs as the economy recovers, on which the Committee I chair will soon be making recommendations to the Government. The animal welfare provisions are welcome and will deliver on specific manifesto pledges.

I particularly welcome the reintroduction of the vital Environment Bill—a casualty of covid, which prevented its passage in the last Session. It establishes a new overarching regulator for the environment following Brexit. I am pleased that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has set up the new Office for Environmental Protection in shadow form to start undertaking its work.

The main issue that I wish to welcome is the Government's announcement that they will introduce three amendments to the Environment Bill to take forward the principal objectives of my private Member's Bill, the Sewage (Inland Waters) Bill—another casualty of covid, as its Second Reading was deferred five times and it ran out of parliamentary time in the last Session. The Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my hon. Friend the Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow), has shown admirable determination to support me and the 135 other Members across the House and the almost 45,000 members of the public who signed a petition to end sewage pollution to address the truly shocking state of our sewage and drainage infrastructure.

The spotlight of data transparency has begun to reveal the state of water quality in our rivers. On 31 March, the Environment Agency published the astonishing admission from water companies, detected by monitoring equipment progressively installed in the past few years at sewage treatment plants and other drainage assets, that raw sewage was discharged into our rivers on more than 400,000 occasions for more than 3 million hours during 2020. Much of that was done within the limits permitted by the Environment Agency. In effect, the water companies have been licensed to spill.

The reasons for that are complex, but they reflect a lack of adequate investment in our drainage infrastructure to keep pace with housing and commercial development since the 1960s. The consequences for the aquatic environment and the species reliant on our waterways are increasingly devastating. I do not have time to go into the causes and effects, but I am genuinely delighted that the Government have adopted the principles of my Bill, and I shall monitor its progress carefully on Report in this House and during its passage through the other place.

I was also pleased to hear the Prime Minister highlight the role of a new infrastructure bank in levelling up investment to modernise the country's infrastructure. There will be plenty of opportunities to help to fund creaking and leaking sewage and drainage infrastructure, which is very reliant on the legacy of our Victorian forebears. Levelling up needs to accommodate digging down if we are to improve water quality and meet the binding environmental targets. I look forward to scrutinising the implementing legislation for those targets, to which the Government committed today.

While we debate a programme of legislation for the next 12 months, it is understandably difficult to lift our eyes to targets set for at least three Parliaments from now, but the actions taken by the Government now will

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be crucial to how and whether we can get back on track to meet their ambitious interim target for emissions reduction, announced as our nationally determined contribution for the COP26 conference this November. The draft statutory instrument setting the level of the UK's sixth carbon budget for the period from 2033 to 2037 was laid shortly before Prorogation and must be put to the House for approval by the end of June. It envisages a 78% reduction in UK total emissions by 2035, compared with the 1990 baseline.

There is no greater environmental protection target than the one the House will shortly be invited to agree. It does not require primary legislation and so was not in the Gracious Speech. The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, my hon. Friend the Member for Saffron Walden (Kemi Badenoch), recently told the Environmental Audit Committee that the Government cannot spend their way to net zero. I happen to believe that while there is a place for legislation, we cannot rely on legislation to achieve net zero. The strategies and measures to be published by Ministers in this Session ahead of COP26 will be crucial in setting the policies required to deliver climate change targets over several Sessions to come.

We should also look to the net zero review by my right hon. Friend the Chancellor of the Exchequer for how he plans to balance as equitably as possible the contribution of households, businesses and public funds to different elements of the transition to net zero. To paraphrase a renowned Finance Minister from another age, the Government's objective must be to secure the largest possible reduction in emissions with the least hissing.

7.10 pm

Stephen Farry (North Down) (Alliance) [V]: I want to start with the topic of legacy and, in doing so, reference the outcome of the inquest into the Ballymurphy massacre, which was announced today.

The Ballymurphy families have received complete and utter vindication. They have been on a long and tortuous path in seeking justice, which they have pursued with immense courage and dignity. Not only were the victims completely innocent and the use of force utterly without justification, but the families have had to put up with the libel that the victims were IRA gunmen.

Even in the most challenging of circumstances, those deaths should never have occurred. There is a need now for the UK Government to reflect on the role of their predecessors, both in terms of how the massacre was able to take place and how it was handled afterwards. More immediately, there is a need for the Government, through the Prime Minister, to give an unqualified apology to the families. It should be recalled that the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, gave such an apology in the immediate aftermath of the conclusion of the Bloody Sunday inquiry. I am particularly disappointed that the Prime Minister in the House and, indeed, no other Government Minister has taken the opportunity today to go on the record in response to the inquiry outcome. All we have seen is a response from a Government spokesperson. That is shameful and not good enough.

The timing of the announcement of a legacy Bill, especially one so controversial and disputed, on the same day as the Ballymurphy inquest outcome was deeply careless and insensitive. While there is rightly a focus today on the Ballymurphy families, many others across Northern Ireland and across these islands—from all backgrounds and all walks of life—are seeking truth and justice. The proposed Bill in the Queen's Speech today is flawed in process and substance. We already have a legacy process agreed by the UK and Irish Governments and most of the Northern Ireland parties in the form of the Stormont House agreement. While far from perfect, it has the potential to deliver outcomes for truth and justice. As recently as January 2020, the Government gave a commitment to the implementation of that agreement through the New Decade, New Approach agreement. What has changed?

The Government's approach seems to be framed through the lens of addressing the false narrative of vexatious investigations. Indeed, Ministers are unable to give any such concrete examples. With this approach, we end up with a legacy process that starts with addressing one perceived problem, and then bolted on is whatever else we need to get there. The effect of the proposals will be to close off the route to any prosecutions. That would apply not just to Army veterans, but to republican and loyalist terrorists. Is that a price that colleagues are willing to pay? I am afraid that a number of Members are engaging in wishful thinking if they believe they can have one without the other.

Furthermore, it must be recognised that for every veteran who wants to see an end to all prosecutions, there is another who does not wish to be equated to a terrorist and who does not see the need for protection from the law. I ask the Government to make it clear that they will not proceed without buy-in from the Northern Ireland political parties and the Irish Government.

I want to touch on a number of other themes. The Prime Minister has been talking about the nature and quality of the Union of the United Kingdom. Let me be clear: if that Union is defined by English nationalism and populism, it will not last. A majority of people across the UK and in Parliament have imposed a hard Brexit on Northern Ireland, with a large degree of indifference to the consequences. The Northern Ireland protocol is there as the minimum required to address the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland, and to protect the Good Friday agreement, but it is a blunt instrument. The focus must be on practicalities: not scrapping the protocol without a genuine or plausible alternative, but getting as many flexibilities and mitigations as possible. Yet you can only get so far in trying to square a circle.

A fundamental consideration must be that the nature of Brexit in trade and co-operation agreements, and the degree of divergence from the European Union, must be reassessed. The greater that divergence, the greater the impact of the protocol and the damage to Northern Ireland. The UK can, through the trade and co-operation agreement, and as a sovereign country, seek to negotiate a bespoke veterinary agreement with the European Union, as many other countries around the world have done. That would not only help Northern Ireland economically, but ease some of the current tensions we are witnessing. Moreover, it would help the whole UK agri-food sector.

We must also be mindful of increasingly substandard and flawed democracy. Devolution settlements have been undermined, with powers restricted and decisions taken over the heads of the respective Assemblies. Standards of openness, transparency and accountability are increasingly being broken with seeming impunity. Civil liberties are being increasingly compromised, and I am particularly concerned by the powers in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. We do not yet have elective dictatorship, but we need a democracy that is based on rights, the rule of law, and checks and balances. In that regard, I am especially concerned at the attempts to undermine judicial review.

We do not need a culture war, but we are seeing too much populism from the Government, and the demonisation of various “out” groups. The Government’s plans for immigration are particularly toxic and pernicious in that regard. Experts estimate that, as a result of climate change, between 25 million and 1 billion people could be forced to leave their homes by 2050. Governments such as that of the UK must lead the way in supporting countries that are already suffering loss and damage.

Finally, I want to focus on climate change and the need for a green new deal. Despite the rhetorical commitment to the delivery of net zero by 2050, the Government do not have the policies and programmes in place to achieve that. As a co-signatory of the Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill, I am deeply disappointed that the Government have chosen not to advance such legislation. A Bill that establishes a statutory framework for the bold, joined-up change that is necessary to fulfil the UK’s international climate responsibilities and to facilitate transition to a zero-carbon economy is greatly needed. Such a Bill has been drafted by climate and ecology experts and has the backing of more than 100 MPs, representing all Opposition parties. It has major public support.

Emerging from the pandemic, we will face a weakened economy, significant job losses and more entrenched inequalities. Time is running out to tackle the climate emergency, yet in doing so we could also build a future that we not only want, but need. We should learn the lessons from the past year, build a new society, invest in thousands of green jobs, and transform our economy to be both sustainable and equitable. Throughout history, periods of difficulty have sparked incredible change, from the new deal in the aftermath of the great depression, to the birth of the welfare state and the NHS after the second world war. We should be thinking and training big, and we need a recovery plan that better protects us in future.

Any new deal this time must be a green new deal, and any economic recovery stimulus must be for a green recovery. Experts increasingly stress the need for major investment in a green recovery, because addressing the climate emergency goes hand in hand with economic and social transformation. The Chancellor’s national stimulus, while significant, is not on the same scale as that of other G7 members. While I welcome the Government’s increased focus on skills, that must be channelled into supporting a green new deal. A green new deal could help us to create thousands of secure green jobs, extending our economy and reskilling workers. We must preserve our planet for future generations, and build an inclusive, ethical society for everyone.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): My plea for people to take about eight minutes has not worked, so after the next speaker I will impose a time limit of eight minutes.

7.20 pm

David Mundell (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It will not surprise you that I wish to focus on the impact of the Gracious Speech on Scotland in the context of last week’s Scottish Parliament elections. However, before I do so, I want to make two other points, one of which is directly related. As we all know in this House, elections always involve winners and losers, and the loss of my former colleague John Scott, the MSP for Ayr for the past 21 years, by just 170 votes, was keenly felt across the Scottish Conservative family. John had been Deputy Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, a Committee Chair and a Front-Bench spokesman, and he was an assiduous constituency Member. He will be much missed right across the Parliament.

May I also welcome the measures in the Gracious Speech to ban conversion therapy, an issue on which I have campaigned, cross-party, along with many other colleagues, and express the hope that such measures can be brought forward in conjunction with the devolved Administrations, so that we can have a uniform approach to this abhorrent practice across the UK? I will certainly be highlighting the need for that during the consultation.

Turning to Scotland, I particularly welcome the Government’s practical commitment to the Union in the Gracious Speech and look forward to the transport infrastructure investment promised to improve connectivity within the United Kingdom, which is needed nowhere more than on the A75 in my constituency, a key route between England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This Government’s commitment to working constructively with the Scottish Government for the benefit of the people of Scotland has been evident throughout the pandemic, not least in the vaccine roll-out. It was evidenced again in recent days by the Prime Minister’s initiative in bringing together the UK Government and the devolved Administrations to work together to fully overcome the pandemic and plan for recovery. That is where Nicola Sturgeon’s laser focus should be, not on talk of another divisive independence referendum.

Despite the outrageous assertions we have heard from the Westminster leader of the SNP here today, the real story of the election on 6 May in Scotland was, as Alex Massie highlighted in today’s *The Times*, the incredible success of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party. We returned 31 MSPs and gained more than 100,000 additional votes to deliver our highest ever share, and we stopped the SNP majority, just as we promised the voters we would. More than that, we proved that the 2016 election was not a fluke, or solely down to the unique personality of Ruth Davidson. The Scottish Conservatives are Scotland’s second party and the main Opposition.

The Scottish people have voted to elect a Scottish Parliament without an overall majority. They could have given the SNP the majority that the nationalists themselves set as the test for another referendum, yet instead they have sent a strong message that people in Scotland want parties to work together now in the national interest of managing the coronavirus pandemic

[David Mundell]

and delivering our economic recovery. The Scottish Conservatives will work constructively with all parties to rebuild our country.

Of course, as after all recent elections in Scotland, we are now told that every single person who voted SNP was doing so to bring about independence and another referendum. It is strange, then, that despite the SNP registering the slogans “Vote SNP for indyref2” and “Both votes SNP for indyref2” as planned ballot descriptions with the Electoral Commission for last Thursday’s election, it instead used “Nicola Sturgeon for First Minister”. So the SNP literally removed indyref2 from the ballot paper when that could have been put on it and left no room for doubt.

Of course, it is clear why the SNP did that—so that it could claim that those people who responded positively to Nicola Sturgeon’s handling of coronavirus could have their vote used to support independence when that was never their intention. Indeed, Nicola Sturgeon told Glenn Campbell of BBC Scotland only last Tuesday that people should of course vote for her if they wanted her leadership but not the distraction and division of another referendum. How disappointed such people must have been when, even before all the votes were counted, the SNP again pushed its divisive plans for a second independence referendum. We have heard it here again today, and I think we are going to hear more of it. Not only is this the wrong priority for our country; it is a betrayal of every voter who supported the party out of a desire for leadership through the pandemic and into recovery. The SNP has no moral authority to hold a second referendum. It failed its own test to secure a majority and has been left as a minority Government.

Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con): Is it not the case that more people voted for pro-Unionist parties in the recent election than for separatist parties?

David Mundell: In the constituency ballots, that is indeed the case, but the point I have just made is that many people who voted SNP did so on the basis of the handling of the pandemic, not in a call for an immediate independence referendum. That is why the SNP now needs to listen to the Scottish people and focus on getting our country through this crisis.

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I am very much enjoying the right hon. Gentleman’s speech, as always when he makes these points, but I remind him that the Conservatives lost two seats in the constituency vote. Perhaps he could outline to the hon. Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew) exactly what happened in the list vote and which of the groups—the pro-independence referendum parties or the anti-independence parties—won that one.

David Mundell: I know that the hon. Gentleman does not really want to focus on the election result because, in reality, it was a failure for the SNP. Only weeks ago, the SNP was riding at 58% in the polls, and we were told that 78 MSPs would be returned; he was quoting those polls in the House on a regular basis. The SNP moved forward by one seat—that is what happened—and that is not, in my view, a landslide or a major change in the political environment in Scotland.

The Scottish Conservatives will continue to oppose nationalist plans for a damaging referendum that could wreck our recovery. However, my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross) has made it clear that, over the next five years, the party he leads will not just be a party of no to indyref2. For the last two Scottish Parliament elections, the Opposition have not been so seriously contending to be in government. In 2026, after two decades of SNP government, the Scottish people deserve the right to choose a real alternative and end the obsession with independence.

Strong as the result was for the Scottish Conservatives last week, starting from now, we are on the long road to becoming a broader movement and building Scotland’s real alternative to the SNP. My hon. Friend the Member for Moray will lead a patriotic Scottish party that has at its heart a belief that Scotland best succeeds and prospers by working within the United Kingdom. We will continue to be a strong Opposition at Holyrood while aspiring to be an ambitious Government dedicated to growing our economy, restoring our schools, rebuilding our communities and supporting our NHS. Today I say to anyone in Scotland who shares our dream of removing the SNP from power and delivering a real alternative focused on the priorities of the people of Scotland, rather than a divisive referendum: join us in the Scottish Conservatives on that journey.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): We now have a time limit of eight minutes.

7.29 pm

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): It is a joy to follow the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell), first because I agree with his point about the importance of developing the A75. Not only is it dangerous, but it is a vital link between GB and Northern Ireland. Secondly, I support his strong case for the Union, because of course just as Northern Ireland is better off within the Union, so Scotland is better off within the Union. The reaction to covid, and the resources that both countries got as a result of the decisions in this Parliament to combat covid, is an indication that neither could have survived, and neither could have come through this pandemic, without the support of the Government here at Westminster and without being part of the United Kingdom and having the resources of the United Kingdom.

As we move from the pandemic and tackling covid to recovery, it is equally important that the Government recognise that if they are going to cement the Union, there must be clear evidence that in that recovery programme, in the levelling-up programme, all parts of the United Kingdom are given the attention that is required to ensure that that economic recovery is effective, and that the businesses that have been damaged by restrictions, the people who have lost jobs as a result of those restrictions, find themselves given opportunities.

In Northern Ireland, the difficulty of course is that part of the programme that the Government outlined in the Queen’s Speech today will be faced with difficulties because of the Northern Ireland protocol. First, the Government said they will support industries where there is a national priority, but Northern Ireland remains under the EU single market rules. Any support that the Government are likely to give to businesses in Northern

Ireland can be challenged—and will be challenged, I have no doubt—by the Government of the Irish Republic, businesses in the Irish Republic and the European Commission.

Secondly, the Government said they want to ease regulations, but that will have an even greater impact because, of course, since Northern Ireland is under the protocol—a monstrous decision to remove all democratic control of laws in Northern Ireland and place it in the hands of Brussels—any UK-wide relaxation of regulations cannot therefore apply to Northern Ireland; and the same goes for any advantages of deregulation, which I believe is right in many instances.

To give one example, I welcome the Government's commitment to improved animal welfare, and I hope they will stop the export of live animals to the continent because of the suffering that that causes. However, those rules could not apply to Northern Ireland, because we will still be subject to EU regulations on the export of live animals. I could give lots of other different examples.

The first thing the Government must address is the protocol. If we are going to have an equal chance in the levelling-up agenda, Northern Ireland must not be economically and democratically disadvantaged by the imposition of Brussels rule, which we are left with as a result of the protocol.

The second thing that I want to discuss is the commitment that the Government have made to setting “binding environmental targets”. I know that, ahead of COP26 in Glasgow, the Government are engaging in international virtue signalling, but there is no point in setting such targets unless they spell out what the impact will be on the people. I noted that the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) said in her speech today, “We can reduce CO₂ emissions and still have economic growth; we have done that.” The truth of the matter is, of course, that we have reduced CO₂ emissions by divesting ourselves of many of our heavy and energy-intensive industries, such as steel, aluminium and many others. It is not that the CO₂ emissions have ceased; we have simply moved them to another country.

If we are going to set targets to reduce CO₂ emissions, the Government must spell out how they are going to do that. Does more renewable energy mean that we add to the £12 billion a year that electricity consumers pay in their electricity bills for renewable energy subsidies? Does it mean greater restrictions on people's ability to fly because we make flying—one of the big producers of CO₂—more expensive? What impact will that have on people's ability to go on their annual holiday? Does it mean we insist that people have more expensive ways of heating their houses? It is estimated to cost £20,000 to invest in heat pumps and so on to make a house energy-efficient. Are consumers going to pay that? The Committee on Climate Change says we will have to eat less dairy products and meat. Are we even going to tell people what their diet should be? If we are going to set these targets, then the Government have got to be honest. They cannot simply set a target and not spell out how it will impact on people's choices and freedom, and what we would regard, in a free society, as the ways in which people can make those choices.

The Prime Minister said that he wants to put rocket fuel into the economy after the pandemic. I hope that it is rocket fuel and not a damp squib. My fear relates to

issues about the Union. If the Government do not deal properly with the levelling-up programme and the divisive impact of the Northern Ireland protocol, as well as the impact that that has on Scottish nationalism, then he will not achieve that objective. If we continue to pursue these high-level climate change CO₂-reducing targets, are we going to find more and more that people's personal choices are affected, that fuel poverty increases as energy bills go up, and that we chase away energy-intensive industries and lose jobs? If we are going to move in that direction, I believe we do not have a Government who are free market, free choice and pro-Union, but a Government who act against all those fundamental principles of the Conservative party. That is why I want to see, and why I believe it is important that we see, the detail of the Queen's Speech.

7.37 pm

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): I welcome today's Queen's Speech and the measures that were announced. While the occasion was a shadow of what it normally is, the one constant was Her Majesty the Queen, in spite of grieving the loss of her husband, the Duke of Edinburgh. I congratulate my hon. Friends the Members for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara) and for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher) on the way that they proposed and seconded the Gracious Speech.

No sooner had we had the election on 12 December 2019 than the world and our nation were hit by the coronavirus pandemic. Thank goodness we have left the European Union. In spite of all the prophets of doom and gloom, the vaccination programme continues to go well, which it certainly would not have if we had signed up to the European programme. Yes, in the fullness of time there must be an inquiry into the pandemic. Just as importantly, we need to find out—or the world needs to find out—how the nightmare started in the first place. I am also very pleased that the Gracious Speech addressed commitments to deal with the impact of the pandemic on public services.

Naturally, I am delighted with the Conservative party's performance at every level in the recent elections. In Southend we gained three seats, making us overwhelmingly the largest party. Last night, I was outside the official residence of the mayor of Southend, Porters for the unveiling of the new flag post and the illumination of the building. I pay tribute to the outgoing mayor, Councillor John Lamb, and his wife Pat, who have had a challenging year but have raised money for the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and for prostate cancer. I wish the new mayor well when she is installed next week.

Turning to the details of the Gracious Speech, I welcome the commitment to continue to

“protect the health of the nation, continuing the vaccination programme”.

I am delighted to learn that the NHS will

“innovate and embrace technology. Patients will receive more tailored and preventative care, closer to home.”

It is good to hear that we will be

“pioneering new treatments against diseases like cancer”,

and I am really pleased that the Government have committed to

“support the health and wellbeing of the nation”,

[*Sir David Amess*]

particularly with regard to mental health. I hope that they will soon share a draft mental health Bill that ensures that users' views and choices are respected. I am pleased that there is an emphasis on early detection and coping strategies, and I was very pleased that the Gracious Speech in 2019 included a promise to reform the Mental Health Act 1983—let's get on with it.

I absolutely understand what a difficult issue social care reform is to deal with, but I hope that the Government act on their manifesto and fix the social care crisis by developing and implementing a clear plan to give every older person the dignity that we very much think they deserve. I have constituents who rely on the carer's allowance and whose elderly parents have dementia. As if the stress and worry about their parents' health were not enough, they are also concerned about losing their family principal private residence on paying for dementia care. I hope that the Government will ensure that no one who needs care will have to sell their home, and that cross-party talks take place to tackle the adult social care issue, as promised in the manifesto. There is a disparity between the fees that care homes charge for residents who are funded by the council and for those who are self-funded, and it needs to be addressed.

I am delighted that the Government “will strengthen the economic ties across the union”.

We are so much better together, as we have heard in previous speeches. Whatever commitments are made in the Gracious Speech, the Government must certainly ensure that the public finances are returned to a sustainable path. In so doing, I am pleased that we have committed to “help more people to own their own home whilst enhancing the rights of those who rent.”

As chairman of the all-party parliamentary fire safety and rescue group, I welcome the draft Building Safety Bill, a profoundly important step towards remedying the faults of the building safety regime. We need to ensure that leaseholders are not left to pick up the pieces of the broken building safety system, and that we continue to have dialogue with the new Building Safety Regulator to oversee building safety for higher-risk buildings. There must also be regulation of construction products, with third party certification so that the public have confidence in their safety and quality.

I welcome the legislation that “will support the voluntary sector by reducing unnecessary bureaucracy and releasing additional funds for good causes”—a subject that I intend to touch on in my Adjournment debate tonight.

I am absolutely delighted that “Legislation will also be brought forward to ensure the United Kingdom has, and promotes, the highest standards of animal welfare”—

wonderful news for the animal kingdom. Perhaps one of the greatest recent successes is the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021. I am delighted that the maximum sentence for animal cruelty offences has increased from six months to five years, which should, I hope, reduce the incidence of animal mistreatment and pet theft.

I also hope that the Environment Bill will make legislative changes to our natural world that will benefit animals. Now that we have left the European Union, we are free to put environmental principles into law and

introduce legally binding targets. I would like the Bill to include increased local powers to reduce coastal and ocean pollution; a control on the use of harmful pesticides, especially for bees; and a plan to work with the Department for Transport to combat harmful pollution from vehicles.

I welcome the announcement that the Government “will strengthen and renew democracy and the constitution”—my goodness, the Fixed-term Parliaments Act did not work well! The Gracious Speech also states:

“Legislation will be introduced to ensure the integrity of elections”—

I very much welcome that. It is ridiculous to have these unnecessarily long election campaigns. Having been a Member of Parliament for 38 years, I have—like others, I am sure—faced online abuse on Twitter, although I can handle it. As the ease with which people can stay anonymous online increases, so does the abuse. I do hope that the online harms Bill will comply with the Equality Act 2010

“in ensuring internet safety for all, especially for children, whilst harnessing the benefits of a free, open and secure internet.”

I note that the Gracious Speech states that “Ministers will deepen trade ties in the Gulf, Africa and the Indo-Pacific.”

In that regard, I have in mind particularly Qatar and the Maldives—I happen to be the chairman of both the all-party parliamentary group on Qatar and the all-party British-Maldives parliamentary group. I am pleased that the Government will continue to provide aid where it has the greatest impact on reducing poverty and alleviating human suffering.

In conclusion, we are told, as always, that other measures will be laid before us. It is my earnest hope that, next year, on the occasion of Her Majesty's platinum jubilee, we will not only unveil a statute of the Queen and a memorial to Dame Vera Lynn, but, yes, it will actually happen and Southend will be declared a city.

7.45 pm

Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op) [V]: It is an honour to follow the hon. Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess), who has been an MP since I was the age of two. I am grateful to be called to speak during this important debate, and it was wonderful to see Her Majesty in the Lords Chamber today highlighting these important issues.

As we start to recover from this dreadful pandemic and rebuild our society and economy, the role of Parliament has perhaps never been more important in determining the direction of travel for our recovery. This occasion is always an opportune moment for us in this House and in the other place to reflect on what we achieve and how we want to achieve it in the coming year and beyond. This year is a poignant time to reflect on where we are going.

I listened to the Prime Minister's speech earlier, and I welcome some of the measures that he announced. The ban on conversion therapy—a practice that is so desperately cruel and immoral—is long overdue, and I urge the Government not to delay in bringing that Bill to the House. Vauxhall has a long and proud history of supporting the LGBTQ+ community, and we have been waiting far too long for this to be made law.

I welcome the Government's focus on jobs and skills, but the devil will be in the detail. So many of my constituents became unemployed as a result of the pandemic. They come from a range of sectors, including retail, hospitality, tourism and the creative industries. Many lost their incomes almost overnight and were not eligible for any vital Government support. Will they be able to get their jobs back in sectors now having to restructure and downsize? Will the job opportunities be evenly spread across these sectors, and what about the long-overdue reform of zero-hours contracts and the gig economy?

The Prime Minister rightly prioritises the lifelong development of skills, but will our long-established adult education institutions, such as the historic Morley College in my constituency, founded in 1889 in Waterloo to support working men and women, be properly supported and funded to deliver on the Government's agenda? What plan do the Government have to tackle the structural inequalities and digital exclusions that prevent so many of our young people from accessing job opportunities in high-value, fulfilling careers?

Last week, I visited Archbishop Tenison's School in Oval and spoke to a group of year 7 students. Eleven-year-olds have faced such a difficult year in transitioning to secondary school from primary school, missing so much vital education during their last year. However, this group was so bright and ambitious, and it is so important that they have the access to all the opportunities so that they can fulfil their potential. This is what levelling up should mean.

Let us not forget that it was the public sector that kept all of us going through this past year, led by our wonderful health services, our local councils, the police, our schools and social services. There is nothing in today's announcement that will reward them for their hard work during the pandemic, including saving the life of our Prime Minister at St Thomas's Hospital, just a stone's throw away from Parliament. As the head of my union, GMB, said today:

"This is an historic missed opportunity at a time when unscrupulous employers are exploiting the pandemic to attack good quality jobs."

Finally, it is always welcome to hear the Government say what they want to do, and that they want to build more houses. We know that increasing supply is one of the tools we have in the box to solve this housing crisis, but what about the poor-quality, overcrowded homes that so many of my constituents are living in? They will not be able to afford any new homes. The recent fire at New Providence Wharf is a harsh reminder of the thousands of victims still living in buildings with dangerous cladding almost four years after Grenfell. There are no excuses: this is yet another missed opportunity by the Government to enshrine in law the right of leaseholders to not have to pay for mistakes they did not cause.

7.50 pm

Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger (Bridgwater and West Somerset) (Con) [V]: I am delighted to take part in this debate, because today—as you probably know, Madam Deputy Speaker—is Somerset Day, an event of such historical insignificance that it took a letter from the Secretary of State himself to remind me. Somerset Day, unfortunately, is a publicity stunt with no genuine history behind it. It was invented six years ago to offer credibility to the then leader of the county council—the one who today, I

am afraid, was waving a rather pertuse flag that shows an overweight dragon with blood pressure problems and a background of fluorescent custard.

We have had an interesting debate, and it was also interesting to listen to Her Majesty. As somebody who has been involved in the Commonwealth, I absolutely agree with the Government that we have to do our bit for overseas aid. I know that we have cut the budget, but we do so many other things: things to do with governance, with children, with education, and with healthcare, which we are seeing especially now. I am always grateful for the amount of time and effort that the Government put into the Commonwealth. It is a massively important organisation, as you know, Madam Deputy Speaker—one that has cross-party support and enormous support throughout the world.

This Gracious Speech has hit on some interesting issues. The first, for me, is jobs, because down here in the heart of Somerset we are building the Hinkley Point C nuclear power station. We have not stopped; we have continued on throughout the pandemic. We are also known for large distribution centres, which have carried on throughout the pandemic. We do an enormous amount of manufacturing—it has all carried on throughout the pandemic. We are therefore incredibly grateful for the money that the Government have made available to keep those businesses going and keep the wheels of commerce turning. On skills and learning, we have probably the best tertiary college in the United Kingdom, Bridgwater & Taunton, which does a phenomenal job.

However, I would just like to say a couple of words of caution. The first is about the rural deficit. If we really want to even up between rural, urban and whatever, we must put more money into rural communities. West Somerset, which I also represent, is by and large fairly poor. It is a massive area, made up of a national park, an area of outstanding national beauty, a coastline and, dare I say it, flood plains—you couldn't make it up. We need that money to keep us going, and thereby hangs a problem, which is, of course, planning. The Government are quite right to say that we need more houses. I do not dispute that; I agree. However, I would be interested to know where we stand on flood plains, national parks, areas of outstanding national beauty and areas that we should perhaps not build on, because they are parts of our heritage. That needs to come out in the detail; if it does not, I think a lot of people will worry.

There is one point that is not in the Queen's Speech, and I am really sad about that. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has had important legislation on planning announced today, as we know, but I wonder how much thought has gone into other problems. He has intervened, I am afraid, to say that he would like to prevent district councils in Somerset from holding a referendum. The district councils want to give the people of Somerset a voice about the plans to reform local government. I think we are all in favour of democracy, but the county council does not want the people to be asked—it wants to tell them. The county council believes that the Secretary of State will ignore the results of this referendum—he has said so—and accept the county's plans to form a giant, impersonal unitary authority. That is not in the spirit of what we have heard today.

[Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger]

This is becoming a very bitter battle indeed. The referendum has already had positive support from hundreds of district councils of every political persuasion. More Conservatives have voted to have a referendum than voted for the county. It will start next week, whatever the Secretary of State says, and it will cost considerably less than the £1 million already spent by the county, which has its own delivery team and which has 24 people in its press office—more than No. 10, intriguingly. The county will force through any change without any kind of vote. My right hon. Friend has offered the people an online questionnaire to fill in, but I am not sure that is democratic. There were no checks to ensure that only people in Somerset took part. It was, I am afraid, a shallow, trivial exercise that made a joke of democracy. If we treat voters like that, they will turn on us, as we all know and as we have seen over the last few days. Somerset may look true blue now, but the people of Somerset deserve fair play and will punish those who deprive them of it. We have seen it before. So happy Somerset Day to all of us, and I do spare a thought for the purple dragon that we are trying to make extinct because it deserves to be.

On my final note on planning, I cover the Somerset levels, and as you will know, Madam Deputy Speaker, 12% of my constituency went under water in 2014. I say to the Government—not just for my area, but for the United Kingdom—that flooding, because we are on an island, is devastating. It is terrifying because we cannot control it, and we certainly cannot stop it when it gets away from us. I would ask the Government to make sure that adequate resources, legally and legislatively, are put into the system so that we can defend—because defend we must—against it. The days, as was the case pre-2014, when the Environment Agency says we will have managed retreat have to stop. We cannot do this, because if we do a lot of our country will be under threat. We cannot ignore climate change but, equally, we cannot ignore the damage that flooding can do. The defences around the Hinkley Point nuclear power station are staggering, and rightly so, but I have seen the cost of doing these things, and I cannot afford to leave Somerset County Council to do them, because it will make a pig's ear of them. Therefore, I ask the Government to please look at this, along with the jobs, the skills and the rural updating, and also to make sure that places such as Somerset are properly covered by properly elected councillors, not by some supernumerary, out-of-touch, irrelevant bunch of people who really do not care. Long live the dragon, and may we slay the ones we do not like.

7.57 pm

Pete Wishart (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): I suppose there is something nice and elegant about following the great-great-grandson of Queen Victoria, the hon. Member for Bridgwater and West Somerset (Mr Liddell-Grainger), who is himself 339th in line to the throne. It would not be a speech from the hon. Member unless we had the council wars, and we could almost see King Ian leading the line and charging into the local authority he tells us about on a regular basis.

This must be just about the thinnest Queen's Speech of recent years. It is certainly the thinnest one I have had in my 20 years here. It was full of work in progress and things to be determined, and, in one case, the Government

still have to work out the details. I know that we do not want to overburden Her Majesty under current conditions, but she had to sit there for eight minutes and recite some 937 words, which meant that this was one of the shortest Queen's Speeches since the second world war.

This seems to be the great Johnson Brexit Government consolidating their place with the British people with a legislative programme that is about as palatable as diluted gruel and about as interesting as last week's dishwasher. It was a Queen's Speech whose stand-out features seemed to be voter suppression—actually trying to depress voter turnout at elections—and taking revenge on the judges they did not like during the Brexit process. Of course, it would not be a Tory legislative programme without some immigration measures just making life that little bit more miserable and intolerable for those in the most desperate need who are coming to our shores for some support, and of course the necessary muscle has to be injected just to ensure that there will be no further protests against all of this and things will get done as easily as possible for this Government.

This is a programme designed to expand the power of this Conservative Government and undermine all who may challenge them. It is a Queen's Speech that prepares the way for more austerity, a public sector pay freeze, cuts to universal credit, and a savings and efficiency review of public services. There is a procurement Bill that threatens our NHS in Scotland, but no employment Bill and no social care Bill. What is abundantly and absolutely clear is that there is practically nothing in this legislative programme for Scotland. To me, more than anything, this simply demonstrates that we are now living in different and diverse countries that are going in different directions and that require different priorities to secure the different futures that both our populations are calling out for. That is fine, as long as both our respective nations get what they want, so there is one Bill that I want to see brought through in the next three years, and that has to be the Scottish referendum facilitation Bill—the Bill that allows the Scottish people to secure what they voted for only five short days ago.

Let us have a cursory look to remind ourselves exactly what happened in Scotland just last week. We had an endorsement of Scottish democracy, with the biggest turnout that we have ever seen at a Scottish Parliament election. The Scottish people gave their verdict and it was as emphatic as it was overwhelming. We heard a little bit from the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell) about some of the details, but there were a few things that he probably did not feel were necessary to tell us, so I feel it is incumbent on me to remind the House of exactly what happened.

The Scottish National party secured 62 out of the 72 constituency seats available. We actually won three extra seats on the constituency ballot: two from the Conservatives and one from the Labour party. Just for completeness, the Liberal Democrats also lost one seat—on the list ballot. It was the highest number of constituencies ever won in a Scottish Parliament election. In fact, it was the highest number of constituencies ever won in any election in the United Kingdom, such was the whole overwhelming nature of that success. Had this been a Westminster election, we would have won 552 seats out of the 650, with a parliamentary majority of 454. Members should just let that sink in, so they can understand the scale of the victory that we secured last week.

Of course, the one that this Government like to tell us about is the list vote, because the Scottish Parliament votes in two ways—on constituencies and the list ballot—to give that proportional representation factor. Now, this is where the Conservatives got all their seats; they only got three on the constituency side. The list is where they got everything else. Thank goodness there is a PR election, because we need an Opposition in Scotland, and thankfully the Conservatives were able to secure that on PR. They have taken comfort from this, but it is cold comfort because, as I reminded the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale, for the first time ever in a parliamentary contest, parties that supported an independent Scotland secured a majority—a slender one, but still a majority.

This is all before we even get into the business that there are Labour supporters and Liberal Democrats who support independence. There might even be Conservatives who support independence. The result has to be respected and the Scottish people must secure what they voted for. How will this Government respond? Well, probably with their trademark chaos and confusion.

Over the weekend and this week, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster has practically been based in the TV studios of Scotland. He has been going around those studios, being as clear as mince. Let us see whether we can figure out a couple of things he has told us. He told us that it is possible for Scotland to become an independent nation. Great! We did not need him to tell us that; we know that we can become an independent nation if we choose to.

The other thing that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that was very curious was that this UK Government would not oppose a referendum Bill designed and delivered in the Scottish Parliament; they would not take it to the courts and would let it pass. But then he went and spoiled it by almost contradicting himself the next day. The Government are utterly paralysed over what to do in response to this dramatic victory for the Scottish National party. They do not know whether to clobber us, make things worse for the Scottish people and deny us our rights, or try to cuddle us. This is the tension that they are in just now. They have no idea how to respond.

Let me make a suggestion to the Government: let's get together. We have to resolve this, because we are now at about 50:50. This cannot go on year after year, election after election. The Scottish people are going to have to decide whether they want to remain in a Brexit Britain determined and designed by a Government they did not vote for, or whether they want to become an independent nation run by people who they directly elect and who will make the decisions about their future.

They call this the great levelling-up Queen's Speech; for Scotland it was the hollowing out of our democracy and the powers of our Parliament and a direct attack on the institutions that run our country. The UK Government have the United Kingdom Internal Market Act 2020 and the levelling-up fund, but the Scottish Government should be in charge of determining the priorities for spending in our nation, not the Conservative party, not the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and not the Prime Minister.

One thing was decided and determined in the recent election, and that was that the Scottish people must have their say about the future of our country. The only people who can make that decision are the Scottish

people themselves. We are going to have to sit down, work together and determine a way to take the matter forward. For goodness' sake, let the people decide.

8.5 pm

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): Although the hon. Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) is misguided, he is always entertaining so it is a pleasure to follow him, as it is to take part in this debate on the Queen's Speech. Of course, we await detail—those who have criticised the lack of detail have been jumping the gun, because the detail will follow when the Bills are published—and of particular interest, quite rightly, is social care, which the Prime Minister has promised we are going to tackle and I am confident we will.

It was a pleasure to note that much of the content of the Queen's Speech was to do with the Government's levelling-up agenda, which I fully support. In my constituency we are fortunate that levelling up began some four years ago: we were granted the first town deal when the Greater Grimsby town deal was established and it has been of great benefit.

I was pleased to hear in the Queen's Speech the talk of infrastructure. Although there is a wider context, I am not going to waste the opportunity of reminding Ministers of the two particular projects in my constituency that are in urgent need of attention. First, we need to eliminate the concrete surface on the A180, which causes no end of disruption to the lives of many residents. There is a cost involved, but I hope that the Minister will remind the Secretary of State for Transport that the money has to be found.

The other issue is my campaign for the restoration of a direct train service between Cleethorpes and London King's Cross. The service was cancelled by British Rail in 1992; we now have an opportunity to restore it at almost no cost. There are six daily trains between London and Lincoln, and one or two of those services could easily be extended to Cleethorpes at almost zero cost. Again, I hope the Minister will report back on that to the Secretary of State for Transport.

The A180 is particularly relevant because it is the main route into and out of the port of Immingham which, along with the rest of the Humber ports, has been granted freeport status, for which I had long campaigned. It is important to note that the bid from the Humber ports scored highly in every category. The steering group that has been established to guide the project through is eager to get the freeport off the ground and up and running within months. We were fortunate to have a visit from the Chancellor of the Exchequer a few weeks ago and we reminded him that we were on the starting blocks and eager to start. We need Government officials and the Department right behind us so that we can be up and running very quickly.

Let me turn to the proposals on planning. I agree that changes to the planning regime are needed. In particular, my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) and others have made the point that we have to ensure that the planning permissions already granted are actually delivered. That would prevent a lot of the tensions that build up when big planning applications are put in for further estates on the edge of villages. I urge caution in the way the Government proceed on that: we have to carry local communities with us and give them a voice that will actually be listened to.

[*Martin Vickers*]

I turn now to the debate about ID cards, voter registration and the like. I must confess that, until recently, ID cards were anathema to me and something that I would have opposed tooth and nail, because there is no doubt that they change the relationship between the citizen and the state. However, it is fair to say that public opinion has moved on. Staff in virtually every shop and office have passes, badges and ID and we need ID for fairly routine things, such as collecting a parcel from the post office. Certainly, showing ID when we vote is a small price to pay to ensure the integrity of our electoral system.

Law and order has always been particularly important to our constituents. I am pleased to say that my own local party chairman was elected as the Humberside police and crime commissioner last week, which is a tremendous result. I know that Jonathan Evison will prove to be admirable in the post. He will want to see robust and visible policing, which is what our constituents continually tell us that they want.

Let me mention immigration. Our constituents are quite prepared to accept controlled immigration, but they want to ensure that the Government have control over it, so we must be much more robust in our approach. I know that my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary is on side with that and will do all she can to push through the necessary legislation, which will certainly have the support of an overwhelming number of my constituents.

The important thing about last week's elections was that they showed that people notice what is happening in their local communities, and recognise the parties that identify with their particular priorities. I urge the Government and my colleagues to listen to the silent majority so that they can hear what most people want, rather than listening via the social media world, lobby groups and so on. Let me give one example. Members may have heard of Suggitts Lane in this Chamber because it has come up three times at Prime Minister's questions. I am delighted that, with my right hon. Friend's support, we are now getting closer to replacing the level crossing with a bridge. When I was out canvassing with our candidate in Suggitts Lane and the neighbouring area, it was quite clear that that is what mattered. It is a local issue and it is what mattered to people. They want that level crossing replaced with a bridge, so that they and their children or grandchildren can have easy access to Cleethorpes beach and its facilities.

We listened to the local community and, as a result, it delivered a Conservative councillor in the Suggitts Lane area for the first time in the existence of North East Lincolnshire Council, which goes back 25 to 26 years. The Government are identifying with the local people, and, where possible, listening to the silent majority. We now have a raft of policies that demonstrate our levelling-up agenda and that we want to ensure prosperity for all our constituents.

8.13 pm

Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP) [V]: Feasgar math, Madam Deputy Speaker. It is a great pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cleethorpes (Martin Vickers). He is a good Tory MP, I have to say, a fine man and a member of the International Trade Committee, which I chair. We are fortunate to have him

on the Committee. His courtesy and dedication are almost second to none. I will not damage his political career too much by calling him a friend, but safe to say I hold him in very high regard indeed.

Before I go much further, I would like to pay tribute on a personal level to the Queen. As we know, she is an elderly lady who has suffered a recent bereavement. We feel great sympathy for her, as we would for anybody in that situation, but we were still very impressed with her efforts today and the way in which she delivered the Gracious Speech; she is truly a woman with a sense of duty. If my late Irish mother, Clare, was alive, I am sure that she would be talking much about what the Queen had achieved today. Incidentally, my mother believed in an Irish republic, a British monarchy, and an independent Scotland. Some people might find those contradictory positions, but my mother spoke five languages and she did not find much difficulty in working all that out, and if we think about it, it is not actually contradictory at all.

The speech today was made against the background of the pandemic. It is a difficult situation for many across the world. I would like to quickly mention a constituent of mine who was a missionary in Ecuador, Father Colin MacInnes, who tells me that if he can get vaccines, he can get people to deliver them in Ecuador. With the mention of Ecuador, I am reminded of the actions in neighbouring Colombia today. We all must condemn the human rights abuses against protestors in Colombia. I am told that police dressed as civilians recently killed about 37 indigenous people. I say this to those in power in Colombia and elsewhere who behave like that: we see you, and the world witnesses what is going on.

Freeports were mentioned in the speech. My Committee was told recently by Ministers that there would not be a Bill, and it now looks like there will be a Bill. The one thing we would love to know is what the GDP gain is from freeports. We know that the GDP upshot from Brexit is not good: the UK is forgoing 4.9%, and it has not put in place any deal that might make something up. Indeed, the deals that it does have in place bring in mere pennies compared with the multiples of pounds that have been lost by Brexit. I include in that, of course, the American deal and the Australian deal, which is only one 20th of the American deal. The American deal itself is about one 20th of the damage of Brexit, if not more.

On the wider points, I agree with my hon. and learned Friend the Member for Edinburgh South West (Joanna Cherry) on the problems for the hospitality industry and fishing, particularly shellfish exports. She made some fine points, but time does not allow me to go deeply into them.

The subject of voting ID is about something that has a 0.00007049% problem—I think that is the statistic. What the Government are addressing is not a problem. We know what it is about, and the Government should be honest: it is a denial of democracy to many people. The age-old right of the Englishman to go and vote from his cottage or castle, uninterrupted by a bureaucrat—not from Brussels but from London—demanding to see his photographic ID is about to change. That is an awful curtailing of the liberty of the Englishman. Fortunately, it is not going to happen in Scotland, because we are soon to be independent. Of course, that is the biggest backdrop of the speech today.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Perth and North Perthshire (Pete Wishart) mentioned, the statistics for the SNP were truly remarkable in this election: 48% of the first-past-the-post vote. That is something that has not been achieved in more than 50 years—longer, in fact: such a victory at a general election has not been achieved since 1966. The SNP got 85% of the seats, which had never been achieved in the United Kingdom. We won the first past the post, and we also won the list. The three parties of independence—the SNP, the Greens and Alba—beat Labour, the Tories and the Liberal Democrats. The combined vote from the two—for those who disagree with it—was 2,685,805, versus 2,657,698, so the independence side won the election in just about every count.

Tories will dispute that. Some Scottish Tories dispute the facts and present all sorts of specious arguments against them. Well, those spurious arguments can be dealt with in one way: the word is “referendum”. Let’s have it. Let’s see how it gets on. Why would they be hiding from the people? Let’s have the referendum, and let’s see what the people of Scotland want.

I am reminded of the tweet by the leader of the Scottish Tories, the hon. Member for Moray (Douglas Ross), who said to voters on the eve of the poll:

“Just a few hours left to show the SNP’s indyref2 plan the red card.”

He was making an allusion, of course, to the fact that he is a football referee. Well, the red card was actually shown to the Tories, who got 22% to 23% of the poll. They are on a hiding to nothing, and the Scottish people are coming more and more towards independence.

I noticed that in *The Daily Telegraph*—not a paper that I pick up very often, I admit, but it came my way—Vernon Bogdanor had an article arguing for going different ways depending on a referendum result. Perhaps he was referring to the 2016 referendum, when Scots voted to remain in the European Union. I wear the lapel badge of Scotland and the European Union, not as a symbol of the past but a symbol of the future and what is yet to come. I am grateful for Vernon Bogdanor’s support, because he clearly means that Scotland should no longer be part of the United Kingdom, and that is the way things are going. We voted to stay in the European Union, and we were promised in 2014 that if we stayed in the UK, that would happen—we would stay in the European Union. Scotland is very much a European nation, and that is where we will find ourselves.

The health response to covid has been used as a reason why the Scottish Government cannot move towards independence. Well, we have had a general election in Scotland. We have also seen in the last week the UK Government managing to send gunboats to the Channel Islands at the height of a pandemic, so a lot of things can happen at the moment.

The Scottish Government’s health response will likely be over this autumn. We cannot allow the economic response to be shaped by Tories from Westminster that we do not vote for, who turn our society in ways we do not want. We are dealing with economic extremists when we talk about the Government at Westminster. They are extreme in everything they do, and in the light of European actions and movement, they are particularly extreme. There is nobody else like them in all of Europe.

We can see that from their voter ID policy, which they are borrowing from the crazies in America, and they should stop doing that.

One way or the other, we will have our independence. We will either have it in a referendum or, if that is blocked, we will have it in an election, either in 2026 or in one contrived before that. The Scottish people will speak at the ballot box, and they will vote for independence. It would be better if the UK Government were to behave nobly before that, because afterwards we do not want to see them embarrassed; we want to see them doing the right thing.

Finally, my cousin wanted to go and live in Italy but realised that she cannot because she is not fortunate enough to have an Irish mother, as I have. She said that the answer was independence before I could say it. People are telling me about independence before SNP politicians can, and that is how Scotland is changing.

8.21 pm

Virginia Crosbie (Ynys Môn) (Con): It is a privilege to speak in today’s debate ar ran pobl Ynys Môn—on behalf of the people of Ynys Môn—and it is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Na h-Eileanan an Iar (Angus Brendan MacNeil), who has an island constituency too. I entered politics to give a voice to those who have none and to try my best to make tomorrow a better day for as many as possible. I am proud to be part of the team who are making that happen, but we need more of the same, so I am delighted that this Queen’s Speech builds on the Government’s levelling-up agenda.

On Ynys Môn, that agenda is much needed. Ynys Môn has one of the lowest levels of gross value added in the UK and has seen the loss of significant local employers over many years. It has been marginalised, and every year it loses young people who leave in search of good jobs and secure employment. With each one who leaves, a little more of the heritage and our Welsh language, which we are so proud of, leaves too. It is my job to give my community a voice that this Government will hear.

Communities across Ynys Môn are tenacious and determined, but for years they have had no voice. They need a Government who will enable them to see the fruits of their determination. I am determined to be that voice and ensure that Ynys Môn gets its fair share and that my constituents across the island see the benefit. I am unshakeable in my tenacity for jobs, jobs, jobs, investment and training—all the things that are in this Queen’s Speech. It is manna from heaven for a champion like me who wants the best for those I represent.

This legislative programme is hard-wired for opportunity, sparking aspiration for our communities not just on Anglesey but across the UK. People want to know that the UK Government are an enabler in the covid recovery, that they can get training and jobs that are highly skilled, and that they can own their own home and have job security, and it is all in here in this Queen’s Speech.

The Prime Minister is right: we cannot go back to pre-pandemic days. We must do even better. Already on Ynys Môn, progress is happening. We are a hotbed of cutting-edge technologies, from marine energy businesses such as Morlais and Minesto to wind and solar developments, and Wylfa Newydd—the best nuclear site in the UK. Thanks to the UK Government, £4.8 million

[Virginia Crosbie]

will be invested in the Holyhead hydrogen hub, meaning jobs and investment. We also have leading research and innovation through Bangor University and Menai Science Park, and I am talking to companies that want to invest in Ynys Môn—companies that are excited about my bid for Anglesey to become a freeport. This is the beginning—the beginning of a momentous chapter for those communities left behind. Let us build, using this Queen's Speech as our guiding light.

8.24 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is an absolute pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Ynys Môn (Virginia Crosbie), who in the short time that she has been here has certainly made a name for herself as an excellent MP for her constituency.

I am grateful to be able to take part in today's debate on Her Majesty's programme for government. Can I say what an honour it is to be here today for the Queen's Speech and to hear Her Majesty's remarks? As always, I offer thanks to her and prayers for her continued health each day.

Although we have not yet had the information that we were looking for and cannot speak to the detail of the proposals, there are a few areas that I would like to highlight and seek some clarification on if possible. As the Democratic Unionist party spokesperson on health, I was pleased to see reference to changes to strengthen the NHS. However, I had hoped to see specific reference to the mental health needs that are rife across this nation—something that perhaps has not been mentioned today. Information from the Royal College of Psychiatrists shows that we are seeing record numbers of referrals to mental health services, with the most recent figures for December 2020 showing an 11% increase compared with the same time last year. The "UK Household Longitudinal Study" found that during the peak of the covid crisis average mental health distress was 8.1% higher. Looking towards the delivery of the five-year forward view for mental health, the Government have set targets that so far have not been achieved. NHS public data shows that two out of three extra posts are unfilled, so we have more pressure on this understaffed sector. I would be grateful if the Government would set out how they will seek to address this shortfall legislatively rather than aspirationally. In Northern Ireland—indeed, in my own constituency—we are facing a mental health crisis like we have never seen, and we must know that we can and will deliver better. I urge the Government to give this the priority that it warrants and designate a mental health Bill specifically to turn aspirations into legal obligations.

I am pleased that the Prime Minister referred to his commitment to a social care Bill. That is good news. In the weekend just past, I had a family approach me where the lady has advanced dementia. Her house is going to have to be sold and the family may go into debt to try to deal with these things. The right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) referred to this and I want to highlight it as well.

I also want to highlight the petition that is going about for increasing the moneys for carers. Those who leave good jobs and then try to take on the position of

carers in looking after family members find that they are on about £70 a week—a massive drop. I ask respectfully that the issue of increasing the wages for carers is looked at.

Another issue is the lost learning referred to in the Queen's Speech. I welcome that, because it is really good news, especially for those in early years. The Duchess of Cambridge has recognised that the lack of support for parents in this area is a huge issue. The effect of the pandemic on lockdown babies who have never attended a mother and toddler group, never learned to play and share with another child and never sung a nursery song in a group in a room has a huge impact that will carry into other years.

A teacher in my constituency who specialises in early years and reading has told me that she can tell the difference between a child who has been socially active and one who has not. She can tell when a child was read to regularly, and for those who have not been, it can take intense therapy to get this right. For the 14, 15 or even more months that have been lost, too many children will be impacted not only in learning their letters but in social behaviour and mixing. It is imperative that we make free-of-charge, safe classes available through every trust and even through willing faith-based groups hosting mother and toddler groups through the summer, when these things usually end. That is in the Queen's Speech, and it is good to see it, but we need to work with the voluntary sector to address the issue of lockdown toddlers before it becomes a crisis.

I also want to speak about the Union, which is vastly important. I am sorry that colleagues from the Scots Nats party are not here. My reading is that the polls were clear. The majority of people in Scotland said that they were not in favour of independence and the figures indicate that. A majority of seats for the Scots Nats does not mean that a majority of all the people in Scotland voted for them. There is a task for Government and us all to do to sell the good points of the Union for everyone in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. By doing so, we can hopefully convince our Scots Nats friends that their future does not lie in independence with the EU; it lies with us in this House and the great United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

I note that the Queen's Speech referred to strengthening economic ties through rail and bus links, but I do not see a terrible lot coming for Northern Ireland in that, so what is happening there? I have referred to the air passage to Northern Ireland and the importance of connectivity and a reduction in air passenger duty. We need to see those things.

I commend the Government for their proposed voter ID legislation. We have that in Northern Ireland and it has not stopped people voting. Indeed, it has given people identification for other purposes, such as travelling. With the ID cards, it turned out to be a small fee for a photograph and that was it. I am also pleased to see the welfare strategy and the commitment to having a carbon-neutral nation. That is good stuff in the Queen's Speech and things we should all welcome, and I am pleased to see them. It is important for the transport sector to deliver sustainable change. These are all good things, as is the commitment to human rights and a global effort to get 40 million girls across the world into school.

Finally, I will speak about the armed forces covenant being passed into law, the proposals for additional national insurance contribution breaks for veterans and the treatment of veterans in Northern Ireland. I assume that Her Majesty's reference to addressing the "legacy of the past" is directed at correcting the lack of progress in the last Session, but my party and I are very clear about what we were looking for. We were waiting with great anticipation for the work to bring into line all veterans, regardless of when and where they served—that is, in certain spheres of the world, but in Northern Ireland as well.

I ended the last Session highlighting the needs of Northern Ireland veterans, and I start this one in the same way. Veterans who served in uniform and operated legally, with honour, great courage and great fortitude, deserve to be treated with equality. I ask the Government to please do the right thing and bring forward legislation on this issue. Let us show that our moral and legal obligation extends to those who have served on every occasion and from every region of this great nation of ours, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. An assurance was given, and now is the time to see the evidence of it.

I thank the Government for the Queen's Speech and the programme they have set out, which seeks to bring us through covid to better times with the bounce for the economy that we are all looking for, and looks to what we can all achieve and enjoy together. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is always better together.

8.33 pm

Dean Russell (Watford) (Con): It is a true privilege to follow the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), who always gives such eloquent and heartfelt speeches. It is an honour, and I will do my best to follow him.

It is also an absolute honour to speak today. Watching the Queen's Speech earlier, one forgets that, just a few weeks ago, she sadly lost her lifetime partner. I remember that the last time I spoke here was to pay tribute to him. What the Queen often shows through her tenacity, her stoicism and her absolute belief in this country is something that came through in the speech today. There was a sense of optimism, a sense of hope and an absolute belief in the people of our great nation.

Over the past year, in the challenges we have faced—they may have seemed like impossible challenges at times—we have seen how our community across all our country and all our great nation came together to work together to save lives, to change lives and to support each other, whether that be the incredible work of the vaccination programme, helping carry bags of shopping for our neighbours, volunteering at local hospitals, or simply standing up and helping somebody who was in trouble.

I believe that the Queen's Speech showed that, because it was about levelling up people and levelling up opportunity for each individual in this country. It is not about saying that because you come from one part, you will get less. It is not about saying that, because you have a certain background, you should not have that opportunity to succeed. It is about saying that every single person, however diverse the thinking and however diverse our backgrounds, belongs to one equal nation. That comes back to the Union.

I am, proudly, the Member of Parliament for Watford, but I am also a United Kingdom Member of Parliament. The word that sings through that phrase is "United." We will consider our future over the coming years and decades, and we have the opportunity to build a stronger Union, through our work, our words and our efforts. Weakening that weakens us all as individuals, as nations, as a community.

Over the past year, especially as a member of the Health and Social Care Committee, I have seen the importance of our incredible NHS and care staff. I truly welcome the integrated approach that has been put forward to support our NHS and care staff. I truly believe that one aspect we must consider is the use of technology. Innovation came through in the Queen's Speech. Innovation in technology, health care, the way we look at our integrated systems and at the future will be something we can build on, not just for this country, but to lead as global Britain around the world. That health care approach looks not only, in some instances, at ancient systems and at how we have treated ourselves over the past 100 or 200 years, but at how we look at the future. That has to include mental health, and I am proud that this Government have invested huge amounts in mental health and wellbeing. That has been an absolute focus in my constituency over the past few years.

One way to ensure people's mental wellbeing is by them knowing that they will never be seen as second class for being a victim. For me, the measures on crime in the Queen's Speech are critical. We should not be a country in which the victim of a crime is seen as lesser than the perpetrator of crime. That goes back to the way we look at ourselves as a nation and as a community. Victims of crime need to be put first, and today's announcements will do that.

One aspect of that is ensuring we look forward in terms of skills. Skills are how we will not just level up this country, but power ourselves around the world. The way we look at each other and the opportunities will come from skills. The idea—it is rather archaic if we think about it—of saying that someone can get new skills only if they are young, seems rather crazy. The Queen's Speech provides an opportunity for us to state that, whatever age someone is, whatever background they have, and whichever part of the country they came from, they will be able to skill up, change their life, and improve their life and that of their family.

I am particularly proud that the Queen's Speech was optimistic. It was about hope and the future, and I fully endorse all its aspects. As the details come out over the coming weeks and months, we must, of course, scrutinise those details to ensure that we deliver on its ambitions on the ground, but the Queen's Speech is ambitious because it believes in us as the people of our great United Kingdom. It believes in my constituents in Watford, and in all of us. We need that hope right now, after a tough year. We need that light at the end of the tunnel, and I believe we are at the end of that tunnel. The vaccination programme has enabled us to do that, and we can look forward once again.

8.39 pm

Zarah Sultana (Coventry South) (Lab): In 1945, in the aftermath of the second world war, a transformative Labour Government were elected on a promise to win

[Zarah Sultana]

the peace. Instead of returning to the old, unfair and unequal society of the past, they promised to build a country for the future and for the people. They created the NHS, and built the welfare state and millions of council homes. They brought industries into public ownership, to be run for the people and not for private profit. They borrowed to invest, taxed the richest and set out to eradicate poverty and unemployment. They faced a country brought to its knees by war. It was a crisis like no other, but they rose to that challenge.

Today, as we emerge from the pandemic, we, too, face crises like no other. We face a crisis of public health, with a Government who let bodies pile high in their thousands and underfunded the NHS for a decade. We face a crisis of poverty, inequality and unemployment, with a Government who hand out billions in dodgy contracts to wealthy Tory donors but refuse to give working-class kids food in the holidays. And looming over us is a climate crisis that threatens the future of us all. This is not a time to tinker around the edges or return to the old, unfair and unequal society and economic model that got us here in the first place. It is time to match the scale of the challenges we face with an ambition like that which the Labour Government had in 1945.

That is why at the heart of this Queen's Speech should be a people's green new deal, a state-led programme of economic transformation to build a country that can not only avert the climate emergency, but truly be one that works for the 99%, not just the 1%. It is a programme designed and discussed by trade unionists, think tanks, activists and policy experts that would create millions of well-paid, unionised, skilled green jobs. It would do so by mass investment in green technologies; expanding and electrifying public transport; building electric vehicles, with investments in gigafactories in places such as Coventry; creating a national care service; and retrofitting the country's homes, cutting both costs and carbon. We would go from an economy controlled and run for profit to a society that is working for all of us. To do that, we need to bring industries into public ownership—rail, mail, water, energy and more—and we need to empower workers, which means repealing anti-trade union laws, so that the needs of many come before the greed of the few.

This programme could revitalise industries in Coventry, across the west midlands and across the country. It would kick start a green industrial revolution, building everything from electric cars to wind turbines. While we do that, we need to be tackling inequality, raising the minimum wage and ending poverty pay once and for all. We need to be giving our NHS workers a 15% pay rise, to make up for a decade of lost pay, and raising taxes on the very richest and the biggest businesses, with a windfall tax on corporations that have made obscene profits during the pandemic. A programme such as this can rise to the challenges we face. It meets the needs of the people and takes on the fossil fuel billionaires who are polluting our planet.

That is what a true people's Government would do, but it is not what this Queen's Speech is doing. Instead, it tries to take us back to business as usual—to the rigged economy of the past. Let us look at what is in it:

“reforms” to planning and the NHS. We have seen what Tory “reforms” mean. They mean cuts and deregulation, creating the

“next generation of slum housing.”

That is not what I am saying; it is what the president of the Royal Institute of British Architects has warned about the White Paper. Today, a Campaign to Protect Rural England branch has called the plans a disaster. Health academics have described the NHS White Paper as consolidating the “market paradigm” in the NHS. Although the Queen's Speech contains promised new laws for property developers and private healthcare companies, there is absolutely nothing about workers' rights. There is not a sight of the promised employment Bill. There is no ban on fire and rehire and no end to zero-hours contracts. There is nothing for more than 5.7 million people in low-paid or precarious work, nothing for the 4.2 million children growing up in poverty, nothing for the one in seven adults without access to the social care they need and absolutely nothing that comes close to tackling the climate emergency.

This is not building back better. This is building back for big business and bad bosses, for Tory donors and property developers, and while it is deepening economic inequality, it is also attacking our democratic rights. The Electoral Reform Society called the Government's voter ID plans “dangerous, misguided and undemocratic”. This is not about stopping voter fraud; it is about voter suppression and stopping young people, black and ethnic minority people and poor people voting. In short, that means people who are less likely to vote for this Government in the first place. If we do not like that, the police crackdown Bill represents an unprecedented attack on our right to protest, as groups such as Liberty have warned. If the Government get their way, not only will people be disenfranchised, but even our right to protest will be curtailed.

This past year, we have seen that it is not millionaire bankers or hedge fund managers who keep society going; it is our nurses, cleaners, teachers, shop assistants, taxi drivers and bus drivers. It is the working class in all our diversity. It is about time that we built a society run by and for them.

8.45 pm

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con): It is a great pleasure to speak on the first day of the Queen's Speech debate. I will focus my remarks on three areas that are of great interest to my constituents—housing, the environment, and the economic recovery after the pandemic.

The Government have a proud record on the environment. We were the first country to legislate for net zero by 2050. Since 2000, we have decarbonised our economy at the fastest rate of any G20 country. Since 2010, we have cut emissions by more than any other G7 country. What we have done with offshore wind is truly phenomenal, so it can be said, “If you vote blue, you truly get green.” However, there is more to be done, so I welcome the fact that the Environment Bill is back in the Queen's Speech. I welcome the fact that it sets ambitious targets in law, and that it cuts across all Departments, so that each has an environmental focus.

I am focused on electric cars—I am one of the Conservative Environment Network's electric car champions—so I am looking forward to June, and to hearing

about our transport decarbonisation strategy. I want it mandated that all new build homes and offices have electric vehicle charging points.

That leads me into my next theme—the economy. Most people in this House will agree that we need to build back our economy, we need to build back better and we need to build back greener. I represent a central London constituency, Kensington, and there is no question but that we have suffered hard during the pandemic. We have lost lots of commuters who would normally come into central London and lots of international visitors, both businessmen and women and tourists, and lots of our residents have moved out of London—temporarily, we hope.

It is important that we look to kick-start the London economy, and one way of doing so is with a focus on business rates, which need a fundamental review. Central London picks up a disproportionate share of business rates. Commercial property rents in my constituency are three times the national average, but the cash flow of a bakery in my constituency is not three times the national average. Two tiny boroughs in central London—Kensington and Chelsea and its neighbour, Westminster—make up 10% of all the UK’s business rates, so we need fundamental reform.

We have made great progress in dealing with the pandemic, and especially with the vaccine roll-out, so I would encourage the Government to start thinking about reconsidering the “stay at home” guidance, because we need people back in our cities. We need them to feel confident about taking public transport into our cities and going about their normal lives.

Another thing that I would like to see that would kick-start the central London economy is a review of stamp duty. Stamp duty levels are so high that they are preventing social mobility and preventing property transactions. One final request I would make for the central London economy is for our two international centres—Knightsbridge, which I represent, and the west end—to be included in the exemptions for Sunday trading. That would make a huge difference.

I want to move on to another topic that is hugely important for my constituency—housing. We need safe, good-quality housing that is in the right places and suitable for local communities, and I want to work on delivering that housing. The building safety Bill announced in today’s Queen’s Speech is crucial. It will implement the recommendations of Dame Judith Hackitt’s review, and it will transform our regime for building safety. We need to try to get that Bill enacted with a sense of urgency, and we also need to address and clarify the issues that many leaseholders are facing through no fault of their own.

I also want to talk about social housing. There is a lot of social housing in my constituency. I was delighted when the Lancaster West estate received just under £20 million from the Government to decarbonise the estate, which links the environment with housing. In our manifesto, we committed to a social housing White Paper. We have produced that White Paper, but we need to see more progress on it and we need to see it enacted. It was not mentioned by name in the Queen’s Speech, but I want us to continue the work on social housing to improve its quality and its regulation.

In my last minute, I want to touch on the planning Bill. There are good things in the Bill, including digitisation, the focus on carbon-neutrality and the focus on beauty in design. However, we need to finesse the Bill. There is no question but that my constituency needs more housing, especially more affordable housing, but we need to ensure that that housing is sensitive to our existing areas, particularly in my constituency, 73% of which is covered by conservation areas. The housing also needs to be sensitive to the skyline, which is very important. So I would ask that we really look at the detail of that Bill. I am concerned that if an area is delineated as a growth zone, there will be no individual planning applications. That is something that I am looking forward to working on.

In summary, there are great things in the Queen’s Speech. We need to work on other elements, but that is a task that I am relishing.

8.54 pm

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): May I begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Midlothian (Owen Thompson) on his appointment as SNP Chief Whip? I wish him every success in that role.

Queen’s Speech debates in recent years have coincided with days of great political importance in Scotland. In 2016, the debate coincided with the launch of the First Minister’s programme for government; in 2019 it clashed with the SNP conference; and this year we are in the aftermath of the Holyrood election, with new MSPs being sworn in on Thursday.

I extend my congratulations to my SNP MSP counterparts who were elected last week: Bob Doris for Glasgow Maryhill and Springburn, and Kaukab Stewart—the first woman of colour elected to Scotland’s Parliament—representing Glasgow Kelvin. We have lots of local issues and challenges to address; I hope that we can work on them together, whether in securing the future of the Maryhill library or in supporting the small businesses that are the backbone of our local economy in bouncing back from the pandemic. I also congratulate Pam Duncan-Glancy, who was my Labour opponent in the last two general elections and is now the first permanent wheelchair user elected to Holyrood. She will be a real champion for equalities and social justice.

The record turnout in the Holyrood election shows that it is primarily to the Scottish Parliament that our constituents look for progress on such vital issues. The step change in turnout has to be a sign of the permanent shift in political gravity that has taken place in Scotland. Much of the programme for government outlined by the Prime Minister today is in areas of devolved competency anyway. Whether or not the English votes for English laws procedures return post-pandemic, many of the Bills announced today will have little impact north of the border. In any event, they could not diverge more starkly from the progressive, reforming agenda promoted not just by the SNP, but by a majority of the parties elected to Holyrood last week. All but one of those parties are committed to developing a minimum income guarantee; all but one support greater public control and ownership of the railways and public transport; all but one oppose the construction of a new royal yacht.

For the first time last week, refugees in Scotland exercised their right to vote—compare that with the proposals in the Queen’s Speech to limit not just the

[Patrick Grady]

rights of refugees to come here, but the rights of all citizens to participate freely in elections! Commitments specifically in the SNP manifesto show what a fairer, more just Scotland can look like. Free dental care on the NHS—the cause that prompted Nye Bevan’s resignation from Government in the 1940s—is a priority. Laptops and bikes for all the kids who need them is good not just for them, but for the country as a whole, and is very different from the kind of pork barrel politics and propositions laid out by the Tory Government today.

The divergence between Governments goes beyond areas of devolved competence. In recent weeks, I have been contacted by hundreds of constituents concerned about the UK Government’s sweeping cuts to the aid budget, which are undermining any claim that this Government can have to global leadership, even as they prepare to host COP26. They are damaging the international development research co-ordinated at the University of Glasgow and other institutions across the country, and they will literally cost lives that no royal yacht, and certainly no Trident missiles, can save.

Constituents repeatedly express their concern about human rights abuses around the world. In Colombia, as many as 47 protesters and human rights defenders have been killed since 28 April, with widespread reports of abuse and arbitrary detention by the security forces. I hope that the Government will join the global condemnation and calls for action.

We desperately want to see Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe and other prisoners of conscience reunited with their families. Her freedom is one of the great causes of our time, and one that has been in my mailbox consistently since the 2015 election. That freedom is clearly achievable and this Government must do all they can to deliver it.

There has to be progress to a peaceful and lasting settlement in the middle east. The recent violence in Jerusalem is a tragedy, and Scotland’s First Minister has called for an end to that violence immediately. The UK Government must follow that example and show greater leadership in seeking to influence events in that part of the world.

Perhaps that is why people in Glasgow North and across Scotland increasingly look to Holyrood as the centre of gravity of political leadership, not only on devolved issues, but for the representation and implementation of their views on Scotland’s role in the world—a role that includes being a proud European country. Glasgow looks forward to welcoming world leaders to COP26, and we will not be afraid to highlight Scotland’s ambition to slash emissions and achieve a just transition, even as this Tory Government dither and delay.

If we want Scotland to speak with a clear, progressive and ambitious voice on the world stage, the best way to do it will be with a seat at the top table. When the mandate of the new Scottish Parliament is respected and the people of Scotland are given that choice, I believe that that is the choice that they will make—to build back better from the pandemic and tackle the climate crisis on an equal basis alongside every other normal independent country in the world.

8.59 pm

Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con): Now then. As we recover from the pandemic, this Queen’s Speech is just what the doctor ordered. I can tell you now that the residents of

Ashfield and Eastwood are absolutely delighted with the contents of the Queen’s Speech. This is the type of Queen’s Speech that actually justifies the why I and many of my colleagues won the red wall seats in 2019.

We are getting tough on law and order, we are getting tough on illegal immigration and we are winning the culture war. Our asylum system is broken, and the eagerly awaited sovereign borders Bill will ensure illegal immigrants cannot claim asylum if they have travelled through a safe country to get here. This is excellent news for genuine asylum seekers who do need our help.

Our brave ex-servicemen should not have to worry about getting a knock on the door 40 years after serving in Northern Ireland. We are going to fix that. They deserve better.

The media and the Opposition called our Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill controversial. Imagine that, Madam Deputy Speaker: a Bill that ensures the most violent criminals get locked up for longer; a Bill that ensures public nuisances like Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter are prevented from damaging property and disrupting public life; a Bill that sees sex offenders locked up for longer; a Bill that sees thugs who attack our emergency workers locked up for longer. There is nothing controversial here at all. This is what the British people want. This is what they expect, and I welcome it.

But I would like to see us go further, especially with antisocial behaviour from nuisance neighbours who make their neighbourhood a miserable place to live. Imagine coming home from a hard day’s work with the usual lot causing trouble, causing problems. There is excessive noise, swearing, threatening behaviour, abusive behaviour, a lack of reasoning, a lack of common sense. It sounds like a shadow Cabinet reshuffle to me, but this actually happens every single day in this country. I hope that, on top of this fantastic Bill, we can look at this very important issue.

The Environment Bill is good news. Even the Lib Dems, although they are not here, should be supporting it, because they do their bit to cut emissions by all travelling to work in one minibus.

The Labour party will most probably start banging on again about the NHS, but that ship has sailed for them. They are not trusted on the NHS or social care. Their legacy in Ashfield is a £1 million a week PFI debt on our hospital. Our brilliant NHS, or as we call it, our brilliant national health service, is safe in our hands. The Labour party, however, has its own NHS, which is the national hindsight service. This service is just over a year old and basically is a think-tank of Opposition MPs who have never spoken to anyone outside the Tea Room or Twitter. What they do is claim credit for every good thing that happens in our country, and when things go wrong, they just say, “I told you so.” This is a failing service, so its leader has leapt to another bandwagon, which is home decorations. While he was lurking about in John Lewis looking at wallpaper, our Prime Minister was up in Hartlepool talking to real people about real issues and his vision for the area, and winning elections.

Sir John Hayes (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): I am delighted that my hon. Friend is making such a robust speech in defence of Ashfield and our country. Is it not the truth that battles are not won, as

he put it, on Twitter or in the Tea Room, but up and down this country, and that this Government in this Queen's Speech are speaking for the silent majority who have been ignored or derided by the metropolitan elite for too long?

Lee Anderson: I thank my right hon. Friend for that intervention. He is absolutely spot on. It is always worth remembering—a little bit of advice for the Opposition—that it is the silent majority that wins elections. It is the silent majority that will win the next election for us. Another word of warning for the Labour party: if we carry on with Queen's Speeches like this one every year, the red wall seats will stay with us for a very long time. When they refurbish this Chamber, we are going to need extra Benches on this side of the House.

9.3 pm

Jacob Young (Redcar) (Con): Over the last year in Parliament we faced a crisis like no other in our living memory, yet we still achieved some incredible things thanks to the determination of this Government. The Prime Minister focused on the people's priorities. We have 11,200 more nurses in our NHS than last year, 9,000 extra police officers as part of our 20,000 target, and a new £4.8 billion levelling-up fund to support communities across the UK. We passed the Domestic Abuse Bill, the Overseas Operations Bill and the Counter-Terrorism and Sentencing Bill. We signed trade deals with more than 60 countries and supported workers and businesses through the pandemic with furlough and grants. We increased sentences for animal abusers from six months to five years. We established eight new freeports, including one in Teesside. We launched the vaccination programme—the most successful vaccine roll-out in Europe—and, of course, we got Brexit done. This is a Government delivering on the people's priorities, which is why we have seen this overwhelming endorsement from the public over recent days.

Turning to this Queen's Speech, as we mark Mental Health Awareness Week, I am proud that this Government are putting mental health at the heart of our plans for the NHS. The past 18 months have been incredibly challenging for many of us. We have all struggled with our mental health in different ways. That is why we are making sure that support is available when people need it and that anyone who struggles will be treated with dignity and respect when getting the help that they need.

When I was elected in 2019, I pledged to do all I could to cut crime and make our streets safer in Redcar and Cleveland. I am thankful to the people of Teesside, who have put their trust in our newly elected Conservative police and crime commissioner for Cleveland, Steve Turner, who got such resounding support, achieving over 50% in the first preference. The reason why the public are backing us on the police is that we are backing the police through things such as the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. We are also recruiting more police, with an additional 185 officers swelling the ranks in Cleveland as part of the Government's plans to recruit 20,000 new police officers across the country.

Tackling road and knife crime is a priority shared by the Government, as is making our justice system fairer for victims, and I am pleased that we are introducing a range of legislation that will do just that. Our measures deliver greater support for victims, tougher sentences for the worst offenders and extra funding to reduce

knife crime. We need that funding to go to the right areas, too, just like in Cleveland. This Queen's Speech shows that we are the party of law and order, putting victims first and serious offenders behind bars.

I also thank the Government for the announcement of the new legislation to ban conversion therapy so that it is finally considered as what it is: a crime. I recognise the need for consultation on legislation, but I say this as a gay Christian: please, let us just get this done. I urge Ministers to speed up any consultation process as much as possible so that victims of this horrific practice are finally recognised as such.

I welcome the Government's commitment to greater online protections from abuse to prevent bullying and intimidation on social media from unaccountable and anonymous trolls. Democracy has to be about sharing ideas and encouraging debate, but no difference in opinion justifies threats, abusive language or degrading comments. That is also why we must strengthen freedom of speech in our universities, to reintroduce proper debate, as is expected of our world-leading higher education system.

Protecting the debate of ideas is fundamental to protecting our democracy, but it is also critical to ensure a robust electoral system that gives citizens the right to vote and in a way that helps them to engage but prevents fraud. It is for those reasons that I welcome the electoral integrity Bill, where, for the first time, we will introduce ID cards for voting. However, I think we should go one step further and step away from all these confusing, frustrating voting systems. Our Parliament is elected on first past the post, and the only time that we have ever been offered an alternative, it was rightly rejected by the voters. We should move to do every elected office in this country through a first-past-the-post system.

Separately, through our new borders Bill, we will fix the loopholes in our asylum system so that no human trafficking gang is able to take advantage of our generosity and humanity to fill their own pockets. Our new plan for immigration will protect and support those in genuine need of asylum; deter illegal entry into the UK; create new legal, safe routes to asylum; break the business model of criminal trafficking networks; and remove more easily from the UK those with no right to be here.

Redcar and Cleveland is over 300 miles away from Dover, but illegal immigration is still one of the biggest issues that my constituents contact me about, and for years their concerns have been dismissed by a political class who are not willing to face up to the challenge of illegal immigration and who are too quick to brand anyone who challenges illegal immigration a racist. Those quick to dismiss need think only of the 39 Vietnamese people who died in the back of a lorry in October 2019, or the 300 people who have died trying to cross the channel since 1999. That is to say nothing of the dangers faced by our coastguard, the Royal Navy or our maritime workers, which they have to endure to protect these lives at sea. The most compassionate approach to illegal immigration has to be to stop people climbing in the back of lorries or in dinghies across the channel, and that is what our plan aims to do.

Finally, as we build back better, we must build back greener too. By implementing the Environment Bill, we will set legally binding environment targets to tackle air pollution, cut plastic waste and revolutionise how we recycle. We continue to lead the way globally in acting on climate change, hosting the vital COP26 climate

[Jacob Young]

negotiations in November and rolling out our 10-point plan for a green industrial revolution. As we step away from carbon-intensive industries, particularly our steel and chemical industries, we must ensure that we facilitate people transitioning into new green collar jobs, which is why I welcome the lifetime skills guarantee.

There is so much more that I would like to say. We have a real, fantastic agenda for the next 12 months, but, to finish, this Government are leading the way out of the covid pandemic and into a decade of growth and prosperity. There can be no doubt that they are delivering on the people's priorities for Redcar and Cleveland, and for the country. This Queen's Speech encapsulates exactly that, and I wholly support it.

9.11 pm

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): It is a real pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Redcar (Jacob Young). There are a couple of points in his speech that I want to pick up on. I note what he said about the first-past-the-post system. I actually happen to be a big fan of proportional representation, which is rather ironic, given that my party won 85% of first-past-the-post seats in last week's election. I would gently say to the hon. Gentleman that if he has an issue with the first-past-the-post system, in order to be consistent he would need to recognise that, in Scotland, 85% of seats were won first past the post by the SNP on a mandate of giving Scotland the right to choose its own future. However, I do not want to quibble with him. I do actually want to agree with what he said specifically in relation to banning gay conversion therapy. I think he is right to put that on the record, and certainly on that he and I are very much on the same page.

As legislative programmes go, today's was pretty bland and uninspiring. Indeed, this Queen's Speech had all the hallmarks of a British Government who are good at spin, but utterly woeful on delivery. This is the second Queen's Speech in which we anticipated an employment Bill, but as is so often the case, Westminster fails on the test of improving workers' rights. Indeed, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation was right to say today:

"The Government has repeatedly committed to levelling up our country, but with one in eight workers trapped in poverty and many of them hardest hit by the pandemic, many will be in disbelief there was no bill to protect them announced today."

I very much agree with the JRF in that respect.

Another legislative Session without an employment Bill means yet another year without neonatal leave and pay provisions on the statute books—something that this Government have promised and something on which there is, indeed, clear cross-party support right across the House. We all know that a Queen's Speech is a statement of intent about Government priorities, and it is clear that strengthening employment rights is not a priority for this British Conservative Government. In fact, it appears that the Tories care more about introducing draconian voter ID laws to suppress election turnouts in poorer areas than about introducing paid leave for parents, just like myself, whose babies at times have been fighting for their lives on neonatal units every single day.

No employment Bill means no making good on promises about neonatal leave and pay, but no employment Bill means so much more. It means a failure to outlaw

fire and rehire, a campaign that has been spearheaded by my hon. Friend the Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire North (Gavin Newlands). It means a failure to legislate for flexible working, and it means a failure to reform the inadequate statutory sick pay system, which was found utterly wanting during the height of the pandemic.

At this critical moment in time, as we emerge from the pandemic, immediate action is needed on all these matters, yet the lack of urgency from this British Government could not be in starker contrast to the actions of the SNP in Scotland. My party recently published a comprehensive plan for the vital first 100 days of a new Government, with key social and economic actions to provide serious governance when it is most needed. We have an immediate plan to support youth employment and invest in better, greener jobs. We will make flexible and family-friendly practices and opposition to fire-and-rehire processes criteria in the Fair Work First programme, and we will give the hardest-hit businesses the help they need to support local economies as they tentatively reopen.

The lack of urgency or action in this Queen's Speech on the stuff that really matters to people is precisely why the Tories were once again roundly rejected at the ballot box in Scotland, and, indeed, have been at every election since the 1950s. However, this unequal Union consistently limits Scotland's ambition and our people have now expressed their desire to be able to choose a different future and a different path, away from a failing and tired Westminster Government who they did not vote for.

Last Thursday, the people of Scotland went to the polls and re-elected for a fourth term an SNP Government led by Nicola Sturgeon. [Interruption.] The Government Whip, the hon. Member for Banff and Buchan (David Duguid), chunters from a sedentary position; I am glad to see that his local Scottish Parliament constituency is again represented by an SNP MSP.

The Scottish people voted for a Government who they wanted to lead them out of the pandemic, and, yes, they voted clearly and unambiguously for Scotland to have the right to choose its future in a post-pandemic referendum. Faced with millions of leaflets from the Scottish Conservatives exclaiming that the only way to stop a referendum was to defeat the SNP, still our party—the SNP—achieved the highest number of votes of any political party, the highest number of constituency seats ever and the highest ever vote share in any Scottish election. If British Ministers have any shred of credibility in claiming to be democrats, they must respect the result of that election and allow Scotland the right to choose its own future.

One of the flagship pieces of legislation in the Queen's Speech is an electoral integrity Bill. However, if this British Government refuse to acknowledge the results of the Scottish election, it will be Westminster that is found wanting on electoral integrity, and that will be an irony that is not lost on any of us.

9.16 pm

Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con): Let me start by paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for North West Cambridgeshire (Shailesh Vara), the proposer, and my hon. Friend the Member for South Ribble (Katherine Fletcher), the seconder, of this Loyal Address in reply to the Gracious Speech. As a member of the 2019 intake,

I particularly enjoyed being referred to as a bouncy young puppy. It has been a while since I felt like one, but I am glad that I give that impression to others.

I turn to the body of the Gracious Speech and refer to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests. Every year, the Government buy nearly £300 billion of services from the private sector, yet this tool for economic regeneration has been blunted by EU procurement procedures that favour large corporations. I know from my own experience of contracting with governmental organisations that time and again SMEs are excluded from this competition because they cannot provide the huge amount of managerial time simply to undertake the overly complex procurement processes.

Reform of our public procurement rules is long overdue, and I am delighted that this benefit of Brexit is going to be realised. The Government will be able to focus their huge investment, allowing them to be both more strategic and to save the taxpayer money through much simpler procurement procedures that allow us, for the first time, to favour British suppliers. The public sector will be able overtly to buy British, allowing competition for contracts under £4.7 million for public works and £122,000 for goods and services to be reserved for SMEs, voluntary community and social enterprises, or a geographical area, ensuring that maximum local economic benefit can be obtained by levelling up investments.

It seems bizarre to have to say this, but this legislation will also allow the tender process to take account of a bidder's past performance, allowing Departments to exclude suppliers that have failed to deliver in the past. As a previously frustrated bidder for contracts, I know how refreshing that simple improvement will be. Simplifying procurement processes, making them accessible to smaller challenger businesses, encouraging innovation and entrepreneurialism, and enshrining common sense principles, such as taking account of past performance—what better way to kickstart local economies and entrepreneurialism? I can immediately see how these changes will drive local growth, promote innovation, support local recruitment and level up communities.

It is an increasingly clear characteristic of this Prime Minister and this Government that they are not just about talking about doing things; they get on and do them. Whether it is getting Brexit done despite the obstacles, delivering a vaccination strategy, or providing the economic support to protect jobs and maximise our storming economic recovery, the Prime Minister is a doer—he makes things happen.

Her Majesty's Gracious Speech has been described as providing rocket fuel to level up the country and ensure equal opportunities for all. It is clear from the Queen's Speech that improving life chances throughout the United Kingdom is at the core of the Government's mission. It seems that Labour and Liberal Democrats share an instinct: through punitive redistributive taxation and their distrust of business and personal success, they want to promote equality by levelling down. We saw last week that people have had enough of being told that they have been left behind. People do not want victimhood; they want opportunity.

As Conservatives, we should focus on equality of opportunity for all, levelling up to share and increase prosperity and progress, so I particularly welcome the proposed skills for jobs programme, which does not gloss over the 50% of the population who do not go to

university but encourages lifelong skills and training to improve life chances, particularly as our economy develops its low-carbon future. The opening up of the student loan scheme to all adults over the age of 24 has the potential to revolutionise lifetime learning and transform the fortunes of further education colleges, placing them at the heart of their communities. Self-improvement is the cornerstone of levelling up and it is the cornerstone of Conservatism.

The chance to own one's own home is another of the great levelling-up opportunities. Home ownership creates stability, savings and often something to pass on to the next generation—a desire at the core of us all. I welcome the Government's recognition that the current planning and construction system is not working and that action needs to be taken to fix it, but much work needs to be done to ensure that the cure does not create additional problems for existing communities. The Government's seminal "Building Better, Building Beautiful" report sends the right signal to developers, and I look forward to working with the Government to implement its objectives.

The Gracious Speech shows a Government who are brimming with ideas and in a hurry to get things done to improve the life chances of communities across the United Kingdom, and I look forward to supporting it.

9.22 pm

Mrs Natalie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew), who is a strong voice for British jobs and businesses and for beautiful communities.

As I welcome the Gracious Speech, may I take a moment to pay tribute to the memory of my constituent Julia James, who was murdered recently while walking her dog Toby in the fields and woodlands by her home in Snowdown in Kent? Julia James was a serving police community support officer with Kent police. She had served with great commitment since 2008 and was a popular pillar of our community, much loved by her family and friends. In her working life she supported women and girls who were victims of violence. It is all the more tragic that she herself died as a victim of a brutal and vicious attack.

The Gracious Speech contained legislation to increase sentences for the most serious violent offenders, as well as additional protections to support victims of violence in the draft victims Bill. For me and so many in my community, the victims Bill should be known simply as Julia's Bill, in recognition of the support that she gave to so many people when they were vulnerable and in need. I am so grateful to my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister for lighting a candle for Julia James. Her light will shine through in the weeks and years to come.

At times of great change like the pandemic, we are reminded that we are at our best when we come together in our communities and as a nation. It reminds us of the importance of our values and why we should always strive to defend them. It also underlines the importance of the work that we do—each and every one of our inboxes has been overflowing during each lockdown period. We are so close to the people we represent, working tirelessly to ensure that our communities' voices are heard and that they get the support that they need—from furlough to vaccines and from care homes to stranded tourists. I am sure I am not alone in saying

[Mrs Natalie Elphicke]

that representing constituents is a fundamental duty of this House. This was well expressed today by my esteemed neighbour, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale). Like him, I look forward to returning to this matter in due course.

I welcome the Government's commitment to strengthening and renewing democracy and the constitution, to protecting freedom of speech and restoring the balance between the Executive, the legislature and the courts. We are all accountable, and should be accountable, first and foremost to our constituents—the people who we represent. It is our duty to represent our constituents and our country without fear or favour. To do our job, we must be able to hold others to account: where there is injustice, we must speak truth to power, not walk on by.

In my time in this place, I have noted that Members are quick to defend the rights of others all around the globe, and do so whatever the personal cost or sanction. However, do we always stand up for the same values and fairness in all our institutions here that we expect elsewhere in the world? I hope that in the work we do to restore the balance of powers, we take steps to strengthen the rights, obligations, duties, responsibilities and accountability of all parts of the system. A much greater woman than I said:

“Courage calls to courage everywhere”.

We have been courageous in leaving the European Union. Now, we must be courageous in defending democracy and freedom of speech, and promoting our British values and our way of life. In promoting our way of life, we want to ensure that we have the housing, the healthcare, the education and the opportunities for the British people. That is what is being delivered through today's Gracious Speech.

In addition, I welcome strong measures to strengthen our country's borders. These small boat crossings need to be stopped without delay, for our country's security and to prevent loss of life. That is why Britain and France must work together to bring a stop to these dangerous crossings once and for all. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Redcar (Jacob Young) for his effective articulation of the horrors of people trafficking and illegal migration, and the need to urgently address this matter.

Dover and Deal is the gateway and guardian of the nation. Since leaving the EU, free trade agreements worth billions of pounds have been secured. The transition has been well managed so far, but the potential for disruption is never far away, and we must continue to build greater resilience in the channel ports by investing in road upgrades to the A2 and delivering the border control facilities that are needed now in order to make the most of the opportunities to come. Creating opportunity is at the heart of Her Majesty's address, particularly for areas such as Dover and Deal. To have strong and sustainable communities, the infrastructure must be in place, too. That means broadband in our villages such as Denton and Wootton, greater water and sewage capacity, road investment, and the high-speed rail whooshing through Dover, Martin Mill and Walmer and into Deal.

The past year has been an unprecedented time in our national life. We have battled to come through the biggest challenge of our lifetimes, yet coming through

we are. This Gracious Speech sets out the course for our country to travel in the years to come: a country that will be independent, strong, reinvigorated, and with a renewed sense of determination and national purpose that will deliver for the people I serve in Dover and Deal.

9.28 pm

Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con): I give thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mrs Elphicke) for paying tribute to the family of Julia James. My heart, thoughts and prayers go to them for their loss—the loss of such a fabulous woman.

It is my pleasure to speak on behalf of my constituency of Stroud, following the historic state opening of Parliament. The United Kingdom—indeed, the whole world—has been battered by a previously unknown virus that has ripped through our communities and devastated families. While we thankfully now have low rates of infection in Stroud, the impact of covid is still being felt by businesses that have spent years building staff, brands and custom but are only just able to open their doors properly. Some businesses and sectors, such as weddings, are still having to fight for discretionary funding or, in the case of limited company directors, any support at all.

Notwithstanding those issues, standing before you, Madam Deputy Speaker, I feel hope. It was music to my ears to hear Her Majesty the Queen talk about a lifetime skills guarantee. I have campaigned and pecked a lot of heads in Government about the benefits of further education. After years of a Labour Government trying to get 50% of young people into university and forgetting about the rest, we are now sending a message loud and clear that people do not always need to follow a certain path to succeed. Early setbacks in school or life do not mean being written off. Learning a trade, retraining or taking a punt on learning a new skill at any stage of life will become the norm. We will create opportunities. I welcome the recognition for FE. I love my local South Gloucestershire and Stroud College, and I am excited to get on with the forthcoming skills Bill.

The focus on internet safety for all could not be more crucial. Our lives are on t'internet—increasingly so during the pandemic—and connectivity must be embraced in so many ways. But the internet is also a digital Dodge City, and it is causing harm every single day. Anonymity, in particular, is being abused. My proposal is to ensure that social media users have the option of verifying their details and not following or being followed by unverified users—in short, give people more choice and give the regulators, the police and the courts an easy route.

Chris Elmore (Ogmore) (Lab): I pay tribute to the work that the hon. Lady has done on anonymity in recent months. I remember a time when it was only I and the hon. Member for Cheltenham (Alex Chalk) speaking on these issues, four or five years ago, so it is great to see so many Members take such an interest. Does the hon. Lady agree that, through the online harms Bill, we must ensure that platforms stop the excuses? We have had years and years of self-governance and voluntary charters but also years of the platforms saying that they cannot do this. If I am discussing with my wife overboarding in my loft, an algorithm will be created to ensure that I get advertising for that, but the

platforms cannot resolve the issue of abuse and attacks on politicians, footballers and members of the public. We really must end the excuse culture of the platforms.

Siobhan Bailie: The hon. Member makes a good point. Everybody across the House wants to see online harms tackled, and we have to give a huge amount of praise to the Government, who are working incredibly hard to do that. I agree—I am not the most techie person in the world, but these tech and social media companies are smart cookies, and I am sure that they could fix this. I am hoping to work with them as well as with the Government, because I hope that the tech companies will do more ahead of needing Government to intervene. The online safety legislation is good. I do not want it to fall—I want it to succeed—but we must move to pre-legislative scrutiny more quickly and tackle anonymous abuse as a priority.

On the mighty plan of levelling up, frankly, if we are not able to level up the social care sector and carers do not receive meaningful reform, it is not actually levelling up. They are integral to vulnerable members of our communities and to our ageing society, yet they feel undervalued and underpaid, and unpaid carers are exhausted without domiciliary respite care, such as that provided by Crossroads charity, which I visited last week. I am therefore very pleased that it is our Conservative Government who will finally deliver reform. Carers are skilled and highly trained, and the job is really hard graft. This must not become another political football. Our carers deserve better.

I challenge you, Madam Deputy Speaker, to find a more environmentally focused set of children and young people than those in Stroud. To be honest, they have the energy to level up with a green recovery all on their own, but I will keep working. I will keep working on projects that make improvements to our local environment,

transport, infrastructure and skills alongside them. We have already thrown our hat into the ring to seek funding to reopen Bristol Road railway station in Stonehouse and a heritage railway station in Sharpness. We are seeking to deliver the first fusion power plant in the world.

Our skilled farmers and our food producers are developing environmental land management programmes. Gloucestershire's local nature partnership has already created a tree strategy. Our canal teams bust through a roundabout—yes, you heard me right: a roundabout—to connect our historic waterways. We have continued to open shops and have transformed an old shopping centre in Stroud—all during a pandemic. Just imagine what we can do in calmer times.

As I have time, I would like to give a nod to my hard-working parish councils and local councils. Levelling up and providing more opportunities to become councillors, to stand and to look after our local communities would be greatly helped by restoring virtual meetings. I know the Government are already consulting on that matter, and I welcome that because we need more information, but virtual meetings have been a revelation during the lockdown. They would mean that in the future more people with caring responsibilities or disabilities can take part in parish council meetings. I really hope we can find time for that legislation.

As I said in my maiden speech, the best is yet to come. There will undoubtedly be more unexpected challenges, although hopefully not one as big as a global pandemic. As Her Majesty the Queen said earlier, the priority is to make the United Kingdom stronger, healthier and more prosperous than before. We can do this.

9.35 pm

Ordered, That the debate be now adjourned.—(*Rebecca Harris.*)

Debate to be resumed tomorrow.

Dame Vera Lynn: National Memorial

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Rebecca Harris.)

9.36 pm

Sir David Amess (Southend West) (Con): I am so very pleased that this Adjournment debate is taking place at the end of a very special day for all of us. It is of specific importance that none other than Her Majesty the Queen was here to start our proceedings, because the lady I am going to talk about was held in very, very high regard by the royal family and particularly Her Majesty the Queen. I am so pleased that it is you, Dame Eleanor, who is presiding over our proceedings this evening, because I happen to know on good authority that you were very fond of this lady because your late father held her in the highest regard. I know that you and your team—Mr Speaker and the other two Deputies—are quietly rather supportive of what I am now going to share with the House.

Dame Vera Lynn holds a special place in the hearts of everyone in the United Kingdom for her wonderful, uplifting singing during the dark years of the second world war. Her voice on the radio brought warmth and hope into the homes of ordinary people whose lives had been thrown into chaos by war. She travelled to many of the theatres of war, particularly in the far east, to support the fighting men she called “her boys”. Viscount Slim, grandson of Field Marshall Sir William Slim, commander of Fourteenth Army in Burma, has told me that his grandfather called the Fourteenth the “forgotten Army”. Dame Vera’s visits to the troops in the far east were so appreciated by the men who fought there. She went on an extended tour of India and Burma, sharing the basic conditions experienced by the soldiers, and they never forgot that. She ate the same food, slept under the same canvas, travelled through hostile and rugged terrain without complaint and with a cheerful disposition that brought sunshine wherever she went.

We have all seen pictures of Vera singing to crowds of young soldiers far from home. It must have been as if a lovely angel had descended to sing to them in the midst of the horrors of war. For a few short hours, she helped them forget the bad food, exhaustion, fear and heat, and connected them with their homes and families, so far away, through her magical voice.

I knew Vera for many years, because she happened to live next door to a friend of mine. I know that my hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Maria Caulfield), whose constituent she was, would have liked to contribute to this debate, but as a Government Whip she is not able to do so. Vera’s daughter, Virginia, and her husband Tom, are both good friends, and they have taken on the mammoth task of continuing Vera’s charitable work, ensuring that her legacy continues.

I feel that a lot of people do not actually know what Vera did. Like me, she came from an ordinary background in the east end of London. Indeed, my family home is in Forest Gate, and just round the corner, down the road, is Dame Vera Lynn road. She experienced tough times, and she was always down to earth, kind and generous. These days—this will probably backfire—celebrities can be somewhat aloof and remote, but Vera was never like that, and she never forgot the sacrifices made by the troops in the second world war.

Vera was 103 when she died. My own mother reached the age of 104—they breed them tough in the east end of London. Vera’s career spanned an incredible 96 years, as she began performing publicly at the age of just seven. Her first radio broadcast was with the Joe Loss orchestra in 1935, and she first recorded one of her most popular songs, “We’ll meet again”, in 1939.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this debate. It is so pertinent and something we all love. I am pleased to hear about the special affection that his family has for Dame Vera Lynn—it is wonderful to hear it expressed in such a way. Does he agree that in a world where some are ashamed of our past, Dame Vera Lynn is a treasure to be remembered and celebrated, as part of a generation of selfless British patriots, whose love of and devotion and dedication to their country is something to be memorialised and immortalised?

Sir David Amess: How could anyone disagree with anything the hon. Gentleman says? I will certainly not disagree on this occasion. He described this wonderful woman brilliantly.

During the second world war, Dame Vera would sing to people using London underground stations as air raid shelters. The title of “forces’ sweetheart” came about after the *Daily Express*, backing the campaign, asked British servicemen to name their favourite musical performer. Of course Vera topped the poll. Her radio programme, “Sincerely Yours”, began in 1941, and included messages to troops serving abroad. However, after the fall of Singapore, the programme was taken off air for 18 months, because it was viewed—I mean, this is crazy!—as too sentimental, and it was thought it would interfere with the war effort.

Vera toured Egypt, India and Burma with the Entertainments National Service Association. In 1985 she rightly received the Burma Star for entertaining British guerrilla units in Japanese occupied Burma. How those young men must have enjoyed having a star like Vera appear among them, and what courage she showed to put herself in such a dangerous position. In her later years, Vera was a frequent performer at commemorative events such as VE day, and we see the royal family on the balcony enjoying every minute when Vera and others appeared. Her final public performance was in Trafalgar Square in 2005, where she made a speech and joined in with a few bars of “We’ll meet again”.

Her career was not finished there. In 2009, at the age of 92, she became the oldest living artist to make it to No.1 in the British album chart—I wonder what the Brits will be making of that at tonight’s awards. In 2017, the year of her 100th birthday, an album of her songs, which I have, with new orchestral settings and duets with many contemporary artists, was released. She was the best-selling female artist of the year—at the age of 100!—and received a lifetime achievement award at the Brit awards, which is taking place this evening. She was the first centenarian performer to have a top 10 album.

It is not just Dame Vera’s wonderful voice that should be commemorated, but the enormous amount that she has done for others less fortunate than herself. Many people will be unaware of all the marvellous work done by her two charities; the Dame Vera Lynn Children’s Charity and the Dame Vera Lynn Charitable Trust.

The Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity was established in 2001 to help children with cerebral palsy and other motor learning impairments and their families. I know that, in her own constituency, my hon. Friend the Member for Castle Point (Rebecca Harris) holds that particular organisation very dear. The charity has its origin in the announcement by Scope that it was no longer able to fund its School for Parents network, including Ingfield Manor, which was close to Dame Vera's home in Sussex. The school provided early intervention services to support parents in raising pre-school age children with cerebral palsy, enabling the children to learn and develop physically, socially and emotionally.

Vera launched the Bluebird appeal to raise funds to save the school, and the charity continues to provide early intervention services as well as other activities, such as music therapy, swimming, sensory sessions and help for families. In the words of Dame Vera:

"Early intervention is key to helping young children with cerebral palsy and other motor learning conditions gain a solid base from which they can develop their independence and self-esteem in later life."

So, Madam Deputy Speaker, what am I asking for tonight in this Adjournment debate? The Dame Vera Lynn Charitable Trust was set up in 1989 with her late husband, Harry. The main aim of the trust is to relieve hardship or distress among former members of the armed services and their families—another cause close to her heart. The trust has donated to many military charities, as well as giving money to other causes, such as children's charities and, more recently, the national health service silent soldiers campaign. So, together with Dame Vera's family, I am launching a campaign for a permanent memorial to one of the most loved stars that this country has ever produced. One place immediately came to mind for her memorial—the iconic white cliffs of Dover, immortalised in one of Vera's most famous songs. In 2017, Vera raised more than £1.5 million to enable the National Trust to purchase 700,000 square metres of land immediately behind the cliff top. That amazing feat was accomplished within a week and is a tribute to her enduring popularity and her hold on the British public's imagination.

The memorial will be a permanent reminder to future generations of what this marvellous lady accomplished and how much she was loved. The project has the backing of my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mrs Elphicke), who is the vice-chairman of our committee, so, if something happens to me, she is standing ready to take over. Most importantly, it also has the backing of Dover District Council, and what a wonderful council it is. It is what I call a "can-do" council. It is so helpful and so proactive. I just could not be more pleased with its welcoming of this scheme.

After an initial site visit to the cliffs in April to find a suitable accessible home for the sculpture, the committees got to work. The most impressive and relevant site and one that has captured the spirit of Dame Vera is a proposed open-air amphitheatre or bowl overlooking the harbour and the white cliffs, which is such a wonderful idea. This project will provide a venue for concerts, theatrical productions and military events in a stunning natural setting. The memorial to Dame Vera will be at the heart of the plans, and her musical legacy will live on in the enjoyment of visitors and audiences for many years to come. You can see it now, Madam Deputy Speaker:

there she will be, presiding over the bowl and looking over the channel. It is just wonderful. People talk about statues and memorials. The team have come up with such a wonderful scheme—I cannot take any credit. I intend to visit the proposed venue this Friday to see for myself how the site could be landscaped to provide the best possible setting.

The people of Dover—I do hope my hon. Friend the Member for Dover will catch your eye, Madam Deputy Speaker—have taken Dame Vera to their hearts. There will be an enormous sense of pride in the memorial, which will cement the link between Dame Vera and the town. I have no doubt that the amphitheatre and memorial will prove to be a popular destination for visitors from all over the world and a magnificent venue for artistic and musical performances. In fact, I must say to my hon. Friend that, when Southend becomes a city, we can have an event at the end of the pier, and I can see us linking up together—it is just wonderful. I can see musical performances as well as acts of commemoration—my right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois) will enjoy this—for the armed forces. I am sure Vera would have loved the combination of her two great loves: music and her boys.

The renowned sculptor Paul Day, whose work includes the Battle of Britain memorial on the Embankment and the Queen Mother's memorial, will create the sculpture, and the initial sketches promise a stunning design that he hopes will tell Vera's story. He will be involved at every stage of the bold project—I think a documentary will be made—so the memorial and the setting will form a cohesive whole and a fitting commemoration of Vera's life and work. The memorial will be paid for by donations and public subscription, so I, as a politician, will not be making the public appeal; I am just sort of chairing it all. I have no doubt that the British people will want to see Vera commemorated in a fitting manner that everyone can enjoy.

The campaign will go live on 18 June—the first anniversary of Dame Vera's death. An application to set up a charitable trust to collect the donations has been sent to the Charity Commission and is being dealt with right now. I very much hope that all the necessary paperwork will be approved in time for the launch on 18 June. The campaign launch video will feature contributions from Katherine Jenkins OBE, Sir Tim Rice, Sir Paul McCartney and Anthony Andrews, each of whom has been touched by Dame Vera's life in some way. Katherine Jenkins has sung many of Dame Vera's songs, interpreting them for a new generation. Anthony Andrew's father was a musician, arranger and conductor at the BBC and played the trumpet on many of Dame Vera's radio performances. There will also be a few surprise contributions, but hon. Members must tune in on the day to find out who they are.

I think all hon. Members would agree that Dame Vera Lynn is one of the most iconic and best loved personalities of the last century.

Mr Mark Francois (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): As the son of a D-day veteran, I wish to wholeheartedly endorse my hon. Friend's suggestion of creating a memorial to Dame Vera Lynn. During this country's darkest hour—darker even than the wicked pandemic that we have had to endure—she helped to maintain our nation's morale as we fought, alone for a period, in a battle for

[Mr Mark Francois]

national survival against Nazi tyranny. She kept up the country's spirits and those of all those who were fighting in the armed forces, including my own father. He cannot be here, but if he were, he would be thoroughly encouraging my hon. Friend in everything he is doing. This is an incredibly fitting tribute to a remarkable woman and, as my hon. Friend's parliamentary friend and neighbour, I wish him Godspeed.

Sir David Amess: I have no doubt at all that my right hon. Friend's late dear father is looking down from heaven now, full of pride in his son and the tribute that he has just paid to Dame Vera Lynn. I really thank my right hon. Friend for his support.

Vera is one of the most iconic and best loved personalities of the last century. I do not understand celebrities any more, but to me she was a true star in the old-fashioned meaning of the word. She was never one to court the limelight offstage, preferring to maintain her family's privacy wherever possible. However, she gave so much of herself to the people of this country that I believe it is only fitting that the country should give something back to commemorate such a wonderful lady.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): The hon. Gentleman's enthusiasm is infectious. He has, even at this late hour, six supporters on our Benches at present, and I am quite sure that that number will grow exponentially, tomorrow when the world is free.

9.56 pm

Mrs Natalie Elphicke (Dover) (Con): Dame Vera's daughter and son-in-law, Virginia and Tom, have asked me to do something: they want me to put on record their gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) for everything he has done, and for his enthusiasm and dedication. We know that he is going to bring this to fruition, and I am sure that the whole House will join them in thanking him for everything that he is doing.

Dame Vera Lynn was a truly remarkable woman in so many ways: in her war work and her bravery going to the frontline; as a top entertainer; in her charity and community work; and, in recent years, as a true friend to Dover. It was a pleasure to meet her in person when we campaigned to prevent our port from being sold off. She was there, side by side with us. She also supported national fundraising campaigns for our white cliffs heritage, so where better to commemorate Dame Vera's wonderful life than on the white cliffs of Dover that she immortalised in that moving song and in her later life?

This will form part of our levelling-up bid, and I hope that the Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman), and his Department will support the importance that this could bring to Dover. Dover Council fully supports everything that is being done. We see this as an opportunity for live performance, for growth, for tourism and for bringing to life the excitement of everything Dame Vera represented in her life in entertainment, in the arts and in her service to our country.

9.58 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Matt Warman): How fitting, on this day of the Gracious Speech, that we should be talking about Dame Vera Lynn, because I think it was one of the most moving speeches that Her Majesty the Queen has ever made, and she herself quoted the line that we will meet again. It is right that we understand what Dame Vera Lynn has contributed to this country and to all that we have gone through in the past couple of years as well. It was only in September that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Sir David Amess) raised this important matter, and I thought at the time that we would meet again. I did not know where and I did not know when, but today has been a sunny day, and here we are. I would like to echo his warm words about the lasting legacy of Dame Vera Lynn. The importance of her words and actions was brought home to us not just by the speech that Her Majesty the Queen gave last year, but by the 75th anniversary of VE Day—we all remember the fitting tribute to Dame Vera during the closing stages of the celebrations, when the nation came together to sing that most famous song. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, Her Majesty the Queen and countless members of the public shared their condolences with Dame Vera Lynn's family following her death last June, at the grand age of 103.

To hear all about Dame Vera Lynn's endeavours in later life through the Dame Vera Lynn Children's Charity, the Bluebird appeal and the Dame Vera Lynn Charitable Trust is truly inspiring.

10 pm

Motion lapsed (Standing Order No. 9(3)).

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Rebecca Harris.)

Matt Warman: Whether Dame Vera was aiding former servicemen and women or working with children and schools, it is clear that she was a true public servant who helped people of all ages and backgrounds throughout her life. My hon. Friend the Member for Lewes (Maria Caulfield), whom my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West mentioned, has written to me personally to say that Dame Vera is much missed in her home village of Ditchling in Sussex, where she was a key figure in the local community. It is clear that Dame Vera touched many people, across this country and this House, through her music and her philanthropy; I can only echo the warm praise of the general public and of my colleagues here today for her lasting legacy.

As I said in the previous Adjournment debate, this country has a long and well-established tradition of commemorating its national and local individuals through statues and memorials. I reiterate the Government's support for public monuments and statues, which serve as a long-lasting reminder of individuals and their efforts for this country, bridging the gap between the past and the present.

I look forward to the day when the memorial to the great Dame Vera Lynn that my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West mentioned gazes down from the white cliffs of Dover. As he mentioned, he has a successful track record of managing to have public statues erected, and we should look forward to future success, whether

it follows on from Eric Cole's or from Raoul Wallenberg's in adding to the 12,000 outdoor statues and memorials in England alone. We all know that Dame Vera Lynn will be a huge addition to that roster, and that my hon. Friend is the man to do it.

The debate gives me an opportunity to detail the Government's position more broadly on erecting new memorials and statues. As my hon. Friend said, it is not normal practice for central Government to fund new memorials, but we all know that in this case many organisations, public and private, have been hugely successful in proposing funding—I can think of few more fitting recipients of that funding than the projects he mentions—and delivering memorials, marking a variety of incidents and historical figures that they are best placed to deem appropriate and sensitive to their local area. There is no more appropriate area than the white cliffs, I am sure.

Many successful memorials are created by a wide range of authorities and organisations, allowing each memorial to respond sensitively to the particular circumstances that it seeks to commemorate. I will not dwell on the excellent example of the jolly fisherman in Skegness—another example of funding by public subscription—or on the excellent Gracie Fields statue in Rochdale. Those memorials and statues were conceived, fundraised and erected through local efforts and ownership. Many people will have seen the recent proposals for a new memorial inside St Paul's cathedral to those who have died as a result of the covid-19 pandemic.

Statues matter. They provide a memorial and a memory for people who wish to remember vital parts of our nation's history. There are a great many people and organisations interested in establishing memorials. As a general rule, it is for those groups to work with the relevant local planning authority and other organisations to identify a suitable site and obtain the necessary planning permissions. The good news is that, following the passing of the Deregulation Act 2015, consent is not even required from the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to erect statues in London; the process is determined through the planning system only—although I do not think in this case I am going

too far by saying that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State is as much of a fan of the great Dame Vera as is my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West. I hope that provides him with some of the reassurance he has sought on the process around new monuments and statues.

I wish my hon. Friend, and all those involved, the deepest best wishes in their efforts to raise funds for this commemoration of Dame Vera. It sounds like an ambitious and transformative proposal for the south coast, truly befitting Dame Vera. I look forward to that moment when her statue looks down from the white cliffs.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Dover (Mrs Elphicke) for her intervention this evening. I share her commitment to the important role of arts and culture in truly levelling up and reinvigorating towns and cities across the country. I know that she recently met the Minister for Digital and Culture, my hon. Friend the Member for Gosport (Caroline Dinéage), to discuss her plans and had a productive conversation with Arts Council England. We at DCMS look forward to seeing the outcomes of her work across Dover and Deal.

I would take this opportunity to burst into song, such is my enthusiasm for this project, but I think that could possibly send it in the wrong direction, rather than the one we would all like to see. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West for all his work in promoting the cause of this statue. I wish him and all those involved—foremost the family of Dame Vera Lynn—the best of luck in this hugely deserving endeavour, and I look forward to seeing it in real life.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing): It looks like we will meet again at the white cliffs of Dover. It is very good when we have an Adjournment debate that achieves something on which everyone agrees, and I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on bringing this Adjournment debate to the House on this most appropriate day.

Question put and agreed to.

10.6 pm

House adjourned.

Petitions

Tuesday 11 May 2021

OBSERVATIONS

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Protection of monuments of Captain James Cook

The petition of residents of the constituency of Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland,

Declares that the achievements of Captain James Cook in the fields of science, exploration and cartography are of immense historic significance and are rightly commemorated by a number of much-loved statues and monuments across Middlesbrough, the Tees Valley and North Yorkshire.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urges the Government to ensure that those monuments and sites which commemorate Captain James Cook are protected against harm or removal.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Mr Simon Clarke, *Official Report*, 10 March 2021; Vol. 690, c. 970.]

[P002651]

Observations from The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Oliver Dowden):

Captain James Cook is rightly considered one of the greatest navigators and explorers of all time: amongst his major achievements were the three voyages between 1768 and 1779 in the Pacific Ocean and to Australia in particular. Britain has a rich maritime heritage, and statues and monuments such as the ones dedicated to Captain James Cook across Middlesbrough, the Tees Valley, North Yorkshire and elsewhere are there to help educate us and future generations about all aspects of Britain's past.

The petition from the constituents of Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland highlights the significance of the Cook statue within their communities and the sense of pride they have in his legacy and achievements.

The Government do not support the removal of statues or similar objects, artwork and historical objects by any organisation. Historic England, as the Government's adviser on the historic environment, supports this position.

Government have been clear that rather than removing or erasing objects, we should contextualise and interpret them in a way that enables the public to learn about all aspects of Britain's past.

We are therefore committed to ensuring that this country's heritage is appropriately protected. The removal of statues and other commemorative objects which are designated as a part of a listed building requires listed building consent. In addition, we have recently introduced new rules to ensure that proposals to remove unlisted statues, memorials and monuments which are important to local communities are given proper consideration through the planning permission system. In determining such applications, local planning authorities are required to have regard to the Government's "retain and explain"

policy. Local people can make their views known through the application process, and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has the power to call in applications for his own determination where he considers such action is appropriate.

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Police violence in Lagos on 20 October 2020

The petition of residents of the constituency of Newcastle Upon Tyne Central,

Declares that the British Government and wider international community should condemn in the strongest possible terms the Nigerian military opening fire on protesters at Lagos Lekki Toll Gate on 20 October 2020 in which there are reports that 69 people were killed, of whom 51 are believed to be civilians, 11 police officers and seven were soldiers; further declares that these people were peacefully protesting against police brutality committed by, but not limited to, the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS).

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to take action to rally the international community and ensure the Nigerian Government investigates this brutal violation of human rights in full, to encourage the relevant authorities to charge officers and soldiers guilty of killing unarmed protestors, to explore sanctions on the Nigerian Government if guilty of corruption, and to provide a strong voice against corruption and violence in Nigeria.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Chi Onwurah, *Official Report*, 17 November 2020; Vol. 684, c. 286.]

[P002628]

Observations from The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (James Duddridge):

The UK Government were deeply concerned by violence during #EndSARS protests in Nigeria in October 2020, which tragically claimed lives. Our thoughts are with the families of all those affected.

In response, the Foreign Secretary issued a statement calling for an end to the violence and for the Nigerian Government to urgently investigate reports of brutality by their security forces and hold those responsible to account. The Minister for Africa publicly encouraged the Nigerian authorities to restore peace and address concerns over brutality towards civilians. He reiterated these messages when he spoke to Foreign Minister Onyeama in October.

In November 2020, the Minister for European Neighbourhood and the Americas, my hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Wendy Morton), participated in a Westminster Hall Debate on behalf of the Government on imposing sanctions following the protests and the authorities' response.

The Government welcomed the Nigerian authorities' decision to disband the Federal Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) and the establishment of judicial panels on inquiry to investigate alleged incidents of brutality by the security services. We recognise that there is not

yet clarity over the number of people killed in Lagos during the protests. The panels must investigate all incidents fully, including those in Lagos.

The Minister for Africa and my hon. Friend the Member for Maidstone and The Weald (Mrs Grant), the UK Trade Envoy to Nigeria, have both stressed the importance of the police and military's co-operation with the panels to the President's Chief of Staff, Professor Ibrahim Gambari, and the Governor of Lagos, Babajide Sanwo-Olu, including during their joint visit in April 2021. The British high commissioner in Abuja has also raised the protests with representatives of the Nigerian Government and will continue to do so. Most panels are expected to report by summer 2021. The UK Government will continue to follow developments closely and we will consider our response.

On 26 April, we established the global anti-corruption sanctions regime. The global anti-corruption sanctions regime stands alongside the global human rights sanctions regime, established in July 2020, to give the UK an additional, powerful tool to prevent and combat corruption by allowing for sanctions to be imposed on those involved in serious corruption around the world. We keep all evidence and potential listings under close review. It is long-standing practice not to speculate on future sanctions designations as to do so could reduce the impact of the designations.

Alongside international and civil society partners, we will continue to push the Nigerian police to uphold human rights and the rule of law in all operations, investigate any incidents of brutality and hold those responsible to account.

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Independence of City of York Council

The petition of the residents of the constituency of York Central,

Declares that York's residents and businesses are best served by having an independent council, on its current boundaries, that is focused solely on their needs and provides the basis for economic opportunity, high quality public services and a stronger community; further declares

concern that if York is merged into a new council stretching 65 miles north to south there could be an increase in council tax by £117 per year; further that this would inevitably mean that resources could be diverted from York and residents would pay more money for poorer services; further that this would lead to the end of the 800-year connection between the city and its council; further that the role of Lord Mayor might be scrapped; further that the disruption to key service delivery across York would cost millions of pounds to implement; and further that it would be disastrous to do this during a public health crisis.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to listen closely to York's residents and businesses and to the City of York Council's submission to its consultation on local government devolution, and to work with all local politicians, including MPs, city councillors and parish and town councillors, on any decisions to do with York's council.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Rachael Maskell, *Official Report*, 15 April 2021; Vol. 692, c. 610.]

[P002658]

Observations from The Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government (Luke Hall):

A consultation on proposals for unitary local government submitted by councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset was launched by Government on 22 February 2021 and closed, after 8 weeks, on 19 April 2021.

The thousands of responses to this consultation are now being considered, and will help inform the Secretary of State's consideration of the extent to which proposals meet the criteria for unitarisation, whether they are likely to improve local government and service delivery across the area of the proposal, whether they command a good deal of local support as assessed in the round across the whole area of the proposal, and whether the area of any new unitary council is a credible geography.

In deciding which proposal, if any, to implement in an area, subject to parliamentary approval, the Secretary of State will make a balanced judgement assessing the proposals against these three criteria having regard to all representations received, including responses to the consultation, and to all other relevant information available to him.

PETITIONS

Tuesday 11 May 2021

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