

**Wednesday  
2 February 2022**

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**HOUSE OF COMMONS  
OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY  
DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Wednesday 2 February 2022**

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# House of Commons

*Wednesday 2 February 2022*

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

## PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

## Oral Answers to Questions

### SCOTLAND

*The Secretary of State was asked—*

#### Connectivity: Scotland and the Rest of the UK

1. **Felicity Buchan** (Kensington) (Con): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on improving connectivity between Scotland and the rest of the UK.

[905311]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack):** Stirling has today submitted its bid to be the UK's city of culture 2025. Winning the bid would bring investment and international attention to the town, and I am sure that every Scottish MP will join me in wishing Stirling the very best for the competition. As I am sure you are aware, Mr Speaker, today—2 February—is also Groundhog day. Of course, in Scotland, every day feels like Groundhog day with the SNP's incessant calls for another independence referendum.

Turning to question No. 1, the Under-Secretary of State for Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Milton Keynes South (Iain Stewart), and I have regular discussions with Cabinet colleagues about improving cross-border connectivity. The UK Government are currently considering the recommendations from the Union connectivity review and a formal response will be published shortly.

**Felicity Buchan:** Does my right hon. Friend share my disappointment that the Scottish Government refused to engage with the Union connectivity review, and does he share my hope that these party political games will stop and that the Scottish Government will work with the UK Government to improve transport links for the people of Scotland, such as vital improvements to the A1 and the construction of the Borders railway to Carlisle?

**Mr Jack:** I do share the disappointment that the Scottish Government did not engage in the Union connectivity review. In fact, the Cabinet Secretary for transport, Michael Matheson, instructed his civil servants not to engage with Sir Peter Hendy, the author of the review. But the UK Government have invited the Scottish Government to work closely in partnership to consider the recommendations and identify solutions that work best for all people in the United Kingdom.

**Pete Wishart** (Perth and North Perthshire) (SNP): There is no doubt that the UK Government speak a lot about improving connectivity with Scotland, but what

is the Secretary of State specifically doing to improve connectivity between the UK Conservative Cabinet and what they refer to as the political lightweights of the Scottish Conservative party?

**Mr Jack:** I am not quite sure how that is linked to connectivity, but as the hon. Member knows, not only do I support the Prime Minister in the role that he is carrying out, but I support our leader in Scotland, my hon. Friend the Member for Moray (Douglas Ross).

**Damien Moore** (Southport) (Con): Rail links between England and Scotland are crucial in promoting regional interconnectivity not just to London, but to premier resorts such as mine of Southport. Would my right hon. Friend commit to meeting me so we can discuss putting the link back in through the Burscough curves to connect Southport better with Scotland?

**Mr Jack:** Yes, I will meet my hon. Friend. I know that he has six beautiful golf courses in his area, so connectivity would be wonderful for us Scots, because we do enjoy a game of golf.

**Christine Jardine** (Edinburgh West) (LD): With the pandemic leading to more and more people looking to holiday in the UK, what discussions—notwithstanding the comments about the refusal of the Scottish Government—has the Secretary of State endeavoured to have with the Scottish Government about harnessing that new-found demand and supporting important transport hubs such as Edinburgh airport and Haymarket station in my constituency to facilitate improved connectivity?

**Mr Jack:** As the hon. Lady will know, connectivity is important. It is not just about air; it is also about rail and road. We are very keen to improve connectivity because we realise that that leads to economic growth and improves people's livelihoods. We are engaging with the Scottish Government in a spirit of good will with a view to improving connectivity for all parts of the United Kingdom.

#### Growth Deals

2. **John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): What progress his Department has made on implementing growth deals in Scotland. [905312]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Iain Stewart):** The Moray full deal and the Falkirk heads of terms were signed in December. We now have nine deals in implementation and three in negotiation covering all of Scotland. The Government have committed over £1.5 billion for the deal programme in Scotland.

**John Lamont:** I am sure that the Minister is aware of the Scottish Government's strategic transport review, and no doubt he will share my disappointment at the very lukewarm support for the extension of the Borders railway to Hawick, Newcastleton and on to Carlisle. Does he agree that this Government should show their full support for the project and tell us when the feasibility study for the Borders railway extension will be started?

**Iain Stewart:** I absolutely share my hon. Friend's disappointment. When we signed the Borderlands growth deal, I was determined that the feasibility study for reopening the full Borders line should be in there. I am keen to see that work starting as soon as possible, and we will soon respond to the Union connectivity review, which also references that line. This is a classic example of where the Scottish Government should stop obsessing and spending their time, resources and money on yet more independence preparations and instead deliver on projects that really matter to the people of Scotland.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): The Borderlands region will see £20 million less investment in its city region deal from the UK Government than from the Scottish Government. Why is that?

**Iain Stewart:** If the hon. Lady looks at the full package of investment that is going into the Borderlands deal, she will see that this Government are full square behind that area. It really is disappointing that it comes down to this petty point scoring when the whole point of the city region and growth deal is that all parts of government—local, Scottish and UK—work together on delivering the priorities that are determined by local people.

**John Stevenson** (Carlisle) (Con): Talking about the Borderlands growth initiative and the growth deal, does the Minister agree that it is extremely important and beneficial to the whole region, and that Carlisle has become the regional capital of parts not just of England, but of Scotland? Does he also agree that south Scotland recognises the importance of Carlisle's economic performance to the whole region? Does he further agree that that helps to support the Union?

**Iain Stewart:** I absolutely agree that the Borderlands growth deal is unique in that it straddles the border. The economic footprint of the region is incredibly important. Last year I held a meeting in Carlisle with local authority leaders and other stakeholders to discuss not just the growth deal, but how it can be the starting point for a proper economic partnership that straddles the border and delivers for my hon. Friend and his neighbouring constituencies.

### Strength of the Union

3. **Stephen Kinnock** (Aberavon) (Lab): What recent steps his Department has taken to help strengthen the Union. [905313]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack):** This Government are committed to upholding and strengthening the United Kingdom. My Department works closely with our partners across Government and with Scottish stakeholders. This Government are delivering record investment in Scotland and are ensuring that the many benefits of the Union are shared across the United Kingdom.

**Stephen Kinnock:** The Leader of the House recently described the leader of the Scottish Conservatives as "a lightweight figure". Does the Secretary of State believe that that comment helped to strengthen the Union?

**Mr Jack:** I have made my position very clear: I do not think that Douglas Ross—[*Interruption.*] Well, I made it very clear in the Scottish media, which hon. Members may not have noticed, but that is fair enough. He is the leader of the Scottish Conservatives and was put there by the membership, and we are a constitutionally devolved organisation. He is doing a very good job and holds Nicola Sturgeon to account, and he has my full backing.

**Virginia Crosbie** (Ynys Môn) (Con): On the Union, this Government are committed to delivering freeports across the United Kingdom, including at least one in Wales. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the creation of at least one freeport in Scotland will result in investment and thousands of jobs and demonstrates why our Union is so effective at delivering for our communities?

**Mr Jack:** I am pleased to say that, after a lot of initial opposition and resistance, we are close to agreeing two freeports with the Scottish Government. My hon. Friend is a great champion for Wales, and I hope that the Welsh Government will also accept a freeport.

**Ian Murray** (Edinburgh South) (Lab): The Sue Gray report released on Monday was utterly damning about the Prime Minister's conduct, yet the Secretary of State continues to back him against the wishes of his own Scottish Conservative leader, who I notice is not in the Chamber for Scottish questions. We now know that the Metropolitan police are investigating no fewer than 12 incidents in Downing Street, with more allegations every day. It is little wonder then that a recent poll found that the Prime Minister is as unpopular in Scotland as Alex Salmond. Does the Secretary of State think that the Prime Minister, in refusing to do the decent thing and resign, is good for the Union or helps those who want to break it up?

**Mr Jack:** The Prime Minister is resolute in opposing a second Scottish independence referendum and therefore very good for the Union.

**Ian Murray:** What is Groundhog day, Mr Speaker, is the Secretary of State's defence of this broken Prime Minister.

Tomorrow, the Bank of England is projected to raise interest rates, and inflation is running at a 30-year high. There will be much anxiety in Scottish households that Ofgem will announce the raising of the energy price cap, leading to a massive hike in bills. Last night, my colleagues and I voted to give every single Scottish household support towards the cost of their spiralling energy bills. Under Labour's fully costed plans, we would save every Scottish household £200 and save £600 for over 800,000 Scottish households hardest hit by the cost of living crisis. That is proper action on this crisis for those both on and off the grid, like many thousands in the Secretary of State's constituency. Given that the SNP did not back these plans in the vote last night either, why are Scotland's two Governments refusing to take any action whatsoever to help Scots with spiralling energy costs?

**Mr Jack:** The UK Government are taking action. The energy price cap is being maintained and will be renegotiated—that is ongoing work for the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. We

are providing a £140 rebate on energy bills for 2.2 million households with the lowest incomes, and we have the £300 winter fuel payment for pensioners.

**Mhairi Black** (Paisley and Renfrewshire South) (SNP): The strength of any Union rests upon the confidence people have in those who are running things. I know that I disagree with the Minister's political judgment, so let me appeal to his business judgment. Hypothetically, if he were handed evidence that the man running his company had been incompetent and dishonest, and was subject to a police investigation, bringing the entire company into disrepute, would he let him carry on in the role, or would he expect him to step back?

**Mr Jack:** As has been said many times at this Dispatch Box, the Prime Minister is very sorry for what happened—he has apologised. He has said that if he could have done things differently, with hindsight, he would have done. It is also the case that no one has said that he is the subject of a police investigation. The police are looking into the events that have been passed on to them by Sue Gray, and we will wait for the outcome of that inquiry.

**Mhairi Black:** I find it quite incredible. Many of the public believe that this Prime Minister has a long history of racism, homophobia and misogyny. He has lost numerous jobs due to his level of dishonesty. He has presided over 150,000 deaths and the loss of nearly £5 billion of public money to fraudsters. Eighty per cent. of people in Scotland want him to resign, and the leader of the Scottish Tories wants him to resign. Let me ask the Minister this: as Scotland's only representative in Cabinet, what would it take for him to ask for the Prime Minister's resignation?

**Mr Jack:** The Prime Minister is doing a fantastic job. He is focusing on the things that matter: delivering on the recovery from this pandemic, the vaccine programme that he backed early on, the booster programme that he led before Christmas, trade deals that will improve outcomes for Scottish food and drink, and many other things. He is a very good leader. The hon. Lady is absolutely prejudging the outcome of the police inquiry.

**Robin Millar** (Aberconwy) (Con): Following the reference to confidence by the hon. Member for Paisley and Renfrewshire South (Mhairi Black), I welcome the publication of the levelling-up White Paper, and the Government's commitment to decentralising the UK shared prosperity fund to local areas in Scotland and Wales. Does my right hon. Friend agree that that is an example of confidence in local decision-making, of real devolution and of good Union working?

**Mr Jack:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right—I know that he is a great champion of the Union. The levelling-up paper, which will be launched today, will contain a lot of initiatives and show that we are using structural funds to practise real devolution by giving that money directly to local authorities.

#### Scottish Parliament: Legislative Remit

4. **Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind): What recent discussions he has had with the Scottish Government on the legislative remit of the Scottish Parliament. [905314]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack):** The UK Government remain focused on the issues that really matter to people in Scotland, including recovery from the pandemic. My Department continues to work closely with both the Scottish Government and UK Government Departments on the ongoing implementation of the Scotland Act 2016.

**Margaret Ferrier:** Yesterday, Holyrood backed a motion rejecting voter ID measures in the Elections Bill because they would disenfranchise Scottish voters. That is an indication of the strength of feeling for people across Scotland, and in my constituency, that the UK Government are not giving them due consideration through the legislative process. Can the Secretary of State confirm what plans the Government have to extend Holyrood's legislative powers?

**Mr Jack:** We are respecting devolution with the Elections Bill: we are bringing in voter ID only for UK elections. We believe that stealing someone's vote is stealing someone's voice.

#### Coastal Communities

5. **Jacob Young** (Redcar) (Con): What steps the Government are taking to support coastal communities in Scotland. [905315]

8. **Cherilyn Mackrory** (Truro and Falmouth) (Con): What steps the Government are taking to support coastal communities in Scotland. [905319]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Iain Stewart):** Communities across Scotland have benefited and will continue to benefit from our focus on levelling up. Particularly for coastal communities we are investing a further £100 million over the next three years for transformative seafood projects that will help to rejuvenate our coastal communities.

**Jacob Young:** The petrochemical and oil and gas industries are vital to coastal communities across our United Kingdom, in Teesside and in Scotland. Will the Minister confirm that this Government are committed to supporting our petchem sector and further oil and gas exploration in the North sea, which will inevitably help us achieve net zero, not hinder it?

**Iain Stewart:** Yes, I can. The Government are committed to delivering a North sea transition deal, which will be a global exemplar of how a Government can work with the offshore oil and gas industry in partnership to achieve a managed energy transition. This deal between the UK Government and the oil and gas industry will support workers, businesses and the supply chain through this transition by harnessing the industry's existing capabilities, infrastructure and private investment potential.

**Cherilyn Mackrory:** This Government's multimillion-pound investment in the fishing industry will benefit coastal communities right across the UK, from Cornwall to Scotland. Does my hon. Friend agree that only by boosting coastal communities and spreading opportunity to every corner of our country can we succeed in our mission to improve the lives of everybody in our great nation?

**Iain Stewart:** Indeed I do. The Government have gone well beyond their manifesto commitment to replace European Union funding, by investing an additional £100 million over the next three years for these transformative seafood projects that will rejuvenate the industry and our coastal communities. Levelling up is about helping communities across the UK, and that means building back better, spreading opportunity, improving public services and helping to restore and celebrate pride in our coastal communities.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael** (Orkney and Shetland) (LD): The world-leading European Marine Energy Centre in Stromness was developed as a consequence of access to EU Interreg funding, money to which we no longer have access. Does the Minister agree that the UK's shared prosperity fund should be the source of replacement funding for organisations such as EMEC that no longer have access to Interreg funding? What is the Scotland Office doing to make that case within government?

**Iain Stewart:** I had the pleasure of visiting Stromness last summer, when I saw for myself the huge potential that Orkney has to lead the country in renewable energy. I continue to speak to the leader of Orkney Islands Council to explore all the ways in which we can help to fund these exciting projects.

**Douglas Chapman** (Dunfermline and West Fife) (SNP): Many coastal communities, including in my constituency, benefit from improved coastal shipping. What actions has the Secretary of State taken to assist in introducing a direct ferry service from Scotland to critically important export markets in Europe?

**Iain Stewart:** I was pleased to reply to a debate that the hon. Gentleman and other colleagues spoke in a couple of weeks ago on exploring the potential for restoring the Rosyth to Zeebrugge link, which, for commercial reasons, ceased operating a few years ago. There are lots of potentials for reopening that. It is primarily a matter for the Scottish Government, but I am happy to work with him and his colleagues to explore all these opportunities.

**Liz Twist** (Blaydon) (Lab): The ScotWind allocation announced last week has the opportunity to create thousands of jobs in Scotland. The reality is that in its time in office the Scottish National party has created lots of highly-skilled jobs, but they are not in Scotland—they are in China, Poland, Portugal and elsewhere. The Scottish Government failed to put in place sufficient demands for local procurement as part of awarding the contract; it is particularly disappointing for coastal communities, who can see offshore wind turbines being installed but cannot see the jobs. What discussion has the Minister had with the Scottish Government about ensuring that the supply chain for ScotWind creates jobs in Scotland and across the UK?

**Iain Stewart:** I agree with the basic point the hon. Lady is making. Referring back to the answer I gave the right hon. Member for Orkney and Shetland (Mr Carmichael), may I say that if we look at renewable energy as a whole, we see that there are enormous opportunities to develop that technology in Scotland, through our contracts for difference round, which is as

big as all the other rounds put together? Huge investment is going in, in offshore wind and in tidal, and I will continue to explore every avenue to make sure that this country is able to secure the lion's share of that industrial capacity.

### Levelling-up Fund: Benefits to Scotland

6. **Suzanne Webb** (Stourbridge) (Con): What assessment he has made of the potential economic benefits to Scotland of the Levelling Up Fund. [905316]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alister Jack):** Eight projects in Scotland have received a share of more than £170 million from round 1 of the levelling-up fund. Those projects will create new jobs, boost training, grow productivity and deliver tremendous economic benefit to Scotland.

**Suzanne Webb:** With all the news on the levelling-up White Paper today, will my right hon. Friend update the House on progress towards the fund's second round? There will be as many bidders in Scotland as there will be in my constituency, where we are keen to move forward with a bid to regenerate Lye.

**Mr Jack:** Unsuccessful applicants who have passed the gateway stage will be offered feedback to support future bids. They will also be encouraged to reapply. Round 2 of the levelling-up fund is due to open in spring this year, and more information will be shared in due course.

**Alex Davies-Jones** (Pontypridd) (Lab): I feel for the Secretary of State having to come to the Dispatch Box to defend his Government's appalling record on spending for the devolved nations. Their broken promises on fully replacing EU funds look to set Wales back more than £1 billion over the next few years. Will he confirm exactly how the Government plan on plugging that gap? The shared prosperity fund will see all the devolved nations lose out on vital funding and is simply not good enough.

**Mr Jack:** To be absolutely clear, regarding funding to the devolved Administrations, the first comment I would make to the hon. Lady is that the settlement for Scotland this year of £41.6 billion is an increase of £4 billion and is the highest settlement that the Scottish Government have received since 1998, so since devolution began. Regarding the UK shared prosperity fund, the European regional development fund and the European social fund are absolutely being replaced with no reduction whatever, as per our manifesto commitment.

**David Duguid** (Banff and Buchan) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend inform the House of what engagement he has had—or other UK Departments have had—with the Scottish Government and, in particular, with local authorities in Scotland to ensure that levelling up is truly a levelling-up exercise across the whole of the United Kingdom?

**Mr Jack:** As my hon. Friend knows from when he was in the Scotland Office with me, we have had a lot of engagement with Scottish local authorities. We have

been very clear that we will deliver the levelling-up money and work with those local authorities to practice real devolution.

### Transport Links: Scotland and the North-east of England

7. **Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): What steps he is taking to improve transport links between Scotland and the north-east of England to promote economic growth. [905317]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Iain Stewart):** The Union connectivity review recognised the importance of the A1 and recommended that the UK Government should seek to work with the Scottish Government to develop an assessment of the east coast road and rail corridor. The Government will respond to the UCR and publish that response in due course.

**Grahame Morris:** On the day that the levelling-up agenda has been published, will the Secretary of State tell the House what steps he is taking to devolve powers and finance to the northern regions, so that we can strengthen ties with the Holyrood Government independently of Westminster, so increasing rail capacity, trade and opportunities for business?

**Iain Stewart:** I know how passionate the hon. Gentleman is about transport matters as I had the pleasure of serving with him on the Select Committee on Transport for a number of years. If he reads through the levelling-up White Paper, which came out today—I appreciate that it is quite a weighty tome, so he might not have had a chance to digest it all yet—he will see in that the measures to which he is referring. We can encourage better connectivity between the different economic centres of the UK. I would be absolutely delighted to see a strengthening of that corridor between Scotland and the north-east of England.

### Defence Investment in Scotland

9. **Ben Everitt** (Milton Keynes North) (Con): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on defence investment in Scotland. [905320]

**The Secretary of State for Scotland (Mr Alistair Jack):** My office and I have regular discussions with the Ministry of Defence on all matters relating to defence in Scotland, including defence investment with industry and commerce in Scotland, which totalled almost £2 billion in 2020-21.

**Ben Everitt:** Scotland is home to the Royal Navy Submarine Service, including our essential independent nuclear deterrent, which protects the whole of the UK. As President Putin continues to escalate his military posture and the aggression on the Ukrainian border—let us be clear that it is President Putin escalating this and not the Russian people—does my right hon. Friend agree that our commitment to defence investment in Scotland, including in Trident, is important, indeed vital, to Scotland's security as part of the UK and as part of NATO? [Interruption.]

**Mr Speaker:** Order. I need to finish these questions. It is in good order that you hear your own Secretary of State.

**Mr Jack:** Mr Speaker, you will not be surprised to hear that I completely agree with my hon. Friend. The UK's independent nuclear deterrent, which is Trident, based at the HM Naval Base Clyde, exists to deter the most extreme threats not only to the United Kingdom but to our NATO allies. Our nuclear deterrent is the ultimate assurance against current and future threats and remains essential for as long as the global security situation demands.

**Mr Speaker:** I call Alyn Smith for the final question.  
**Rise in the Cost of Living**

10. **Alyn Smith** (Stirling) (SNP): What discussions he has had with Cabinet colleagues on the potential effect of the rise in the cost of living on people in Scotland. [905321]

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland (Iain Stewart):** This Government have consistently said that the best way to support people's living standards is through good work, better skills and higher wages. Our plan for jobs is working, the economy is growing and unemployment is low. The national living wage, the universal credit taper and allowance changes are putting more money in people's pockets.

**Alyn Smith:** The UK energy market is demonstrably broken. Surely that is of concern to all of us in all parts of the House. I am particularly concerned about rural energy prices and disparities between urban and rural areas. Competition law and energy law are reserved to this place. Will the Minister support my call for an investigation into uncompetitive energy practices? If he will not, would he care to come to the city of Stirling and explain to the people of Stirling and Scotland how the UK energy market is working for them?

**Iain Stewart:** First, let me welcome the city of culture bid by the hon. Gentleman's home city. I am always happy to visit Stirling—in fact, I believe that I am coming up to visit in the next couple of weeks. I am very happy to meet him to discuss the measures to which he refers, but energy prices are rising globally. That is a consequence of the coronavirus restrictions easing and demand coming back, together with other geopolitical factors, so I would put the points that he raises in that global context.

### Speaker's Statement

12.2 pm

**Mr Speaker:** Before we come to Prime Minister's questions, I wish to make a statement about the House practices regarding accusing Members of lying or of deliberately misleading the House. I recognise that there are frustrations around the House's practices.

First, let me say that there are means by which accusations of lying may be brought before the House, including by means of a substantive motion. The Scottish National party did so on its Opposition day in November. However, Members may not accuse each other of lying or of deliberately misleading the House unless such a substantive motion is under consideration. "Erskine May" is clear that it is

"to preserve the character of parliamentary debate", which I take to mean to stop it descending into fruitless cycles of accusation and counter-accusation.

It also says:

“Expressions when used in respect of other Members which are regarded with particular seriousness, generally leading to prompt intervention from the Chair and often a requirement on the Member to withdraw the words, include...charges of uttering a deliberate falsehood.”

It is important to stress context. Similar words said in different proceedings might attract a different response from the Chair depending on the subject being debated, tone and other considerations. In general, though, the Chair will not tolerate accusations of lying or of deliberately misleading the House. That is the long-standing practice of the House, as set out in “Erskine May” and followed by successive Speakers and Deputy Speakers.

Of course, long-standing practices may change—for example, if the House decided that it wanted a different approach, perhaps informed by a Procedure Committee inquiry—but it is not for me to change the practice unilaterally. Therefore, I ask Members to respect this approach. I know feelings run high on important issues we discuss, but there are plenty of ways of making strong feelings felt within the rules and without placing the Chair in the invidious position of having to order Members to withdraw or seeking their suspension.

Before we come to Prime Minister’s questions, I would like to point out that the British Sign Language interpretation of proceedings is available to watch on [parliamentlive.tv](http://parliamentlive.tv).

## PRIME MINISTER

*The Prime Minister was asked—*

### Engagements

Q1. [905431] **Esther McVey** (Tatton) (Con): If he will list his official engagements for Wednesday 2 February.

**The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):** This Sunday, Her Majesty the Queen will become the first British monarch to celebrate a platinum jubilee. While it is a moment of national celebration, it will be a day of mixed emotions for Her Majesty, as of course the day also marks 70 years since the death of her beloved father George VI. I know the whole House will want to join me in thanking Her Majesty for her tireless service. We look forward to celebrating her historic reign with a series of national events in June. This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues and others. In addition to my duties in this House, I shall have further such meetings later today.

**Esther McVey:** On Monday, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care said mandatory vaccinations would be subject to a consultation. Can the Prime Minister make it unequivocally clear—no ifs, no buts, no qualifications—that mandatory vaccinations for NHS staff will be abandoned? Will he also make it clear that that is also true for care workers, many of whom have already lost their jobs? What support will the Government be giving to get those care workers back into the care sector, and will those who have lost their jobs get compensation?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my right hon. Friend for her thoughtful work on this. I want to stress that vaccines remain our best line of defence, and I think

that NHS staff and all those who work in the care sector have a professional responsibility to get vaccinated. However, as my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary told the House on Monday, given the difference between omicron and delta, it is right—my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Esther McVey) is right—that we revisit the balance of risks and opportunities. The Health Secretary has said we will launch a consultation and, subject to the responses and the will of this House, the Government will revoke the regulations.

**Keir Starmer** (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab): Following your opening remarks, Mr Speaker, I want to say to Government Members that theirs is the party of Winston Churchill. Our parties stood together as we defeated fascism in Europe. Now their leader stands in the House of Commons parroting the conspiracy theories of violent fascists to try to score cheap political points. He knows exactly what he is doing. It is time to restore some dignity.

One of the most absurd claims made on behalf of Operation Save Big Dog is the Prime Minister and the Chancellor writing in *The Sunday Times* that they are the “tax-cutting Conservatives.” Why do these alleged tax cutters keep raising taxes on working people?

**The Prime Minister:** On the right hon. and learned Gentleman’s first point, I do not want to make heavy weather of this, but I am informed that in 2013 he apologised and took full responsibility for what had happened on his watch, and I think that was the right thing to do.

On what we are doing to tackle the cost of living and taxation, our covid recovery plan is vital in helping people with the cost of living: lifting up universal credit payments by cutting the tax that people effectively pay, lifting the living wage, and helping councils with another half a billion pounds for those who are facing particular hardship. What we are also doing, and this is absolutely vital, is increasing the number of high-wage, high-skill jobs in this country. There are 420,000 more on the payroll than there were before the pandemic began, because we have had the fastest exit from covid of any European economy, because we had the fastest vaccine and booster roll-out.

**Keir Starmer:** It is not just the national insurance rise. Thresholds for income tax frozen—a stealth tax on working people. The threshold for tuition fees frozen—a stealth tax on working people. Local authorities forced to increase council tax—a stealth tax on working people. You can be as stealthy as you like, but you cannot hide reality. We have the highest tax burden for 70 years in the middle of an inflation crisis. I ask the Prime Minister again: why do he and the Chancellor keep raising taxes on working people?

**The Prime Minister:** What we are doing is helping people with the cost of living, cutting taxes for those on universal credit, as I have said, and helping people with the cost of their fuel, with the cold weather payments and the warm home payment—doing all the things that this country would expect. We are lifting the living wage, which this party introduced. This Government have increased that by a record amount. Above all, the most important thing we are doing is helping people into work, with 500,000 people off welfare and into work under our way to work scheme. There are more



people in work now than before the pandemic began, and that is the record of this Government. Never forget that there has never been a Labour Government who left office with unemployment lower than when they came to power.

**Keir Starmer:** Lots of words, lots of bluster, but no answers. A word of warning, Prime Minister: that will not work with the police.

I will tell the Prime Minister why the Government are putting taxes up: low growth. In the decade of Tory Government before the pandemic, growth slumped. It was much, much weaker than under the last Labour Government. If the Tories matched our record on growth, we would have £30 billion more to spend on public services without having to raise a single tax. Surely even this Prime Minister does not need someone else to tell him that he and the Chancellor are having to raise taxes because the Tories failed to grow the economy over a decade.

**The Prime Minister:** No, I think everybody in this country can see that we have been through the biggest pandemic for 100 years and that we have looked after the people of this country to the tune of £400 billion, which we put into furlough and all the other schemes, with 11.7 million people protected. Everybody knows the cost of that. At the same time, despite all the difficulties we have faced, we have now got the fastest growth in the G7. That is absolutely true. We have youth unemployment at a record low. We have got three times as much tech investment coming into this country as France, and twice as much as Germany. *[Interruption.]* Yes, that is absolutely true. If we want to know about Labour economics, never forget that the last time they were in office, when they were finally booted out, they left a note saying, “There is no money left.” That is the way they run the country.

**Hon. Members:** More!

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Some people will not be getting more, because they will not be here to hear it.

**Keir Starmer:** The UK has suffered the worst economic crisis in the G7. The Prime Minister has more chance of persuading the public that he did not hold any parties than he has of persuading them that the economy is booming. High taxes are not just the result of low growth. Under this Government we have seen a pandemic of waste and fraud, from the Prime Minister’s yacht to Government contracts for mates of Ministers. They have treated taxpayers as an ATM for their mates and their lifestyles. Now we find that they have written off £8.7 billion on personal protective equipment and the Chancellor is writing off £4.3 billion in fraud. That is enough to cover the tax hike he is inflicting on working people. Why did this Government block the National Crime Agency from investigating all the billions they lost to fraud?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course we despise fraud and those who steal from the taxpayer, which is why we have already recovered £743 million in lost furlough money and £2.2 billion that was stolen in bounce back loans, and we will go on. But I have to tell you, Mr Speaker, that I am proud of what this Government and this

country did: securing record quantities of PPE in record time, and furloughing and looking after the entirety of British business and society in the way that we did.

Once again, Captain Hindsight comes to this House and attacks the Government for doing exactly what he urged us to do 18 months ago. Mr Speaker, it so happens that I have been rustling in my notes and I have found a letter dated 22 April 2020—which I will place for your convenience in the Library of the House—from the shadow Chancellor, the hon. Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, my right hon. Friend the Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), suggesting that we could secure PPE supplies from a theatrical costumier and get ventilators from a professional football agent. No wonder fraud was running at £21 billion a year under Labour. I am proud of what this Government did to secure PPE and I am proud of the way we protected this country.

**Hon. Members:** More!

**Mr Speaker:** Who wants to be the first to leave? Please put your hand up, because I am going to pick one of you.

**Keir Starmer:** The Prime Minister might want to sharpen how he answers questions under interview; he is going to need to in the next few weeks. Waste and low growth explain why we have high taxes, but they do not explain why it is always working people who are asked to pay more. Yesterday he ordered his troops not to support a windfall tax on oil and gas companies. As a result, the country is missing out on over £1 billion that we could have used to cut taxes on energy bills for working people. Today he is ordering his troops to vote for tax cuts for banks. As a result, the country is missing out on another £1 billion that we could have spent cutting taxes for working people. Why are the Chancellor and the Prime Minister protecting oil companies and bank profits while putting taxes up on working people?

**The Prime Minister:** Let’s just get to the heart of what this is all about. This is all about dealing with the consequences of the biggest pandemic that this country has seen, with an unprecedented economic crisis, in which the state had to come forward and look after the people of this country to the tune of £408 billion. Everybody can see the fiscal impacts of that. Shall I tell the House what this Government and this country are voting for, and what we are doing? We are investing now in 45,000 more NHS workers—more people in our NHS—this year than there were last year: 10,900 more nurses; about 5,000 more doctors; 9 million more scans and 100 community diagnostics hubs to help people to get the scans and the treatment that they need. And the incredible, lamentable thing is that the Opposition—the party of Nye Bevan—voted against those funds and that investment, and they would have made our covid recovery impossible.

**Keir Starmer:** For all the bluster, the truth is that the Conservative party is the party of high taxes because it is the party of low growth; it is the party of high taxes because it is the party of eye-watering waste.

We know that this Prime Minister has no respect for decency or honesty. I can take it when it is aimed at me, but I will not accept it when he gaslights the British

public, writing absurd articles about cutting taxes at a time when he is squeezing working people to the pips. Isn't it the case that he and his Chancellor are the Tory Thelma and Louise, hand in hand as they drive the country off the cliff, and into the abyss of low growth and high tax? *[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Mr Gullis, I think you have been trolled for long enough and you do not want to be trolled any more. That is the last comment I have—otherwise I will ring your mother.

**The Prime Minister:** I think the right hon. and learned Gentleman is Dick Dastardly and Muttley, both of them pulling in different directions—we know they have different views.

We are getting on with the job, and of course I think it is absolutely extraordinary that the Opposition have done nothing to support our covid recovery plan and they voted against our plans to support the NHS. Just in the last few days, while the right hon. and learned Gentleman has been fixated on the issues that he is absolutely determined to escalate, we have opened freeports across the country, and we are getting 500,000 people off welfare into work with our Way to Work plan.

In just a few short minutes—I hope the right hon. and learned Gentleman will hang around, because he will hear him—my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Levelling Up will deliver the long-awaited levelling up White Paper, full of good stuff, including 55 education investment areas across our country. It is a wonderful economic and moral mission to level up and give opportunity across the whole country, and a fantastic vision for this country. The Opposition have nothing of the kind to offer the people of this country.

While we are getting on with coming out of covid, and we are the second fastest, or the fastest economic recovery in the G7—the fastest, the fastest—the right hon. and learned Gentleman would have kept us in lockdown. We are fixing the NHS and social care, when the Opposition voted against it, and they have no plan. We are building a coalition—*[Interruption.]* We are building a coalition—*[Interruption.]*

**Mr Speaker:** Order. Prime Minister, I am this way, not that way—maybe Specsavers might be the answer to see where I am—but can I just say that Dame Caroline Dinenage is desperate to get the next question to you? I call Dame Caroline Dinenage.

Q2. [905432] **Dame Caroline Dinenage** (Gosport) (Con): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. First, I would like to give my condolences to the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), and say how good it is to see her back in her place.

Sophie Fairall was just 10 years old when she died in September. Childhood cancer is often described as rare, yet cancer is the biggest killer of children under 14. Sophie's GP failed to diagnose her cancer, and it was only when she went to A&E that they discovered the tumour in her little body that was 12 cm long. On World Cancer Day on Friday, I would like to ask the Prime Minister to please advocate for more and better training for general practice to identify cancer in children.

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend. I am very sorry to hear of Sophie's case, and my thoughts are with her family and her friends. She is right that research is crucial in tackling childhood cancers. That is why we are investing in more research, but it is also vital that we do tests, diagnostic scans and screens early enough, and that is why it is also important that not only has National Institute for Health and Care Excellence updated its guidance on referring childhood cancers in February last year, but we are investing in 100 new diagnostic centres in community hubs.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): I am sure that you, Mr Speaker, and the rest of the House will want to join me in celebrating and supporting World Cancer Day.

Mr Speaker, in relation to your earlier statement, I have a difficulty reconciling the Prime Minister's version of events with other evidence and, as you know, I have a duty to reflect and represent the deep public anger with the Prime Minister. That said, I respect the absolute impartiality that you take in your role, and I want to set it on the record that I respect both you and the authority of the Chair.

This morning, the *Telegraph* newspaper revealed that the Prime Minister attended a party in his flat on 13 November 2020. The Prime Minister previously told the House that no party took place. The police are now investigating this party, and we face a very real prospect of a sitting Prime Minister being questioned under caution and being fined in office. If he is questioned, he must go, and if he is fined, he must resign. Mr Speaker, you will agree that the House should not be treated with contempt, so can the Prime Minister—*[Interruption.]* Here we go again. So can the Prime Minister update the House on his whereabouts on the evening of 13 November? Surely he does not need to wait for an investigation to tell us exactly where he was.

**The Prime Minister:** “Here we go again” says the right hon. Gentleman opposite, and I must say those were entirely my feelings: he asked exactly the same questions, as I recall, in the Chamber a few days ago. He knows that the process must go on, but I can tell him what has been going on in Downing Street in November and throughout: we have been delivering the fastest vaccine and booster roll-out anywhere in Europe; we have been getting people back into work; and we have been helping to bring the west together to defy what I think is completely unacceptable threats and intimidation from the Putin regime against Ukraine. That is what we have been doing.

**Ian Blackford:** That was a disgraceful response, and I have to say to the Prime Minister that he should read the room and see the expressions on some of his colleagues' faces; he has lost it. We have now reached the ridiculous scenario of a Prime Minister who cannot even tell us where he was. He lives in a world where he thinks everything is owed to him, and he never pauses to think what he owes to the public. The Prime Minister is now a dangerous distraction at home and a running joke on the international stage. What does it tell the Prime Minister and the public that on the morning he has returned from Ukraine the Chair of the Select Committee on Defence has submitted a letter of no confidence in him?

**The Prime Minister:** It tells me that it is more vital than ever for the Government of this country to get on with the job and deliver our covid recovery plan, and that is what we are doing.

Q3. [905433] **Virginia Crosbie** (Ynys Môn) (Con): I would like to say diolch—thank you—to the Prime Minister for visiting my Ynys Môn constituency, where he saw at first hand the enormous beneficial impact the new nuclear plant Wylfa Newydd could have if built on Anglesey. Nuclear power must play a role if we are to meet our carbon and net-zero commitments, level up and combat rising energy prices. Does my right hon. Friend agree that the rapid deployment of nuclear technology must be a priority for this Government, and if so will my right hon. Friend commit to financing a nuclear plant at the Wylfa site in this Parliament?

**The Prime Minister:** It was a great joy to visit my hon. Friend's constituency, where I believe she is known as "Atomic Kitten"—or so she informed me—and she outlined in great detail her plans for Wylfa. It is a fantastic vision and a fantastic site, and it remains a very interesting and attractive prospect for new nuclear power.

**Colum Eastwood** (Foyle) (SDLP): I am not sure if the Prime Minister has noticed but while he has been partying working families in Northern Ireland have lost £1,000 from their universal credit, their national insurance has been put up by this Government and their energy bills are going through the roof. He is very fond of telling us that we are all in this together; isn't it the truth that this Prime Minister has only ever been it for himself and his rich mates?

**The Prime Minister:** No, I am in it to serve my country and the entire United Kingdom, and I am also proud that we have had the biggest investment in Northern Ireland since devolution began and we have cut taxation on universal credit.

Q5. [905435] **Chris Loder** (West Dorset) (Con): South Western Railway has totally cut off Dorset, Somerset, most of Wiltshire and Devon from its direct rail services to London as well as slashing our service in half, most of which is totally unnecessary. Will my right hon. Friend support me and my neighbouring colleagues in getting direct services back to West Dorset and having a timetable that is fit for our region?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend very much for his question; he knows whereof he speaks. He is an expert in the subject and has lobbied very effectively for his constituents and reflected their frustrations. I am told that the timetable is expected to return to December 2021 levels from Saturday 19 February.

Q4. [905434] **Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): I was out this weekend speaking to a constituent who has a cold and leaky house. She has already seen her bills go up from £100 to £170 a month. The Government have failed to insulate her house and failed to control her fuel bills. Bribing people with their own money is no plan. The Prime Minister has no plan to cut VAT and no plan to get the oil and gas industry to contribute. Another constituent, who voted for the

Prime Minister, went further and called him "despicable." What use is a Prime Minister who has no plan for families struggling with the cost of living and who has lost the trust of the people of this country?

**The Prime Minister:** The hon. Member talks about cutting VAT. I wonder whether he voted for Brexit and our ability to cut VAT—perhaps he could indicate. We delivered that and celebrated its anniversary on Monday. I sympathise very much with his constituent and understand the pressures that people are facing on the costs of living, but what we have got to do is invest and protect them. We are putting in £12 billion-worth of support and financial help for families in hardship this year, which is absolutely vital after the pandemic. The most important thing is to have a jobs-led economic recovery. In case I failed to make myself clear before you wound me up, Mr Speaker, that is why we have the fastest economic growth in the G7.

Q6. [905436] **James Grundy** (Leigh) (Con): The Greater Manchester mayoral clean air zone scheme—in effect, a congestion charge affecting all 500 square miles of Greater Manchester, including my constituents in Leigh—is a job-destroying tax on ordinary working people. We all want clean air, but the model proposed by Mayor Burnham is unworkable and economically devastating, with charges of £60 per day per lorry driver. Taxis, white van men and even buses will be caught by it. Will the PM intervene to prevent Mayor Burnham from inflicting this disastrous Labour scheme on Greater Manchester?

**The Prime Minister:** I know from my own experience how vital it is when trying to clean up air in a great city not to penalise business unjustly, and particularly small businesses. It has become clear that the scheme proposed by the Labour Mayor in Manchester is completely unworkable and will do more damage to businesses and residents in Manchester. We must find an alternative that does not punish local residents. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs will say more about that in the coming days.

Q8. [905438] **Abena Oppong-Asare** (Erith and Thamesmead) (Lab): If the Prime Minister receives a fixed penalty notice for attending a party or hosting a party during lockdown, will he inform the House, and will he resign?

**The Prime Minister:** Of course, I will comply with the law, but I have got to wait for the process to be concluded.

Q7. [905437] **Ian Levy** (Blyth Valley) (Con): Since I was elected, my fabulous constituency has really seen the green shoots of prosperity. Government support is bringing a green revolution to Blyth Valley. However, with such growth there has been increased congestion on our roads, and we are in desperate need of upgrades to road infrastructure. Will my right hon. Friend please meet me to discuss the urgent problem and help Blyth Valley out of its ever-increasing traffic jam?

**The Prime Minister:** My hon. Friend is the best champion that Blyth could possibly have. He does a quite amazing job. I thank him in particular for helping

to secure the Britishvolt gigafactory in Blyth—an absolutely amazing investment. Of course, growth and prosperity bring challenges when it comes to congestion on our roads, and we have to tackle that. We are working with the council on a bid for the Blyth relief road, and I will ensure that he gets a meeting with the Transport Secretary to discuss it further.

Q10. [905440] **Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The problem with a distracted Prime Minister is that he makes the wrong choices. While he has been living it up, many of my constituents are living on the breadline as food, energy and taxes shoot up. In York, rent prices are now the highest in the north and some of the highest in the country. York is now in the top 10 places in the country where there is a cost of living crisis, pushing my constituents further into poverty and debt. When will he stop protecting himself and start protecting my constituents?

**The Prime Minister:** One of the first things I did when I became Prime Minister was ensure that we looked after people on low incomes by increasing local housing allowance, by increasing the living wage—not once but twice, and by record amounts—and by doing what we have now done with universal credit. The most important thing about the UK economy right now is that we have a strong, jobs-led recovery, and that is what is going to drive up wages, drive up productivity and drive up growth. That is what this Government are delivering.

Q9. [905439] **Sir Desmond Swayne** (New Forest West) (Con): Will the Prime Minister brief us on his visit to Ukraine?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my right hon. Friend very much for his question. Very briefly, I can tell the House that the mission, which I hope everybody will support, was to stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine, for our country to show that we stand with the people of Ukraine, and to show that we stand for the sovereign and territorial integrity of Ukraine at a very difficult time. On the borders of Ukraine, as everybody knows, there are about 125,000 Russian troops massing. The situation is very perilous, and the job of the UK is to lead the west in bringing together the most important countries in creating a package of economic sanctions that will deter President Putin from what I believe would be a disastrous miscalculation, and also to strengthen our support for the Ukrainian people and, indeed, the Ukrainian army. We are doing that by supplying lethal but defensive weaponry, as well as training, to the Ukrainians, which is greatly appreciated. But I must say that the situation remains risky and it is vital that diplomacy finds a way forward.

Q14. [905444] **Gareth Thomas** (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): On a related issue, after the publication of the Russia report the Prime Minister claimed

“tackling illicit finance and driving dirty money and money launderers out of the UK is a priority.”

His warnings to Mr Putin of late would surely have carried more bite if he had used the 18 months since the publication of the Russia report to legislate for an economic crime Act to stop the flow of dirty money from Russia. Why has he not prioritised this issue of national security?

**The Prime Minister:** Contrary to some of the myths that are peddled, this Government have come down very hard on dirty money from Russia and everywhere else—that is why we brought in the unexplained wealth orders—and indeed China, which Opposition Members might like to consider. That is why we have sanctions on Russia following what it did in Crimea in 2014. We have Magnitsky sanctions on everybody involved in the poisoning of Alexei Navalny. To the hon. Gentleman’s point, we are bringing forward the economic crime Bill, and it will be voted on in the third Session of this Parliament.

Q11. [905441] **Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): Two years ago this week, despite the best efforts of the Opposition, this Government delivered on the democratic decision to leave the European Union. *[Interruption.]* Despite there being a global pandemic in the two years since, more than 70 free trade agreements have been signed. However, as we recover, many more opportunities can be realised. Will the Prime Minister commit to appointing a Minister with responsibility for realising the Brexit freedoms and benefits that will boost all our constituencies?

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker, you can hear from the chuntering opposite that they still want to take this thing back. They still want to cancel Brexit, but it is largely thanks to Brexit that we had the fastest vaccine roll-out in Europe, that we have been able to deliver our freeports and that we have been able to do 60 or 70 free trade deals around the world. I will not anticipate any decisions I may make about the Government, but I certainly think it would be a good idea to have a Minister driving that post-Brexit agenda.

Q15. [905445] **Gavin Newlands** (Paisley and Renfrewshire North) (SNP): Let us just recap, Mr Speaker. First we were told that we must wait for the Sue Gray report; then we were told that we must wait for the police investigation to conclude. We had, “There was no party,” then we had, “If there was a party, I was not there,” and then we had, “If there was a party, all rules were followed.” But no one believes the Prime Minister. If any of the above were true, why did Allegra Stratton have to resign?

**The Prime Minister:** I explained that sad matter on the Floor of the House. No one wanted Allegra to resign, and I was very sad that she did.

Q12. [905442] **Simon Jupp** (East Devon) (Con): My constituent Jinty Sheerin has launched a campaign for a dedicated menopause clinic in Devon. Women in East Devon currently face a 120-mile round trip to get to the nearest specialist menopause clinic. It is not good enough, is it? Will my right hon. Friend outline what steps the Government are taking to improve access to menopause services in Devon and the south-west?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend for raising this very important campaign. We are committed to improving menopause care so that all women can have access to the support that they need to manage the symptoms. Menopause will be a priority in our women’s health strategy, and we are committed to establishing a UK-wide menopause taskforce.

**Dame Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab): If the Prime Minister needs a Metropolitan police inquiry to tell him whether he attended a party on 13 November in his own Downing Street flat, why should we believe that he is a fit and proper person to have his hand on the button of our independent nuclear deterrent?

**The Prime Minister:** I hesitate to remind the hon. Lady that she campaigned actively to install a Prime Minister who wanted to get rid of our nuclear deterrent altogether.

Q13. [905443] **Mark Eastwood** (Dewsbury) (Con): My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister, the Government and our NHS have done an amazing job with the vaccine roll-out, making it a resounding success. Will he join me in thanking the wonderful NHS workers,

volunteers and pharmacists who have worked so hard to help to make that possible in Dewsbury, Mirfield, Kirkburton and Denby Dale?

**The Prime Minister:** I thank my hon. Friend, who does a fantastic job in representing his communities, and I thank all of them—everyone involved in the roll-out in Dewsbury, Mirfield, Kirkburton and Denby Dale. It was an extraordinary national effort. Anyone who has visited a vaccine centre will know that feeling of pride in what was happening; that feeling of energy in a collective effort to make our society and our country literally healthier day by day. I thank all those people from the bottom of my heart.

**Mr Speaker:** That is the end of Prime Minister's questions. Will those who wish to leave please do so quietly and quickly?

## Speaker's Statement

JACK DROMEY

12.43 pm

**Mr Speaker:** We now come to tributes to Jack Dromey.

Jack made his mark long before he came into this House, in particular as a fearless, energetic trade unionist. I remember campaigning with him in the '80s and '90s to save the Royal Ordnance factory in Chorley. He was positive, down to earth, and determined to help working people—characteristics that remained with him throughout his career. I have to say, as somebody who knew Jack and worked with Jack: he was innovative; he was absolutely visionary. We sat down, upon a closure where thousands of jobs were going to go, and Jack said, "We're in this together; we will stand shoulder to shoulder with the people whose jobs are at risk." He said, "We've got to look beyond what kills people. We can do something different. Let us look for alternatives that save people's lives."

The expertise that was in Royal Ordnance Chorley was second to none. Of course we had to fight for the jobs in the first place. It became a choice between Glascoed and Chorley, and Jack said, "With the land values we know where British Aerospace will be." In the end we came up with real alternatives. We had seen Lockerbie. We had seen the destruction and the loss of life, and in Chorley they designed a cargo that stopped the plane coming down. That was the vision of Jack, who said, "If we can't save the jobs in making bombs, let us save jobs by finding an alternative to save lives." So that is my personal experience of Jack Dromey. I knew him on other occasions, but I have to say: he was inspirational to me and he has been inspirational to many others in this House.

Since his election to this House in 2010, he proved to be an exemplary Member of Parliament. He was an assiduous and effective campaigner for his constituents. As a Front Bencher, he was trusted to lead for the party in particularly sensitive areas such as housing, policing, pensions, and, most recently, immigration. While he was a robust Front Bencher, he always demonstrated respect for his opponents and was well liked and admired across the House. Nobody could fall out with Jack Dromey.

While we mourn a colleague, it is Jack's family who will of course feel the loss most deeply. I know the whole House will join me in expressing our condolences to the Mother of the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman). Harriet, I know that all Members of this House will join me in saying to you and your family that we are so sorry for your loss, and it is a sad loss for this House.

I will now take brief points of order to allow for tributes to an esteemed colleague.

**The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. On 7 January, this House suffered the loss of the hon. Member for Birmingham, Erdington, Jack Dromey, and it is right that we should come together now in tribute to his memory. Let me offer my condolences, on behalf of the whole Government, to the Mother of the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), and her family.

Although Jack and I may have come from different political traditions, I knew him as a man of great warmth and energy and compassion. I can tell the House that one day—a very hot day—Jack was driving in Greece when he saw a family of British tourists, footsore, bedraggled and sunburned, with the children on the verge of mutiny against their father: an experience I understand. He stopped the car and invited them all in, even though there was barely any room. I will always be grateful for his kindness, because that father was me, and he drove us quite a long way.

Jack had a profound commitment to helping all those around him, and those he served, and he commanded the utmost respect across the House. He will be remembered as one of the great trade unionists of our time—a veteran of the Grunwick picket lines, which he attended with his future wife, where they campaigned alongside the mainly Asian female workforce at the Grunwick film processing laboratory. Having married someone who would go on to become, in his words,

"the outstanding parliamentary feminist of her generation",

Jack became, again in his words, Mr Harriet Harman née Dromey.

Jack was rightly proud of the achievements of the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham, but we should remember today his own contribution to this House during his 11 years as the Member for Birmingham, Erdington. He was a fantastic local campaigner who always had the next cause, the next campaign, the next issue to solve. I was struck by the moving tribute from his son Joe, who described how Jack was always furiously scribbling his ideas and plans in big letters on lined paper, getting through so much that when Ocado totted up their sales of that particular paper one year, they ranked Jack as their No. 1 customer across the whole of the United Kingdom.

Jack combined that irrepressible work ethic with a pragmatism and spirit of co-operation, which you have just described so well, Mr Speaker. He would work with anyone if it was in the interests of his constituents. As Andy Street, the Conservative Mayor of the West Midlands, remarked:

"He was a great collaborator always able to put party differences aside for the greater good... Birmingham has lost a dedicated servant... And we have all lost a generous, inclusive friend who set a fine example."

While Jack once said that he was born on the left and would die on the left, I can say that he will be remembered with affection and admiration by people on the right and in the middle, as well as on the left. Our country is all the better for everything he gave in the service of others.

**Keir Starmer (Holborn and St Pancras) (Lab):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Since the sudden passing of our friend Jack, tributes from every walk of life have captured the essence of the man we knew and loved: larger than life, bursting with enthusiasm and ideas, and tireless in the pursuit of justice and fairness. Jack channelled all those attributes into representing the people of Erdington, into a lifetime of campaigning for working people, and into his greatest love, his family.

The loss felt on the Labour Benches is great. The loss to public life is greater still. But the greatest loss is felt by another of our own, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham

(Ms Harman). She and Jack were married the best part of 40 years ago. The annual general meeting of the Fulham Legal Advice Centre may not sound like the place to find romance, but that is where Jack and Harriet met, with Jack addressing the meeting, and Harriet inspired to blaze a new trail—one that eventually led her to the place she holds today, as an icon of the Labour party and of this Parliament.

When we hear Harriet talk about Jack, one word comes through time and again: “encouraged”. It was Jack who encouraged her to join Brent Law Centre. It was Jack who encouraged her to stand as an MP—the first pregnant by-election candidate. It was Jack who encouraged her to run to be the Labour party deputy leader. When Harriet became the first woman in 18 years to answer at Prime Minister’s questions, Jack sat in the visitors’ gallery with their children, beaming down with love and admiration. I am so glad to see Jack’s family here today, beaming down with the same love, affection and pride.

The sense that Jack was always on your side is felt across this party and across the trade union movement. You can always get a measure of someone by how they treat their staff or those who rely on them. One of Jack’s former employees has said that whenever they met new people, he would always say that she was the real brains of the operation and he was merely the bag-carrier. His humility and sense of humour were legendary.

Shortly after Harriet’s book came out, a staffer had a copy of it on their desk. Jack roared with laughter as he saw a photo of himself in his 20s, barely recognisable with the prodigious thick beard. “Good grief!” he exclaimed, “What was Harriet thinking?” “What? Putting the picture in the book?” replied the staffer. “No,” Jack said, “marrying me!”

I was fortunate enough to work alongside Jack when I was a new MP in 2015. Our friendship endured, and as I gave a speech in Birmingham just a few weeks ago, it was Jack’s face that I saw in the audience, beaming up at me. He texted me the next day saying how much he had enjoyed it. That was two days before he died, which brings home the shock of his sudden, tragic passing.

Jack cut his teeth as a campaigner who spoke truth to power. He picked battles on behalf of working people, then he won them. It would be impossible to list all those victories today. He led the first equal pay strike after the Equal Pay Act 1970 was brought into law; he supported Asian women to unionise against a hostile management at Grunwick; and, even this year, he campaigned for a public inquiry on behalf of covid bereaved families.

Jack was a doughty campaigner, dubbed “Jack of all disputes”, who was feared by his opponents, but he was also deeply respected and liked across the political divide. Each and every one of us is richer for having known him. We will all miss him terribly.

The funeral service on Monday was beautiful and moving. Today, our hearts go out to Harriet, Joe, Amy, Harry and Jack’s grandchildren. The loss and grief they will be feeling cannot be measured or properly described. It cannot be wished away or pushed down and ignored, because great grief is the price we pay for having had love. We all love Jack and, even though he may no longer be with us here, that love will always live on.

**Sir Peter Bottomley** (Worthing West) (Con): May I say through you, Mr Speaker, and through the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) the mother of Amy, Joe and Harry, that the personal was very well covered in St Margaret’s two days ago? The political has been covered by the press and by Gordon Brown when he spoke at the service. I would like to contribute a parliamentary word and a trade union one.

The parliamentary one is that Jack showed what can be achieved if, by chance, you cannot have ministerial office during your time here. For those who come here thinking that being a Minister is the only thing that matters, they are wrong.

Secondly, I believe that if we could have more people who have had serious, continued trade union experience coming into this House, the House of Commons would be better for it, and I hope that that will not just be on one side of the House.

**Ian Blackford** (Ross, Skye and Lochaber) (SNP): Over recent months, we have been forced to gather here far too often to remember colleagues who, very sadly and often suddenly, have been lost to this Parliament.

Jack Dromey is another Member of this House who has gone well before his time. On behalf of myself and my colleagues in the Scottish National party, I want to extend our deepest sympathies to all who knew and loved Jack. My thoughts, of course, are most especially with the Mother of the House; she has lost a constant companion at her side. She and the family bear the biggest burden of the loss of someone who was at the very centre of all their lives.

I would also like to extend sympathy to Jack’s beloved party, because we all know he was a Labour man through and through. I will also remember Jack as one of the feistiest campaigners in this place—a man rooted in trade union politics, rooted in the rights of workers, and a man who never lost an ounce of that spirit when he entered this Parliament. That fighting spirit extended to causes and campaigns far and wide, and I know that it extended to strikes and protests in Scotland, too. He was a true friend of Scottish workers and a champion of workers everywhere.

Jack was true to the cause and that is probably why he was so good at working cross-party and winning support and friendship across this place. My friend, the former Member of this place, Neil Gray, worked very closely with him on the Pension Schemes Act 2021 and he still speaks so fondly about Jack’s determination and his passion to make sure that that Bill was amended. He would often bound up the stairs to my office to seek my and my party’s support for various campaigns not just for him, but more often, for Harriet.

I will finish by sharing one story that I read about Jack, which I thought was both very telling and very touching. Apparently, a few years ago, a great admirer of the Mother of the House from the feminist movement approached Jack and said, “I always feel a bit nervous around Harriet—I am so in awe of her,” only for Jack to reply, “Me too. Even after all these years.” Today, we can assure Jack and his family that many of us were in awe of him, too. We deeply admired the way he conducted himself and the way he carried himself every day of his

[*Ian Blackford*]

life. He left his gentle mark on so many and he will be greatly missed. May he now rest in peace. God bless you, Jack.

**Guy Opperman** (Hexham) (Con): Thank you for allowing me, exceptionally, to speak from the Front Bench on a very difficult occasion. What an honour, my dear Jack, and what a sadness it is to speak of the friend I got to know from the other side of the Aisle.

For three years, Jack was the shadow Pensions Minister and we became close. We would meet, talk and plan, and sometimes agree to disagree, but always with equanimity. Politics is adversarial and heated. The media encourage us—in fact, demand of us—to be aggressive and mean-spirited. Jack did not play that game. Others have spoken of his decades of work for the union movement, of his being a loving father and a devoted husband, and even of his management of truculent children on a deserted Greek road. I want to talk about two things. First, he is the best example I know in 11 years in the House of Commons of cross-party working. Many used to joke about how often I would exchange texts with Jack. We worked together and we got results. I would give him briefings on all future legislation, ongoing inquiries and difficult issues. That requires a lot of trust, and such trust can go wrong, as we all know. But he never used confidences unfairly or for quick political gain. I believe that we and this House work better for such a thing. During the process of the Pension Schemes Bill, he spoke or sent texts to each other more than 110 times—I counted them up. Without his help, the Bill, in particular, the measures on collective defined contributions, and the work with the Transport and General Workers Union, would not have happened as they did.

Secondly, I want to talk about Jack's kindness and generosity of spirit. My children died in childbirth in June 2020 and I want to share with the House what he said when I tried to return to work, as we had two Bills to do that autumn. He saw that I was struggling at this Dispatch Box on 29 June. He sent a text to me afterwards and I wanted to share it with the House:

"Guy, I know we both have a job to do, but I was not comfortable today. I feel for you, and your wife, my friend. We will build work around you. My thoughts are with you. Please take your time. Best wishes, Jack".

Jack Dromey was, in my opinion, a man made in the Teddy Roosevelt spirit: kind but combative; passionate but polite; and always in the arena, always striving for the benefit of others. There can be no finer compliment than saying that "The Man in the Arena" quote, which is my favourite, applies utterly and totally to Jack. Farewell my friend, it was an honour to know you.

**Dame Margaret Hodge** (Barking) (Lab): My husband Henry introduced me to Jack and Harriet when we got together in the '70s. We were, as ever, at some conference, Jack was, as ever, preoccupied with fixing some vote, and I was in total awe of Harriet and Jack. Fortunately, I got the seal of approval and we have been friends now for nearly 50 years. Those who knew him well know what a generous, kind, funny, enthusiastic, interested and interesting, loyal, unselfish and consistent friend Jack was.

Jack's life was filled by his total passion for social justice, his tribal loyalty to the Labour party, his consummate determination to be at the heart of any and every campaign that might help to make the world a better place, and his relentless optimism that he would always win. Jack's life achievements were so many, his campaigns so eclectic, that it is impossible to capture everything in a short tribute. I want to focus on his work before he became an MP. From the Grunwick strike to fighting to maintain the Rosyth and Plymouth dockyards, from corralling the first ever equal pay strike at Trico to observing the Luanda mercenary trials in Angola, seeking to stop the execution of three British mercenaries, wherever there was injustice, Jack was there. I remember Jack in the '70s leading the occupation of Centre Point in London, when London was littered with empty new office buildings while the homeless slept on the streets; in the '80s, when he bravely led the trade unions to oppose Militant in Liverpool; in the '90s, when he served on Labour's national executive committee and worked to modernise the Labour party and make us fit to govern; and in the noughties, when he organised the cleaners' strike here in Parliament when they were earning as little as £5 an hour.

Finally, two personal memories. In all our fantastic adventurous holidays together, whenever we arrived at a new destination, Jack's first question was always, "What's the wi-fi code?" He was not looking for a local restaurant. He was not finding a place for us to have a drink. His first priority was always, "Is everything okay in Erdington?" On new year's eve, we would always have a sing-song, me playing the piano and everybody else singing. Each year, Jack, with his great singing voice, would give us a solo performance, that harked back to his Irish roots, of "Danny Boy", with the women joining in to help him with the high note at the end. We always brought in the new year with a bang.

Our grief at his loss is an expression of our love for the man. Jack will continue to live on in all our todays and tomorrows as we take forward the campaigns he worked on and enjoy the successes he achieved. Thank you, Jack, for everything, and for just being you.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell** (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): It is a privilege and an honour to speak today about Jack, who I am proud to call my friend and colleague in this place. He was my parliamentary neighbour, as his constituency inside Birmingham city ran alongside the royal town of Sutton Coldfield, and there were many mutual issues affecting our constituents, on which we worked seamlessly, constructively and enjoyably together.

Jack's arrival in Birmingham was somewhat unexpected, not least because those of us keenly watching the outcome of the selection contest had been advised that this was an all-women shortlist, but we quickly established a rapport. The thing I learnt early on about Jack was that he was a brilliant negotiator. Faced with a brick wall, his instinct was not to pound his way through it, but to skilfully manoeuvre around it wherever possible. And he was ineffably charming and patient. He had a considerable knack locally of bringing people of different persuasions to common positions. He did it at times of great anxiety in the automotive industry in the west midlands with Caroline Spelman, our former colleague from Meriden, with West Midlands Mayor Andy Street and, most recently, with me working on Afghans coming to Birmingham from Kabul.



All of which leads me, finally, to a story about Jack's negotiating powers and—forgive me for name dropping, Mr Speaker—about his relationship with the Marquis of Salisbury, a former colleague in this place, Conservative Minister and Member for South Dorset, Robert Cranbourne. When his lordship was a Defence Minister, he held regular meetings with the unions in Whitehall. These meetings sometimes ran for four hours and meaningful results were slow in being achieved, but during particularly drawn-out moments the Marquis, as he is now, would catch the eye of the then senior trade union negotiator, as he then was, Jack Dromey. After one such meeting, his lordship rang up Jack to suggest that it would perhaps be better if they sorted out the business beforehand, possibly over lunch, and, to Robert's relief, Jack willingly agreed. "Where should we go?" asked Jack, to which the Marquis replied, "I wonder if you might like to come to White's, my club in St. James's," to which Jack replied, "Ah, I've always wanted to go there."

And so affairs of state and the Ministry of Defence were congenially sorted out by these two distinguished public servants. On the first occasion, as various chiselled-featured members of the British establishment walked through the club's hallowed portals, Jack drank orange juice, but on the final occasion, after a particularly successful negotiation had been concluded, glasses of vintage port were consumed. As he stepped out on to the street, Jack thanked his lordship for his kind hospitality, and as he left said over his shoulder, "By the way, please don't tell Harriet where we've been. And especially do not mention the vintage port!" [*Laughter.*] For the avoidance of doubt, Mr Speaker, I can of course confirm that this was a workplace event. [*Laughter.*]

As we remember an adopted son of Birmingham taken from us far, far too soon, let us remember the words of Harry, Jack and Harriet's son, who with both sadness and pride spoke of the quality, but not alas the quantity, of the years they all had together.

**Layla Moran** (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD): To the tributes already paid, I add the profound sympathies of both myself and all the Liberal Democrats who sit on these Benches. As a relatively new Member of the Commons, I confess that I did not know Jack that well, but what I did know I really, really liked.

I first met him in a mindfulness meditation class, which he, the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) and I attended with other MPs as we sought to find some calm in the storm of the 2017 to 2019 Parliament. I dare say that it was, at times, hilariously awkward. I remember Jack taking those classes with great humour. He oozed wisdom and kindness, and I think it was that shared experience that meant that, when we caught each other's eye while passing each other in the Lobby, he would ask how I was, and he really meant it. Since his passing, I have learned that that kind man, whom I liked so much, had a similar effect on pretty much everyone he met. The tributes today are proof of how respected he was across the political spectrum. While a trade union man through and through, he was a pragmatist. He would work with anyone who could deliver his aims and shared his values.

Part of Jack's appeal and great strength was that he was so obviously driven by his values and by a deep desire to help people. Quite simply, Jack Dromey was

one of the good guys. I think it says it all that he worked to the last. In that final debate on Afghanistan, he urged Parliament and the Government to take a more compassionate approach to those in the world who need us the most and said:

"Our country has a proud history of providing a safe haven to those fleeing persecution."

He also spoke of our country's most fundamental values "of decency, honesty and fairness."—[*Official Report*, 6 January 2022; Vol. 706, c. 129WH.]

Jack embodied those values.

To the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham, to their children, Harry, Joe and Amy, and to the whole family, there are no words, but I hope that from today's tributes they can take some comfort in knowing the impact that Jack had and how he affected not just this House but the whole country.

**Greg Clark** (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): Jack made a big impression as soon as he was elected to this place in 2010 and was appointed to the Front Bench straight away. I was a rookie Minister and he was my shadow. It was a forbidding prospect because Jack came with such a reputation, as the Leader of the Opposition attested, as one of the big trade union leaders of his day, used to rallying mass meetings and getting his own way. It was with a little trepidation that I committed myself to going head-to-head with him for many weeks in Committee for what became the Localism Act 2011.

However, I was quickly to discover that Jack's success was based, as evidenced today, on his charm, persuasion and forensic mind. He had a tremendous impact as we spent those many weeks together. In fact, so persuasive was Jack's oratory and work in Committee that, much to the Whip's consternation, he incited my first rebellion—as the Minister taking the Bill through Committee! [*Laughter.*] His remarks were so persuasive that I could find no argument against his amendment and declared that I would accept it, and we did, despite the fact, as former and current Ministers will know, that my speaking notes had "RESIST" in bold type. It is objective to say that Jack's powers were simply, literally, irresistible.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) attested to Jack's brilliant work in forging alliances irrespective of party. He mentioned the work that Jack did with our former right hon. Friend Dame Caroline Spelman, his constituency neighbour. They stood up in particular for manufacturing industry interests that created jobs in their constituencies and across the west midlands. That joint work was vital during turbulent times; when investment decisions were being considered, showing the unity of purpose of the local MPs projected nationally was very important.

Jack's lifetime of knowledge, experience and passion for manufacturing industry made him an authority, carrying universal respect and the confidence of employers creating jobs. I was therefore honoured when Jack asked me, after Caroline stepped down at the last election, to continue that partnership with him. We met regularly with businesses and trade union leaders, not only in his beloved automotive sector, but in aerospace, chemicals, life sciences and food and drink. He is greatly missed by the leaders of those sectors.

Ministers from the Front Bench and my hon. Friend the Member for Hexham (Guy Opperman), as well as the Prime Minister, have attested to what an effective

[Greg Clark]

advocate Jack was. He achieved what he did through kindness, enthusiasm, optimism and encouragement, but not without drawing on his trade union skills of organisation and tenacity. His achievements and how he won them made him respected across this House and across the country. He represents, as does the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), the very best of this House.

**John Cryer** (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): I will start by saying how great it is to see the Mother of the House, our inspiration, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), in the Chamber today, and her family. I knew Jack for years and years; I could probably speak for the next two hours about all the campaigns we worked on together, first as Transport and General Workers Union officers and then as MPs elected to Parliament at the same time.

There are a couple of campaigns that I will talk about particularly. The first, which many people in this Chamber will remember, was when Kraft took over Cadbury. Seven factories were taken over by Kraft, and Jack led the trade union campaign to protect their jobs—a very successful campaign, by the way. As part of that campaign, which I got involved in at Jack's behest, we went to see the then Business Secretary, Peter Mandelson.

Before the meeting—this is just the sort of thing Jack would do—he discovered that Peter's favourite chocolate was fruit and nut, so we got a cardboard box roughly the size of Westminster Abbey and filled it with Cadburys Dairy Milk Fruit & Nut before having a very constructive and successful meeting—I wonder why it was so constructive and successful? I must add that I remember saying to Jack before we went in, "Jack, Peter's quite a lean sort of bloke. He obviously looks after himself. Do you think some of that chocolate might be surplus to requirement?" So by the time we got into the meeting the box was a bit lighter than had originally been the case.

The second campaign, which again was successful—even more successful, actually—was one that is largely forgotten now, involving S&A Foods. I ask hon. Members to bear in mind the name, because that will be important. S&A Foods was a big agricultural combine, largely producing strawberries, about 30% of the British strawberry market. Its workers were largely migrants and very badly exploited. It was a big workforce: I am talking 4,000 to 5,000 people working on the land in the west country picking strawberries, but just for three months a year, and being very badly treated.

Jack got involved in that campaign and, as he always did, threw everything at it. He worked his heart out on getting recognition, getting better terms and conditions and improving the lives of those thousands of people working on the land. That became quite a big deal at the time, and I remember Jack and I going to a meeting of Transport and General Workers Union members and officers afterwards.

Jack always had about 50 things going on in his brain at the same time—that was just the way he was—so as he rose to speak to the members, he was not really concentrating on his words. He opened his speech by saying, "Right, what I want to talk to you about now is S&M", and I could see the faces of all these pretty

traditional—for those who knew the T&G—trade unionists faces dropping, going, "What!". I was nudging Jack, saying, "Jack, it's S&A, not S&M—that's something entirely different." I think.

As I said at the beginning, I could talk at great length about all the campaigns I did together with Jack. He was always an inspiration. He always led from the front, and he was very largely successful. He was one of the most successful trade union officers industrially in the past 50 or 60 years, or something like that, and often in difficult conditions. Jack had one overriding aim, and that was to improve the conditions and the lives of the people he and we represented. In that, I think he was successful, and in that, I think he left the world better than he found it.

**Tracey Crouch** (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): I do not remember the first time I met Jack, but that is probably because when I did, I walked away feeling like I had known him forever. He was gentle, sweet and naturally mindful—by which I mean that, unlike some colleagues, his eyes were not darting around to see if there was someone more interesting or important to speak to. If you had his attention, you held his attention.

To me, he was always so kind. He never defined me by my politics or my football team, but as a person. He always asked about my family and, whenever we had a conversation about my son Freddie, he would regale me with tales and the occasional picture of his grandchildren, accompanied by a beaming smile and sparkling eyes. His adoration of his family was clear to see.

Jack was exceptionally polite. Like a child who can spot an ice cream shop from a mile away, Jack it seems could spot a colleague who needed a confidence boost. He always had a word of praise for anyone downhearted about their performance in this place—a cheeky, "Well done", a smile as he sat down, a kind tribute in his own comments. He was quite simply a lovely colleague.

I am sure he was prone to arguing with the sat-nav or left his shoes in a perilously dangerous place, but from the outside he looked like a pretty perfect husband, one who loyally and lovingly supported his wife at a time when Parliament was even more challenging for women that it is today. I hope that most of us think that we have a Jack at home, but I still reckon that he could have made a fortune giving consultancy on how to be the long-suffering but supportive male other half. This House has lost someone special, but my heart does not break for us; it breaks for the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman) and his three children and grandchildren. As I sit down, I remember his warmth and gentleness. I send my love to them today.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to add a contribution from my party. I apologise that my right hon. Friend the Member for Lagan Valley (Sir Jeffrey M. Donaldson) was unable to be here. He lost his brother last week and the funeral was yesterday, so I will make some comments on behalf of my party.

I came to this House in 2010. I had some relationships and experience in the council and the Assembly, but I knew that this was a bigger place, with more MPs and more people. I looked about, to know who to watch to learn the ropes and the trade. In my opinion, Jack Dromey was one of the people to look at, because,

whenever he spoke, had I been going to leave the Chamber, I would sit down. I wanted to hear what he was going to say. That was the sort of gentleman he was.

My last engagement with Jack Dromey was in Westminster Hall—that will be a surprise to people that I was in Westminster Hall, but I was. On that day, Jack Dromey was there as a shadow spokesperson to speak on the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme. We had a good debate and a good response from the Minister. Afterwards, as I always do, and others do, I thanked Jack Dromey for his significant contribution on a subject that he loved and wanted to add to, and he thanked me in his turn. The Backbench Business Committee had given us the privilege of a debate, but Jack Dromey thanked me for at least requesting it. It is hard to believe that that was on 6 January. Less than 18 hours later, I got a message from the girl in my office to tell me that Jack had passed away. I said, “You’ve got it wrong. I saw him yesterday. That just cannot be right.” Unfortunately, it was right.

Jack Dromey was a man of strong principles, with a devotion to service. His legacy is of a fighting spirit and relentless optimism, and it is one to which each of us on these Benches can and should aspire. Jack, I feel, was a master of all campaigns. If he was campaigning for something, be on his side, because that was the winning side. All of us, both on this side of the House and across the Floor, are the poorer for his absence.

My thoughts and prayers are with his family—with Harriet, our friend and colleague, the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), and the children—as they face the coming days without this wonderful man, so suddenly taken from us all, but they will have fantastic memories.

I am sure that you will agree, Mr Speaker, that the message that must go to his family today is that they are not alone with their grief and that this House and this great family of MPs and staff are united behind them.

**Yvette Cooper** (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): No one could have failed to be moved on Monday by the incredible tributes to Jack from his three children, Harry, Joe and Amy. All of us know the pride that Jack had in his family, but we felt it, too, on Monday, and also their pride in him.

Jack had that wonderful way of making you feel that everything was going to be alright. It did not matter what scrapes he had got you into, it was all going to be okay. I was lucky to work with Jack on so many campaigns. He was just so formidable on so many different things. If we despaired, he always had some good new idea to pick us up, and then he would be off running with it and we would be racing to catch him up. If we got too highfalutin, he would remind us what they were saying in the Dog and Duck. If we faltered, as all of us do from time to time, he would be there to tell us that we were brilliant and not to lose faith.

Jack was a fabulous feminist. We all saw the support that he gave to Harriet over so many decades. We heard from Amy, Jack’s daughter, on Monday that true feminism at home meant also making sure that Harriet never had to learn how to use a washing machine. I have to say that I was so proud when I heard that. I have known Harriet and Jack since I was in my 20s, and have avoided, wherever possible, using the washing machine at home, and have resolutely refused to learn to cook. I

must tell Amy that she got me into a bit of trouble on Monday, because Ed, who was sitting next to me, turned and glowered at me and said, “So, it was all Jack and Harriet’s fault.” I just said that I had learned from the very best.

Jack did not just support Harriet; he supported so many of us as women parliamentarians and women in the trade union movement. One woman trade unionist told me that, many years ago, Jack had encouraged her when she was a young mum to put herself forward in the trade union movement. That would have been pioneering enough at that time, but what he also did when he spied her husband standing at the back holding their child was to find him and tell him what an incredibly important and noble job he was doing in supporting her, too.

Jack also had that amazing special ability to bring people together at a time when politics can feel so divided. We heard how, when he died, he had tributes from the five biggest manufacturing groups in Britain and also the five biggest trade unions, which is a unique reflection of the industrial alliance that he had worked so hard to bring together. In the Labour movement, he not only straddled the left-right divide, but had strong roots in both our liberal and our communitarian traditions. Unusually, his politics and values throughout his life bound together that fierce support for equality, feminism, anti-racism and individual rights, with those deep roots in community, solidarity, family and faith in the dignity of work. He brought that all together. We need more Jacks.

I was with Jack the afternoon before he died. Every conversation that I had with him that day was just pure Jack. I doubted something that I had done, but he said that it was brilliant—I am sure it was not. We talked about Christmas, and he said how wonderful his grandchildren were. He then went on to speak in a debate in Parliament and make a passionate and patriotic case for the Government to do the right thing by vulnerable Afghan refugees. As a last act in Parliament, it was entirely fitting and a demonstration of his persistent decency and solidarity.

Most of all, Jack was an optimist. He loved life and he loved people. He made lives better because he believed that things could be better. So many of us have learned so much from Jack that we will make sure that that legacy carries on.

**Liam Byrne** (Birmingham, Hodge Hill) (Lab): Jack Dromey was my mentor, my teacher, my political partner and my friend for almost a decade and a half in Birmingham. Like for many of us here today he was like a father to me; indeed, he was at school with my dad, at Cardinal Vaughan in west London, part of that extraordinary generation of second-generation Irish kids: sharp, chippy, pushing, determined to make a contribution to social justice.

It didn’t always start smoothly: my godfather, Spud Murphy, then a prefect at Cardinal Vaughan, used to talk to me fondly about having to give Jack a clip round the ear for smoking behind the bike sheds at school. But Jack was not a rebel without a cause: his cause was social justice, and he fought for it his entire life. His glorious life was one long crusade for the underdog; he fought for them whenever and wherever he found them. His campaigns in Birmingham are innumerable: he fought for more police numbers, he fought for covid

[Liam Byrne]

families, he fought for the food bank, he fought for Erdington High Street, he fought for manufacturing jobs, he fought for the factory at GKN—and this was all just in the last week of his life.

As you will know, Mr Speaker, Jack brought a particular approach to all his campaigns. It generally started with a very, very long list of bullet points, and Jack would start off by saying, “Just three points”, and we would tease him as he got to, “And seventeenthly”, but he brought to every single one of his campaigns what he used to fondly say was a certain “je ne sais quoi”. He made sure that at the core of every single one of his campaigns were the stories, because we have all been educated in the legend of Joe and Josephine Soap in the Dog and Duck in Erdington. He also brought to all his campaigns not just the art of coalition building but incredible calm, along with persistence. He used to very proudly say that his nickname in the union was “Never snap, never flap Jack”, and he reminded me of that very often as I was losing my rag over the last year and a half.

On the last day of Jack's life we were working together on a book about the future of our great region, the heart of Britain, and as ever he brought to that an extraordinary optimism. He put the green industrial revolution at the core of what he wrote, and this is what he wrote:

“I am passionate in my belief that change is possible. However, as my experience as an MP for a constituency with high levels of inequality and poverty, it is crucial that any change is not just ambitious in the objective of dealing with climate change, but radical in creating opportunity for all. There is much to do and little time to achieve it before it's too late.”

I say to the Mother of the House, my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), and the family watching today, like you we have all struggled with the shock of loss. I myself have found comfort in the words not of an Irish poet but of a Greek, who wrote centuries ago:

“Even in our sleep, pain...falls drop by drop upon the heart, until, in our own despair, against our will, comes wisdom through the awful grace of God.”

The wisdom we draw from Jack Dromey's life is very simple: we should all try to be more Jack. Our community, our country, and this House of Commons will be a damn sight better for that.

**Jess Phillips** (Birmingham, Yardley) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow my colleague and friend from Birmingham, my right hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Hodge Hill (Liam Byrne), and what I want to say is going to be all about Birmingham. Jack did not sound like me. He was not groomed as I was, just as a child loves their parents no matter what, to love Birmingham, because it was given to me at birth. Jack did not have that, and he loved it way more than me. He would talk about Birmingham in terms that made it unrecognisable to me. I love the place, don't get me wrong, but Castle Vale, while I love it, is not a place of great beauty. The Aston expressway is not a thing to behold, yet when Jack talked about Birmingham and Brummies, he felt so much as if he was from the tradition of the place of my birth. I think much of that is to do with his Irish ancestry, which so many of us in Birmingham have, but there could be no greater advocate for the city of Birmingham.

I know that many people want to speak, so I will touch slightly not only on Jack being an honorary Brummie—not even “honorary”, Jack Dromey was a Brummie through and through, without question—but on him being an honorary sister. The first time I ever spoke in this building, it was Jack Dromey who sat next to me. He put his arms around me afterwards and said, “I am so proud of you. I am so proud to see you here”—mainly because I was a girl from Birmingham and he loved Birmingham. The last time I ever sat in this place with him was just a week before he died, and we had just been put on the same team together, the shadow Home Affairs team. He said to me, as I sat down from asking a question of the Home Secretary, “It is so delightful to be completely outsmarted and outflanked by brilliant women.” That came as no surprise to me. I say to my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman), all her family and her children that Birmingham will truly miss Jack Dromey. All the love of a sometimes not very beautiful place is with you and your family.

**Shabana Mahmood** (Birmingham, Ladywood) (Lab): Jack and I were both elected in the 2010 general election, and he was my constituency neighbour, but because he was selected relatively late to be our candidate in Birmingham, Erdington, we did not get to meet until we were both newly elected Birmingham Members of Parliament.

I remember in those early weeks lugging around a massive rucksack that basically had a mobile office in it, having no idea of the lobbying required to get ahead in the race for an office in this place. Jack came over to me—we had only spoken a couple of times at this point—and told me that he had secured a whole suite of offices in Portcullis House. On hearing that, I was immediately insanely jealous, but he went on to ask whether I wanted to share them with him. Of course, I went from insane jealousy to all but falling at the man's feet with gratitude. He laughed and said he simply had to rescue me from my flipping bag, because it was practically the same size as me, and he could bear it no longer. That set the tone for our friendship—lots of gentle mickey-taking and loads of laughter.

I was always struck by how ready Jack was—we have heard so much about this today—with his praise and encouragement. It is something that his children spoke so movingly about at his funeral. Jack would always stop you, text you or drop you a note to say he had seen you make a speech or give a TV interview—whatever it might be—and that it was “first-class, absolutely brilliant, the best of Labour.” He never hedged his bets when it came to praise, did Jack, but he really believed in generous and uncomplicated affirmation not just of his loved ones, but of his friends and colleagues. The sincerity meant it always mattered to the person on the receiving end. It always made a difference.

Not every conversation with Jack was quick. He would stop you to talk about the famous “three or four quick things,” but I soon clocked that the correct number was calculated by taking the number of things Jack said he wanted to talk about, multiplying it by two and adding three. It seemed to work every time, and Jack always got a promise out of you, or maybe more than one promise, to attend a meeting, to look into something or to join one of his campaigns.

In one of our more recent conversations, he told me he wanted to talk about campaigning—four quick things were actually 11—and at the end I laughed and said, “Jack, mate, how is it that your four quick things have now led to 10 absolutely urgent, immediate priorities for my to-do list?” I soon regretted admitting those 10 priorities, because he then laughed wholeheartedly and said, “That’s the target from now on, Shabana: 10 things to be added to the to-do list.”

It is difficult to believe that a man so full of energy, positivity and generosity is gone. He leaves an immense legacy, not just as a titan of the labour movement but as a thoroughly decent, good man. Jack Dromey was first class, he was absolutely brilliant and he was the best of Labour.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): It goes without saying that the loss of Jack has shocked us all, and our hearts go out to Harriet and her family.

Jack was, as we have heard, respected across this House. He was an extremely generous person, often giving praise to his colleagues and associates whether they wanted it or not. I am privileged to chair the Tribune group of Labour MPs, of which Jack was an enthusiastic member. On many occasions, he would stop me somewhere en route as he rushed off to a meeting to tell me what a wonderful job I was doing of organising the Tribune group. On one occasion, when he was particularly effusive with his praise, I stopped him and said, “Jack, not even my mother would believe what you are saying.” He just carried on undeterred, thinking his message had not got across.

No matter how much he was over the top with his praise, he always left you feeling better after speaking to him. He felt the Tribune group had a lot to offer the party, and we met regularly to discuss the issues of the day. Jack would always keep the discussion well grounded and to the point. When we were losing sight of the bigger picture, he would intervene, “Just a few quick points, may I, chair?” He would then set out his opinion, always carefully thought through, with an anecdote here and a shaggy-dog story there—sometimes long and sometimes short, depending on the audience—and always with a twinkle in his eye. He would then bring us back to the point, with the apocryphal question, “What do Joe and Josephine Soap in the Dog and Duck think?” I heard about Joe and Josephine so many times that I feel I have been to the Dog and Duck. I actually got to the point where I googled it, and there is no Dog and Duck in Birmingham. We will miss him in those discussions and, above all, we will miss his dynamism and enthusiasm, which spurred us on; and I will miss his encouragement in keeping the Tribune group going.

We are both proud long-term members of the Transport and General Workers Union. He had been a high-ranking official, becoming deputy general secretary, and I was a lowly lay member of the transport section. We got to know each other when he came to this place, and we found we had a number of mutual acquaintances from the trade union, mainly because my region—the London region—was very influential in the union, and my branch, the cab section, was very influential in London.

Many of the people in my branch were on the broad left of the trade union, and Jack back then was a member of the broad left. There is no questioning Jack’s left-wing credentials. He built a long reputation

on the campaigns he fought and won as a trade union official. His determination to stand up for social justice was legendary even then, over 30 years ago, and he continued this struggle in his parliamentary career.

The negotiating skills he honed as a trade union leader enabled him to forge alliances across the divide in this place and to get things done for the people of his adopted Erdington. In my opinion, there will always be a bit of London that is Erdington, and that is Jack’s legacy for them. Jack’s indefatigable campaigning on behalf of the trade union and labour movements touched six decades. He changed the lives of countless people who will never know what he did for them.

One last thing we had in common is that 16 months ago I became a granddad. Nothing made Jack smile more than when we talked about the unalloyed joy of being a granddad. It is probably those chats that I will remember most when I think of Jack. So Jack, if out there, in a parallel universe, there is a Dog and Duck with Joe and Josephine in it, perhaps sometime in the future—not too soon—we will sit down with a pint and find out finally what they actually think. It was an honour and a delight to have known you.

**Gary Sambrook** (Birmingham, Northfield) (Con): Thank you for squeezing me in, Mr Speaker.

I had known Jack for about 12 years, since he was first selected to stand in Birmingham, Erdington, and I am still a councillor in Kingstanding in his constituency. I have to confess that Jack and I did not always see eye to eye on every issue. I think the first time we met was on Aylesbury Crescent in Kingstanding, where we did not exactly meet on equal terms; we actually had a few coarse words. But whenever I or anyone had a debate with Jack, including in public meetings, we would always get the wink and nod after the little dig or political point, and I respected that enormously.

I last saw Jack at Penny Holbrook’s funeral, about a week and a half before he passed away. My heart goes out to everybody in the Erdington constituency Labour party, because they have had a terrible year, with so many people sadly passing away. Within five minutes, Jack and I were talking about MG Rover. He said, “I remember one particular day”, and I looked at him and said, “Of course you were involved with MG Rover. Why wouldn’t you have been?” We had a long conversation about it. I think he was talking about the situation in 2000 or 2001, when he said, “We went into a meeting with the Phoenix Four”—they thought that the success and the campaign had been won—“I have no shame in telling you that I cried in that room that day”. That is because the issue meant so much to him, because of the thousands of workers at the site and what the company meant to the community.

Then, of course, Jack went on to talk about his grandchildren, as he was playing with another small child at the funeral. He was having a good laugh about the height jokes that his son Joe made to him all the time. We left on good terms that day.

Jack had a very good sense of humour. We have a WhatsApp group for all Birmingham MPs, who will remember that just a few weeks ago—Jack being Jack—he tried to organise something that could have politically shown up me and my right hon. Friend the Member for Sutton Coldfield (Mr Mitchell) on a police debate. My

[Gary Sambrook]

right hon. Friend and I have never been so quiet in a WhatsApp group before: because Jack had got the wrong WhatsApp group! He had accidentally got the all-party one, rather than the Labour one. The argument on tactics started between the other MPs, when all of a sudden someone noticed that my right hon. Friend and I were in the group. I saw Jack the next day and he came up to me with a big, beaming smile. I will not repeat what he said because there were a lot of expletives, although it was something along the lines of, "I'm a bit of an idiot, aren't I?", but he smiled and joked about it.

Jack was a good man who fought passionately for the city that is my home. Many of us will miss him terribly.

**Mr Speaker:** I am very concerned about leaving enough time for the Mother of the House, who is going to sum up at the end. Can we please be brief because there is a lot of business ahead and the family are waiting?

**Karin Smyth** (Bristol South) (Lab): I rise as vice-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on Ireland and the Irish in Britain. My hon. Friend the Member for St Helens North (Conor McGinn), who chairs the group, apologises that he is not here; he is at a funeral today.

Jack was a valued and prominent member of the Ireland and the Irish in Britain group—the community from which he came. Shortly after my arrival here in 2015, he welcomed me not only as a new MP, but as a fellow child of Ireland's 33rd and, frankly, finest county: county London. "Where are your parents from?", he asked. "Mine are from Cork and Tipperary", he proudly did say. His father was a labourer, his mother a nurse—the people who came here to rebuild England. Their work and experience underpinned and drove his politics and dedication to public service. In the trade union movement, he always saw the parallels between his own parents' struggles and those of newer migrant communities, and he built links with those new migrant communities—most recently with the Polish community at an event at the London Irish Centre.

Jack's support for the Gaelic Athletic Association in Birmingham and across Britain was a significant part of his involvement with the community. It is no surprise, given that his grandfather, Jack Doherty, was a hurler who played for Tipperary in several All-Ireland finals in the early 20th century. It was a very proud moment for him to take part in the St Patrick's day parade in Birmingham—which had not taken place for decades because of the pub bombings—alongside the Erin Go Bragh GAA Club, based in his Erdington constituency. Just last year, engaging in the cross-party work of which we have heard so much today, he worked with colleagues on both sides of the House to save Páirc na hÉireann, the home of Gaelic games in Britain ensuring that a generation of children in the west midlands can continue to enjoy Irish culture and sport.

Jack's son Joe described at Jack's funeral how he had beamed when visiting the construction centre named after him, imagining his own dad—newly arrived on these shores—knowing what would become of his son. Jack was so proud, as many of us were, when there was an event here in Parliament to honour him and other sons and daughters of that generation of Irish construction workers who had helped to build Britain. He was one of

a relatively small band of us MPs who are as proud of the people we came from as we are of the people we represent now, being both British and Irish. Jack also had a strong sense of justice. In the week when we mark the 50th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, his involvement in the pursuit of democratic, peaceful politics on the island of Ireland and good relations between our two countries was recognised by the Irish Government and by the Irish ambassador to the UK, Adrian O'Neill, who attended Jack's funeral on Monday.

Being Irish was very important to Jack, and Jack was very important to Ireland and the Irish community in Britain. We will miss him. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam.

**Mr Khalid Mahmood** (Birmingham, Perry Barr) (Lab): I first met Jack during the Longbridge dispute, when we, as Members of Parliament, were getting together to do our best to save that huge industry in Birmingham. Unfortunately we all know what the result of that was, but Jack always tried his best. I met him next when we had an issue with the HP Sauce company, which was pulling out of Birmingham and going to Denmark. I joined him when he said, "I am going to lead this campaign on behalf of the trade unions." We had a couple of conversations and meetings and decided to organise a rally. We all walked through Aston for about a mile and a half to the factory, and spoke to the workers there. Eventually, as a result of Jack's tenacity, we managed to secure better terms and conditions for the people who had been expecting to lose their jobs.

That is what Jack was about. He was a great man, and from that day onwards I realised that he was someone whom I wanted to know better and become closer to. So when my friend and his predecessor as the Member of Parliament for Birmingham Erdington, Siôn Simon, decided that he was going to move on, one of the first things I did was speak to Jack. On Friday evenings Jack was usually with his family, but one Friday evening Siôn and I met at a curry house where he and I and a couple of other friends tended to go to transact business, and I said, "Siôn, if you are leaving, perhaps we should speak to Jack Dromey, because he is a great guy, and we want someone like him who understands a community like Erdington which contains industries and a huge number of working people."

When I called Jack he was in Ireland, listening to a recital being given by his daughter Amy. He texted me saying, "Can we speak tomorrow? I am at this recital, and I can't talk to you now." He contacted me the next day. The local Labour party then went through the necessary procedure, and selected him because it believed that he was the right person.

Jack was always at the forefront. Recently when a young lad, Dea-John Reid, was stabbed to death, Jack and I, along with our hon. Friend the Member for Birmingham, Edgbaston (Preet Kaur Gill), turned up and spoke to representatives of the black churches and the community. I hope that our action has prevented any further uprisings.

Jack was always there. He was always there for the community, and he was always there for me. When I became frustrated by local authority issues, the following day he would either call me or come and see me in Portcullis House and try to explain how I could make progress.

Let me end by sending my condolences to the Mother of the House, to Joe and to Amy, and by changing an adage around: behind every strong woman there is a strong man. May Jack rest in peace.

**Dame Angela Eagle** (Wallasey) (Lab): I want to pay a very short tribute,

because we have heard so much from both sides of the House that encompasses so accurately Jack's many qualities. When he came to the House, he was fully formed as a political activist and one of the greatest trade unionists of his generation. He had the abilities to ensure that social justice was advanced. He never gave up, and he was optimistic. He loved and was proud of his wife—he was a feminist before many of us knew what that word meant—and was unashamed to be Mr Harriet Harman. He was a very rare, very talented, very kind and gentle man who was the best of the Labour and trade union movement. We will all miss him terribly.

Condolences, obviously, to the Mother of the House and to his fantastic children, who are in the Gallery. As someone who was fortunate to benefit from Labour party romance, I always looked up to Harriet and Jack's law centre romance as something that I should follow.

**Mr Barry Sheerman** (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): Jack Dromey has been in my life for a very long time. I was a candidate in Taunton—an eminently winnable seat for Labour—and because I was from the Transport and General Workers Union as well as a Co-operative, this young man suddenly pitched up for a day to help me, so we have known each other since 1974. He was really suspicious of me at first—there I was, a university academic standing as the Labour candidate—but he found out that I had served an apprenticeship at the ICI paint factory in Slough and we became great friends. Ever since that day, we worked together—we started the all-party parliamentary manufacturing group—and did wonderful campaigns together. He was not just a colleague or a comrade; he was a mate.

When you are serious about politics, you come here on a Thursday morning, to make the Leader of the House's life a misery, and Jack was a member of that club. I still see him there. Jack was so warm and generous, and he had a way of worming things out of you. He had a big family, and I have four children and 12 grandchildren. We used to compete, and I know more about his family than you could ever believe because he would tell me. He would ask of my family, "How are you getting on? What stage are you at?" but I bored him because everything he had to say was more exciting than what we were doing.

The fact about Jack was his passion. As Chair of the Education and Skills Committee and then the Children, Schools and Families Committee, I have always been passionate about children's issues, and he was passionate about families and children. He once said to me, "Barry, if you are a Member of Parliament and you care about the job, you cannot bear to think of a child in your constituency going to bed tonight with nothing in their tummy." He was compassionate, he was funny and he was wise. I was with him and John Smith one night when we raised a glass of champagne and said, "Nothing but the best is good enough for the workers." Jack, we love you, miss you and will work to be even better than we are because of you.

**Rushanara Ali** (Bethnal Green and Bow) (Lab): I first met Jack when I was a young researcher working for the then MP Oona King and he was at the Transport and General Workers Union. She had secured a private Member's Bill to ensure that cowboy contractors did not do shoddy work in council homes or treat their staff badly, but she was double-booked for a meeting with senior officials—that was not uncommon for her—and I was terrified, because she said that I had to sit in and work out what the Bill should contain. She said, "Don't worry—Jack Dromey will be there. Let him do the talking," and of course what happened was that Jack mobilised the business community and trade unions and got the Government to support our Bill. Despite its not getting through, the Government supported the measures, and Oona, Jack and others managed to change many thousands of people's lives by improving the work done in council homes. That legacy continues up and down the country, including in my constituency. I often look at those blocks of flats and think, "If Jack and others hadn't done that work, people's lives would have been much worse."

When I arrived in Parliament, Jack was always there, as others have said, providing constant encouragement. Even when I was going through very tumultuous times in my constituency and in managing the politics there, he would have very encouraging words, constantly giving me confidence and constantly supporting me whenever I needed it.

In his last speech in Westminster Hall, which I had the privilege of chairing, he said that

"the bravery of our service personnel and Government officials who stayed on the ground in Kabul, at great personal risk during Operation Pitting, represented the very best of Britain."—[*Official Report*, 6 January 2022; Vol. 706, c. 129WH.]

He told the Government how important it was to act to protect Afghani people for what they did.

Jack represented the best of British—the best of our country—and he is greatly missed by all of us. He was family to me, and I know to all of us across this House and in his constituency. My thoughts are with the Mother of the House and the family. Jack will be greatly missed, but he will always live in our memories and in what we go on to do. That is his legacy.

**Helen Hayes** (Dulwich and West Norwood) (Lab): Jack Dromey had a fierce heart for justice, and combined with his inherent kindness and decency, he was able to achieve so much for so many, and we have heard much about that today.

First, I want to pay tribute to Jack on behalf of my constituents. When Jack was not in Birmingham, Erdington, his home was in Dulwich and West Norwood. He and the Mother of the House are familiar figures in our community, valued and faithful supporters of our local independent businesses, kind and generous neighbours, and friends to so many. A few weeks before Christmas, I spotted from my car the lovely scene of a pair of grandparents taking a grandchild for a walk, before realising some moments later that this was Jack and the Mother of the House. Since Jack's untimely death, so many of my constituents have expressed their shock and sorrow, and have told me how much they will miss Jack.

Secondly, and briefly, I want to pay tribute to Jack as a tireless champion of early years education, and maintained nursery schools in particular. Jack understood the

[Helen Hayes]

transformative impact that high-quality early years education can have on reducing inequality and disadvantage, and he understood that every child, no matter their background, deserved the best. As the recently appointed shadow Minister for children and early years, I have spent the last few weeks meeting people who work with small children, and so many have mentioned Jack's powerful advocacy for their profession and how much he will be missed.

Jack was a friend to all of us, especially to colleagues with less experience, to whom he offered support, a listening ear and, always, wise counsel. Jack is irreplaceable, most of all to his family and to the Mother of the House, for whom there is so much love in my constituency of Dulwich and West Norwood and across the wider Lambeth and Southwark Labour family.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): I think we all thought that Jack would always be here because the whole of his life was devoted to being there for others—the workers he represented, the constituents he was so proud to serve and the family he loved. I simply want to say that it was such a privilege to be at his funeral on Monday. As we have heard, his children spoke so beautifully about their father, with so much love and joy, and I am absolutely certain that he was looking down on them from on high, bursting with pride. Amid the laughter and the smiles, and the tears and the stories, there was a moment in the service when a shaft of sunlight came through the window and illuminated the nave, and I like to think that it was illuminating also the essential truth about Jack's life. Although it was cut short, he used every single day that he had in trying to build a better world—oh, what an example for the rest of us to follow!

**Mr Speaker:** I am now going to bring in the Mother of the House, the right hon. and learned Member for Camberwell and Peckham (Ms Harman). May I just

say, Harriet, that this shows how the House can be at its best, and that it is at its best because of the love for you, Jack and your family?

**Ms Harriet Harman** (Camberwell and Peckham) (Lab): Thank you, Mr Speaker. On behalf of myself and my family, I warmly thank all hon. Members who have spoken today. I say to everyone from all the around the country who has sent us cards, emails, texts, tweets, and who have posted on Facebook, that the memories they have shared with us, and the respect that they have shown for Jack, have given so much comfort to me and his beloved family as we face the total shock of his sudden death from heart failure just three weeks ago.

Jack hated inequality and oppression, and his life's work was a steadfast focus on supporting those who were fighting against it. His roots in the Irish working-class immigrant community, his solidarity with black and Asian people fighting against inequality, and his respect for middle-class people who, though not suffering hardship themselves, wanted to work to end it for others, made him the polar opposite of the culture wars and the living embodiment of the coalition that is the Labour party. He spoke up for people and they heard him, and that made them stronger, whether they were those he worked with or those he had never met.

Much has rightly been said about Jack's support for me in my work. It was phenomenal and it was unwavering. But it was not just because I was his wife; it was a matter of principle. Jack believed that men should support and respect women, and he detested men who he saw holding their wives back in their own self-interest.

For all of us who received it, Jack's support was a super-power. It made us all walk taller; it made us all feel stronger. We will so miss him. I thank you, Mr Speaker, for your tribute, for your kindness to me and to his family, and for allowing us this time today to pay tribute to Jack.



## IOPC Report on Metropolitan Police Officers' Conduct: Charing Cross Police Station

2.7 pm

**Dr Matthew Offord** (Hendon) (Con) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Home Secretary if she will make a statement on the Independent Office for Police Conduct report on police officers' conduct at Charing Cross police station.

**The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse)**: As the House is aware, the Independent Office for Police Conduct yesterday published the findings of an investigation into bullying and discrimination at Charing Cross police station between 2016 and 2018. The report makes extremely disturbing reading. It describes abhorrent behaviour and misogynistic, racist and homophobic communications between officers, which appear to have become commonplace. On a personal note, as someone who knows the Met well, I cannot begin to describe my horror at the revelations in the report.

It is right that individuals found to have committed gross misconduct have been dismissed and cannot re-join policing. However, this is obviously about more than individuals; it is about how a toxic culture can develop and fester in parts of a police force—a culture that is allowed to go unchallenged until a brave officer blows the whistle or a message is discovered on an officer's phone. These events have a corrosive impact on public trust in policing and undermine the work of the thousands of diligent and brave police officers who keep us safe every day. I am grateful for the work of the IOPC in investigating these allegations, and I expect the Metropolitan Police Service and the Mayor of London to implement the report's recommendations as soon as practically possible.

We are also taking action to address these issues. The Home Secretary has established the Angiolini inquiry, which has now started, and Dame Elish is examining the career of Sarah Everard's killer. While focused on that case, she will be considering whether the culture in the places where Sarah's murderer worked meant that alarm bells did not ring earlier. In the second part of her inquiry, we expect a light to be shone on wider policing, including on those cultural issues.

In addition, at the Home Secretary's request, Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and fire rescue services is currently inspecting forces across England and Wales to judge their vetting and counter-corruption capabilities. As part of this, we have specifically asked it to look at how forces are ensuring that misogyny and sexism are identified and dealt with in the workplace. We are also working closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council to ensure professional standards on social media use for all police officers.

Being a police officer is an honour, conferring special status on those who serve. The findings of the IOPC's report are shaming for those who have abused that honour and for the Metropolitan police. Standards must be raised. The precious bond of trust between the public and the police depends upon it.

**Dr Offord**: As a London MP, there are few opportunities to seek answers on the performance of the Metropolitan police, so I am grateful to you, Mr Speaker, for granting this urgent question.

The publication of the report by the Independent Office for Police Conduct joins the list of misdemeanours that have occurred in the Met in recent years. The IOPC opened its investigation in March 2018 following claims that an officer had sex with a drunk person at a police station. This is, in itself, a criminal offence, and it is even more shocking following the rape and murder of Sarah Everard by a serving police officer less than a year ago. The report says that officers searched social media with the intention of having sex with people they have made contact with through being a victim of crime. This is an egregious breach of trust with the public and must be addressed immediately. Officers were found to have sent messages to a female on a shared group chat saying:

"I would happily rape you...if I was single I would happily chloroform you."

Other officers gleefully boasted about their behaviour by sending messages including:

"You ever slapped your missus? It makes them love you more. Seriously since I did that she won't leave me alone...Knock a bird about and she will love you. Human nature."

It surely is not.

The investigation uncovered evidence in relation to bullying, violence towards women, perverting the course of justice, discriminatory language and other inappropriate behaviours. The range and severity of these messages demonstrates that they are not humorous comments but evidence of a sinister and obnoxious culture that has pervaded the very organisation and individuals who are supposed to uphold the law. Worst of all, it tarnishes the reputations of all the decent, hard-working employees of the MPS.

Where is the Mayor of London in all this? Recently we heard his comments on the cost of living, accusations about the Prime Minister, Brexit, levelling up and drug decriminalisation—on everything except what he is responsible for, the policing of London. While more young people are murdered on the streets of London and police officers commit crimes, we need leadership on keeping Londoners safe, and that is not happening.

Will the Minister, first, look at the Sexual Offences Act 2003 with a view to changing the law so that any person, of any age, who is in a position of trust with any other persons, regardless of their age, commits a criminal offence if they seek to involve the other person in sexual activity? Secondly, will he expand and speed up Baroness Casey's review of the Metropolitan police's culture and standards to take into account behaviours outside the realm of the workplace so that proper background checks are made on the appointment of MPS staff in all departments, including the MO7 taskforce? Finally, will he seek the establishment of a confidential complaints system in the MPS so that whistleblowers, particularly women, can raise their concerns without being subjected to campaigns of threats, intimidation, coercion and abuse by others?

Confidence in the MPS is incredibly low following a number of abuses. If the public decide they no longer have confidence in those who police them, then that really would be a crime.

**Kit Malthouse**: I share my hon. Friend's horror at some of the messages that have been published, which really are abhorrent. As I understand it, the unit that is being investigated has since been disbanded, and quite rightly so, with disciplinary action following.

[Kit Malthouse]

With regard to my hon. Friend's specific requests, on the offence, I am certainly happy to look at that suggestion and explore it further as a possibility. On the Casey review, he is quite right that Dame Louise Casey has been appointed by the Metropolitan Police Commissioner to examine cultural issues within the force.

Obviously, that started with the appalling killing of Sarah Everard and the consequences thereof, but I am sure, knowing Dame Louise as I do, that she will be looking closely at all these issues as they unfold, sadly, on an almost weekly basis in the newspapers. I have asked today for a meeting with her so that I can understand exactly where her inquiry is going and establish for myself that it will fit neatly with the work we are doing, through the inspectorate and through the Angiolini inquiry, into wider issues of culture in the Met and elsewhere in policing. On the establishment of whistleblowing systems, one of our specific requests of the inspectorate as it looks at all the police forces across the UK is that it make sure that adequate whistleblowing facilities are in place—or that the process is there—that will allow officers who want to call out bad behaviour to do so with confidence. Again, it is worth saying that although it is possible to put in place processes, practices, manuals and training, and we can do our best to train police officers and to instil in them the right values—that has never been more important than now, as we are having such a huge influx of new, young police officers waiting to be filled with the right kind of values—this still does point to a culture of leadership making it clear that such behaviour is not to be tolerated, and projecting confidence on officers to step forward and call out bad behaviour and this kind of communication. Whatever the processes we put in place, unless the wider leadership of UK policing is able to project that confidence, I think we will fail in our mission.

**Sarah Jones** (Croydon Central) (Lab): May I associate myself with the comments from the Minister, particularly his thanks to the IOPC for the report? The behaviour outlined in the report is truly appalling. As a woman and a mother, I found it chilling. Such shameful behaviour undermines policing and threatens public trust. The Metropolitan police must accept and urgently implement the IOPC's 15 recommendations.

Sadly, this is not just an issue in London; there have been disgraceful cases involving misogyny or racism among officers in Sussex, Hampshire, Leicestershire and Scotland. Ministers will know about these—we have been aware of them for some years. It is not good enough to leave police forces to solve these problems, or to wait until all the different reviews are completed. We need action now from the Government to tackle discrimination and prejudice within policing, and to help rebuild confidence.

Police training needs overhauling now, so that police officers get ongoing training throughout their careers, including on anti-racism and on tackling violence against women and girls. Action is needed now on the wholly inappropriate use of social media to perpetuate prejudice or bullying. What are the Government doing now to make sure that that happens? Action is needed now to tackle racism within the police force, but the National

Police Chiefs' Council action plan on race is 18 months overdue. Why is the Home Office not making sure that this happens sooner?

The Home Office inquiry after the murder of Sarah Everard is still non-statutory, meaning that it still does not have the full range of powers. Will the Minister listen to Labour's calls and place it on a statutory footing? If the Government want to show that they believe in tackling misogyny, at a time when the rape charge rate has fallen to a record low of 1.3%, will the Minister finally commit now to making tackling violence against women a strategic policing requirement?

Confidence in the police is absolutely fundamental—to protecting victims, catching criminals and keeping our communities safe. We all want the police to be the best that they can be—victims deserve it, the public deserve it and all good police officers deserve it. We need a plan from the Government to make sure that that happens. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner must now spend every minute of her remaining time working to make the Met the best that it can be. That means tackling serious violence, and violence against women and girls, and getting prosecution rates up, but it also means a relentless focus on raising standards. Nothing less will do.

**Kit Malthouse:** I recognise that the hon. Lady's job is to challenge the Government to do ever better, and I welcome her doing so, but I hope she will bring the same forensic challenge to the Mayor of London. Having done the job of deputy Mayor for policing and crime, I would certainly have taken responsibility for driving such changes forward from City Hall. Indeed, we faced similar problems between 2008 and 2012, established our own race and faith inquiry and drove through some of the very difficult reforms that were required a decade ago. I hope she will speak to her party colleague in City Hall and press him also to bring action.

While the hon. Lady is right to urge us into ever-greater action on these matters, I know she recognises that there is plenty of work already ongoing. We are, for example, working closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council as part of the new national working group on inappropriate social media use by police officers, working out what more we can do to drive that down. I recently met the chair of the scrutiny panel for the NPCC race and equality plan, and I am confident she will be able to bring impetus, momentum and scrutiny to the work it is doing.

We have not made the Angiolini inquiry statutory, because we want to get on with it. We need speed if we are to solve some of these problems fast and maintain confidence in UK policing. If we find, in discussion with Dame Elish, that the statutory basis is required, we will consider that. For the moment, we want to get on with it fast and, as I say, the work has already started. We do not believe, given the way the police regulations are drawn, that Dame Elish will face any obstacle in obtaining the evidence she needs from those forces involved in stage 1 of the inquiry, but if obstacles are put in her way, we are committed to trying to remove them for her. We are examining the strategic policing requirement at the moment and will make announcements about what is or is not included in it in the months to come.

**Nickie Aiken** (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): Words cannot really cover how I felt when I read the IOPC report; that anybody could think that using such language is acceptable, let alone police officers—and police officers based in my constituency, in a police station just up the road. I will be meeting the borough commander for Westminster tomorrow to discuss the report and how he and his colleagues plan to bring its recommendations to pass. I also welcome the review by Dame Louise Casey; I have worked with her for many years and I know she will leave no stone unturned when it comes to looking at the culture of the Metropolitan Police.

Does my right hon. Friend agree, however, that although it is clear there are rogue police officers in the Metropolitan Police and other police services, there are thousands and thousands of dedicated and hardworking police officers up and down the country who are equally disgusted? Will he join me in thanking them for their service?

**Kit Malthouse:** I share my hon. Friend's disgust at these events. As a former Westminster councillor and the London Assembly member for the area that includes Charing Cross police station, and having visited the police station to see its work in policing one of the most diverse, sensitive and difficult parts of the country and the capital, I find it shocking to see such evidence. I agree that that disgust and fury will be shared by the thousands of police officers across the United Kingdom who do extraordinary things every day to keep us safe. It will be shared not least, given the nature of the messages, by the ever increasing numbers of female and black and minority ethnic officers—the numbers in UK policing are now at an all-time high in both categories—who are doing their best to help us all in changing the face of British policing.

**Dame Diana Johnson** (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): This report is truly shocking. One key issue is the screening out of unsuitable applicants right at the start. I want to ask about current recruitment and vetting, as so many officers are now being employed. Does the Minister believe that the use of solely online recruitment, assessment, checks and offers is appropriate? That is happening in several forces, where there are no face-to-face interviews. One recruit said that the first time he had a face-to-face interview was when he was being measured for his uniform. I will just quote what Karen Ingala-Smith of the anti-violence charity Nia said, referring to Sarah Everard's killer:

"Couzens was at least the 15th serving or former officer to have killed a woman. Now is the time for more rigorous checks, not fast-track online selection processes".

**Kit Malthouse:** As I am sure the Chair of the Select Committee will recognise, the advent of the pandemic meant that we had to find innovative ways to continue with our recruitment process. We are obviously reviewing them as we emerge from the pandemic, to ensure that we get them exactly right. As I explained earlier and as I am sure the right hon. Lady knows, we have commissioned a general inquiry across UK policing to look at vetting procedures to make sure that the police across the UK have consistency—because each force is responsible for its own vetting—and that that net is drawn as sharply as we possibly can to ensure that we get the right people into policing.

Critically, however, it is important that we monitor carefully how those new young police officers coming through feel and what they are being exposed to, and give them the confidence to know that where there is bad behaviour, they are able to call it out without detriment to themselves. There is not just one piece of the jigsaw; an entire machine needs to be built to ensure integrity in all police officers—to build confidence among the British people that the right people are getting into policing, that they are being maintained in policing and that, where things go wrong, corrective action can be taken quickly.

**Mrs Maria Miller** (Basingstoke) (Con): The racism, misogyny and bullying uncovered by the report are damning, but I do not believe that it is reflective of the vast majority of our police forces, as my right hon. Friend just said. We owe it to those officers to root out this behaviour. The IOPC started its investigations four years ago, and similar investigations in Hampshire—as the Minister will know, as my near neighbour—took three years. What is my right hon. Friend doing to ensure that investigations are completed in a more reasonable timeframe, and that anonymity is not used to hide those who are involved in such heinous behaviours?

**Kit Malthouse:** My right hon. Friend is quite right that we need to ensure that inquiries are speeded up as much as possible. I hope that she will remember that, a year or so ago, we introduced reforms to the way in which the IOPC operates to push it to ever greater alacrity in its inquiries. Now, in the case of an inquiry going over 12 months, it is required to write a letter to the appropriate authority—whether that is the police and crime commissioner or me—to explain why. Often, the delay is the fault not necessarily of the IOPC, but of inquests, criminal inquiries or correspondence providing information that extends the timeframe. However, we need to know why.

As far as transparency and anonymity are concerned, I have written recently to all legally qualified chairs of disciplinary panels to say that there should be a stringent examination of whether those hearings need to be held in private or in public. It is absolutely vital for trust in policing that the British people not only know that justice is being done in a disciplinary process, but can see it too.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. I want to try to get everyone in but, as colleagues are aware, we have another statement and then further business, so I request that questions are short and to the point, which will enable the Minister to be short and to the point as well.

**Wera Hobhouse** (Bath) (LD): In the last year alone, Cressida Dick was forced to make two public apologies for corruption and cover-up, in the Daniel Morgan murder case and—although she never apologised—for the atrocious mishandling of the vigil for Sarah Everard. We have seen the Met accused of institutional corruption, misogyny, racism and, following the Stephen Port killings, homophobia, not to mention the handling of the partygate fiasco. Now we have this damning report on the Charing Cross police station by the Independent Office for Police

[Wera Hobhouse]

Conduct. This lack of leadership and the culture of cover-up are letting down honourable rank-and-file police officers, so why did the Home Secretary think that it was remotely acceptable recently to extend Cressida Dick's term, as opposed to demanding her resignation?

**Kit Malthouse:** Two of the matters that the hon. Lady refers to are still under investigation by Her Majesty's inspectorate and I hope that that will conclude shortly. It is worth pointing out that this incident was discovered shortly after the commissioner became commissioner and the unit was disbanded shortly thereafter on her watch. The reason that her contract was extended is that we thought she was the best person for the job.

**Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con):** As someone who represents a central London constituency, I am shocked and horrified by these revelations and the toxic culture that it represents in some parts of the Metropolitan police. Will my right hon. Friend assure me that he will bring up these concerns with the Mayor of London, because the Mayor needs to take responsibility for sorting out the culture of the Metropolitan police?

**Kit Malthouse:** As somebody who, as I said, served in City Hall as deputy mayor for policing, I can tell the House that the intention of the Greater London Authority Act 1999, which created the mayoralty and put the police authority and then the Metropolitan police under the control of the Mayor of London, was to ensure that the forensic examination of Met performance and internal processes could be done as close to the frontline as possible and that the Mayor should be in the driving seat.

**Ms Karen Buck (Westminster North) (Lab):** As one of the two Members of Parliament for Westminster, I have always greatly valued and supported the work of our local police, and I think that our good and decent police officers will also be appalled by what they have seen in the past few days. They know what we know—that policing a young, modern, diverse city such as Westminster and London is founded on trust. That trust will also be reflected by having a police service that reflects London, so will the Minister tell us what immediate steps he is taking to review the progress, which has faltered over recent years, in ensuring that London's police service is as diverse in all its forms as the city that it polices?

**Kit Malthouse:** Hon. Members will have seen that, as part of our uplift programme not just in London, but elsewhere, we are specifically pushing to increase diversity both in terms of gender and race within policing. That is important nowhere more than in London and we have been working closely with the Metropolitan police to maximise the possibility of not only people from a BME background, but women joining the police force.

**Florence Eshalomi (Vauxhall) (Lab/Co-op):** The Minister will be aware that I have spoken about the issue of the Met police on a number of occasions. I am very proud to represent Vauxhall in south London. It is a diverse constituency where, if I am honest, sometimes the relationship between the community and the police can be fractious. We have a number of great community

leaders who are willing to work and build the trust between the police and the community. However, reports such as this just blow that confidence out. How can I reassure my diverse community—my diverse community of young black children, of LGBT people, of women who feel let down by the police—that they can have confidence and trust in the police? How will the Minister address the issues relating to the fact that, when we come to summer, we will see our police out on the streets and the young who are fearful of the police will not trust them, women who want to go out across Vauxhall at night will be scared to approach the police, and our LGBT people who want to go out and enjoy themselves will not want to come forward to the police? How is he going to address that culture now?

**Kit Malthouse:** Having wrestled with these issues in the past, I completely agree with the hon. Lady that it is totally critical that there is a strong bond of trust with communities who have perhaps had a fractious relationship with the police. I think that the best thing that they can do is decide to be the change themselves, and I urge all communities in London and elsewhere to put forward their brightest and best to be police officers.

**Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab):** Cutting 21,000 police officers since 2010 has led to the rush to recruit officers to backfill those gaps, and the vetting of those officers is crucial. Does the Minister think that recruiting people purely through interviews online and doing that vetting purely online is suitable, given that the police are such a customer-facing, hands-on—sometimes literally—service with the public?

**Kit Malthouse:** It is worth pointing out that, while the assessment process was online, once those police officers enter training, it is not accepted that they will necessarily be attested at the end. They are constantly assessed throughout their training on whether or not they are suitable. We continue to monitor their performance not just through training and in the immediate months after their acquisition, but thereafter. Having said that, we have to be slightly careful to bear in mind that, of the 11,000-odd who have stepped forward to be police officers, the vast majority of them are bright, smart, well-meaning and well-motivated people with the right kind of values to be police officers, and we have high hopes for them in the future.

**Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Kilburn) (Lab):** The report was chilling. What worried me most was that the horrific cases were referred to the IOPC in 2018, yet the concerns about sexist discrimination and sexual harassment in the London Metropolitan police were not addressed by the time of the horrific murders of Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman, and Sarah Everard, who has been mentioned a few times. Like my hon. Friend the Member for Vauxhall (Florence Eshalomi), I have had young women in my constituency writing to me and saying that they do not feel safe walking around at night in my constituency. As someone who had a bad experience with the police before I became an MP, I ask the Minister to set out some tangible steps the Government are taking to ensure that the misogyny in the force is tackled and that they are actually doing a proper job, so I can reassure my young constituents that they are safe to walk around in Hampstead and Kilburn.

**Kit Malthouse:** As I explained earlier, we are engaging at all levels with the various actions plans that are in place to try to bring change in policing. And, of course, we are injecting a much more diverse shot of energy and personnel into policing through the uplift programme. However, it is—I am not making a political point—primarily the job of the Mayor of London to hold the commissioner to account on these issues. We are sending in the inspectors not just to London but to every force to look at their vetting and anti-corruption processes to make sure they are functioning well, but with a particular emphasis on the ability internally to call out exactly this kind of behaviour. It appears that this incident came to light after phones were brought in to be checked after a previous incident—this was referred to by my hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (Dr Offord)—and they were discovered almost accidentally. We have to ask why. Why were there not police officers calling out that behaviour? That is what we are sending in the inspectors to have a look at.

**Gareth Thomas** (Harrow West) (Lab/Co-op): The Minister will understand that this case, among other things, will reinforce the profound concern about the level of violence towards women and the lack of accountability for men who are responsible for that violence. As my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) alluded to in her remarks, the Government have so far refused to make violence against women and girls a strategic policing priority. Given the seriousness of this latest report, the fact that it is not an isolated case and the clear need for cultural change across the Metropolitan police, will the Minister stop procrastinating and bring that in?

**Kit Malthouse:** We have not refused at all. We have said we will consider it, along with all the other horrendous crimes that, sadly, teem around this country and which we have to deal with. As I say, we will publish our findings on the strategic policing requirement shortly.

**Wendy Chamberlain** (North East Fife) (LD): I am the only female former police officer currently serving in this place. Although I served with dedicated officers, I would be lying if I said that I did not recognise an element of the culture from my own service over 28 years ago. Training is absolutely vital. Post the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, all police officers and staff across the UK attended three days of diversity training. It was a big undertaking, but it visibly demonstrated to the public that we were taking this seriously. What steps is the Minister taking and what conversations is he having with the College of Policing for something similar?

**Kit Malthouse:** The hon. Lady speaks with knowledge and she is exactly right. We are in intensive conversation with the College of Policing, which, as I hope she knows, is under new leadership, to ensure that we get the package of training exactly right, and, specifically, that the training catches up with modern phenomena, which perhaps it has been a little slow to do, such as social media.

**Marsha De Cordova** (Battersea) (Lab): The findings of this report were deeply shocking, but if we look just at this last year, we have seen that the Metropolitan police have deep-rooted structural problems, from racism

to bullying to misogyny. Currently, we have a commissioner in the job that I do not believe is fit for purpose. Does the Minister agree that, to really tackle the broken culture in the Metropolitan police, we also need to change the commissioner?

**Kit Malthouse:** I recognise that media coverage has the tendency to compress time. It is worth pointing out that the issue came to light in 2017 and the unit was disbanded in 2018. Charing Cross police station was merged into a wider borough operational command under new leadership, which is committed to driving out this kind of appalling behaviour. Whether that culture persists, and the vigour with which the Met is pursuing it, will be revealed, we hope, by both the Angiolini inquiry and the work of Dame Louise Casey. I urge the hon. Lady to wait for those conclusions.

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): This cultural problem does not just apply to Charing Cross, or even, as my hon. Friend the Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) said, to the Met. It also does not just apply to middle-ranking and junior officers. As a councillor and now a Member of this House, I worked with Chief Superintendent Paul Martin and Chief Inspector Ricky Kandohla, who were both found guilty last week of gross misconduct and dismissed without notice for a series of offences. The chief superintendent led the three-borough basic command unit and was found to have committed bullying and discriminatory conduct towards a female police officer, misuse of a bank card, and impropriety over a promotion. Will the Minister assure the House that any reviews will address the cultures within our police forces right to the top of senior levels?

**Kit Malthouse:** That is our intention.

**Anna McMorrin** (Cardiff North) (Lab): The report not only makes for incredibly uncomfortable and difficult reading, but destroys public confidence. This is not just about the Met. Alongside the Government's failure in the criminal justice system, where victims are let down and rape prosecutions have fallen to just 1.3%, how can the Minister expect victims of serious sexual assault and rape across the country to come forward? What will he do about that?

**Kit Malthouse:** I have previously expressed sincere regret for the results in the criminal justice system on rape. I hope the hon. Lady will recognise that some of our actions—not least Operation Soteria, which is showing good signs of making progress in this area—will give people more confidence in getting a result. However, the incidence of reported rape in this country continues to rise as more and more people come forward to report that appalling crime, and we must ensure that they are confident of getting justice through the criminal justice system. That is what the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Redditch (Rachel Maclean), and I are dedicated to.

**Nadia Whittome** (Nottingham East) (Lab): The IOPC's report was truly damning, but it is not the only example of misogyny in the Met police that has come to light in the past couple of weeks. The Met has also been made to pay compensation to a woman in Nottingham who was deceived into a relationship with an undercover

[Nadia Whittome]

officer, and it has been made to apologise to my constituent Dr Koshka Duff for misogynistic and derogatory comments made before and after a strip search. Does the Minister agree with the report's conclusion that the incidents the IOPC investigated are

"not isolated or simply the behaviour of a few 'bad apples'"?

Will he commit to an independent, public, statutory inquiry into institutional misogyny in the Metropolitan police?

**Kit Malthouse:** Given the incidents we have seen—I too was appalled by the incident to which the hon. Lady refers—it is hard not to agree with the IOPC conclusions. As I have explained in the past few minutes, several inquiries in this area are ongoing within the Met, and I think it best to wait for them to conclude before deciding on what the next steps may be.

## Levelling Up

2.43 pm

**The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Minister for Intergovernmental Relations (Michael Gove):** Madam Deputy Speaker, I would like to make a statement on the Government's plans to level up and unite our country.

The White Paper we are publishing today sets out our detailed strategy to make opportunity more equal and to shift wealth and power decisively towards working people and their families. After two long years of covid, we need to get this country moving at top speed again. We need faster growth, quicker public services and higher wages, and we need to allow overlooked and undervalued communities to take back control of their destiny.

While talent is spread equally across the United Kingdom, opportunity is not. Our country is an unparalleled success story, but not everyone shares in it. The further a person is from one of our great capitals—whether it is London, Edinburgh, Cardiff or Belfast—the tougher life can be. For every local success, there is a story of scarring and stagnation elsewhere, and that must change. We need to tackle and reverse the inequality that is limiting so many horizons and that also harms our economy. The gap between much of the south-east and the rest of the country in productivity, in health outcomes, in wages, in school results and in job opportunities must be closed. This is not about slowing down London or the south-east, or damping down animal spirits, but rather about turbocharging the potential of every part of the UK. This country will not achieve its full potential until every individual and community achieves everything of which they are capable. Our economy has been like a jet propelled by only one engine, now we need to fire up every resource that we have.

The economic prize from levelling up is potentially enormous. If underperforming places were levelled up towards the UK average, unlocking their full potential, this could boost aggregate UK GDP by tens of billions of pounds each year. So, how do we achieve success? First, we do so by backing business. The economic growth that we want to see across the UK will be generated by the private sector, by businesses and entrepreneurs investing, innovating, taking risks and opening new markets. We will support them every step of the way, by cutting through the red tape, by making it easier to secure investment and, as our White Paper today outlines, by creating the right environment on the ground for business.

As the Chancellor laid out in our Plan for Growth, we need to invest in science and innovation, improve infrastructure and connectivity, and extend educational opportunity to underpin economic success. This White Paper makes clear our commitment to improve education, investment and connectivity fastest in those parts of the country that have not had the support that they needed in the past. We have set out clear, ambitious missions, underpinned by metrics by which we can be held to account to drive the change that we need.

On productivity, science and innovation, our mission one is that, by 2030, we pledge that pay, employment and productivity will have risen in every area of the UK,

with each containing a globally competitive city; closing the gap between top performing areas and the rest. Mission two will see a massive increase in domestic public investment in research and development outside the greater south-east, increasing by at least a third in the next three years, and we will use the shift in resources to leverage private sector investment in the areas that need it most.

On infrastructure and connectivity, we will have better local transport, bringing the rest of the country closer to the standards of London's transport system. We will also improve digital connectivity, with billions of pounds of investment, bringing nationwide gigabit-capable broadband and 4G coverage to the whole UK, and we will expand 5G coverage to the overwhelming majority of the population.

On education and skills, we will effectively eradicate illiteracy and innumeracy, with investment in the most-underperforming areas of the country. There will be 55 new education investment areas in England alone, driving school improvement in the local authorities where attainment is weakest. Our sixth mission is to have new high quality skills training, targeted at the lowest skilled areas, with 200,000 more people completing high quality skills training annually.

We know that, to achieve these missions, we will need smart, targeted, Government investment. That is why we are investing more than £20 billion in research and development to create a science and technology superpower. Today, we are allocating £100 million specifically to three new innovation accelerators in the west midlands, Glasgow and Greater Manchester. It is also why we are investing £5 billion in bus services and active travel, with new bus investment today in all our mayoral combined authorities and the green light for bus projects in Stoke-on-Trent, Derbyshire, Warrington and across the country. It is also why we are investing in new academies, new free schools and new institutes of technology. Today, we are establishing a new digital UK national academy—just as the UK established the Open University to bring higher education to everyone, we are making available to every school student in the country high quality online teaching, so geography is no barrier to opportunity.

We will also use the freedoms that we now have outside the EU to reform Government procurement rules to ensure that the money that we spend on goods and services is spent on British firms and British jobs. We will unashamedly put British workers first in the global race for investment. Economic opportunity, spread more equally across the country, is at the heart of levelling up, but levelling up is also about community as well. It is about repairing the social fabric of our broken heartlands, so that they can reflect the pride we feel in the places we love. That is why we are investing in 20 new urban regeneration projects, starting in Wolverhampton and Sheffield and spreading across the midlands and the north, with £1.8 billion invested in new housing infrastructure to turn brownfield land into projects across the country like Stratford and King's Cross in London.

By regenerating the great cities and towns of the north, we can relieve the pressure on green fields and public services in the south. A more productive, even prouder and faster-growing north helps improve quality

of life and wellbeing in the south, which is why we are refocusing housing investment towards the north and midlands.

Our housing mission is clear: we will give renters a secure path to greater home ownership, we will drive an increase in first-time buyers and we will deliver a tough focus on decent standards in rented homes. A new £1.5 billion levelling-up home building fund will give loans to small and medium-sized builders to deliver new homes, the vast majority of which will be outside London and the south-east. Our housing plans will set a decent minimum standard that all rented properties must meet.

Our White Paper this spring will include plans to cut the number of poor-quality rented homes by half, address the injustice of “no fault” evictions and bear down on rogue landlords, thereby improving the life chances of children and families up and down the country.

We will also take action in law to tackle the problem of empty properties and vacant shops on our high streets. Building on the work of my hon. Friend the Member for Stoke-on-Trent North (Jonathan Gullis), we will ensure that properties cannot remain unloved and unused for months, dragging down the whole high street. Instead, we will put every property to work for the benefit of the whole community.

Also central to improving quality of life for all will be further investment in sport, culture, nature and young people. That is why we are investing £230 million extra in grassroots football and using the community ownership fund to help fans take back control of clubs such as Bury FC. It is also why every extra penny of Arts Council spending will now be allocated outside London, from celebrating ceramics in Stoke to supporting pride in British history in Bishop Auckland. There will also be another £30 million allocated to improving parks and urban green spaces, as well as plans to re-green all of our green belt.

We will also invest an additional £560 million in activities for young people, and we will invest in reversing health disparities, tackling obesity and improving life expectancy. We will also ensure that the communities in which we are investing are safer and more orderly. Fighting crime and antisocial behaviour is essential to giving communities new heart, so we will invest an additional £150 million in our safer streets fund and ensure that those who drag down our communities through vandalism, graffiti and joyriding pay back their debt to those communities. They will be set to work on improving the environment, cleaning up public spaces, clearing away the drug debris in our parks and streets and contributing to civic renewal.

Critical to the success of our missions will be giving communities not just the resources but the powers necessary to take back control. That is why our White Paper sets out how we will shift more power away from Whitehall to working people. We will give new powers to outstanding local leaders such as Andy Street and Ben Houchen—[*Interruption*—and, indeed, Dan Jarvis. We will create new Mayors where people want them, we will give nine counties including Derbyshire and Durham new powers as trailblazers in a programme of county deals and we will strengthen the hand of local leaders across the country.

We will also take back control of the money that the EU used to spend on our behalf, ensuring that local areas can invest in their priorities through the new UK

[*Michael Gove*]

shared prosperity fund. With power comes responsibility, so we will also ensure that data on local government performance is published so that we can hold local leaders to account.

Central Government will report back to this House on our progress against our missions and on the impact all our policies have on closing geographical inequalities. Because building long-term structures matters, we will also create the institutions, generate the incentives and supply the information necessary to drive levelling up for years ahead.

This White Paper lays out a long-term economic and social plan to make opportunity more equal. It shifts power and opportunity towards the north and midlands, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It guarantees increased investment in overlooked and undervalued communities, in research and development, in education and skills, in transport and broadband, in urban parks and decent homes, in grassroots sport and local culture and in fighting crime and tackling antisocial behaviour. It gives local communities the tools to tackle rogue landlords, dilapidated high streets and neglected green spaces, and it demonstrates that this people's Government are keeping faith with the working people of this country by allowing them to take back control of their lives, their communities and their futures.

I commend this statement to the House.

2.54 pm

**Lisa Nandy** (Wigan) (Lab): After all the delays, all the slogans and all the big promises, is this it? Is this really it? The sum total of ambition for our proud coastal and industrial—[*Interruption.*]

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. The Secretary of State was heard with respect. I do not expect the shadow Secretary of State to be shouted out.

**Lisa Nandy:** Conservative Members do not disrespect us when they chunter and jeer; they disrespect the people of this country.

Seriously, is this it? The sum total of ambition for our coastal and industrial towns, our villages and our great cities is a history lesson on the rise of the Roman empire, and Ministers scurrying around Whitehall, shuffling the deckchairs and cobbling together a shopping list of recycled policies and fiddling the figures. Is this really it?

For some of us, this is personal. We have lived these failures every single day. We have watched good jobs go, our high streets boarded up and young people who have had to get out to get on. The Secretary of State talks about Bury FC. My step-dad was a lifelong supporter of Bury FC, a regular at Gigg Lane and his last words to my step-brother before he died were, "What's the score?" If he were alive today, he would never forgive the Government for standing aside while this asset at the centre of Bury's community was allowed to collapse.

This system is completely broken, and the Secretary of State has given us more of the same. This was meant to be the Prime Minister's defining mission of Government. I am not surprised he was too embarrassed to come here today and defend it himself. It is so bad that even

the Secretary of State has privately been saying that it is rubbish. They tell us to wait till 2030, but where have they been for the last 12 years? I will tell them where—in Whitehall, turbocharging the decline of our communities, and cutting off choices and chances for a generation of young people.

The Secretary of State talks about 12 missions, but this is 12 admissions of failure. Let us take one of them. Only two thirds of children leave primary school with the basic skills to get on. Forgive me if I have missed something, but was he not the Education Secretary for four years? What about this? The Government want to tackle crime, but on their watch fewer than one in 10 crimes are solved and nearly all rapes go unprosecuted. No one listening to this would think that he had been in charge of the Ministry of Justice.

This is a Government in free fall—out of ideas, out of energy—with recycled, watered-down ambitions. None of this is new. In fact, some of it is so old that one of the better announcements that caught my eye was actually made in 2008 by Gordon Brown and has been running ever since. Across our home towns, we have seen good jobs disappear and far too many young people who have had to get out to get on. This does nothing to address that.

The Secretary of State talks about a Medici-style renaissance, but can he not see what is happening in front of his eyes? Our high streets are struggling because the local economy is struggling. People do not have money to spend in our shops, our businesses and our high streets, and the Government are about to hike up their taxes. This does nothing to address that. What we needed was a plan to connect our towns and villages to jobs, to opportunities and to our family and friends, but they have halved the funding for buses and scrapped the rail promises to the north, and where is the digital Britain we were promised?

We do not need to look to Rome, Jericho or renaissance Florence for inspiration, because in Preston, Wigan and Grimsby, people are delivering real change for themselves, not because of their Government, but despite them. Imagine what we could do if they would get out of the way and give us back the power that we demand to make decisions for ourselves. [*Laughter.*] Well, Conservative Members laugh. They do laugh—they have been laughing at us for years—and here it goes again.

It is absurd that we have to go cap in hand to Westminster to do things that we know will work for us. Do not believe me; believe the former Mayor of London, who in 2013 demanded powers that are nowhere to be seen in this report. We asked for powers, and we got a process. Where are the powers we were promised? Seriously, we have the arrogance of a Chancellor sitting in Whitehall, drawing lines on a map, choosing which of us have earned the right to have some say on the decisions that affect not their lives, but our lives, our families and our communities.

The Secretary of State talks about London-style regeneration. My colleagues in London will talk proudly about the London they call home, but not every part of this country wants to be the same. We have our own identities. We are proud of our own places. We believe in our communities and we believe in our people, and we deserve a Government who back us, not the smoke and mirrors that we have been handed today.



The Government have given more to fraudsters than they have given to the north of England. For every £13 they have taken from us, they have given us £1 back. We get a partial refund and they expect us to be grateful. *[Interruption.]* I will give the House an example. The Mayor of Greater Manchester today raised broken promises on rail, and he was told by one of the Government's MPs, "Don't bite the hand that feeds you."

It is not their money; it is ours. Imagine what we could achieve if we had a Government with an ambition for Britain that matched the ambition of the people in it. We could build good jobs in every community. There is a global race to create these jobs, and we will bring them here so that young people in our coastal and industrial towns can power us through the next generation, like their parents and grandparents powered us through the last. In every community in this country, people know that we can do so much better than this, with well-paid jobs and money back in people's pockets to genuinely transform our high streets. We can reform business rates to back our bricks and mortar businesses. We can be buying, making and selling more in Britain and have an educational recovery plan that stands as a testament to our commitment to the young people who make this country what it is. That is our mission, and today we have learned one crucial thing: for all the spin and all the gloss, the Government will not do it, because they do not believe in this country—we will. *[Interruption.]*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. I think you are preventing the Secretary of State from speaking. I suggest that a modicum of silence from those on the Back Benches would be welcome.

**Michael Gove:** I have enormous respect and affection for the hon. Lady, but at the end of her response, I do not think I heard a single question, nor did I hear her disagree with a single policy that we have put forward. She is in distinguished company; she joins other Labour colleagues who have welcomed the White Paper, such as Tracy Brabin, the Mayor of West Yorkshire, who said there is

"lots to be pleased about"

in it, and the Mayor of South Yorkshire, who said on Sunday that he warmly welcomed the support that we were giving to Sheffield and that it was

"much needed recognition of the potential"

of that great city. I am glad that the hon. Lady is in good Labour company in welcoming the White Paper.

The hon. Lady mentioned Bury FC, and she suggested that this Government had stood aside. I am sorry, but this Government provided £1 million to the fans of Bury FC so that they could take back control of the club. It was not Labour Bury Council but Tory Ministers who saved that football club for its fans.

She asks where we have been over the past 12 years and about my time as Education Secretary. My mother said self-praise is no honour, but since the hon. Lady asks, there were more good and outstanding schools as a result. We closed the gap between rich and poor, we extended opportunity and we ensured that illiteracy and innumeracy were tackled.

The hon. Lady also says that we need more good jobs. I completely agree. That is why we have a plan for growth and she has no plan. She says that we need to

revive our high streets. I completely agree. That is why we have a plan for investment, and the Opposition have no plan. She says that she wants improved connectivity. That is why we have ensured that gigabit connectivity has gone from 10% to 60% in the past two years, and they have no plan. She says that she believes in devolution. We have nine county deals and powers for Mayors. The only devolution in England that Labour ever offered was to London. It did nothing for the north and midlands when it came to devolution. She said she wants safer town centres. Why is it, then, that every time we have brought forward policies for tougher sentences in this House, Labour has voted against? It has no plans, no idea and no answers.

The Opposition also ask about new money. Do they not remember that Liam Byrne wrote in 2010 when the Labour Government left office that there was no money left? Now, they are so fiscally inconstant that they say they want simultaneously not to have a national insurance increase and to cut other taxes, and at the same time to increase public spending. Our commitment to abolish innumeracy cannot come quickly enough, starting with the Labour Front Benchers. My right hon. Friend the Chancellor has committed £500 million to tackling adult innumeracy; we know where that funding should go first. If they had their way, borrowing would go up, interest rates would go up, and the poorest in the north and midlands would lose out; instead of levelling up, they would bring the economy crashing down. That is why we never need to have those Front Benchers in power in this country ever.

**Several hon. Members rose—**

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. A little reminder that the Secretary of State should not refer to hon. Members by name.

It is going to require a lot of self-discipline if we are to have any chance of getting everybody in, so I ask for very short questions. The Father of the House will provide a marvellous example of that, I am sure: Sir Peter Bottomley.

**Sir Peter Bottomley (Worthing West) (Con):** I say to my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State that those in the south-east hope this will be successful, giving individuals opportunity and changing the economic geography of the parts of this country that need to be connected to the thriving country we hope to create together. Will he heed council leaders such as Councillor Kevin Jenkins in Worthing, who wants Ministers to pay attention to things that they could do that would help and to stop doing things that do not help, because all over the country we need Ministers to pay more attention to local leaders?

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right, and in the levelling-up White Paper there is a commitment to ensure greater devolution all round. I signalled the county deals we are green-lighting for Derbyshire and Durham, but we are also devolving more power to local authorities across the country, including through the new UK shared prosperity fund. He is also right to remind us that, while deprivation is concentrated disproportionately in the north and midlands, there are pockets of genuine poverty in communities such as Worthing and Hastings that we need to pay close attention to.

**Tommy Sheppard** (Edinburgh East) (SNP): This is somewhat underwhelming, is it not? Not so much a dead cat as a damp squib. This might have been an opportunity to bring forward proposals for the modernisation of government in these islands, to devolve further powers and competence to the national Administrations, and to do something about the asymmetric and centralised mess that is the government of England, but, no, what we are promised is that in eight years' time we will get a better bus service. It is, frankly, insulting given the amount of political capital that the Government have invested in this. This is a Government who have broken trust with the British people, and getting it back will require people and policies of substance, rather than glib soundbites and photo opportunities for Ministers in hard hats and hi-viz vests. The statement literally has nothing in it for the people I represent in this House, but we will watch with interest as this con is perpetrated on the people of the north of England.

Meanwhile, in Scotland we have another Brexit betrayal: the replacement funds for the EU structural funds are falling £900 million short, and control is being centralised to Whitehall. That is what we are receiving from this Government, and that is why more and more people are turning to the option of political independence for their country.

My central question is this: how does this square with the rest of the Government's policies? We have a chronic and increasing problem with inequality in Britain, yet everything this Government do seems to make it worse: the decision to cut universal credit and the below-inflation increases in other benefits are driving the gap between rich and poor even higher; so, too, is the decision to increase basic rate taxes and not to increase taxes for those who can most afford them; and so, too, is the Government's inaction and unwillingness to do anything about the cost of living and spiralling energy bills. So my question, Secretary of State, is this: given all of that—given the Government's policy in the round—is this not just a piece of meaningless window dressing?

**Michael Gove:** The short answer is no. The longer answer is this: we work in partnership with the Scottish Government, and we recognise their devolved responsibilities, but people in Scotland pay their taxes to have two Governments working together for them, and that is what we have done. The levelling-up fund has ensured that there has been investment in North Ayrshire, in Edinburgh and in Aberdeen, to help communities and councils led by Scottish nationalist councillors, and that has been backed by SNP MPs. The UK shared prosperity fund has also guaranteed funds going to Scotland, ensuring that Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Cornwall receive every bit as much outside the EU as they ever did within it, but with our control of that funding, not the European Union's.

Today, we have announced additional funding for an innovation accelerator in Glasgow. In Glasgow University and the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow has two of the United Kingdom's leading research universities. We are supporting and backing them. I explained to the First Minister last night how important it was that we worked together, and we will seek to work together.

When it comes to inequality, the Scottish Government have presided over growing inequality in education outcomes in schools in Scotland. We want to work with

them to reverse that. When it comes to devolution, rather than devolving more powers to local government in Scotland, as we are doing in England, the Scottish Government have centralised powers. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has been eloquent in complaining about that. Again, that is a devolved matter, but if the critique from the hon. Gentleman is to carry force, it is vital that he recognises the beam in his own eye before pointing out the mote in others.

**Greg Clark** (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): What the towns and cities of our country need is ambition, investment and encouragement, not the negativity and neglect that I am afraid they have experienced under the Labour party over the years. As a Teessider born and bred, and as someone who negotiated and signed the devolution deal with Teesside six years ago, I am proud to see it leading this White Paper thanks to the great progress it has made under Ben Houchen.

Does the Secretary of State recognise that building on such successful policy innovations is the best way to go, rather than needing to start from scratch in every case? In that context, does he recognise that the role of universities and scientific institutions, which are strong in the regions, is a good place to invest and to drive further prosperity across the UK?

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend was a brilliant Secretary of State both for Communities and Local Government and for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. He was, more than anyone else—apart from the former Chancellor, the former right hon. Member for Tatton—responsible for extending devolution across England. He is absolutely right: this is a model that works and on which we can build. He is also absolutely right to say that higher education is critical to the economic future of the north and the midlands, where we have outstanding universities. The increased research and development spending that we are announcing today will be directed towards those excellent institutions. Whether for life sciences in Newcastle, renewables in Teesside or materials in Manchester, we will be working with those universities to revive the north and the midlands.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I call the Chair of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Committee.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for an advance copy of the White Paper, although I have to admit that I have not quite read it all yet.

When the Select Committee has looked at this issue in the past, we have agreed that local councils have to be key to delivering a levelling-up agenda, and that means a devolution framework, with all councils getting real new powers and real new resources to deliver. When I looked at page 140, I saw the words “devolution framework”, and I was encouraged. Will the Secretary of State confirm, however, that in that list of powers, there is not a single new power? All the powers in there are already available to at least some local authorities, and all this framework does is enable more local authorities to have those powers. What is certainly not set out is a list of new resources that will be available to enable the spread of existing powers to more local authorities to be delivered in practice. Will he confirm those two things?

**Michael Gove:** It is a typically fair and informed question from the hon. Gentleman. What the framework does lay out is how local authorities that have fewer powers can acquire more, and how we can have a convergence towards a model, which not every part of the country will necessarily want to adopt, that is closer to the level of power and autonomy that the Mayor of London exercises. We are completely open, and we have said so, to negotiating with local areas on the acquisition of further powers.

I should also say that the UK shared prosperity fund prospectus that we are publishing today makes it clear that lower-tier local authorities especially will have additional resources, through the UKSPF, to enhance their ability to serve their citizens.

**Anne Marie Morris** (Newton Abbot) (Ind): I congratulate the Secretary of State on his “Levelling Up” paper, but particularly mission 7 to level up health outcomes and wellbeing. Will he meet me to discuss levelling up health and care provision in rural areas as part of that mission, a blueprint for which was published yesterday in a report co-authored by the all-party parliamentary group on rural health and social care, which I chair, and the National Centre for Rural Health and Social Care?

**Michael Gove:** Yes, I absolutely will. The hon. Lady makes an important point. Of course improving economic productivity is at the heart of levelling up, but we also need to tackle unfair health outcomes. Within the White Paper, we have details of how we are proposing to do so, not least taking forward some of the recommendations of Henry Dimbleby’s national food strategy, which outlines how we can effectively tackle obesity—one of the greatest drivers of diabetes, which is one of the greatest drains on NHS resources.

**Naz Shah** (Bradford West) (Lab): I wrote to the Secretary of State on 19 January and I have not had a response to that letter, but in it I cited research from Utopia, which, after analysing 34 cities and towns, found that Bradford needed the most development and infrastructure support. We have lost out on Northern Powerhouse Rail, stifling £30 billion-worth of investment over the next 10 years. We have been given crumbs. What is he doing for my constituents in Bradford West—he has mentioned nothing in his statement today—after failing them time and again with the NPR?

**Michael Gove:** The hon. Lady is right. Bradford is a fantastic city—it has seen significant investment, not least in cultural renewal, and it has a wonderful university—but it also has areas of real deprivation, not least in the constituency that she represents. I look forward to working with her, and with Tracy Brabin and municipal leaders in Bradford, to ensure that the policies in the White Paper can deliver for her constituents.

**Damian Green** (Ashford) (Con): I very much welcome this White Paper—a genuinely one-nation Conservative document. I particularly commend my right hon. Friend and his colleagues on the health commitment it makes. Five years’ extra healthy lifespan will be absolutely critical in spreading opportunity not just to disadvantaged people but to disadvantaged communities, because health inequalities hold people back almost more than anything else. Frankly, we can have all the transport infrastructure

we like, but if people in middle age are too unhealthy to lead full lives and to stay in work, they cannot benefit from it. Will he go into a bit more detail about how he will achieve that ambition?

**Michael Gove:** Absolutely. My right hon. Friend is right: this is a one-nation document that is in that Conservative tradition. He is also absolutely right that addressing health inequalities is vital, not just to relieving pressure on the NHS for taxpayers but to giving people the full lives that they deserve. We outline in the White Paper some of the steps that we are taking, not least to deal with obesity, but, in addition, my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary will be bringing forward a health inequalities White Paper a little later this year, and I will be working with him to take forward some of the insights of Professor Michael Marmot and others about what the drivers of health inequalities are and how we can tackle them.

**Dan Jarvis** (Barnsley Central) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State and the Under-Secretary, the hon. Member for Harborough (Neil O’Brien), for the briefing that they gave to the Mayors and myself yesterday. However, it is a shameful indictment of our country that, for too long, where you grow up has determined where you end up. We all know that to address these challenges requires transformational resources. What more can the Secretary of State do and how can we help him to get the Chancellor to provide additional resources to deliver on the plan that he has brought forward?

**Michael Gove:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for making that point. I hope to have the chance to visit him in Sheffield before too long to discuss how we can use some of the funding that was allocated in the spending review more effectively on his behalf, and how we can ensure that future spending commitments from the Chancellor and from others serve the people whom he serves.

**John Redwood** (Wokingham) (Con): I welcome the emphasis on personal journeys and improvement of free enterprise. Freeports can make a great contribution to that, so will the Government bring forward a freeport for Northern Ireland to show that it is properly part of the United Kingdom and, with it, to see off the EU threat to our Union?

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend makes an important point. The Government are committed to ensuring that we have two additional freeports in Scotland, at least one in Wales and one in Northern Ireland, and announcements on those should be forthcoming shortly.

**Sammy Wilson** (East Antrim) (DUP): I welcome the White Paper and the Government’s paying attention to levelling up across the United Kingdom—as a Unionist, I see that as important to assure citizens they are considered part of the United Kingdom. However, many people in Northern Ireland will say that new red tape as a result of the Northern Ireland protocol is strangling our economy. How do the proposals in the White Paper benefit people in Northern Ireland in terms of education, jobs, research, housing, crime and so on? How does the Secretary of State seek to level up Northern Ireland through that?

**Michael Gove:** The right hon. Member makes a series of good points. First, I absolutely understand the problems with the protocol, and my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary is working incredibly hard to tackle them. Secondly, we recognise that the Northern Ireland Executive exercise devolved responsibilities in a number of areas, but we can help: additional funding for research and development means that Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster can get additional funding to create the jobs that Northern Ireland requires. The broader economic strategy that we outline in the White Paper is designed to help every part of the United Kingdom, and, through the UK shared prosperity fund, there will be additional funding. UK community renewal funding and levelling-up funding has been distributed to communities in Northern Ireland, but we need to do better in ensuring that it reaches those who deserve it most, not least those in areas such as Larne and Glenarm in the right hon. Gentleman's constituency.

**Alicia Kearns** (Rutland and Melton) (Con): Leicestershire and Rutland councils were some of the worst funded in the entire country—until today. Thanks to the Secretary of State, Leicestershire is one of the nine counties that will be negotiating a county deal. Will he please reassure me that when he negotiates a deal for Leicestershire, he will include Rutland, which cannot go for its own county deal? It needs a sidecar deal. Will he also help us level up pride by coming to visit our wonderful area?

**Michael Gove:** That is an offer too good to resist. I will say two things. First, Leicester and Leicestershire have much to offer, but there are also significant pockets of deprivation not just in the city but in rural Leicestershire that we must tackle. My hon. Friend is right that the county deal that we are proposing will—I hope—help. Secondly, I know that Rutland's independence is cherished by its people and its Member of Parliament, but on this occasion there can be—how can I put it—a fruitful union between Leicestershire and Rutland, and I would like to see that advance.

**Catherine McKinnell** (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): The Secretary of State will know the impact of growing up poor on health, education and life chances, because it is well documented. But, even before the pandemic, two in five children and young people in the north-east were growing up in poverty, so it is hard to understand why the White Paper does not address the lack of cross-Government strategy to tackle child poverty. If levelling up is to mean anything, surely it must address that issue in the north-east.

**Michael Gove:** The hon. Lady makes a good point. Indeed, there is a commitment in the White Paper to additional funding for the supporting families programme—previously the troubled families programme—which helps to address many of the drivers of child poverty. Of course, I would be the first to acknowledge that there is more to do, and in communities in Newcastle—in Longbenton and elsewhere—there are real challenges that we need to work with Newcastle City Council to overcome. The council's Labour leader is someone with whom I think we can do business.

**Jake Berry** (Rossendale and Darwen) (Con): I welcome the White Paper. I am sure that the Secretary of State would acknowledge that delivering foreign direct investment

is key to levelling up the north and beyond. Would he consider a 13th mission: to double FDI in the north of England by 2030?

**Michael Gove:** May I thank my right hon. Friend? Many of the best ideas in the White Paper are the fruit of work that he and the Northern Research Group of Conservative MPs have conducted. The paper that he co-wrote for the Centre for Policy Studies, "A Northern Big Bang", has influenced our thinking in a number of areas, not least unlocking additional private sector investment. My noble Friend Lord Grimstone, the Department for International Trade Minister, now leads the Office for Investment, and one of his missions is to increase FDI, particularly in the north and midlands. I look forward to working with Lord Grimstone and my right hon. Friend to ensure that east Lancashire is at the front of the queue for that investment.

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and for the White Paper, which is very thoughtfully put together—not least because the foreword by the Prime Minister is on a detachable page. That is great.

One page that appears to have already been detached, however, is the bit that refers to rural Britain. I am really concerned that there is very little concern in the document for levelling up the rural parts of our country. In Cumbria, we have three-hour round trips for cancer treatment and a threat to our local A&E department, and our villages and communities are being cleared by second homes and Airbnb. I would be delighted to work constructively with the Secretary of State, and I would love if it he agreed to meet me so that we can talk about some answers to the housing catastrophe affecting not just Cumbria, but the rest of rural Britain.

**Michael Gove:** I have to say, I agree with almost everything the hon. Gentleman said. First, it is important that we focus on rural poverty; secondly, there are unique issues in Cumbria. Local government reorganisation, with the creation of one new authority in Cumberland and one in Westmorland and Furness, will contribute to ensuring that we have a proper focus on those, but we need to go further. He is also right that the issue of second homes and their impact on local economies is a complex one. We are not in the right place yet, and I want to work with him and other colleagues to address it.

**Lia Nici** (Great Grimsby) (Con): It was wonderful to be able to welcome my right hon. Friend to my constituency this week to see the amount of levelling up that is needed and the work we are doing with our local council to achieve it. Does he agree, however, that it is about not just school education, but technical education for our young and older people—something new Labour was able to decimate very effectively when it was in power, but which is vital to matching up jobs and opportunities to level up areas such as Great Grimsby?

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. If we think about the technical institute in Grimsby, which was a source of pride and high-quality further education, some of the changes that the new Labour Government made undermined that centre of excellence. One thing we are clear about in the White Paper is the importance of ensuring that further education is aligned with the needs of local employers. In Grimsby and north-east

Lincolnshire, as part of the renewables revolution led by the Business Secretary, there is now a chance to ensure new jobs, investment in FE and a recognition of the link between the two, so that in Grimsby people can stay local, but go far.

**Christian Matheson** (City of Chester) (Lab): I always enjoy listening to the Secretary of State, who is always very articulate and performs well at the Dispatch Box. I wish him well in the forthcoming Tory leadership election. There is an obsession, which he has illustrated today, with elected Mayors; I understand he has briefed them, but not the leaders of local authorities. In Cheshire West and Chester, the Government have taken £466 million since 2010 from our local authority, and the only way we can win funding back is by bidding to this pot or that pot, which is decided by Ministers. If he is going to increase funding for local authorities, will he please remember those areas that are not covered by directly elected Mayors, but nevertheless have outstanding leaders such as Louise Gittins?

**Michael Gove:** I thank the hon. Gentleman. Been there, done that, got knocked back twice, so I am afraid I am not going round that course again. I will agree that it is important that we talk to all local leaders. I personally think the devolution of power to mayoral combined authorities has been a good thing, but it is not right for everywhere in this country. There are ways we can strengthen the hands of local leaders, and I look forward to doing so in Cheshire.

**Sir Edward Leigh** (Gainsborough) (Con): Gainsborough South West ward is the 24th most deprived ward in the country. I thank the Secretary of State for awarding us £10 million in levelling up, but does he agree, looking at the overall picture, that the prosperity of northern industrial towns was built not with Government money, but by entrepreneurs in the 19th and early 20th century, when regulation and taxation were a fraction of what they are now? What plans does he have, with his colleagues, to try to reduce the burden of regulation and taxation on towns in the north of England?

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend is correct; that is why I sought in my statement to emphasise that levelling up can only succeed if British business and private enterprise succeed. That means the right regulatory framework, outside the European Union, as we spelled out on Monday. There are steps we have taken and can take to ensure that we have smarter and leaner regulation. More broadly, I think that if we look at the success of great industrial towns in the past, we see that figures such as Joe Chamberlain were driven by the spirit of private enterprise, but by civic pride as well. Chamberlain provided an example of great local leadership, and also of ambition to improve education. The mission that he led in Birmingham to ensure that universal education was extended even to the poorest was the perfect complement to the drive that he showed in generating wealth through the market.

**Hilary Benn** (Leeds Central) (Lab): One of the great inequalities in my constituency is the gap between those who are able to feed their families and those who are not. In every year since the Government took office the use of food banks has increased, and last year 2.5 million food parcels were given out to people who had gone up

to a complete stranger and said, “Can you help me to feed my family?” What are the Government going to do to bring an end to this scandal?

**Michael Gove:** The right hon. Gentleman makes a very important point. We have taken, and continue to take, a series of steps through the supporting families programme. We are also outlining in the White Paper some of the proposals that we are taking forward as part of Henry Dimbleby’s national food strategy, which explicitly addressed some of the particular challenges to which the right hon. Gentleman has rightly drawn attention, to ensure that people have the resources and the capacity to put healthy food on the table for their children. I look forward to perhaps visiting Leeds with Henry Dimbleby to talk to the right hon. Gentleman about exactly how we can achieve the change that we need.

**Siobhan Baillie** (Stroud) (Con): I am saddened by the characteristic doom and gloom on the Labour Benches. We should be welcoming confirmation that we will be turbo-charging every single part of the UK, including the south-west, and recognising the importance of the private sector to achieving those goals will be key. In Stroud we have a fantastic town centre regeneration plan, which is backed up by recent private investment in previously long-standing empty buildings such as the Imperial Hotel and Five Valleys, and buildings in King Street. Will my right hon. Friend dispatch his levelling-up Minister to Stroud so that he can see how far the marriage between private and public money that we are hoping to achieve could go for local people?

**Michael Gove:** The Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, my hon. Friend the Member for Harborough (Neil O’Brien), is hereby dispatched to Stroud—first class.

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): How can we take seriously the Secretary of State’s promise to turbo-charge places such as my city when his Government have spent 12 years draining the fuel tank and slashing the tyres? If his offer of a county deal is to deliver meaningful change, does it not need to start with restoring the £100 million that Nottingham has lost through cuts in council funding?

**Michael Gove:** Nottingham has a bright future, and Nottinghamshire has an even brighter one, with my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield (Ben Bradley) as leader of that council, leading a programme of urban development and regeneration. I look forward to working with the hon. Lady, and with my hon. Friend the Member for Mansfield, to ensure that we make Nottinghamshire great again.

**Jesse Norman** (Hereford and South Herefordshire) (Con): The Secretary of State will know that Herefordshire has one of the smallest and sparsest populations and some of the lowest gross value added in this country. He will also know of my passion for the New Model Institute for Technology and Engineering, which promises to offer entirely new forms of learning and teaching, lower drop-out rates, lower levels of mental ill health, and much greater inclusiveness for young people in skills-based higher education—it is the small modular nuclear reactor of higher education. Will the Secretary

[*Jesse Norman*]

of State encourage this model, and will he consider, call for and initiate a review of higher education in order to regenerate cities and towns across the UK?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. It is important for Members to be very brief, because otherwise we will not get everyone in.

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend's new model institute is a perfect model of what was envisaged by the former Member of Parliament for Orpington when he was the higher education Minister and introduced reform to ensure that we improved access to higher education, but with a particular focus on skills and jobs. I look forward to working with him and the Education Secretary to spread this model through across the UK.

**Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab):** I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. He announced a county devolution deal for County Durham, which has lost £224 million in Government grants since 2010. At the same time, his own county council's spending powers have gone up. Will the devolution deal replace anywhere near the £22.4 million a year that County Durham has lost?

**Michael Gove:** I am looking forward to working with the new Conservative and Liberal Democrat Administration in Durham county—the first non-Labour Administration for many years, following on from the success of my hon. Friends the Members for North West Durham (Mr Holden), for Bishop Auckland (Dehenna Davison) and for Sedgefield (Paul Howell) in winning their seats at the last general election. Sadly, the Labour Administration of Durham County Council were responsible for significant maladministration and the waste of resources. I am convinced that the new Administration will spend taxpayers' money better.

**Johnny Mercer (Plymouth, Moor View) (Con):** I commend my right hon. Friend for his statement. Since 2015, Plymouth has been on an amazing journey, with more inward investment than it has seen for decades. I echo the plea of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashford (Damian Green) that the levelling up of opportunities—an extension of the life chances agenda that we started back in 2015—becomes a defining issue for this Government. Will he remember the seats in the south-west? We talk about the red wall, which is all brilliant, new and exciting, but we have a real job of work to do to improve life chances in the south-west.

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. There are real pockets of poverty that we need to address in the south-west, particularly around Plymouth. The same is true in parts of the south, particularly in Portsmouth and Southampton. Although there is understandably a focus on the north and midlands, our broader focus is on moving prosperity and investment outside of London and the south-east, precisely to communities such as the one he serves so well.

**Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab):** The Coalfields Regeneration Trust, based in Wombwell, is the only organisation dedicated to supporting former mining towns in the UK. Its vital work includes improving

health outcomes, providing employment support and boosting skills for communities where levelling up is needed most. Will the Secretary of State agree to meet the trust to learn more about its work?

**Michael Gove:** Of course, I would be delighted to.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** I welcome the designation of North Northamptonshire as an education investment area. Would the Secretary of State be kind enough to explain to my constituents what that will mean for educational outcomes in Kettering?

**Michael Gove:** Children in Kettering deserve the very best start in life. First of all, that means a relentless focus on standards and discipline. It means ensuring that we have systematic synthetic phonics in primary school, and that children are fully literate, numerate and capable of going to secondary school by the time they reach the end of key stage 2. It means multi-academy trusts, which are delivering higher standards where existing schools have failed. It can also mean—I would be happy to discuss this with my hon. Friend—a new 16 to 19 sixth form like Brampton Manor or Harris Westminster, providing children from working-class backgrounds with the chance to go to the very best universities.

**Mr Alistair Carmichael (Orkney and Shetland) (LD):** I welcome the creation of the "Islands Forum" referred to on page 132 of the White Paper, and the news that the Secretary of State is to chair its first meeting—it is in his hands to ensure that it is not a talking shop. Item No. 1 on the agenda for that meeting has to be "Island future transport infrastructure needs". The communities in Shetland are desperate to see the construction of tunnels and fixed links, and he could be the person to get the Scottish Government and the Treasury together to deliver that. Is he up for the challenge?

**Michael Gove:** I am completely up for it. There are issues of connectivity and access to good quality services and investment in Orkney and Shetland, the Western Isles, Anglesey and the Isle of Wight. Although they are very different communities, they have shared interests. I will absolutely do what the right hon. Gentleman says.

**Selaine Saxby (North Devon) (Con):** I thank my right hon. Friend for his statement and—I say this as a former maths teacher—for his enthusiasm for numeracy. Will he clarify how his plans will deal with large and mostly rural counties such as Devon? On average, we can look as if we do not need much levelling up, but that hides a large variance, with huge disparities in opportunity within the county.

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right; parts of Devon are relatively economically successful, but there are also areas, not least in South Molton and Barnstaple, in her constituency, where there is real poverty. One thing we are doing with the roll-out of gigabit broadband and better digital connectivity is making sure that businesses in those areas can provide better jobs and greater investment, but we will explore with the local authority in Devon what more we can do to give local leaders the powers they need to make a difference.

**Mohammad Yasin** (Bedford) (Lab): The Tories have been in power for 12 years, so does the Secretary of State agree that these vague plans to raise school standards in a third of local authority areas, including Bedford borough, is an admission of unforgivable failure and that any promised investment will never make up for the cuts started when he was Education Secretary, which blighted a generation of our children?

**Michael Gove:** As the hon. Gentleman mentions my time at Education, let me say that we protected, in real-terms, funding for schools from five to 16; we introduced a pupil premium, which meant that £250 million of additional funding was targeted on the poorest; and in Bedford we opened Bedford Free School, an outstanding school that brought opportunity to disadvantaged children in his constituency. What did the Labour party in Bedford do? It fought it every step of the way. So if he wants opportunity for people in Bedford, he should come to this side of the House, because we are the real crusaders.

**Mr Andrew Mitchell** (Sutton Coldfield) (Con): May I urge my right hon. Friend not to be downcast by the negativity of those on the Opposition Benches, but to be uplifted by the support he is receiving for his statement today from those on the Government Benches? In the west midlands, we are particularly pleased about the innovation accelerators and the smart city region programme, which can both be really effective through the galvanisation of the private sector. I am also pleased about the brownfield remediation money, which will stop the iniquitous building of houses on the green belt. May I say that we are awaiting transport money desperately needed for the royal town's centre plans, which are being driven forward by the determination and vision of the Conservative-led Royal Sutton Coldfield Town Council?

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right on that. I know that he was instrumental in the success of Andy Street's election as Mayor of the West Midlands Combined Authority, and Andy has shown what a pro-business, pro-free market Conservative Mayor can do. My right hon. Friend is absolutely right to say that the innovation accelerator in the west midlands will be a way of harnessing all of the talent in his constituency and beyond. I listened carefully to his plea for better transport to the royal borough of Sutton Coldfield. In my view, the quicker people can get to Sutton Coldfield, the better it is for everyone. It is a beautiful royal borough with a fantastic Member of Parliament.

**Deidre Brock** (Edinburgh North and Leith) (SNP): I note the intention to pilot an innovation accelerator in Glasgow. It is to be led by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the Scotland Office and other UK Government Departments, from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to the Department for International Trade, but no mention is made of the Scottish Government. Can he tell me what consultation there has been with the Scottish Government on the proposal?

**Michael Gove:** Yes. I talked to the First Minister about it last night.

**Bob Blackman** (Harrow East) (Con): My right hon. Friend will be aware that, despite the regeneration programmes in London over the past 30 years, the

deprived wards in London are the same ones as they were 30 years ago. Will he assure the House that this will not be used as a reason to deprive London of money, despite the inaction of the do-nothing Mayor at the moment, but that it will be new investment in the north, midlands and across the UK?

**Michael Gove:** Yes, my hon. Friend is absolutely right; levelling up is not about dampening down the success of London or overlooking the needs of disadvantaged communities in London. It is striking that when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister was Mayor of London the gaps in life expectancy and health outcomes between the wealthiest and the poorest parts of London narrowed. He was a one nation Mayor and he is a one nation Prime Minister.

**Kim Leadbeater** (Batley and Spen) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for meeting me recently to discuss this subject. Sadly, it was a virtual meeting so we were unable to share a packet of Fox's biscuits together—they come from my constituency. After 12 long years, I welcome any announcement that could result in much-needed, long overdue investment in the towns and villages in Batley and Spen. Does he agree that when it comes to levelling up, it is the reality on the ground that matters and the real-world, tangible differences it makes to communities? With that in mind, will he confirm that he will accept my invitation to come to Batley and Spen, so that I can show him at first hand not only the challenges we face, but the unique opportunities that levelling-up funding could provide?

**Michael Gove:** First, we have set out clear missions, but the hon. Lady is absolutely right to say that we need to deliver on them. We want to be held to account for that delivery and it needs to be concrete. Secondly, she has been a great champion for community organisations and their capacity to bring people together. A new approach is outlined in the levelling-up White Paper on just that, which is inspired by her work and that of my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Danny Kruger), so of course I will accept.

**David Morris** (Morecambe and Lunesdale) (Con): Eden Project North gained planning permission on Monday. Five long years, but we got there in the end. I will put it bluntly: how can my right hon. Friend help Eden Project North? The sooner he helps me, the sooner I will shut up about it and the sooner I can get on to the next project in my constituency.

**Michael Gove:** Eden Project North has two brilliant advocates: my hon. Friend and the Prime Minister. I know I will not be long in this job if I do not deliver for both of them.

**Ian Lavery** (Wansbeck) (Lab): The levelling-up programme should not just be about shiny infrastructure projects. It should be about real people and life opportunities. Life expectancy is not addressed in this hefty document. Life expectancy in Windlesham in the Secretary of State's constituency is 86.7 years; in parts of my constituency it is 72.5 years. That is staggering and grotesque. What will he do about that?

**Michael Gove:** I completely agree with the hon. Gentleman that it is staggering and grotesque. One of the things we need to do is learn from Professor Michael

[*Michael Gove*]

Marmot and others about the drivers of health inequalities. I know that, in many cases, people such as the hon. Gentleman who worked in mining or heavy industry, even though it is a proud and amazing manufacturing sector, sometimes bear long-term health scars. We need to do more, and I look forward to working with him and others to address it.

**Derek Thomas** (St Ives) (Con): It is brilliant news that small and medium-sized builders will get support to build 42,000 homes. Will the Secretary of State meet me and my Cornish colleagues to make sure those homes are retained by people who live in Cornwall?

**Michael Gove:** Yes, absolutely.

**Chi Onwurah** (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): The recording that emerged today of the Secretary of State talking of “dirty, toothless northerners” certainly deserves an apology, but is today’s statement not a continuation of that abuse? Having taken away £500, on average, from everyone in the north-east, we get little pots of recycled money and ambitions such as:

“By 2030, local public transport...will be significantly closer to the standards of London”.

That is eight years not even to catch up with London buses. What kind of ambition is that?

**Michael Gove:** Speaking as an Aberdonian and as someone who was born further north than most people in this House, I can say there is no one more northern than me. Thinking particularly about this situation, one of the things we outlined in the White Paper is our proposal to ensure that the current North of Tyne Mayor can work with local authorities in the south of Tyneside, Gateshead and elsewhere to achieve precisely the goals that the hon. Lady wants.

**Sara Britcliffe** (Hyndburn) (Con): I grew up in a northern industrial town, and I politely say to the hon. Member for Wigan (Lisa Nandy) that a plan for levelling-up opportunity is exactly what such towns need. Delivery is key, so will the Secretary of State make sure that we get shovels in the ground?

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. She grew up in Accrington. Members like her, who know what it is to grow up in an industrial town, know what happened in the past, including under Labour, and know that we need investment, business and ambition. That is what this White Paper has.

**Stephen Kinnoek** (Aberavon) (Lab): The all-party parliamentary group on the UK shared prosperity fund, which I am proud to chair, has been calling on the Government to ensure that not a single penny is lost in the transition from the European structural funds to the SPF, but calculations by the Welsh Government confirm that the SPF will leave the UK close to £1 billion worse off and that Wales will get £750 million less. Will the Secretary of State meet our APPG to discuss how to ensure the nations and regions of our country do not get short-changed?

**Michael Gove:** That is a fair point. On this occasion, I think that the calculations made by the Welsh Finance Minister, Vaughan Gething, for whom I have great

respect, were wrong, but I would be more than happy to meet the hon. Gentleman and others to take them through our approach.

**Dr Luke Evans** (Bosworth) (Con): Levelling up in Bosworth uniquely looks like millions of pounds into Hinckley Academy, £28 million into Leicestershire broadband and £19.9 million into Twycross Zoo. On page 235 of the White Paper, the next level of levelling up is about the county deal, which is drastically needed by the seven MPs in Leicestershire. Will my right hon. Friend meet all seven of us to make sure that we can rocket fuel that by autumn 2022?

**Michael Gove:** We absolutely will. I commend my hon. Friend for getting to page 235 of the White Paper so quickly.

**Clive Efford** (Eltham) (Lab): When he was Mayor of London, the Prime Minister commissioned a report that asked for more tax-raising powers and the ability to borrow money for London, but that was rejected. The current Mayor is asking for powers to be able to raise money. If London cannot pay for its transport system, which city in this country can? Why are the Government standing in the way of devolution in London? Is the Secretary of State not just cherry-picking schemes across the country and standing in the way of devolution in the same way that he is in London?

**Michael Gove:** No. There are two things. The first is that I had a good conversation with the Mayor of London yesterday. I stressed to him that we wanted to explore what potential there was for further devolution across all the mayoral combined authorities. There is a party political argument about the management of Transport for London which I will not revisit now, but simply saying that greater borrowing powers would solve all of London’s transport problems does not do justice to the scale of the issue. To be fair to the Mayor of London, I want to work with him in order to make sure that we can solve those problems.

**Martin Vickers** (Cleethorpes) (Con): I thank my right hon. Friend for his visit to my constituency on Monday. He will recall the excellent fish and chip lunch that we shared. During that lunch, a number of points were raised. First, can he ensure that LNER delivers on its promise of a direct rail service from Cleethorpes through to King’s Cross? Urgent decision making was also referred to, and the way to help delivery of that would be to create a level 3 authority in the county.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** One question at a time.

**Michael Gove:** Those are very good points. We do need a direct train service to Grimsby and Cleethorpes. My hon. Friend’s other points are absolutely well made and well understood. I enjoyed the delicious fish and chips from Papa’s, with a side order of what I understand is called guacamole à la Mandelson.

**Kate Green** (Stretford and Urmston) (Lab): I was interested to read about the national youth guarantee. A total of £500 million was announced by the Government in 2019 for the youth investment fund, but the first £10 million of capital funding was opened to bids only just a few weeks ago. Will the Secretary of State kindly



urge his colleagues to turbo-charge the delivery of that funding so that our young people do not have to wait until 2025 to enjoy better opportunities and facilities?

**Michael Gove:** That is a very fair point and I will look into it.

**Alun Cairns** (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on taking back control and on his strategic approach to levelling up across the whole of the United Kingdom. This contrasts so favourably with the billions of pounds of European aid that the Labour party wasted in Wales over the past 20 years. May I ask him to pay particular attention to those areas in Wales that did not qualify for European aid, so that we can be levelled up at last?

**Michael Gove:** My right hon. Friend is absolutely right. We need to make sure that the additional funding available through the UK shared prosperity fund goes to all the communities in Wales that deserve it.

**Rebecca Long Bailey** (Salford and Eccles) (Lab): The Secretary of State bursts with enthusiasm today, yet his plans are not bursting with much new funding. Even the director of the Northern Powerhouse Partnership says that

“the government is planning to spend less on English regional development than was the case under Theresa May or David Cameron.”

It said that true levelling up would need long-term financial backing from the Chancellor. When will we see that?

**Michael Gove:** We saw it at the spending review.

**Jason McCartney** (Colne Valley) (Con): I really welcome this statement. I welcome that Kirklees will be an education investment area. I welcome that Kirklees will get extra support from the high streets task force, but can we make sure that it is not just the swanky cities of the north like Leeds that are levelled up, but it is also our towns such as Huddersfield, Milnsbridge, Holmfirth, Marsden, Slaithwaite and, of course, Doncaster, Madam Deputy Speaker?

**Michael Gove:** I could not agree more. I have nothing against Leeds; I love Leeds. [HON. MEMBERS: “That’s not what it says about you!”] My name is hymned by children in Leeds streets, I know. The serious point is that there is cultural investment in Kirklees, not least in Huddersfield, and my hon. Friend is absolutely right that more needs to be done for all the authorities in Kirklees and for the towns in West Yorkshire surrounding them.

**Imran Hussain** (Bradford East) (Lab): The stark reality is that someone who lives in the inner city of Bradford is likely to live 10 years less than someone who lives in an affluent suburb. Although I accept that the Government plan commits to raising health and life expectancy, it does not go far enough. One of the issues is the top-down approach. I sincerely and constructively ask the Secretary of State to meet me to discuss transformative new proposals that are being put forward by local grassroots community groups in Bradford to change health inequalities and to address the real issue.

**Michael Gove:** I will make sure that, if it is not me, another Minister definitely talks to the hon. Gentleman.

**Gary Sambrook** (Birmingham, Northfield) (Con): I remember as a schoolboy watching Tony Blair and Gordon Brown fly into Birmingham by helicopter to say that every job at Longbridge would be saved. Seventeen years on, it is this Conservative Government who have given West Works six million quid to provide the new jobs that are needed locally. This Conservative Government will be helping St Modwen and other developers to make sure that we build on the land at Lowhill Lane. Will the Secretary of State visit, with me, the biggest levelling-up project in Birmingham and the west midlands?

**Michael Gove:** The west midlands is succeeding at last under Conservative leadership, such as that provided by Andy Street and my hon. Friend.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. We really cannot have long preambles: one question to the Secretary of State, please.

**Mrs Emma Lewell-Buck** (South Shields) (Lab): In South Shields: freeport bid—rejected; levelling-up bid—rejected; towns fund bid—rejected; transport funding—rejected. We have suffered Tory cuts of nearly £200 million. Tinkering with our governance alone will not change a thing. The Secretary of State once praised policies that, in his own words, meant

“the happy south stamps over the cruel, dirty, toothless face of the northerner”.

Is he proud that he has managed to do exactly the same again today?

**Michael Gove:** I think that South Shields does deserve better. That is why we are going to work with the North of Tyne Mayor to ensure that across Tyneside, both north and south, we have the right structures and the right investment in place.

**John Stevenson** (Carlisle) (Con): In Cumbria, if there is support for a mayoral model but some opposition to it, will the Government take statutory powers to ensure that the mayoral model prevails?

**Michael Gove:** Yes, and I cannot think of a better mayor for Cumbria than my hon. Friend.

**Ben Lake** (Ceredigion) (PC): Six of the nine areas in Ceredigion rank in the bottom 10% of areas across the UK for decent broadband coverage. How will the hardest-to-reach premises, such as those in Ceredigion, be targeted for public investment?

**Michael Gove:** I will work with the hon. Gentleman and, indeed, with the Senedd and the Welsh Government to ensure that we can roll out broadband. I recognise that lots of small businesses in Ceredigion—in Aberystwyth and all the way up to Machynlleth—need that support, and we will be there for them.

**Sir Robert Neill** (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): I refer the House to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests. Following this excellent document and having recognised the value of cultural investment,

[*Sir Robert Neill*]

will my right hon. Friend meet me to discuss some of the exciting ways in which some of our major arts organisations, including those based in London, are prepared to participate in the levelling up throughout the whole country?

**Michael Gove:** I absolutely will. My hon. Friend is a keen champion of arts, culture and, in particular, music. The institutions that we have in London are fantastic, but they can play a real part with institutions such as the Hallé and others in the north to improve cultural opportunities for all.

**Paul Blomfield** (Sheffield Central) (Lab): Since 2010, Conservative Governments have cut £2.1 billion in funds to Sheffield City Council. Our annual grant is £288 million lower in real terms. Today, the Secretary of State announced £13 million and described it as transformational. If that is transformational, how would he describe the money we have lost? When will he restore it?

**Michael Gove:** I do not think that I described it as transformational; I think it was the Labour Mayor of South Yorkshire, who said that it had the “potential” to be transformational. I am looking forward to working with the Labour Mayor of South Yorkshire in order to achieve that transformation.

**Mary Robinson** (Cheadle) (Con): I welcome this White Paper and the multi-billion pound investments in brownfield regeneration, connectivity, research and development, and especially the innovation accelerators, which in Cheadle and across Greater Manchester will make a real difference to all those businesses that want the extra help to start up. Will my right hon. Friend say whether, as well as civic leaders, business leaders will be part of the design of the accelerator?

**Michael Gove:** Absolutely. I had the opportunity, thanks to my hon. Friend, to visit Cheadle and indeed other parts of Greater Manchester just a fortnight ago. Thanks to her advocacy, I was also able to meet some of the business figures most interested in making sure that innovation in Manchester succeeds, and I want to continue to work with them because the business voice is critical to the success of the north-west.

**Patrick Grady** (Glasgow North) (SNP): How are people in Scotland supposed to see the UK Government making spending and policy decisions in areas that are supposed to be devolved as anything other than a power grab?

**Michael Gove:** The hon. Gentleman is a graduate of Glasgow University—

**Patrick Grady:** Strathclyde!

**Michael Gove:** Oh, the hon. Gentleman did not make it to Glasgow—never mind. He is a graduate of another great university in Glasgow. We are investing money in that university to recognise that the constituency he represents has incredibly talented young people, and we want them to succeed, just like him.

**Andy Carter** (Warrington South) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and welcome the radical shake-up contained in this White Paper. My ears pricked up when I heard him mention Warrington and funding for better public transport—120 new electric buses for Warrington. Thank you, Secretary of State. Does he agree that, if we want to get people into jobs, we have to provide the public transport to help them get there?

**Michael Gove:** That is absolutely, totally, 100% correct, and it is my right hon. Friend the Transport Secretary who deserves all the credit.

**Ruth Cadbury** (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): Hounslow is in the second most prosperous UK sub-region by gross value added, but thanks to 11 years of Government policies, 40% of Hounslow’s children live in poverty, so when will levelling up address inequality within communities as well as between them?

**Michael Gove:** That is a very important point. What we need to do is to make sure that we work with the Mayor of London, but also with Hounslow Borough Council and those who are involved in providing opportunity for young people in the communities the hon. Member represents, to give them a better chance in the future.

**Holly Mumby-Croft** (Scunthorpe) (Con): We are under way, levelling up in Scunthorpe and we are unashamedly ambitious to do more. Can I offer a very strong invitation to my right hon. Friend to come to visit us, so we can show him what we are doing and have a chat about future opportunities?

**Michael Gove:** Absolutely. I enjoyed visiting Grimsby and Cleethorpes earlier this week. North-east Lincolnshire is great. It is time I visited north Lincolnshire as well.

**Mick Whitley** (Birkenhead) (Lab): Wirral Council is facing a budget black hole of more than £20 million. I have pledged to do whatever I can to save the fantastic public services that so many of my constituents rely on, and I am grateful to the Secretary of State for kindly agreeing to meet me and my hon. Friends from the Wirral to discuss this very serious situation. Levelling up will remain nothing more than an empty catchphrase as long as local authorities such as mine are forced to consider closing libraries, leisure centres and swimming pools. Ahead of our meeting, can he tell me if he thinks this White Paper comes anywhere close to undoing the enormous damage done to local authorities’ finances since 2010?

**Michael Gove:** I am looking forward to a meeting. I recognise that there are real issues in the Wirral, which I hope we can work together to resolve.

**Bob Seely** (Isle of Wight) (Con): I thank the Secretary of State so much for taking forward the islands forum idea. Sadly, I did not get beyond page 132, because that is where it was. Can he assure us that the forum will give a voice to islands such as the Isle of Wight to be part of the prosperity agenda in education and high-quality jobs, as well as in landscape and seascape protection for some of the most unique and beautiful parts of Great Britain?

**Michael Gove:** Absolutely. The islands forum is an idea developed following conversations with and advocacy from my hon. Friend. We recognise absolutely, as he has consistently pointed out, that island communities face particular challenges as a result of distance and dispersal, and we need to tackle them.

**Margaret Greenwood** (Wirral West) (Lab): I welcome the Secretary of State's commitment to meet me, my hon. Friend the Member for Birkenhead (Mick Whitley) and other Wirral MPs. Woodchurch leisure centre and swimming pool and libraries in Greasby, Irby, Hoylake, Pensby and Woodchurch are all under threat of closure because of Wirral Council having to make up to £27 million of savings as a direct result of brutal cuts from Conservative Governments since 2010, so can the Secretary of State make sure that he provides emergency funding to save these vital services?

**Michael Gove:** I look forward to discussing that at a meeting with the hon. Lady and the hon. Member for Birkenhead (Mick Whitley).

**Robert Largan** (High Peak) (Con): I welcome the enhanced bus service on its way to Derbyshire, the Derbyshire county deal and the fact that Derbyshire is going to be an education investment area, on top of the future high streets £10 million for Buxton, the £137 million for the Hope Valley upgrade and the £228 million Mottram bypass, but there is a democratic deficit I am worried about. The Mayor of Greater Manchester takes decisions that have a huge impact on High Peak, but we have no say in them. What can we say to having more collaborative working, ensuring that levelling up works for everyone across regional boundaries?

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend makes an important point. High Peak contains some of the most beautiful and important parts of Derbyshire, but it is also part of the greater economic area around Greater Manchester. I therefore want to ensure, with him, Derbyshire leaders and the Mayor of Greater Manchester, that we are working together in the interests of my hon. Friend's constituents.

**Drew Hendry** (Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey) (SNP): With this scheme, the highlands are set to lose out on tens of millions of pounds compared with EU funding. The highlands have been placed in category 3—the lowest of all the categories—and face significant financial challenges in accessing the cash. This is the largest local authority area in the UK. Why are the highlands so low on this Government's agenda?

**Michael Gove:** The highlands are at the top of the Government's agenda. The UK shared prosperity funding that we are guaranteeing will ensure that highland communities get the investment that they need, but more than that, the roll-out of 4G and 5G will also help highland communities. It is the case that the Scottish Government have not necessarily rolled out broadband as quickly as those communities would want, as colleagues such as Donald Cameron in the Scottish Parliament have pointed out. I want to work with him and the Scottish Government to serve the people whom he represents.

**Rob Butler** (Aylesbury) (Con): I know that my right hon. Friend believes that local leaders know best when it comes to regenerating local areas, and when it comes to Buckinghamshire, he is absolutely right. Buckinghamshire Council, which effectively created the concept of county deals, is very disappointed not to be one of the first nine, so will he tell me how soon the second tranche will be announced, because Bucks is poised to not just negotiate, but spring into action?

**Michael Gove:** I absolutely appreciate that and Martin Tett, the leader of Buckinghamshire Council, is a first-rate local authority leader. I cannot give a timescale at the moment. We want to make sure that the first nine county deals are successful, but we want to move on rapidly thereafter to expand the scope of county deals.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): My constituency is repeatedly overlooked for funding, whether that is for the future high streets fund, the towns fund or the levelling-up fund, but at the same time, bids from other areas that score lower on the Government's criteria are successful. The Secretary of State will appreciate that there is little trust that the White Paper will deliver anything for my community, so what assurances can he give me that any future bids for funding will be judged fairly and that my constituency will finally get the cash that it deserves?

**Michael Gove:** There are clear and objective criteria for funding, but it is also the case that some local authorities may need help with building capacity to make sure that their bids are as effective as possible. I extend the resources of the Department to the hon. Gentleman and his local authority to make sure that they put in the best bids possible.

**Jane Hunt** (Loughborough) (Con): This is a plan that provides opportunity and growth throughout every part of our country; I am looking particularly at mission 6, on skills training. Does my right hon. Friend agree that it is the Conservatives who really help people to get on in life?

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Of course, she represents a constituency with one of the finest universities in the country and she recognises the vital importance of higher education, further education and schools working together to extend opportunity.

**Stephen Farry** (North Down) (Alliance): Speaking as a former Minister in Northern Ireland, our Executive had far more control over the allocation of structural funds when we were in the EU than they do over levelling-up funds today. Does the Secretary of State recognise that the UK's approach to levelling-up funds, particularly the shared prosperity fund, means only reduced resource for Northern Ireland and risks duplication and waste, as well as competition in the shared public space over the scarce resources that remain?

**Michael Gove:** I respectfully disagree, but I recognise that the hon. Gentleman has a wealth of experience in this area, so I want to work with him, his party and his party's Minister in the Executive to make sure that we minimise bureaucracy and maximise effectiveness.

**Mike Wood** (Dudley South) (Con): The west midlands has some world-leading, innovative companies as well as universities and research institutions doing ground-breaking research, but public research and development investment in the west midlands has been low compared with other areas, even though for every £1 of Government investment, we have seen a private sector return of £4. How will the innovation accelerator help to close that gap?

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend brilliantly encapsulates the challenge. The innovation accelerator will bring together representatives from the private sector—from business—as well as those in the outstanding universities that, as he rightly points out, are a feature of the west midlands in order to ensure that its manufacturing strengths can be leveraged more effectively. I look forward to working with him and others to achieve that.

**Rachael Maskell** (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): The broken housing market is the bigger driver of inequality across York, with the boom in second homes and holiday lets. Therefore, the aspiration of the people of York is being denied. Rather than throwing us dead cats with the House of Lords, will the Secretary of State throw us a proper agenda to address the housing crisis in York?

**Michael Gove:** Three important points. First, the hon. Lady is absolutely right that there are things we need to do to tackle the housing market, in particular the second homes issue. It is complex, as she understands, but there is more that needs to be done. Secondly, I hope she will support the proposed mayoral deal for York and North Yorkshire, which I think will give some of the powers necessary to deal with the problems she mentioned. Thirdly, the House of Lords in York, or for that matter Glasgow, would be a great thing.

**Stephen Metcalfe** (South Basildon and East Thurrock) (Con): Can my right hon. Friend confirm that, as we look forward, levelling up applies to need not geography, and that the most deprived areas in Basildon and Thurrock will see the benefits to allow south Essex to reach its full potential?

**Michael Gove:** Yes, absolutely. We need to target need. We need to recognise that, in the south-east, London, Oxford and Cambridge are the three crown jewels generating wealth, but that there are communities that do not share in that prosperity. I should point out that one of the poorest areas, if not the poorest, in the country is Jaywick in the borough of Tendring, represented by my hon. Friend the Member for Clacton (Giles Watling). It is critically important that we work with local government leaders to address poverty wherever we find it.

**Jonathan Edwards** (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind): If the British Government were serious about levelling up and using Brexit freedoms, as they call them, would they not be devolving key economic levers to Wales, such as powers over VAT and corporation tax?

**Michael Gove:** That is an interesting idea, but I am not sure the hon. Gentleman's friends in Plaid Cymru would necessarily take an approach to VAT and corporation

tax that was as pro-enterprise as I would like. The key thing is that we need to make sure the UK remains competitive overall. His constituents in Carmarthen East and Dinefwr will benefit thereby.

**Damien Moore** (Southport) (Con): I welcome my right hon. Friend's statement today and thank him for Southport's £38.5 million town deal. But will he ensure that jobs, growth and investment are at the heart of his levelling-up agenda and that vanity projects, such as those proposed under the active travel scheme, do not supersede them?

**Michael Gove:** My hon. Friend makes a very important point. We of course want to encourage cycling and walking, but we need to balance that with the need to ensure that thriving economic areas such as Southport, which are at the heart of the success of not just Sefton but Greater Merseyside and Lancashire, are given the opportunity to provide the economic growth for which he has been such an effective champion.

**Beth Winter** (Cynon Valley) (Lab): The Secretary of State talks about shifting power and resources to communities. I think he made one mention of Wales. In the case of Wales, the opposite is true. These proposals ride roughshod over devolution, override our democratically elected Government and short-change us to the tune of £1 billion by 2024. The truth of the matter is that the proposals will result in further hardship and poverty for my constituents in Cynon Valley and throughout the UK. So I implore the Secretary of State to listen to my constituents and the people of this country, respect devolution and restore the missing £1 billion to Wales.

**Michael Gove:** I respectfully disagree. When I was recently visiting Merthyr and Pontypridd, I found that actually the investment we are making through the levelling-up fund was welcomed by Labour and independent councillors in south Wales. Obviously, we need to do more not just for south Wales but for north Wales, which is why there is a commitment in the White Paper to ensure more civil service jobs move to Wrexham.

**Nigel Mills** (Amber Valley) (Con): I, too, welcome the investment in education and public transport in Derbyshire. While my right hon. Friend is negotiating county deals in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, will he perhaps give a little shove towards full proper devolution and a mayor for the east midlands?

**Michael Gove:** That is definitely worth exploring. I recognise that there are particular geographical—what is the word?—issues across the east midlands, but I think the success of Andy Street in the west midlands has meant that more options are opening.

**Paula Barker** (Liverpool, Wavertree) (Lab): Since 2010, £465 million has been cut from Liverpool City Council, with £34 million in this coming financial year. Local government staff have had their pay cut by 20% since 2010 in real terms. Will the Secretary of State, if he is genuinely committed to tackling and reversing inequality, tell us when local government workers can expect a 50% pay increase like the commissioners in Liverpool City Council, or will he agree to meet me and my colleagues to look at that eye-watering decision?

**Michael Gove:** Liverpool City Council has had a troubled past recently, but it has a new leadership committed to change and reform. The commissioners are a vital part of that process. I am more than happy to talk to the hon. Lady and other Liverpool MPs—*[Interruption.]* If we did not have those commissioners there, we would not be dealing with the legacy of corruption and incompetence, and whether the hon. Member for Wigan (Lisa Nandy) wants to defend that past or be part of a brighter future is her choice.

**James Wild** (North West Norfolk) (Con): Levelling up is as relevant in North West Norfolk as it is in the north, so I welcome the invitation for Norfolk to negotiate a county deal, which I hope will see more local powers and resources. Education is at the heart of spreading opportunity, so will my right hon. Friend confirm that Norfolk's selection as one of the new education investment areas will mean extra support and dedicated action to give more young people a good start in life?

**Michael Gove:** Absolutely. For example, we want to ensure that the sort of model used at Sir Isaac Newton Sixth Form in Norwich, which provides an excellent opportunity for children denied it in the past, is spread across Norfolk as part of our EIA initiative.

**Gerald Jones** (Merthyr Tydfil and Rhymney) (Lab): Wales is set to be denied £4.6 billion as a result of the Government classifying HS2 as an England and Wales project, despite the Treasury finding that Wales would lose out on £150 million per annum as a result of HS2. That does not sound like levelling up to me. Does the Secretary of State agree?

**Michael Gove:** I do not think Wales loses out as a result of HS2. I think north Wales in particular benefits significantly because of increased connectivity. However, I respectfully say to the hon. Gentleman that the Labour

party needs to sort out its position on HS2. When the Leader of the Opposition was campaigning to be elected in Camden, he said that one of top priorities was to oppose HS2, and then when we brought forward proposals to extend HS2, he criticised them. There is an inconsistency in the Labour party's position on infrastructure investment. I know that the hon. Gentleman's heart is in the right place, but the Labour party's HS2 policy currently is not.

**Felicity Buchan** (Kensington) (Con): I represent a London constituency with two of the most deprived wards in the entire country. Does my right hon. Friend agree that levelling up is also about deprived areas in our inner cities? Will he back my campaign for step-free access at Ladbroke Grove tube station?

**Michael Gove:** Absolutely. My hon. Friend is right. One of the things that the White Paper brings out in a look at the borough of Kensington is the fact that it contains both some of the wealthiest areas in the country and some of the poorest. Without wanting to stray into another important area—although it is important to refer to it—the suffering of Grenfell families and the community around them is a reminder of our need to ensure that opportunity and security are extended to those who have suffered in the past, and they have had no better champion in this House than my hon. Friend.

**Several hon. Members** *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton):** Order. I am afraid that we must bring this statement to an end. I am sorry that we have not been able to get everyone in, but we did manage about 70 in the hour and a half that was allocated. We have more business to move on to, but I thank the Secretary of State for his statement.

## Points of Order

4.19 pm

**Daisy Cooper** (St Albans) (LD): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. In the past 36 hours, the National Audit Office has reported that the Department of Health and Social Care spent £1.3 billion last year that was not signed off by the Treasury and also incurred £8.7 billion of losses on personal protective equipment. That is a jaw-dropping £10 billion. The report also states:

“The Department was not able to manage adequately some of the elevated risks, resulting in significant losses for the taxpayer.”

Alarming, it also says that the Department has still not

“re-established effective controls in all areas.”

Although an Opposition day debate was held yesterday on fraud and Government waste, the NAO report was not released in time for proper questions to be put to the Government. Madam Deputy Speaker, have the Government advised you of whether they intend to make a statement on those damning findings? If not, how may we as Members hold Ministers to account for the waste?

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** I thank the hon. Lady for her point of order. She knows that the Chair has no power over bringing Ministers to the Chamber, but Members have the power to use the proper means whereby that can be done, such as if a question is considered to be urgent. As the hon. Lady said, there was an extensive debate on this matter yesterday, when the very matters that she refers to were aired fully here in the Chamber, but I appreciate what she says about the timing of the publication of the National Audit Office report. I draw to her attention the ways in which she can ask for advice from the Table Office as to how she might compel a Minister to come to this House. I have at this moment, probably in view of the fact that the debate occurred yesterday, not received any notice of an intention from the Government to bring this matter to the House again in the near future.

**Justin Madders** (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Are you aware of a letter from the UK Statistics Authority to the director of data science at 10 Downing Street regarding claims made by the Prime Minister that there are more people in work now than there were at the start of the pandemic? In the letter, the UKSA points out that that claim is incorrect and there are in fact 600,000 fewer people in work than at the start of the pandemic.

I am mindful of what was said by Mr Speaker earlier and that accusations of deceit do not enhance the reputation of this place, but this claim has been made by the Prime Minister on 24 November, 15 December, 5 January, 12 January, 19 January and again today. I believe that the public have a right to expect what is said by the Prime Minister at the Dispatch Box to be truthful and accurate. Have you received any notification of an intention from the Prime Minister to correct the record?

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order and for having given me notice of his intention to raise it. As Mr Speaker has said many times from the Chair, and as those of us who occupy the Chair have repeated, the veracity or otherwise of statistics

and the interpretation of statistics is the very stuff of political discourse and debate. The hon. Gentleman is right to ask the questions, and I am quite sure that he will find a way of asking those questions directly of Ministers. He is absolutely right to say that it is important that statements made in this House are absolutely correct and true, and if an error has been made inadvertently, I am sure that those on the Treasury Bench will note the points made by the hon. Gentleman, and his request for the matter to be looked at again will be referred to the appropriate Minister. There is of course a system for correcting errors and mis-statements, which Ministers and others can use if necessary.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker—for reasons that will become clear, I was not able to give you advance notice of this—it is well accepted that it is at the discretion of the Chair as to how long they run an individual item of business, but that can sometimes cause difficulties for hon. and right hon. Members who want to take part in the following item of business and have to judge when they need to be in the Chamber. Colleagues can be left with the choice of potentially spending a long time in the Chamber at the previous business and so missing important business such as Select Committee sessions, or alternatively running the risk of being late for the start of the next item of business because they were in Select Committee.

Are you aware, Madam Deputy Speaker, of any consideration being given to amending the practice of the House, possibly by following the example of other Parliaments, so that the timings of important items of business can be known with a bit more predictability? That would allow Members, who have all got very busy diaries, to plan out their working day with a bit more certainty than they can just now.

**Madam Deputy Speaker:** I thank the hon. Gentleman for his point of order. There is no need for him to apologise for not having warned me of his intention to raise it, because I have heard that question put on many occasions over several decades. The fact is, and it would be good for people who pay attention to our proceedings to know this, that Members of Parliament have in one day to undertake a huge variety of different duties: attending Committees, asking questions, taking part in debates, meeting constituents and doing a whole range of other duties that we all do diligently.

I am the first to agree with the hon. Gentleman that it can be very difficult to work out a reasonable balance for the working day and manage to fit in, in a timeous way, everything that has to be done, and I can only say to him that one person's long statement is another person's late-starting debate. We are in the middle of exactly that situation at this very moment, which is probably why the hon. Gentleman has raised the matter now. The previous statement could have lasted for another half-hour, but my fellow Madam Deputy Speaker decided that sufficient Members had taken part, and the occupant of the Chair has to balance one item of business against another.

The hon. Gentleman makes a plea that I think will be echoed by most of our colleagues, and I can only say to him that Mr Speaker and the Deputy Speakers do understand this. If he seriously wishes that the matter be considered, I suggest he raise it with the Chairman of

the Procedure Committee; it would not be unreasonable for it to be raised, but I would be very surprised indeed if the problem were to be solved.

### BILLS PRESENTED

#### AIR POLLUTION (LOCAL AUTHORITY AUDITS) BILL

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

Mr Barry Sheerman, supported by Caroline Lucas, Geraint Davies, Luke Pollard, Helen Hayes, Christine Jardine, Neil Parish and Dame Angela Eagle, presented a Bill to make provision for local authorities to conduct annual audits of air pollution in their area and associated emissions by public and private entities; to require those local authorities to prepare reports on those audits; to require the Secretary of State to report annually to Parliament on those audit reports; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 March, and to be printed (Bill 244).*

#### MINISTERIAL DISCLOSURE (FIXED PENALTY NOTICES) BILL

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

Mr Alistair Carmichael, supported by Ed Davey, Daisy Cooper, Wendy Chamberlain, Tim Farron, Layla Moran, Christine Jardine, Jamie Stone, Wera Hobhouse, Sarah Olney, Munira Wilson and Sarah Green, presented a Bill to require Ministers of the Crown to disclose that they have been issued with a fixed penalty notice; and for connected purposes.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 25 February, and to be printed (Bill 245).*

### Carbon Emissions (Buildings)

*Motion for leave to bring in a Bill (Standing Order No. 23)*

4.27 pm

**Duncan Baker** (North Norfolk) (Con): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to require the whole-life carbon emissions of buildings to be reported; to set limits on embodied carbon emissions in the construction of buildings; and for connected purposes.

This will be known as the part Z regulation.

This country has a long, proud history of creating buildings and infrastructure that have enabled Britain to develop and evolve at a rate envied by the rest of the world, but we should reflect on the fact that during that time it is not just Britain that has developed and evolved, but construction itself. Indeed, construction has come a long way since the industrial revolution caused our towns, infrastructure and industry to burgeon. Back then, it was an industry based on judgment, precedent and trial and error, whereas in modern Britain construction is as much an art and a science, led by our engineers and builders, who are world-renowned for their expertise and experience. However, climate change means that it is time for construction to evolve again: as we go about ensuring the UK's role as a global leader in decarbonisation we must discuss the decarbonising of construction.

Every year, our buildings and construction are responsible for the emission of 150 million tonnes of carbon—greenhouse gases—which is nearly a quarter of our country's total carbon footprint. Two thirds of those emissions—yes, the majority—are due to the lighting, power, water, heating and cooling of buildings, or what we call operational carbon, and I am proud that this Government have taken bold steps to ensure that those emissions will reduce as part of our net zero strategy. By 2025 all new homes will be installing low-carbon alternatives to gas boilers, for instance, and by 2035 this country will have decarbonised the electricity network completely. As such, by 2035 we can expect that the emissions related to those services will have fallen to an almost negligible amount. Fantastic! However, that leaves a big piece of the pie—the other third. Where do those remaining emissions come from, and what plan do we have to deal with them?

The other third comes from construction itself, and it is responsible for 40 million to 50 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year. For perspective, that is more than the entirety of the UK's aviation plus shipping. Those 50 million tonnes of carbon emissions are due to the construction, upkeep, refurbishment and demolition of new and existing buildings and infrastructure. Collectively, that is known as embodied carbon, so called because the materials that we build are the physical embodiment of such greenhouse gas emissions. Most embodied carbon emissions are in the construction of the building itself. For a typical new build constructed today, embodied carbon accounts for half the total emissions that the building will be responsible for over its entire lifetime. In some buildings, that same amount is released before the building is even occupied.

Currently, those embodied carbon emissions are completely unregulated. The law places no restriction whatsoever on how much embodied carbon can be emitted when we construct a building. In fact, the 50 million tonnes of carbon due to construction have hardly changed for

[Duncan Baker]

years—perhaps only altering slightly during a recession. Now, I am not a builder or a developer, but if I was and I desired to build a building that was gratuitously tall or complicated and I said to my architect, “Put as much concrete as you like into the floor slabs”—subject to planning permission, of course—that would be my choice, and there would be no accounting for the carbon impact of those decisions. We are in the middle of a climate emergency, and yet the embodied carbon of our buildings and infrastructure is completely unregulated—there is no requirement by law to do anything about that 50 million tonnes of carbon.

Let us be clear: that is not to say that no one in the construction industry is looking at how to reduce embodied carbon—far from it. I will come back to that in just a moment. However, the regulation and legislation is not there to support such efforts. We are decarbonising our electricity grid and ending our reliance on fossil fuels, but we are leaving ourselves open to a big concrete and steel elephant in the room.

The Climate Change Committee has been advising for four years that embodied carbon needs regulating. During the Environmental Audit Committee’s inquiry into the sustainability of the built environment—I am a part of that inquiry, and I see many Committee colleagues present—the regulation of embodied carbon has come up again and again. Meanwhile, our friends around the world in the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Denmark, Finland, the USA and New Zealand are either moving towards introducing embodied carbon regulation or have already done so. The recent net zero strategy set out the Government’s intention to support action in the construction sector by improving reporting on embodied carbon in buildings and infrastructure with a view to exploring a maximum level for new builds in the future, so the ambition is clearly there.

Unlike some of those other countries, which had to create standards to implement embodied carbon regulation, we already have the tools to do it. We have standards and guidance that cover the assessment of carbon emissions for construction: they have been in use in the industry for nearly five years on a voluntary basis and are seen across more and more construction sites in the UK. So we have the tools; now we need the leadership and the regulation to bring an extra level of clarity and make low carbon a requirement in all construction projects around the UK.

I understand that that cannot happen overnight. Parts of the industry still need to upskill their teams and incorporate existing guidance into their standard ways of working. However, at an appropriate pace, with clear direction and agreed implementation dates from this Government, embodied carbon regulation can unlock the creative potential of our construction industry. We can see now that embodied carbon regulation is needed; we can see that it is aligned with the Government’s aspirations and we understand that we have all the tools we need to get it done.

Finally, let us talk about the impact it will have on our workforce. What about our engineers, architects, planners and builders? Will they have to change how

they design and build the places we call home, the buildings we meet in and the infrastructure that ties us all together? Is such regulation compatible with the industry, and is our industry ready for it? The answer is yes. The industry wants to play its role in fighting climate change—it is calling for it quite loudly now.

In the summer of last year, the construction industry took the proactive move of responding to the Climate Change Committee’s suggestion on its own and producing a proposed building regulation under the name “Part Z”. “Part Z” was drafted by industry experts and shared for comments across the industry. The response was staggering: 120 of the country’s leading developers, clients, contractors, architects, engineers and institutions writing statements calling for the regulation of embodied carbon.

This country’s history is intertwined with the evolution of construction—Robert Stephenson, the Shard, the Gherkin, the channel tunnel, the Forth bridge, even the Palace of Westminster we stand in today—but it is time for construction to evolve again. We can build more sustainably, we can build out of beautiful natural materials, we can retrofit and we can pay attention to all those issues. It is time to stop putting embodied carbon off as a possible future area to explore. It is time now to regulate embodied carbon.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Ordered,*

That Duncan Baker, Jerome Mayhew, Mr Richard Holden, Anthony Browne, Cheryl Mackrory, Sir Robert Goodwill, Ian Levy, John McNally, Helen Hayes, James Gray, Dr Matthew Offord and Caroline Lucas present the Bill.

Duncan Baker accordingly presented the Bill.

*Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 18 March, and to be printed (Bill 246).*

#### **FINANCE (NO. 2) BILL (WAYS AND MEANS) (FREEPORT RELIEFS)**

*Resolved,*

That provision may be made amending sections 45R and 270BNC of the Capital Allowances Act 2001 and paragraph 12 of Schedule 6C to the Finance Act 2003.—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

#### **FINANCE (NO. 2) BILL (WAYS AND MEANS) (VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY: EXEMPTION FOR CABOTAGE OPERATIONS)**

*Resolved,*

That provision may be made conferring a power on the Treasury to make provision for the temporary extension of cabotage rights, as provided by Resolution 41 of the House of 2 November 2021 (Vehicle excise duty (exemption for cabotage operations)), to apply at times after 30 April 2022.—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

#### **FINANCE (NO. 2) BILL (WAYS AND MEANS)**

*Resolved,*

That provision may be made for a new tax to be charged in circumstances where a business for which there is a special administration regime becomes subject to special administration or to other special measures in connection with insolvency.—(*Lucy Frazer.*)



## Finance (No. 2) Bill

*Consideration of Bill, as amended in the Committee and the Public Bill Committee*

### New Clause 1

#### FREEPORT TAX SITE RELIEFS: PROVISION ABOUT REGULATIONS

Schedule (Freeport tax site reliefs: provision about regulations) makes provision about powers to vary the circumstances in which certain reliefs are available in relation to freeports.— (*Lucy Frazer.*)

*This new clause and NS1 make provision about powers to make regulations in relation to the circumstances in which certain reliefs are available in relation to freeports.*

*Brought up, and read the First time.*

4.40 pm

**The Financial Secretary to the Treasury (Lucy Frazer):** I beg to move, That the clause be read a Second time.

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** With this it will be convenient to discuss the following:

Government new clause 3—*Public interest business protection tax.*

New clause 2—*Review of impact of section 25 (Tonnage tax)*—

‘(1) The Chancellor must review the impact of the changes made by section 25 of this Act (Tonnage tax), and lay a report of that review before the House of Commons, within 12 months of that section coming into force.

(2) The review carried out under subsection (1) must include assessment of the impact of the provisions of that section on—

- (a) the training of UK—
  - (i) cadets and
  - (ii) ratings, and
- (b) the employment of UK—
  - (i) cadets and
  - (ii) ratings

by operators of qualifying ships.

(3) The review carried out under subsection (1) must include assessment of the effect of changes to flagging arrangements made by subsections 25(6) and (7).’

*This new clause would require the Government to report to the House on the impact of the provisions of clause 25 on the training and employment of UK seafarers.*

New clause 4—*Reviews of Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy*—

‘(1) The Government must publish a review of the operation of the Economic Crime (Anti-Money Laundering) Levy by 31 December 2027.

(2) The Government must publish on 31 December each year until the establishment of a register of beneficial owners of overseas entities that own UK property—

- (a) an assessment of the contribution to the effectiveness of the Levy that such a register would make; and
- (b) an update on progress toward implementing such a register.’

*This new clause would put into law the Government’s commitment to undertake a review of the Levy by the end of 2027, and require them to publish an assessment every year until a register of beneficial owners of overseas entities that own UK property is in place an assessment of what impact such a register would have on the effectiveness of the Levy, and progress toward the register being established.*

New clause 5—*Review of the impact of the extension of temporary increase in annual investment allowance*—

‘The Chancellor of the Exchequer must, within three months of the end of tax year 2022-23, publish a review of decisions by companies to invest in the UK in 2022-23, which must report on which companies, broken down by size, sector, and country of ownership, have benefited from the annual investment allowance; and this assessment must also assess the merits of the existence of the superdeduction in light of the AIA.’

*This new clause would require a review of which companies have benefited from the Annual Investment Allowance in 2022-23, broken down by size, sector, and country of ownership, and an assessment of the merits of the superdeduction in light of the AIA.*

New clause 6—*Review of the impact of this Act*—

‘(1) The Government must publish a review of the measures in this Act within three months of its passing.

(2) The review in subsection (1) must consider how the measures in this Act will affect—

- (a) the amount of tax working people will be paying in 2022/23;
- (b) household finances in 2022/23;
- (c) the rate at which the economy will be growing in 2022/23.’

*This review would require the Government to review what impact measures in this Act are having in 2022/23 on the amount of tax working people will be paying, household finances, and economic growth.*

New clause 7—*Equality Impact Analyses of Provisions of this Act*—

‘(1) The Chancellor of the Exchequer must review the equality impact of the provisions of this Act in accordance with this section and lay a report of that review before the House of Commons within six months of the passing of this Act.

(2) A review under this section must consider the impact of those provisions on—

- (a) households at different levels of income,
- (b) people with protected characteristics (within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010),
- (c) the Government’s compliance with the public sector equality duty under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, and
- (d) equality in different parts of the United Kingdom and different regions of England.

(3) A review under this section must include a separate analysis of each separate measure in the Act, and must also consider the cumulative impact of the Act as a whole.’

New clause 8—*Government review of operation of Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy*—

‘(1) The Treasury must conduct a review of the Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy.

(2) The review must consider the impact on the effectiveness of the levy that would be made by the following measures—

- (a) the establishment of a register of overseas entities as proposed in the draft Registration of Overseas Entities Bill that was laid before Parliament on 23 July 2018; and
- (b) proposals for corporate transparency and reform of the companies register announced in a Ministerial Statement to Parliament on 21 September 2020.

(3) The review must be published and laid before Parliament within two years of the levy coming into operation.’

*This new clause would require the Treasury to conduct a review of the economic crime (anti-money laundering levy). In particular, the review would need to consider how the introduction of corporate transparency measures previously announced by the Government would affect the levy’s operation.*

New clause 9—*Assessment of annual investment allowance*—

- (a) how much the changes to the annual investment allowance under section 12 of this Act will affect GDP in the event of the Finance Act coming into effect, and

- (b) how the same changes would have affected GDP had the UK—
- (i) remained in the European Union, and
  - (ii) left the European Union without a Future Trade and Investment Partnership.’

*This new clause would require an assessment of the effects of the provisions in clause 12 on GDP in different scenarios.*

*New Clause 10—Review of temporary increase in annual investment allowance—*

The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an assessment of—

- (a) the size, number, and location of companies claiming the increased annual investment allowance,
- (b) the impact of this relief upon levels of capital investment, and
- (c) the percentage of total business investments that were covered by this relief in 2019, 2020 & 2021.’

*This new clause would require an assessment of the take-up and impact of the temporary increase in the AIA.*

*New clause 11—Assessment of Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of the Act coming into effect an assessment of the impact of Part 3 of this Act (Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy) on the tax gap and how it has affected opportunities for tax evasion, tax avoidance, and other economic crimes.’

*This new clause would require an assessment of the impact of the Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy on the tax gap and on opportunities for tax avoidance, evasion and other economic crimes.*

*New clause 12—Review of avoidance provisions of sections 84 to 92 on the tax gap—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of the Act coming into effect an assessment of the provisions in sections 84 to 92 of this Act on the tax gap in the UK.’

*This new clause would require an assessment of the impact of the provisions on tax avoidance in clauses 84 to 92 on the tax gap.*

*New clause 13—Review of provisions of section 85 and publication of information on overseas property ownership—*

‘(1) The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an assessment of the impact of the provisions of section 85 about the publication by HMRC of information about tax avoidance schemes.

(2) This assessment must include consideration of the impact of the publication of a register of overseas property ownership upon the promotion of tax avoidance in the UK.’

*This new clause would require an assessment of the impact of the provisions of clause 85, and consideration of the impact of publishing a register of overseas property ownership.*

*New clause 14—Review of reliefs on investments—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into force an assessment of the impact on the tax gap of the reliefs on investments contained in this Act, and of whether those reliefs have increased opportunities for tax evasion and avoidance.’

*New clause 15—Effect on GDP of international matters in Act, and of whole Act—*

‘(1) The Government must publish an assessment of the impact on GDP of—

- (a) the provisions in sections 24 to 28 of this Act, and
- (b) this Act as a whole.

(2) The assessment must also compare these impacts to the impacts had the UK—

- (a) remained in the European Union, and
- (b) left the European Union without a Future Trade and Investment Partnership.’

*This new clause would require a Government assessment of the effect on GDP of the international provisions of the Act, and of the Act as a whole, in different scenarios.*

*New clause 16—Review of impact of Residential property developer tax on the tax gap—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an assessment of the impact of Part 2 of this Act (Residential property developer tax) on the tax gap, and of whether it has increased opportunities for tax evasion and avoidance.’

*This new clause would require a Government assessment of the impact of the Residential Property Developer Tax introduced in this Bill, and of its effect on opportunities for tax evasion and avoidance.*

*New clause 17—Impact of Act on tackling climate change—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an impact assessment of the changes in the Act as a whole on the goal of tackling climate change and the UK’s plans to reach net zero by 2050.’

*New clause 18—Vehicle taxes: effect on climate change goals—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an assessment of the impact of sections 77 to 79 on the goal of tackling climate change and on the UK’s plans to reach net zero by 2050.’

*New clause 19—Review of impact of reliefs in Act on the tax gap—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of the Act coming into effect an assessment of the impact of the tax reliefs in this Act on the tax gap, and of whether they have increased opportunities for tax evasion and avoidance.’

*New clause 20—Uncertain tax treatment—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an assessment comparing the rates of uncertain tax in the UK to those of all other OECD countries.’

*New clause 21—Emissions certificates—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an assessment of the impact of sections 99 and Schedule 16 of this Act on the goal of tackling climate change and the UK’s plans to reach net zero by 2050.’

*New clause 22—Composition of the Office of Tax Simplification—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an assessment of the composition of the Office of Tax Simplification membership with a view to ensuring it is diverse and representative.’

*New clause 23—Capacity of the OTS—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect a review of the membership and capacity of the OTS, including consideration of the capacity the membership would have to deal with an expansion of its remit to include fairness in the tax system.’

*New clause 24—Gambling—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an assessment of the provisions of clause 80 on—

- (a) the volume of gambling, and
- (b) public health.’

*New clause 25—Impact of Act on tax burden of hospitality sector—*

‘The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an assessment of the impact of the Act as a whole on the tax burden on the hospitality sector.’

*New clause 26—Review of the residential property developer tax—*

‘(1) The Government must publish a review of the residential property developer tax within three months of the passing of this Act.

(2) The review under subsection (1) must assess how much money the RPDT would raise at a range of rates at 0.5 percentage point increments.’

*This review would assess how the revenue the RPDT would raise at range of rates at 0.5 percentage point increments.*

**New clause 27—Review of Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy—**

‘(1) The Government must publish an impact assessment of the operation of the Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy within six months of Royal Assent to this Act.

(2) The assessment carried out under subsection (1) must include an assessment of the contribution to the effectiveness of the levy that a register of beneficial owners of property would make.’

*This new clause would require the Government to produce an impact assessment of the operation of the new Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy, and assess how a register of beneficial owners of property would contribute to the effectiveness of the levy.*

**Amendment 35, page 2, line 30, leave out Clause 6.**

*This amendment deletes clause 6 which reduces the rate of the banking surcharge and the level of the surcharge allowance.*

**Amendment 36, page 10, line 44, at end insert—**

“, and at the end of section 32(1) insert “, but eligibility for the increased maximum annual allowance from 1 January 2022 to 31 March 2023 is available only to businesses which can demonstrate that they have taken steps to reduce carbon emissions within their own business models and have set out further steps for how they plan to reduce carbon emissions towards a net zero goal”.”

*This amendment would restrict access to the extended temporary increase in annual investment allowance to businesses that support transition to “net-zero”.*

**Amendment 37, page 10, line 44, at end insert—**

“, and at the end of section 32(1) insert “, but eligibility for the increased maximum annual allowance from 1 January 2022 to 31 March 2023 is available only to businesses which do not have a history of tax avoidance”.”

*This amendment would restrict access to the extended temporary increase in annual investment allowance to businesses that do not have a history of tax avoidance.*

**Amendment 38, page 11, line 10, at end insert—**

‘(3) In paragraph 2(3) of Schedule 13 of that Act—

(a) after “second straddling period is” insert “the greater of (a)”; and

(b) after “of that sub-paragraph” add “and (b) the amount (if any) by which the maximum allowance under section 51A of CAA 2001 had there been no temporary increase in the allowance exceeds the annual investment allowance qualifying expenditure incurred before 1 April 2023.”

*This amendment would amend the transitional provisions for the reversion of the AIA to £200,000 on 1 April 2023, to ensure that smaller businesses with lower levels of qualifying capital expenditure are not disadvantaged by having their effective AIA limit restricted to significantly less than £200,000 for a period.*

**Amendment 34, page 19, line 41, at end insert—**

‘(10A) The Secretary of State must consult trade unions representing UK seafarers before making any regulations pursuant to subsection (8).’

*This amendment would require the Government to consult trade unions representing UK seafarers before making regulations pursuant to subsection (8) of this clause. This subsection extends to ships not registered in the UK the power of the Department to make regulations requiring proof from companies and groups within the tonnage tax regime that their ships comply with safety, environmental and working conditions.*

Government amendments 1 to 13.

Government new schedule 1—*Freeport tax site reliefs: provision about regulations.*

Government new schedule 2—*Public interest business protection tax.*

Government amendments 14 to 33.

**Lucy Frazer:** I thank all Members who have taken part in the debates on the Finance Bill so far. Today we are focusing on a number of potential amendments to the Bill. Many of the amendments seek to ensure the proper functioning of the legislation in response to stakeholder scrutiny and feedback. Others take forward responses to substantive issues that have emerged during the Bill’s passage. I will address each amendment in turn.

Amendments 1 to 8 to clause 36 relate to the Bill’s measures to establish a residential property developer tax, or RPDT. These amendments ensure that those holding a specific type of build licence giving them effective control of the land are subject to RPDT. That will ensure that the legislation works as intended, and closes a potential loophole.

Amendments 9 and 10 to clause 58 relate to the Bill’s clauses on the economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy. These amendments seek simply to amend clause 58 by replacing two references to “entities that are” with “persons”, providing further clarity by using terms consistently throughout the legislation.

Amendments 11 to 13 form part of the extensive action that the Government are taking to address the current heavy goods vehicle driver shortage. As Members will remember, at the last autumn Budget, the Government temporarily extended cabotage rights for foreign operators of heavy goods vehicles until 30 April this year to ease supply-chain pressures. That change was made on a short-term basis to support essential supply chains. These amendments seek to introduce an enabling power through the Bill to make temporary changes to vehicle excise duty legislation should the Government decide to introduce a further temporary extension of road haulage cabotage flexibilities beyond April and up to 31 December 2022. These amendments do not, in themselves, extend those flexibilities. The Government have made no decision to extend the cabotage easement. Any such decision would be taken only after consulting with interested parties, and in consideration of wider pressure on supply chains at the time.

Amendments 14 to 17 are technical amendments to clauses 7 and 8, and to schedule 1, which seek to abolish the basis period rules for the self-employed and partners, and introduce the tax-year basis from April 2024. The amendments will ensure that eligible taxpayers are able to benefit from certain tax reliefs, including double taxation relief, that are given as a deduction against tax rather than against profits during the transition to the new tax-year basis. The amendments are required to avoid an unintentional outcome of the basis period reform transition rules.

Amendments 18 to 30 address a number of technical points in the new asset holding companies regime to better reflect the original policy intentions. These amendments follow engagement with industry. They will make the rules of the tax regime clearer for companies that will use it, and will ensure that it can be more effectively implemented.

[Lucy Frazer]

Amendments 31 to 33 relate to accounting standards. They make minor technical changes to part 2 of schedule 5, which revokes the requirement for life insurance companies to spread their acquisition costs over seven years for tax purposes. These changes will simply ensure that the legislation functions as originally intended.

I turn now to the Government new clauses and new schedules. New clause 1 and new schedule 1 will deal with provisions about regulations regarding freeports. These new provisions seek to build on our existing powers that allow us to introduce, amend and remove conditions to enable businesses to qualify for freeport tax reliefs. The provisions do that by allowing the Government to use secondary legislation to remove and recover those reliefs from individual businesses, if necessary on a prospective basis. This power could be used to enforce compliance. For instance, it would allow the Government to introduce new reporting requirements if needed, and to respond if companies did not adhere to them by removing reliefs or taking other action.

These provisions support our critical freeports programme, which will help to create employment in left-behind areas, and allow them to prosper with additional and much-needed investment. We look forward to seeing them, and the businesses within them, prosper.

New clause 3 and new schedule 2 seek to legislate for a new public interest business protection tax. Energy groups will often enter into derivative contracts to hedge their exposure to fluctuations in wholesale energy prices, and help to ensure that they can supply energy to customers at the prices fixed and under the price cap set by Ofgem. They will typically use a forward purchase agreement to buy energy in the future at a price that is fixed at the time when the contract is entered into.

The Government have been monitoring the global rise in wholesale energy prices very closely. We have a serious concern about certain arrangements whereby energy suppliers do not own, control or have the economic rights to the key assets needed to run their businesses, including forward purchase contracts. It is currently possible for an energy business to derive value from such a valuable asset for its own benefit and the benefit of its shareholders, while leaving its energy supply business to fail, or increasing the costs of a failure. The costs of that failure would then be picked up by the taxpayer or consumers, because it would trigger a special administration regime or a supplier of last resort scheme. These are special Government-funded administration routes that help to ensure that UK customers continue to be supplied with energy.

Ofgem is now consulting on a range of regulatory actions that it proposes to take to ensure that the right protections are in place in these circumstances. That work will ensure the ongoing resilience of energy supply businesses. However, it will take months for these changes to come into effect. The Government recognise that it would be unacceptable for a Government to allow business owners to profit from engineering this kind of outcome in the interim period, at great and direct expense to the taxpayer.

**Peter Grant** (Glenrothes) (SNP): I do not think that anyone would argue with the intention behind the new schedule, but it is not so much a new schedule as a Bill within a Bill. It is 25 pages long, and it introduces a tax

that has not existed before. It was tabled less than 48 hours ago, and as far as I can see there has been no consultation with anyone. Given that this issue has been known about for so long, why has it taken until now for the Government to table such a large, complex and unwieldy amendment to their own legislation?

**Lucy Frazer:** I understand the hon. Gentleman's concern. The Bill has been tabled at this time because Ofgem has identified a risk related to energy suppliers in the circumstances that I have described. If that eventuality came to pass, there would be a significant loss to taxpayers if we did not introduce the legislation to prevent it. I understand his concern, but it is necessary for the Government to introduce this tax and to introduce it now, to ensure that these risks do not materialise.

**Mel Stride** (Central Devon) (Con): Am I right in assuming that the purpose of the new tax is to discourage certain types of behaviour rather than to raise revenue?

**Lucy Frazer:** My right hon. Friend is right. We are not seeking to raise revenue; we are seeking to prevent certain circumstances from coming about, and we hope that this deterrent will be sufficient. Of course, if it were not, we would be able to recoup the money by way of tax. He will have spotted that the legislation is only in force for a short period to allow Ofgem to take regulatory action to ensure that we deal with this issue in the appropriate way through regulation rather than by bringing preventive action by way of a tax.

As I was saying, this new tax will have effect where steps are taken to obtain value from assets that materially contribute to a licensed energy supply business entering into special measures or to the increased costs of the business where it is a subject of special measures on or after 28 January this year and before 28 January next year. The tax will apply to the value of the assets that are held in connection with a licensed energy supply business where the assets in scope of the tax exceed £100 million, including assets held by connected persons. This is to ensure that the tax would capture only the very largest energy businesses. The tax will apply at a rate of 75% so as to be an active and effective deterrent against actions that are not in the public interest, and to recoup a substantial proportion of the costs that would otherwise fall to the Government under special administration measures in the event that such action was taken, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride) pointed out.

In order to ensure that the tax is robust against avoidance activity, and given the sums at stake, the Government consider it necessary for Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs to be able to recover the tax from other persons if it cannot recover it from the relevant company. These joint and several liability provisions will apply only to companies under common ownership, as well as investors and persons connected with those investors in limited circumstances. Safeguards are also in place to permit certain affected persons to make a claim for relief to limit the amount of joint and several liability to the amount that they potentially benefit from such transactions. It is our hope and expectation that no business would pursue such action and that the tax will not be charged. The tax is a temporary and necessary safeguard that will protect the taxpayer and energy consumers in the interim period before the regulatory change takes effect.

The Government amendments will ensure that the legislation works as it should and protects the interests of the people of this country. I therefore commend to the House amendments 1 to 33, new clauses 1 and 3, and new schedules 1 and 2, and I urge Members to accept them.

**James Murray** (Ealing North) (Lab/Co-op): Any member of the public hearing that the Government were today voting their Finance Bill through the House of Commons might expect such a Bill to do something to help with the cost of living crisis facing families up and down this country. Our new clause 6 makes this simple point. It asks the Government to set out how the measures in the Bill will affect household finances, the amount of tax working people are paying, and the rate of growth in the economy in the coming year.

I suspect that Ministers will want to avoid our new clause 6 because they know what the answers will be. The truth is that whether through this Bill or any other means, the Government are letting energy bills soar, refusing to cancel their national insurance hike, and failing to set out a plan for growth. The Conservatives' failure to grow the economy over the last decade, and their inability to plan for growth in the future, has left them with no choice but to raise taxes. This low-growth, high-tax approach to the economy has become the hallmark of these Conservatives in power.

Let me make it clear why our new clause 6 might make such difficult reading for Conservative Members. People see their energy bills going up and about to soar, inflation at its highest rate in decades, and their wages falling in real terms—and what do the Tories do? They raise national insurance by £274 for a typical full-time worker. It is the worst possible tax rise at the worst possible time. We warned that it was wrong when the Government pushed it through Parliament last year. Our arguments have only got stronger since then, so instead of digging in, the Chancellor and the Prime Minister should do the right thing and scrap this tax hike on working people and their jobs. Despite calls on the Government from all sides, they are so far refusing to budge. In this Bill, they offer no relief to working people, who face soaring prices and tax bills. They have managed to find time, however, to put into law a tax cut for banks, as we see in clause 6.

Clause 6, which our amendment 35 seeks to delete, would see the rate of the banking corporation tax surcharge fall from 8% to 3%, with the allowance for the charge raised from £25 million to £100 million. That will cost the public finances £1 billion a year by the end of this Parliament. Throughout the passage of the Bill, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury has used smoke and mirrors desperately to pretend that the Government are not cutting taxes for banks. She has tried to hide this tax cut under a separate change to corporation tax that may never even come to pass.

**Anthony Browne** (South Cambridgeshire) (Con): Including corporation tax and the surcharge, the taxation of banks is currently at 27%. After this legislation, it will be 28%. Does the hon. Member agree that 28% is higher than 27%, and therefore taxes on banks are actually going to rise, not go down?

**James Murray**: It is the same tired doublespeak by Government Members trying to hide this tax cut for banks. However they try to present it, in this Bill the

banking surcharge is cut from 8% to 3%; it is there in the policy costings from the Treasury that the measure will cost the public purse £1 billion a year by the end of this Parliament. If Government Members do not like this tax cut, they can simply vote with us to delete it at the end of Report, rather than pretend it does not exist.

**Anthony Browne**: Will the hon. Member give way?

**James Murray**: No, I am going to make some progress.

The truth is that this tax cut is going ahead at a time when bankers' earnings are on the rise, with investment banks' profits soaring off the back of a wave of takeovers and mergers caused by the pandemic. The UK arm of Goldman Sachs—a business that the Chancellor will know well—boosted its pay by more than a third last year, Barclays is set to raise bonus payments by more than 25% in its corporate investment bank, and boutique banks in the City are expected to do especially well, as they are exempt from rules that limit bonuses.

These measures show just how out of touch this Government and this Chancellor are: they are championing a tax cut for banks while ignoring calls from the TUC, the Federation of Small Businesses, the Institute of Directors, Labour MPs, some on their own side, and the British public, to abandon their tax cut on working people and their jobs. If Ministers are still refusing to listen, today we are giving their Back Benchers an opportunity to say, "Enough is enough." They can vote with us tonight to cancel the banking tax cut and make the Government think again.

The national insurance hike is wrong because it threatens people's financial security. I will now turn to other aspects of the Bill that relate to wider economic security and the threat of economic crime.

**Simon Hoare** (North Dorset) (Con): Just before the hon. Gentleman leaves the rise in national insurance contributions—a difficult decision for any Government, particularly given the backdrop of a manifesto commitment—surely he would criticise the Government were they to put the ideology of a manifesto front and centre, instead of trying to find a way of ameliorating what would clearly be growing waiting lists and people queuing at all our advice surgeries and offices, complaining that they could not get the treatment they needed, which they were denied during the pandemic. Surely that is the right thing to do for public health and all our citizens.

**James Murray**: No one denies that the NHS needs more money, but hiding behind the hon. Member's intervention is the idea that there is no other way to raise the £12 billion that the national insurance rise will raise. It takes some cheek to hear that from Conservative Members, when just yesterday we heard of £8.7 billion being wasted on PPE procurement and £4.3 billion of fraud being written off by the Chancellor—there is the £12 billion. Frankly, the Chancellor should stop wasting money, stop letting criminals get away with fraud, and stop expecting working people to pick up the bill.

**Peter Grant**: I commend the hon. Member for reminding the Government just how much of our money they have wasted in the last year. Does he remember a message on the side of a bus that promised a huge cash boost to the NHS if we left the European Union, and has he wondered what happened to that money?

**James Murray:** I remember many slogans that the Conservative party has used and I would not trust many of them. However, I would like to make some progress and talk about what the Government are doing, or failing to do, to tackle economic crime.

5 pm

We support the principle behind the economic crime levy that part 3 of the Bill seeks to introduce, although we and others have questioned whether it will be enough. More widely, however, it is impossible to take this Government seriously when it comes to economic crime. Ministers seem to change their mind over an economic crime Bill by the day and, as our new clause 4 makes clear, we are all still waiting for the Government to establish a register of beneficial owners of overseas entities that own UK property.

This new public register is desperately needed, has been greatly delayed and would bring transparency to the overseas ownership of UK property. It would help to stop the use of UK property for money laundering and would finally help to tackle the shocking reputation our country has earned for being the world's laundromat for illicit finance. Plans to introduce a register were first announced by the Conservatives in 2016 and legislation was first published in 2018. We were promised that it would be operational by 2021. It is now 2022, so this is a promise clearly broken by the Conservatives. We have seen all manner of hand-wringing from Treasury Ministers over plans for the register during the passage of the Bill. At one point, they tried to imply that failing to establish the register was the Business Secretary's fault, but most often they have fallen back on the dreaded phrase, "We will introduce legislation to Parliament as soon as parliamentary time allows".

There is simply no urgency from Treasury Ministers to get the register in place and no urgency whatever from the Prime Minister. Yet, as Members on both sides of the House agree, we need to rid our economic system of money laundering, and that need has become more urgent than ever with the unfolding crisis over Ukraine. Economic sanctions against Russia will be hamstrung as long as those linked to Putin and his regime can hide their wealth. They are hiding that wealth here in the UK, having bought up some of our country's most expensive property. Much of it will be found in Knightsbridge and Belgravia—in the same SW1 postcode as the House of Commons. Transparency International has identified £1.5 billion-worth of real estate in the capital owned by Russians accused of corruption, or with ties to the Kremlin. The ownership of these firms has been revealed only through court cases, document leaks and investigations by journalists, so it is likely that that figure only scratches the surface. The truth is that high-end property in the UK plays a central role in Russian money laundering, so the Government's refusal to introduce the register of overseas owners of UK property undermines our economic security.

The UK Government have at least one hand, and not far off both hands, tied behind their back when it comes to pursuing the dirty money of Kremlin-connected oligarchs, because we simply do not know where that money is. We have the legislation to introduce a register to help solve this problem ready to go, but the Conservatives are refusing to implement it. Why is that? Well, *The Times* reported last week that the Tories have received £2 million

from donors with Russian links since the right hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) became Prime Minister in 2019. The Centre for American Progress think tank has said that

"uprooting Kremlin-linked oligarchs will be a challenge given the close ties between Russian money and the United Kingdom's ruling Conservative party".

There you have it: we know Russian oligarchs linked to Putin are hiding dirty money in high-end property here in our country. Much of it has been used to buy up mansions in Knightsbridge and Belgravia, a mile from where we are as I speak. It is right under our noses and I bet they are laughing at us. We know exactly what to do to stop them. So we ask: why have the Government not acted? At best, it is disinterest in an issue of national and economic security. At worst, it could be argued that it is Conservative party self-interest, given some of its funders and friends. If Conservative Members feel as angry and frustrated as we do, they should join us by voting today for new clause 27, which brings together members of different parties to keep up the pressure on the Government to introduce the promised register of overseas entities who own property here in the UK.

We have also tabled an amendment that relates to the residential property developer tax introduced by part 2 of the Bill. We support the principle behind that tax, which will be levied on the largest developers in the residential property sector. It should help to make sure that those responsible for putting dangerous materials on buildings will pay something towards the very significant costs of removing unsafe cladding. The tax will be levied at 4%, with an expectation of raising £2 billion over 10 years. Although we support the principle of the tax, we should be clear that it will in no way end the cladding scandal, nor will it even settle the question of who pays for the crucial remediation works.

When the Bill began its passage in November 2021, the Government were expecting leaseholders in buildings of between 11 and 18 metres to take on forced loans to pay for the costs of cladding remediation in their building. That prospect hung over leaseholders' heads for almost a year until, finally, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities realised that the Government were wrong to do this. He announced last month that he now expects developers to pay for remediating mid-rise buildings of between 11 and 18 metres. We support any moves to protect leaseholders from these costs, and we have always made it clear that, among the many players involved in the cladding scandal who should be paying to fix it, leaseholders must absolutely not be one of them.

We would like to know more about the Treasury's view on how the estimated £4 billion needed to remediate buildings of between 11 and 18 metres will be raised. The Housing Secretary has said that he hopes the £4 billion cost will be met by a voluntary fund to which he will persuade developers to contribute. We would like to know the Treasury's view on what will happen if developers do not come to the table and hand over that £4 billion.

We want to make sure that leaseholders are protected and that the money does not end up coming out of existing affordable homes funding. Last week, my hon. Friend the Member for Greenwich and Woolwich (Matthew Pennycook), the shadow Housing Minister, asked for reassurance on that point. He asked the

Housing Secretary to guarantee that funding already allocated for new social and affordable housing will not be diverted to the building safety crisis should he fail to extract sufficient money from developers. There was no such commitment forthcoming from the Housing Secretary.

It is for that reason that we tabled new clause 26 to press Ministers on what other options they might consider. I would be grateful if the Minister could confirm whether there are any circumstances, if the Housing Secretary is unable to persuade developers to hand over £4 billion voluntarily, in which the level of the residential property developer tax could be reconsidered to help to meet some of the shortfall.

Finally, I would like to address amendments tabled by other Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Easington (Grahame Morris) tabled new clause 2, which would require the Government to review and report to the House on the impact of clause 25 on the training and employment of UK seafarers. I thank him and his colleagues from the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers for meeting me recently to explain why they believe the tonnage tax should be amended to strengthen the existing requirements to train UK seafarers.

When clause 25 was debated in Committee, the Minister did not mention the training commitment in the tonnage tax. I would therefore like to add my voice to that of other hon. Members in asking the Government today to set out their plans for the training and employment of UK seafarers.

I also commend my hon. Friend the Member for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy) for tabling new clause 7, which would require the Government to publish a proper impact assessment of this Bill. The economy is not an abstract concept, and the Government's decisions on how it runs will affect people's lives, and different communities in different ways. The people we represent, in communities across the country, deserve a Government who will be up front and transparent about the impact their economic decisions will have, so we would welcome a proper impact assessment.

Across the country, people are worried about the future. Energy bills are soaring and inflation is at its highest in decades, yet the Tories propose to raise national insurance by £274 for a typical full-time worker. That shows just how out of touch the Chancellor is, and it adds insult to injury that he is doing it in the same breath as cutting taxes for banks by £1 billion a year.

The tax rise threatens the financial security of families across the country, and our country's economic security is being left exposed by this Government. Their shocking failure, apparently driven by self-interest, to put in place a public register of overseas owners of UK property leaves us unable to use the full force of economic sanctions against Putin and his allies. This Government will not protect people from the cost of living crisis, and they will not protect our country from Russian dirty money; the only thing they want to protect is the Prime Minister's job. I know Tory Back Benchers have not yet summoned the courage to change their leader, but I urge them to do the right thing, at least today, and join us in voting to change this Bill.

**Jackie Doyle-Price** (Thurrock) (Con): It is a great pleasure to address the House on the subject of new clause 2, which I am happy to sponsor with the hon.

Member for Easington (Grahame Morris), with the support of the RMT. I recognise that the Government are reviewing the tonnage tax regime with exactly the right attitude, but I encourage them to think more widely about how we genuinely get a post-Brexit bonus for the entirety of this industry—not just the shipowners, but the workers. I make my comments from my position as chairman of the all-party group for maritime and ports. I am very proud of our maritime sector and I am very proud to represent the ports in Thurrock, particularly in Tilbury and Purfleet, and, of course, the Thames freeport.

The great thing about this Finance Bill is that it shows that the Government are taking advantage of the new freedoms that we have now that we have left the European Union. We now have more tax freedoms, which will encourage more business investment. I am greatly looking forward to watching the Thames freeport grow and grow. There has been a fantastic partnership between Forth Ports, which is based in Scotland, DP World, which invests in London Gateway, and of course Ford at Dagenham. It will bring a whole new lease of life to economic opportunities on the Thames. But I am very keen that workers get a better chance to share in our post-Brexit freedom. It is with that in mind that I have been very happy to engage with the RMT and with the hon. Gentleman to give my support to this sector.

If we are genuinely a maritime nation, which is one of those platitudes that we often trot out in this Chamber, we should have our own maritime workforce, whether it be through ports, or those engaged in shipbuilding—I am very pleased that the Prime Minister has given his personal backing to expanding our shipbuilding sector and getting back to making ships here. But this is also for our seafarers. On a day when we are celebrating levelling up, we should remember that our coastal communities are among those in most need of levelling up. For the workers in those areas, the opportunity to have access to more opportunities for skilled jobs surely should be grasped. With that in mind, I support new clause 2 and the amendment sponsored by the hon. Member for Easington.

Let me tell Members a story about my constituency. I have many retired seafarers in my constituency, as I would, representing what I call the ports capital of the UK—they tell me these great stories of the romantic adventures that they had as young men travelling the world—but I have no seafarers among the current generation. Although the current tonnage tax regime encourages the shipping companies to invest in training opportunities for officers and cadets—all fine and good—I would like to see that extended to encourage more training opportunities for ratings, too. I cannot think of a better way for a young person to enter the world of work than to travel and to see the world while they are learning new skills. Many skills required on a ship can be migrated into employment later in life. To me, it seems like a no brainer if we really want to open up horizons and opportunities for all our young people. It feels a bit elitist to me if, with entirely the right attitude, we use this tax regime and the concessions around it to encourage investment and training and restrict that to the officer class.

We know what has happened in the shipping industry. We are training people to fill senior positions, while shipping companies are recruiting cheaper labour from

[Jackie Doyle-Price]

elsewhere in the world, and we all know where those countries are. At a time when we are encouraging companies to be more virtuous about their supply chains and tackling the issue of modern slavery, it seems slightly hypocritical to me that we turn the other way when we know of companies that are taking advantage of cheap labour in the maritime sector.

To be fair, the Government have done an awful lot of work on this. I congratulate them on making changes to minimum wage legislation, for example, which has improved conditions in our waters, but we are nothing if not leaders by example. I encourage the Government to go further. I am grateful for the conversation I have had with my right hon. and learned Friend the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and my hon. Friend the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury about this. As they go through the review, I encourage them to think imaginatively about what more we can do to properly use this important measure to encourage more employment in that industry.

5.15 pm

I have nothing much more to add, other than to say that it is a great pleasure to work with Opposition colleagues. I am not sure that I ever thought I would find myself tabling an amendment on behalf of the RMT, but that is what Brexit has done, to be fair—the RMT's support of Brexit was not without good reason. We are used to having a world run from Brussels, where the business lobby was based on cosy corporatism. In how we now approach economic policy post Brexit, we are determined to ensure that it delivers for the whole of Britain and the whole of our business community; let us ensure that it delivers for the workers too.

**Alison Thewliss** (Glasgow Central) (SNP): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price). I very much agree with the principles of her new clause 2 because, if this tonnage tax is to mean anything, it should be about more than just changing a flag; it should be about changing the culture, as she mentioned. I am proud to have in my constituency City of Glasgow College, which has trained a lot of seafarers. It is a big hub for maritime education worldwide. It would be a real boon to it if we could encourage that within the UK, as we are at the moment, and in an independent Scotland it will certainly be a beacon to the world as an island nation.

I rise to speak to the amendments and new clauses in my name and those of my colleagues. As we did in the Bill Committee, we want to highlight the points on which the Finance Bill falls short. Last year, we saw COP26—also in the great constituency of Glasgow Central, where the world came to Glasgow—and I feel that the Finance Bill could have been the opportunity to mark in the legislative process in this place how important the climate change agenda is. It should have run through this Finance Bill and this Budget as through a stick of rock, but unfortunately we are left with just a fluffy sweetie in the bottom of someone's pocket. It is not enough.

We therefore feel that there should be an assessment of the effect of the Bill's provisions on climate change and how they affect the UK Government's net zero targets. In Scotland, we have more ambitious net zero

targets than the UK does. The Scottish Government are delivering lasting action to secure a net zero and climate-resilient future in a way that is fair and just for everyone. The SNP, in government in Scotland, is committed to a just transition to net zero emissions by 2045, with an ambitious interim target in 2030 of a 75% reduction—targets that form the heart of Scottish Government policies and actions.

An example of how that is already being delivered includes the groundbreaking and truly historic ScotWind announcement. We also already have the equivalent of almost 100% of gross electricity consumption generated from renewable sources in Scotland. We have commitments for the renewal of peatland, for the planting of trees and for the tackling of biodiversity loss, and we are leading the Edinburgh process to ensure that a whole-of-Government approach is adopted globally, while committing to protect 30%—and highly protect 10%—of our land for nature by 2030.

All those things are laudable policies, but we see no actions by the UK Government to incentivise them. Finance Bills are full of tax cuts, tax rises, incentives and different measures, and this Bill could have moved so much further to incentivise net zero through the measures introduced. The Bill does not go far enough. It is important to measure not only what is being done, but what could be done. Were the UK Government serious about their climate change commitments, they would rethink the illogical decision to deprioritise the carbon capture and storage facility in the north-east of Scotland. It was a real opportunity. The Government could have and should have gone further, but they short-changed Scotland yet again.

We support a great number of the new provisions in the Bill to do with economic crime. Members should have read already the excellent report released by the Treasury Committee, on which I sit, and which I came from earlier on this afternoon. The 11th report of the Committee, on economic Crime, is a very compelling and detailed read. It notes:

“Economic crime is a major and rapidly growing problem in the UK”,

and that while there has been a range of different initiatives by the UK Government, economic crime

“seems not to be a priority for law enforcement.”

Ministers came to the Committee and told us that they were “not happy” with the progress the Government have made in tackling economic crime, and I could not disagree with the Government on that point. There is certainly a lot more to be done.

While the economic crime levy is broadly welcome, it strikes me that a lot of taxes here are taxing people who are doing the right thing already, rather than chasing the people who are not. That really ought to be more the priority, because we have seen a Minister in the House of Lords resign because of the Government not doing enough and being frustrated at the lack of action by the Government to tackle fraud in the coronavirus loan schemes. There is an awful lot more that the Government could and should be doing on this.

We seek movement on the economic crime Bill. We want there to be an economic crime Bill because so much of the legislation on this issue is still held at Westminster. On the registration of companies, for example, I have spoken long and weary, and will continue to do



so, about the deficiencies in Companies House. The register is complete and utter guff, in that people can put anything in and it is not checked, because there is only an information gathering function, rather than any kind of checking, verification or anti-money laundering organisation at Companies House, and that needs to change. We very much want to see movement on the long overdue registration of overseas entities Bill, and we support all amendments to this Finance Bill to that end. I sat on the Joint Committee, with Members of the House of Lords, on the draft Registration of Overseas Entities Bill, and we took copious information from experts in the field. They said to us, “If you shut down this route, we know where people are going to go next”, and “If you do this, then this will happen.” We made recommendations to the Government, and the Government did not even at that time take up all the recommendations the Committee made.

Since that report was published and the Joint Committee sat, things have only got markedly worse. The criminals are getting away with more, and that has a real effect, because there are implications if those buying up huge swathes of London property cannot be traced. If that property, which should be housing people, is not available to them because it is being used as a means of money laundering, that should worry us all. There are of course implications more widely of the money coming in from Russian oligarchs, with the Government being left vulnerable in dealing with the wider crisis in Ukraine.

If we do not know who owns such property, how can we sanction them and follow them up? How can we take some action against those using the UK as a means of laundering their dirty lucre? We cannot, and it is really important that the UK Government act on this more urgently than they have before. As the hon. Member for Ealing North (James Murray) mentioned, some of this began in 2016. There were Bills in 2018, including the opportunities in the Sanctions and Anti-Money Laundering Bill in 2018, and all such opportunities have been missed, and they are being missed yet again in the Finance Bill we are discussing this afternoon. I think there needs to be an awful lot more action taken, and an awful lot more quickly.

I have quoted other people talking about economic crime recently, but I want to mention Professor Sadiq Isah Radda, who, as the executive secretary of the Presidential Advisory Committee Against Corruption in Nigeria, told our Prime Minister that London was actually

“the most notorious safe haven for looted funds in the world today”.

That really should spur the Government here to action. This has been going on for far too long, and it absolutely must be tackled. It is a stain on the UK and, through things such as Scottish limited partnerships—the legislation those on is reserved to here; it has nothing to do with Scotland—it tarnishes Scotland with a dirty name by association.

Each Finance Bill makes our tax code more complex and, within that, there are more opportunities for people to seek loopholes and ways to reduce the tax that they should pay. For all of us, tax should be regarded not as some kind of burden, but as a duty and the price we pay for living in a civilised society. The more complicated the tax code, the more it can be exploited.

That complexity is hinted at somewhat in the corrective amendments that Ministers have tabled at this late stage. Although this Bill is so complicated, they come to us on Second Reading and in Committee and say, “Oh yes, all things are fine”, but today, at this late stage, we find that things are not quite right and have to be corrected. That makes it all the more worrying that the Government are bringing in this whole new proposal—the public interest business protection tax—without due notice. Again, there may be legitimate reasons for not giving due notice, but there is no consultation or evidence gathering that we get to see before we come here to vote on it today. That goes alongside my general complaint about Finance Bills, which is that their Bill Committees do not take evidence and they should, because that is really important. The public interest business protection tax may well be laudable, but we just do not know sufficiently whether it will be effective, what the evidence is or the Government’s full motivations for introducing it.

I am very grateful to George Crozier of the Chartered Institute of Taxation and the Association of Taxation Technicians, who wrote to me last night with some of his concerns about the proposal and the way that it has appeared at this late stage. Some of his questions about bringing in a new tax without due notice are about the mechanisms in the Bill. It is supposedly time-limited to 12 months, so theoretically it could then be extended in time and in scope by regulation. We do not know whether the Government intend to do that if Ofgem do not move as quickly as they want it to. Again, I accept that the proposal may be about getting Ofgem out of a hole. I am sure that is fine, if that is what the Government want to do, but does that not indicate that it is much easier to make tax changes than effective regulatory changes when there is a point of crisis?

I was very glad that, by coincidence, we on the Treasury Committee had Jim Harra of Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs in front of us this afternoon. I asked him what he felt the impact of this proposal would be, including whether it would have an operational impact. He said, “No, because we hope it raises no taxes whatsoever”. It is unusual for the head of HMRC to say that he hopes to raise no tax from a measure in a Finance Bill, but that is what he said.

As an anti-avoidance, preventive measure, sure, that is fine, but the way in which it has been introduced this afternoon is not very good. We have seen this very late, and we get all the documents, explanatory notes and all the other things that come with it. To introduce something such as this in a Finance Bill seems very suboptimal, as the Minister is wont to say.

Bringing in a policy such as this also misses the wider set of reforms that are needed to the energy system, which the Government are not taking forward with sufficient urgency. My Glasgow Central constituents and households across these islands are urgently crying out for practical support with their energy bills. They need to know that they can afford to put the heating on in the morning. They need to know whether they can afford to use the cooker to heat up their kids’ dinner. They need to know whether they can turn the lights on or whether they all have to huddle in the dark with candles. That is the stark reality for so many people, and it is part of what is missing from this Government’s action. I said at Treasury questions yesterday that it had been almost two months since the Chancellor came to

[Alison Thewliss]

the House. Although he came yesterday, there was still no practical solution for such people; there is no practical solution in this Finance Bill.

While I am here, I want to ask the Minister about a query raised by the former Pensions Minister, Steve Webb, who pointed out a change on the HMRC website that says:

“Rates for Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, Child Benefit and Guardian’s Allowance for the 2022 to 2023 tax year are provisional and may change between now and 6 April 2022”.

I asked HMRC officials why that change to the website was made and they did not know. I ask the Minister whether she knows why that change has been made. Are the Government riding to the rescue of those people, or is it just a change on a website? It would be useful for people to know the full implications.

5.30 pm

I do not aim to keep the House any longer on any of the provisions of this Finance Bill; we have had plenty of time to have our say in Committee. However, the mechanisms in the Bill fundamentally will not fix the cost of living crisis that people up and down these islands face. They will not fix the problem of the national insurance rise heading down the tracks—that tax on jobs that will make it more difficult for employers to take people on at a time when their prices are rising and make it more expensive for individuals to get by. They will not fix the £20-a-week cuts to universal credit and child tax credits, or the urgent energy crisis that people are facing and are so fearful of.

We do not have great confidence in this Finance Bill or its ability to fix the problems that our nations face today. We long for the day when we can have a Government closer to the people in Scotland that will be able to take those decisions in a far more effective and compassionate manner.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. I hope to bring in the Minister at 5.55 pm at the very latest, because many questions have been asked that hon. Members want the Minister to answer, so it is only fair to give her the time to answer them. Three hon. Members have tabled new clauses to which they must have the opportunity to speak. I must ask for short speeches, please; I hope we can manage without a time limit, but if those who are speaking to their new clauses can keep to five minutes, everyone will have the opportunity, however briefly, to address the House.

**Layla Moran (Oxford West and Abingdon) (LD):** I rise to speak on behalf of the Liberal Democrats, particularly on new clause 27, which is tabled in my name.

The Liberal Democrats have concerns about this Bill. People who work hard, pay their taxes and play by the rules are seeing their incomes squeezed through no fault of their own. They are being crippled by tax hikes, benefits slashes and skyrocketing bills, and today I am afraid the Chancellor is letting them down. He is providing less in extra catch-up funding for children than he is in a tax cut for bankers. In contrast, the Liberal Democrats are calling for a £15 billion catch-up fund for kids,

support for small businesses and protection from energy bill rises for the most vulnerable, and we support all new clauses that help to that end. We live in precarious times and we must do more.

In the context of escalating tensions with Russia, I am also concerned about what is missing from the Bill. New clause 27 has support from both sides of this House. It is similar to new clauses 4 and 11, tabled by Labour and SNP Front Benchers—I am grateful to them for rowing behind this clause—but it also has Conservative Members as signatories, which goes to show the cross-party support for bringing in this measure.

The new clause asks for an impact assessment to be produced on the operation of the new economic crime levy, and would require the Government to assess how a register of beneficial owners of property would contribute to the effectiveness of such a levy. Sadly, due to the scope of the Bill, the new clause cannot introduce such a register, but that does not make the need for it any less urgent.

The register would close the loopholes that allow oligarchs to launder money through British property. Lax regulations have turned London into a playground and a laundromat for Russian oligarchs, with successive warnings from the intelligence and security communities painting the city as “Londongrad”. Prior to the pandemic, Transparency International identified 87,000 properties in England and Wales that were owned by anonymous companies registered in tax havens. A new analysis has found that, of the £6.7 billion-worth of UK property bought with suspicious money, £1.5 billion comes from Russia.

On Monday, the Foreign Secretary spoke about introducing new sanctions, and I welcomed that. It is interesting that *The Moscow Times* reported on Monday that the Kremlin was “alarmed” at the British threat and vowed to retaliate. The dirty money that oligarchs invest in yachts, football clubs and Belgravia mansions has close ties to Putin’s own wealth. We know how he operates: he gives them the money to buy the assets. If we aim at the oligarchs, we aim at Putin, but there is a problem, because we cannot sanction what we cannot see. Claims from the Government that we are standing up to Putin’s military manoeuvres ring hollow when he and his friends know full well that they have already hidden half the money in our own back garden, and the Government continue to do nothing about it.

Dirty money also undermines our credibility with our allies. The Centre for American Progress, a think-tank closely linked to the Biden Administration, said:

“Uprooting...oligarchs will be a challenge given the close ties between Russian money and the United Kingdom”.

I am afraid to say that the stench of corruption and dirty money wafts over our political system and the whole country, and it is incumbent on us here and the Government to clean it up. There is a way to do that, and it is through the economic crime Bill, but waiting for that feels like waiting for Godot. It should not be this difficult to get the Government to make good on their own promises, because it was a Conservative Government six years ago who said they would introduce it. Two thousand days later and we have had nothing.

Just this week, the Prime Minister stood at the Dispatch Box and announced plans for a register of beneficial ownership, but at this stage it feels like he is the boy who

cried wolf. I urge the Minister to accept new clause 27, which has support on both sides of the House, to start those tentative steps, to show Putin we are serious and to make sure that we clean up dirty money from our politics and our country for good.

**Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to new clause 2 and amendment 34. I thank all Members who have co-sponsored or signed the new clause. It indicates extensive support not just from Labour Members, but from Members from across the House and a variety of parties. I must declare my interest as a member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers parliamentary group, and I refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests.

New clause 2 is very important to UK-based employment in the maritime sector. The issue has been raised with the current shipping Minister, the hon. Member for Witney (Robert Courts), who is sympathetic to the arguments we are making, and previously with his predecessors, most notably the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes), who was enthusiastic about what we propose.

Clause 25 of the Bill makes tonnage tax more flexible for ship owners but no corresponding adjustments for seafarer jobs and skills based in the UK, as eloquently pointed out by the hon. Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price). The tonnage tax's original purpose—it was introduced by a Labour Government, by Gordon Brown—was to arrest the decline in training and employment opportunities for British seafarers in an increasingly deregulated labour market. We have seen the increasing dominance of flags of convenience.

I remind those on the Treasury Bench that at the time of the Falklands war—unbelievably, 40 years ago—there were 45,000 British-based ratings and officers in the UK. Today, that number is below 23,000. About a quarter of all seafarer jobs in the UK industry are UK-based. The Bill does not seek to improve the mandatory link to train officer cadets or to create a separate mandatory link for the training of ratings.

The comprehensive spending review Red Book commits the Government to

“explore how best to make use of existing powers regarding the training commitment”.

However, I understand from discussions with the maritime unions that the process, which I inform the Treasury Bench is being taken forward by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, is not considering any specific measures to train British ratings or to employ British seafarers, including those who were trained on the tonnage tax vessels. This is a real wasted opportunity. If there is to be a Brexit dividend, we really must address that.

Perhaps it is a case of the Government, without taking action, inadvertently damaging the UK maritime sector, but there is an opportunity to put it right. New clause 2 would require the Government to review the impact of clause 25—tonnage tax—on employment and training for British officers and ratings, including the effect of changes to flagging arrangements on qualifying ships.

**Jackie Doyle-Price:** The hon. Member is making the case persuasively. Does he agree that one of the difficulties is that Government policy is siloed in this area? Perhaps

that is why the Government are missing the opportunity. He is right that the maritime Minister—the Under-Secretary of State for Transport, my hon. Friend the Member for Witney (Robert Courts)—gets it completely and is sympathetic, but the decision-making capability rests with the Treasury. Does he think that we need to get the Government together to see the right outcome for everyone involved in the shipping industry?

**Grahame Morris:** I am grateful for that intervention, and of course the hon. Member is right. The new clause's proposal is not revolutionary; it is common sense. It is joined-up Government and application of the principle of trying to ensure benefits for British-based seafarers from the growth predicted for the maritime sector, particularly in relation to zero-carbon and offshore. That is particularly important, given that the Government could seek to use clause 25 to attract more flags of convenience into the tonnage tax scheme. Tonnage tax is a tax break that has already provided £2.165 billion in relief from corporation tax for UK and international ship owners.

In truth, the new clause would be a modest change. The real measure required to boost seafarer jobs and training, including in some of our most deprived coastal communities—including mine—would be a new mandatory link to ratings training, as well as officer cadet training, as advocated by the ratings' union, the RMT. I do not propose that, however, because that is beyond the scope of the Bill.

Amendment 34, which is linked to new clause 2, seeks to provide the Secretary of State with the power to consult maritime trade unions over compliance with environmental safety and working conditions on non-UK flagships in the tonnage tax scheme. That would be consistent with the minimum standards on seafarer safety that everyone in the House would seek to support and which are part of the maritime labour convention to which the UK Government are a signatory along with all other maritime nations. I could say a little more but time is short, so, in the interests of progress, I shall leave it at that.

**Bell Ribeiro-Addy** (Streatham) (Lab): I rise to speak to new clause 7, on equality impact analyses. The Government's efforts to date on equality impact assessments overall have been woeful. There should not be a need for me to speak to any detail of the new clause. We cannot talk about sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism, poverty and regional inequality properly without talking about the economy, because we know that structural inequality and discrimination hold many of our communities back. As my hon. Friend the Member for Ealing North (James Murray) said, we have a right to know exactly who benefits from the Government's policy agenda, but their continued refusal to publish proper impact assessments for their Bills speaks for itself.

I want to emphasise how the Government and the Bill are deepening already existing inequalities. For all the talk of levelling up, the Government's policies amount to a sharp widening of all types of inequality, which are already among the widest in western Europe.

5.45 pm

The first and most obvious example, because it is the one that the Government make the boldest claims about, relates to geographical disparities and inequalities. The latest

annual data from the ONS shows that the average household income in Kensington and Chelsea was over £63,000 a year. In Sunderland, however, it was just £16,000, and it was almost as bad in other parts of the north. I repeat that that is for entire households, not individuals. What is the Government's response? Their response is to cut HS2; increase national insurance, which will catch the lowest paid in places such as Sunderland but leave the wealthiest residents of the royal borough unscathed; and level up spending on schools, so that pupils in the leafiest boroughs get more and inner-city pupils are even more deprived.

Ministers seem unaware that there are huge disparities within regions. It is not all rosy in the big cities either, especially in London. The average household income in Lambeth, where my constituency is, is £29,000. In Tower Hamlets it is even lower. Both figures are a tiny fraction of local house prices and there is nothing in any Government agenda for them.

Ministers also seem unaware that there is a huge increase in the exploitation of young people. A recent report from the Resolution Foundation found that one third of all those aged 24 or under returning to work in this phase of the pandemic were doing so in insecure, lower paid or zero-hours work. What is the Government's response? It is to cut universal credit eligibility to just four weeks and to force them to take jobs where pay is lower. For good measure, they have also frozen the repayment threshold of student loans, so they will find that even a minimal pay rise is eaten into by interest payments.

Contrary to the Prime Minister's repeated claims in this House, it is not the case that more people are now in work than prior to the pandemic. I would ask that the Prime Minister be called to correct the record, but I fear that there would never be any business done if that became the norm. According to the ONS, there were in fact 526,000 fewer people in work in November 2021 than there were in November 2019, before the pandemic began.

Specifically on women, the ONS reports that, after years of steady decline, the gender pay gap rose once more in 2021, to 7.9% for full-time employees. The Bill and the entirety of Government policy do nothing to address that. Like the employment total, it is not even certain that Ministers are aware of it. Some 3 million women are in low-paid work, compared with 1.9 million men.

LGBT communities have seen a stark rise in homelessness. Homelessness has risen overall by 165% since the Conservative party came to power. The Albert Kennedy Trust reports that 24% of young homeless people or young people at risk of homelessness are from the LGBTQ community. In the disabled community, over 40% of people with learning disabilities lost care and support over the past decade as a result of social care cuts, and the charity Scope reports that over 27% of working-age disabled people are living in poverty.

Finally, I want to discuss briefly the issues facing the black, Asian and minority ethnic community. In 2019 the UN reported that austerity had worsened racial inequality, but this is a Government who deny the very existence of institutional racism when the evidence is all around us. TUC comparisons of median pay show that there is an ethnicity pay gap of 10.13%. Those are only the figures we actually have, because ethnicity pay gap

reporting is woeful and shameful. It is much, much worse than for the gender pay gap. However, we must note that during the pandemic the Government, because equality is just an add-on for them, suspended gender pay gap reporting. I would also make the point that more than half of all the UK's black children live in poverty. That means that Government policy, in the form of high energy prices, higher national insurance or freezing income tax thresholds, disproportionately hits ethnic minority communities and people in work much harder.

The Government are not using their powers, including fiscal powers, to alleviate those inequalities; they are actually exacerbating them. It is a shameful record. The Government would do well to remember that equality is not expendable. It is not an add-on. It is not an extra. It is actually our law. If they are so certain that they are delivering for everybody in this country, I call on them to accept my new clause to show they are actually delivering for people right across the country. The fact remains that inequalities are out of control and they are doing absolutely nothing to stop that.

**Peter Grant** *rose*—

**Richard Thomson** (Gordon) (SNP) *rose*—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. I can see two Members standing and I intend to call the Minister at 5.55 pm. I call you first, Mr Grant, and any time you do not use up before 5.55 can be used by your colleague—no pressure.

**Peter Grant:** Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker; I am pleased to be able to make a brief contribution to tonight's debate. I commend the three previous speakers, the hon. Members for Streatham (Bell Ribeiro-Addy), for Easington (Grahame Morris) and for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran). It is unfortunate that the very inadequate time that the programme motion allowed did not give any of them the time they deserved, given the amount of work they put into their amendments.

I mentioned new clause 3 and new schedule 2 earlier, but "schedule" is a misnomer here. We are not talking about a schedule; we are in effect talking about the "Finance No. 3 Bill", 25 pages long and intensely complicated. This is our one and only chance to get it right and none of us can feel comfortable that it was tabled on Monday, it is being debated on Wednesday and it comes into force on Friday—not next Friday, but the previous Friday. What on earth are the Government playing at?

I do not have an issue with any of the other important business that took up today's time—nobody could have any issue with any of that. My issue is that when the Government knew they were going to table such a substantial, technical and complicated amendment at this stage, it was up to them to amend the programme motion to give a decent amount of time, because 90 minutes for this debate is ludicrous. Only the Government had the ability to put forward a change to the programme motion; and only the Government had the opportunity to consult with Opposition parties in advance of that amendment being tabled, or indeed to discuss it with outside stakeholders. Not doing so was a failure, unless the Minister can give a very good reason as to why secrecy was so important. Springing it on the House in this way was, I believe, an abuse of the Government's powers and shows contempt for Parliament.

The aim of the new tax is laudable and nobody would argue against it, but we have been given no indication as to why the tax is the way to prevent the kind of behaviour that we are trying to deter. It appears that it is just because they can change the tax system immediately and make it retrospective, whereas other things would take a bit longer. I ask the Government this question outright: is the urgency because they have picked up intelligence that another major player in the energy market was about to cut and run—to cash in and bail out? If they cannot answer that in public today, I would appreciate it if they contacted me after, on a guarantee of confidentiality. To be honest, I can see no other reason why there was a need for such secrecy and last-minute panic.

The amendment is restricted to energy companies, but it can also be extended to apply to any other kind of company the Treasury chooses to designate. What is that for? Can the Minister explain what other companies might need to be brought in, and in what circumstances that might need to happen? The measure is only to be in place for a year, or for such other time as the Treasury decides it wants to extend it, and it can extend it as often as it wants, although only until 2025. However, given that the Minister has said that the amendment is essentially a stopgap until Ofgem is able to amend the regulatory environment to prevent these abuses in the market, just how lacking in confidence are they of Ofgem and its ability and willingness to fix this long-standing problem if they think it might need another three years before it is fully dealt with?

Paragraph 41 of new schedule 2 gives the Government the power to change the law retrospectively. No Parliament should ever lightly agree to such a power, but tonight we have been given no choice; we simply have not had sufficient time to look at the detail of that or to get the assurances we would usually want about what that power will and will not be used for.

My hon. Friend the Member for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) referred to comments from the Chartered Institute of Taxation, and the Association of Tax Technicians told me yesterday:

“We have a brand-new tax without any prior announcement, no consultation, little debate, which will be enacted before the next Budget, and will be effective from 28 January 2022. OK, these are arguably special circumstances, but is this a good way to run a tax system?”

The short answer is no, it is not.

**Lucy Frazer:** I shall endeavour to answer all the points raised swiftly, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The hon. Member for Ealing North (James Murray) began by asking in new clause 6 for us to publish a review of the impact of the amount of tax working people will be paying. He will know that we have already published the “Impact on households” document in the October Budget of 2021 and the Office for Budget Responsibility already produces fiscal forecasts. However, he used the amendment to discuss the issue more broadly, suggesting that the Government were not doing enough to help working families. That simply is not correct, and he knows it.

We have cut tax for low-income families by introducing the universal credit taper rate, saving working families £1,000 a month.<sup>1</sup> The hon. Gentleman will know that we increased the rate for the national living wage, and

he will know about the half a billion pounds of household support for the hardest-hit families—not to mention the significant covid support that we have given the families who have needed it over the last 18 months to two years. However, the best way to help people to have appropriate incomes to support themselves is to get them into jobs, and that is why we have spent £2 billion to get young people into the kickstart scheme, and £2.9 billion to help the 1.4 million long-term unemployed to get into jobs, ensuring that we have a lower unemployment rate than comparable countries such as Canada, France, Italy and Spain.

The hon. Member for Oxford West and Abingdon (Layla Moran) talked about the need to put more money into people’s pockets, and to support services. That is exactly what we did in the spending review, with a cash increase of £150 billion a year by 2024, the largest real-terms increase provided by any Parliament in this century. Only yesterday, I was pleased to see an announcement about levelling up education funding across the country.

The hon. Member for Ealing North mentioned the NHS and social care levy. I am proud that this Government are willing to tackle the really difficult issues that face this country. My hon. Friend the Member for North Dorset (Simon Hoare) pointed out that if we secure sufficient funds, we shall be able to tackle waiting times and have more doctors. I should point out that it was a Labour Government who, in the same way, increased national insurance contribution rates by 1% in 2003, specifically to increase NHS funding. The hon. Member also mentioned the banking surcharge, but, as was mentioned by my hon. Friend the Member for South Cambridgeshire (Anthony Browne), tax rates for banks are going not down, but up—to 28%, when they would otherwise be at 27%.

A number of Members on both sides of the House mentioned the economic crime measures in the Bill, and the beneficial ownership register. I hope that those Members were present for Prime Minister’s Question Time this afternoon and heard what the Prime Minister said, showing that we are committed to introducing this legislation. However, we have already done a significant amount to tackle economic crime. Since 2010 the Government have introduced more than 150 new measures and invested more than £2 billion in HMRC to tackle fraud. We do not want in this country money that has been gained through criminality or corruption—it is not welcome in the UK—and the international Finance Action Task Force concluded in December 2018 that we have some of the strongest controls in the world. Since then, we have strengthened those powers even further.

I will spend a couple of seconds on the new clause relating to tonnage tax, referred to by the hon. Member for Ealing North, my hon. Friend the Member for Thurrock (Jackie Doyle-Price) and the hon. Members for Glasgow Central (Alison Thewliss) and for Easington (Grahame Morris). It is important to ensure a fair wage for our seafarers, who are recognised worldwide as some of the most highly skilled. That is why, in 2020, the Government extended the minimum wage entitlement to seafarers on domestic voyages.

The Department for Transport’s “Maritime 2050” strategy shows that we want a diverse and rewarded workforce, so we will continue to engage closely with industry and trade unions to support the training and employment of both British officers and ratings. I

1. [Official Report, 4 February 2022, Vol. 708, c. 6MC.]

[Lucy Frazer]

understand that the RMT has had recent meetings with the DFT and the Maritime Skills Commission on the training of ratings and has been invited to submit its analysis to inform further discussions. I wish I had more time to deal with that matter, but I will be happy to take it up further.

On the residential property tax, the hon. Member for Ealing North will know that the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities is actively working on the matter.

Climate change goals were mentioned by the hon. Member for Glasgow Central, who said that there was not enough investment in businesses to incentivise them. However, in the last financial year, we issued £16 billion-worth of green bonds and set up the UK Infrastructure Bank to invest in net zero, backed with £12 billion of capital, which will also help to unlock more than £40 billion of overall investment in infrastructure.

For all those reasons, and many others, I urge hon. Members to accept the Government amendments, but not the others.

6 pm

*Debate interrupted (Programme Order, 16 November).*

*The Deputy Speaker put forthwith the Question already proposed from the Chair (Standing Order No. 83E), That the clause be read a Second time.*

*Question agreed to.*

*New clause 1 accordingly read a Second time, and added to the Bill.*

*The Deputy Speaker then put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83E).*

### New Clause 3

#### PUBLIC INTEREST BUSINESS PROTECTION TAX

“(1) Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) makes provision about a tax charged in circumstances where a business for which there is a special administration regime becomes subject to special administration or to other special measures in connection with insolvency.

(2) In this section “special administration”, “special administration regime” and “special measures” have the meanings given by paragraph 2 of that Schedule.”—(Lucy Frazer.)

*This new clause introduces NS2.*

*Brought up, and added to the Bill.*

### New Clause 17

#### IMPACT OF ACT ON TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

“The Government must publish within 12 months of this Act coming into effect an impact assessment of the changes in the Act as a whole on the goal of tackling climate change and the UK’s plans to reach net zero by 2050.”—(Alison Thewliss.)

*Brought up.*

*Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill*

*The House divided: Ayes 228, Noes 306.*

### Division No. 180

[6.1 pm

#### AYES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	Elliott, Julie
Abrahams, Debbie	Elmore, Chris
Ali, Rushanara	Eshalomi, Florence
Ali, Tahir	Esterson, Bill
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Evans, Chris
Amesbury, Mike	Farron, Tim
Anderson, Fleur	Farry, Stephen
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Ferrier, Margaret
Ashworth, rh Jonathan	Fletcher, Colleen
Bardell, Hannah	Flynn, Stephen
Barker, Paula	Foxcroft, Vicky
Beckett, rh Margaret	Furniss, Gill
Begum, Apsana	Gardiner, Barry
Benn, rh Hilary	Gibson, Patricia
Betts, Mr Clive	Gill, Preet Kaur
Black, Mhairi	Glindon, Mary
Blackford, rh Ian	Grady, Patrick
Blackman, Kirsty	Grant, Peter
Blake, Olivia	Green, Kate
Blomfield, Paul	Green, Sarah
Bonnar, Steven	Greenwood, Lilian
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Greenwood, Margaret
Brennan, Kevin	Griffith, Nia
Brock, Deidre	Haigh, Louise
Brown, Alan	Harris, Carolyn
Brown, Ms Lyn	Hayes, Helen
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Healey, rh John
Bryant, Chris	Hendrick, Sir Mark
Buck, Ms Karen	Hendry, Drew
Burgon, Richard	Hillier, Dame Meg
Byrne, Ian	Hobhouse, Wera
Byrne, rh Liam	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Cadbury, Ruth	Hollern, Kate
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Hopkins, Rachel
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Hosie, rh Stewart
Carden, Dan	Howarth, rh Sir George
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Huq, Dr Rupa
Chamberlain, Wendy	Hussain, Imran
Champion, Sarah	Jardine, Christine
Chapman, Douglas	Jarvis, Dan
Charalambous, Bambos	Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Cherry, Joanna	Johnson, Kim
Cooper, Daisy	Jones, Darren
Cooper, rh Yvette	Jones, Gerald
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Jones, rh Mr Kevan
Cowan, Ronnie	Jones, Ruth
Coyle, Neil	Jones, Sarah
Crawley, Angela ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Owen Thompson</i> )	Kane, Mike
Creasy, Stella ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i> )	Keeley, Barbara
Cruddas, Jon	Kendall, Liz ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Pat McFadden</i> )
Cummins, Judith	Khan, Afzal
Cunningham, Alex	Kinnock, Stephen
Daby, Janet	Kyle, Peter
Davey, rh Ed	Lake, Ben
David, Wayne	Lammy, rh Mr David
Davies, Geraint	Lavery, Ian
Davies-Jones, Alex	Leadbeater, Kim
Day, Martyn	Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma
De Cordova, Marsha	Lewis, Clive
Docherty-Hughes, Martin	Lloyd, Tony
Dodds, Anneliese	Long Bailey, Rebecca
Doogan, Dave	Lucas, Caroline
Dorans, Allan	Lynch, Holly
Dowd, Peter	MacAskill, Kenny
Eagle, Maria	Madders, Justin
Edwards, Jonathan	Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Efford, Clive	Mahmood, Shabana
	Malhotra, Seema

Maskell, Rachael  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moran, Layla  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Helen  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Murray, James  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Nicolson, John  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Qaisar, Ms Anum  
 Rayner, rh Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt

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

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Richard Thomson and**  
**Marion Fellows**

#### NOES

Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aiken, Nickie  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Anderson, Stuart  
 Andrew, rh Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Gareth  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, rh Steve  
 Baron, Mr John

Baynes, Simon  
 Bell, Aaron  
 Benton, Scott  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Bhatti, Saqib  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew  
 Bradley, rh Karen  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Braverman, rh Suella  
 Brine, Steve  
 Bristow, Paul  
 Britcliffe, Sara  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buckland, rh Sir Robert  
 Burghart, Alex

Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartlidge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Cates, Miriam  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, rh Mr Simon  
 Clarke, Theo  
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan  
 Clarkson, Chris  
 Cleverly, rh James  
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse  
 Colburn, Elliot  
 Collins, Damian  
 Courts, Robert  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey  
 Crosbie, Virginia  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Gareth  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinéage, Dame Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Donelan, rh Michelle  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, rh Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Drummond, Mrs Flick  
 Duguid, David  
 Dunne, rh Philip  
 Eastwood, Mark  
 Edwards, Ruth  
 Ellis, rh Michael  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
 Eustice, rh George  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Farris, Laura  
 Fell, Simon  
 Fletcher, Katherine  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Ford, Vicky  
 Foster, Kevin  
 Fox, rh Dr Liam  
 Francois, rh Mr Mark  
 Frazer, rh Lucy  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fuller, Richard  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Gale, rh Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Glen, John

Goodwill, rh Sir Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Richard  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffith, Andrew  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Higginbotham, Antony  
 Hinds, rh Damian  
 Hoare, Simon  
 Holden, Mr Richard  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Holmes, Paul  
 Howell, John  
 Huddleston, Nigel  
 Hudson, Dr Neil  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, Jane  
 Hunt, Tom  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Kearns, Alicia  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 Lamont, John  
 Langan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherylyn

Maclean, Rachel  
 Malthouse, rh Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Mortimer, Jill  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Morrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Parish, Neil  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quince, Will  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David

Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Stuart, Graham  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trott, Laura  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Sir Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Noes:**  
**Craig Whittaker and**  
**Alan Mak**

*Question accordingly negated.*

### **New Clause 27**

#### **REVIEW OF ECONOMIC CRIME (ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING) LEVY**

‘(1) The Government must publish an impact assessment of the operation of the Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy within six months of Royal Assent to this Act.

(2) The assessment carried out under subsection (1) must include an assessment of the contribution to the effectiveness of the levy that a register of beneficial owners of property would make.’—(*Layla Moran.*)

*This new clause would require the Government to produce an impact assessment of the operation of the new Economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy, and assess how a register of beneficial owners of property would contribute to the effectiveness of the levy.*

*Brought up.*

*Question put, That the clause be added to the Bill.*

*The House divided: Ayes 230, Noes 301.*

### **Division No. 181]**

**[6.14 pm**

#### **AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane  
 Abrahams, Debbie  
 Ali, Rushanara  
 Ali, Tahir  
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena  
 Amesbury, Mike  
 Anderson, Fleur  
 Antoniazzi, Tonia  
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan  
 Bardell, Hannah  
 Barker, Paula  
 Beckett, rh Margaret  
 Begum, Apsana  
 Benn, rh Hilary  
 Betts, Mr Clive  
 Black, Mhairi  
 Blackford, rh Ian  
 Blackman, Kirsty  
 Blake, Olivia  
 Blomfield, Paul  
 Bonnar, Steven  
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Brown, Ms Lyn  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burgon, Richard  
 Byrne, Ian  
 Byrne, rh Liam  
 Cadbury, Ruth  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
 Carden, Dan  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Charalambous, Bambos  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cooper, rh Yvette  
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Crawley, Angela (*Proxy vote  
 cast by Owen Thompson*)  
 Creasy, Stella (*Proxy vote  
 cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cummins, Judith  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Daby, Janet  
 Davey, rh Ed  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint  
 Davies-Jones, Alex  
 Day, Martyn  
 De Cordova, Marsha  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Dodds, Anneliese  
 Doogan, Dave  
 Dorans, Allan  
 Dowd, Peter  
 Eagle, Maria  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Efford, Clive  
 Elliott, Julie  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Eshalomi, Florence  
 Esterson, Bill  
 Evans, Chris  
 Farry, Stephen  
 Fellows, Marion  
 Ferrier, Margaret  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Flynn, Stephen  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Gill, Preet Kaur  
 Glendon, Mary  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Green, Kate  
 Green, Sarah  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Greenwood, Margaret  
 Griffith, Nia  
 Haigh, Louise  
 Harris, Carolyn  
 Hayes, Helen  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hendrick, Sir Mark  
 Hendry, Drew  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hollern, Kate  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hopkins, Rachel  
 Hosie, rh Stewart  
 Howarth, rh Sir George  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana  
 Johnson, Kim  
 Jones, Darren  
 Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Ruth  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Kane, Mike  
 Keeley, Barbara



Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden*)  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Leadbeater, Kim  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lynch, Holly  
 MacAskill, Kenny  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moran, Layla  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Helen  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Murray, James  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Nicolson, John  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Owen, Sarah  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke

Qaisar, Ms Anum  
 Rayner, rh Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Shah, Naz  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheerman, Mr Barry  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, Alyn  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sultana, Zarah  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas, Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick  
 Thompson, Owen  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Webbe, Claudia  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittome, Nadia  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Winter, Beth  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Wendy Chamberlain and**  
**Tim Farron**

#### NOES

Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aiken, Nickie  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Anderson, Stuart  
 Andrew, rh Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline

Argar, Edward  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Gareth  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett

Barclay, rh Steve  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Baynes, Simon  
 Bell, Aaron  
 Benton, Scott  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Bhatti, Saqib  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew  
 Bradley, rh Karen  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Braverman, rh Suella  
 Brine, Steve  
 Bristow, Paul  
 Britcliffe, Sara  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buckland, rh Sir Robert  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartlidge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Cates, Miriam  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, rh Mr Simon  
 Clarke, Theo  
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan  
 Clarkson, Chris  
 Cleverly, rh James  
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse  
 Colburn, Elliot  
 Collins, Damian  
 Courts, Robert  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey  
 Crosbie, Virginia  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Gareth  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinage, Dame Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Donelan, rh Michelle  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, rh Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Drummond, Mrs Flick  
 Duguid, David  
 Dunne, rh Philip  
 Eastwood, Mark  
 Edwards, Ruth  
 Ellis, rh Michael  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie

Eustice, rh George  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Farris, Laura  
 Fell, Simon  
 Fletcher, Katherine  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Ford, Vicky  
 Foster, Kevin  
 Fox, rh Dr Liam  
 Francois, rh Mr Mark  
 Frazer, rh Lucy  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fuller, Richard  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Gale, rh Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Richard  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Higginbotham, Antony  
 Hinds, rh Damian  
 Hoare, Simon  
 Holden, Mr Richard  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Holmes, Paul  
 Howell, John  
 Huddleston, Nigel  
 Hudson, Dr Neil  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, Jane  
 Hunt, Tom  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Kearns, Alicia  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi

Lamont, John  
 Largan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cheryllyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Malthouse, rh Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Mortimer, Jill  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Parish, Neil  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will

Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trott, Laura  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Sir Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Noes:**

**Alan Mak and  
 Craig Whittaker**

*Question accordingly negatived.*

**Clause 6**

**RATE OF SURCHARGE AND SURCHARGE ALLOWANCE**

*Amendment proposed:* 35, page 2, line 30, leave out clause 6.—(*James Murray.*)

*Question put,* That the amendment be made.

*The House divided:* Ayes 228, Noes 301.

**Division No. 182]**

**[6.26 pm**

**AYES**

Abbott, rh Ms Diane	De Cordova, Marsha
Abrahams, Debbie	Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Ali, Rushanara	Dodds, Anneliese
Ali, Tahir	Doogan, Dave
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena	Dorans, Allan
Amesbury, Mike	Dowd, Peter
Anderson, Fleur	Eagle, Maria
Antoniazzi, Tonia	Edwards, Jonathan
Ashworth, rh Jonathan	Efford, Clive
Bardell, Hannah	Elliott, Julie
Barker, Paula	Elmore, Chris
Beckett, rh Margaret	Eshalomi, Florence
Begum, Apsana	Esterson, Bill
Benn, rh Hilary	Evans, Chris
Betts, Mr Clive	Farron, Tim
Black, Mhairi	Farry, Stephen
Blackford, rh Ian	Fellows, Marion
Blackman, Kirsty	Ferrier, Margaret
Blake, Olivia	Fletcher, Colleen
Blomfield, Paul	Flynn, Stephen
Bonnar, Steven	Foxcroft, Vicky
Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben	Furniss, Gill
Brennan, Kevin	Gardiner, Barry
Brock, Deidre	Gibson, Patricia
Brown, Alan	Gill, Preet Kaur
Brown, Ms Lyn	Grady, Patrick
Brown, rh Mr Nicholas	Grant, Peter
Bryant, Chris	Green, Kate
Buck, Ms Karen	Green, Sarah
Burgon, Richard	Greenwood, Lilian
Byrne, Ian	Greenwood, Margaret
Byrne, rh Liam	Griffith, Nia
Cadbury, Ruth	Haigh, Louise
Cameron, Dr Lisa	Harris, Carolyn
Campbell, rh Sir Alan	Hayes, Helen
Carden, Dan	Healey, rh John
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair	Hendrick, Sir Mark
Chamberlain, Wendy	Hendry, Drew
Champion, Sarah	Hillier, Dame Meg
Chapman, Douglas	Hobhouse, Wera
Charalambous, Bambos	Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Cherry, Joanna	Hollern, Kate
Cooper, Daisy	Hopkins, Rachel
Cooper, rh Yvette	Hosie, rh Stewart
Corbyn, rh Jeremy	Howarth, rh Sir George
Cowan, Ronnie	Huq, Dr Rupa
Coyle, Neil	Hussain, Imran
Crawley, Angela ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Owen Thompson</i> )	Jardine, Christine
Creasy, Stella ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i> )	Jarvis, Dan
Cruddas, Jon	Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Cummins, Judith	Johnson, Kim
Cunningham, Alex	Jones, Darren
Daby, Janet	Jones, Gerald
Davey, rh Ed	Jones, rh Mr Kevan
David, Wayne	Jones, Ruth
Davies, Geraint	Jones, Sarah
Davies-Jones, Alex	Kane, Mike
Day, Martyn	Keeley, Barbara
	Kendall, Liz ( <i>Proxy vote cast by Mr Pat McFadden</i> )

Khan, Afzal  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Leadbeater, Kim  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lynch, Holly  
 MacAskill, Kenny  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 McCarthy, Kerry  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm  
 McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorrin, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moran, Layla  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Helen  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Murray, James  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Nicolson, John  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Qaisar, Ms Anum

Rayner, rh Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Shah, Naz  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Slaughter, Andy  
 Smith, Alyn  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sultana, Zarah  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas, Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick  
 Thompson, Owen  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Twist, Liz  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Webbe, Claudia  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittome, Nadia  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Winter, Beth  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel

**Tellers for the Ayes:**

**Mary Glendon and  
 Sarah Owen**

**NOES**

Afolami, Bim  
 Afriyie, Adam  
 Aiken, Nickie  
 Aldous, Peter  
 Allan, Lucy  
 Anderson, Lee  
 Anderson, Stuart  
 Andrew, rh Stuart  
 Ansell, Caroline  
 Argar, Edward  
 Atkins, Victoria  
 Bacon, Gareth  
 Bacon, Mr Richard  
 Bailey, Shaun  
 Baillie, Siobhan  
 Baker, Duncan  
 Baker, Mr Steve  
 Baldwin, Harriett  
 Barclay, rh Steve  
 Baron, Mr John  
 Baynes, Simon  
 Bell, Aaron

Benton, Scott  
 Beresford, Sir Paul  
 Berry, rh Jake  
 Bhatti, Saqib  
 Blackman, Bob  
 Blunt, Crispin  
 Bone, Mr Peter  
 Bottomley, Sir Peter  
 Bowie, Andrew  
 Bradley, rh Karen  
 Brady, Sir Graham  
 Braverman, rh Suella  
 Brine, Steve  
 Bristow, Paul  
 Britcliffe, Sara  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buckland, rh Sir Robert  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartledge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Cates, Miriam  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, rh Mr Simon  
 Clarke, Theo  
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan  
 Clarkson, Chris  
 Cleverly, rh James  
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse  
 Colburn, Elliot  
 Collins, Damian  
 Courts, Robert  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey  
 Crosbie, Virginia  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Gareth  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinenage, Dame Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Donelan, rh Michelle  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, rh Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Drummond, Mrs Flick  
 Duguid, David  
 Dunne, rh Philip  
 Eastwood, Mark  
 Edwards, Ruth  
 Ellis, rh Michael  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
 Eustice, rh George  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Farris, Laura  
 Fell, Simon  
 Fletcher, Katherine  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Ford, Vicky  
 Foster, Kevin  
 Francois, rh Mr Mark  
 Frazer, rh Lucy  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fuller, Richard  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Gale, rh Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Richard  
 Gray, James  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffith, Andrew  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Hayes, rh Sir John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Higginbotham, Antony  
 Hinds, rh Damian  
 Hoare, Simon  
 Holden, Mr Richard  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Holmes, Paul  
 Howell, John  
 Huddleston, Nigel  
 Hudson, Dr Neil  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, Jane  
 Hunt, Tom  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Kearns, Alicia  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 Lamont, John

Largan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Loder, Chris  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia  
 Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherylyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Malthouse, rh Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew  
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Mortimer, Jill  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Parish, Neil  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quin, Jeremy  
 Quince, Will

Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Roberts, Rob  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew  
 Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stewart, Iain  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trott, Laura  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Walker, Mr Robin  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Sir Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Noes:**

Alan Mak and  
 Craig Whittaker

**Clause 36**

RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES:  
 “INTEREST IN LAND”

*Amendments made:* 1, in clause 36, page 28, line 10, leave out “An RP developer” and insert “A company”.

*This amendment (along with Amendments 2, 3 and 8) removes an unnecessary potential circularity in the meaning of an “interest in land” for the purposes of residential property developer tax.*

Amendment 2, in clause 36, page 28, line 11, leave out “RP developer” and insert “company”

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 1.*

Amendment 3, in clause 36, page 28, line 16, leave out “RP developer’s” and insert “company’s”

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 1.*

Amendment 4, in clause 36, page 28, line 20, leave out subsection (2)

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 5.*

Amendment 5, in clause 36, page 28, line 29, at end insert—

“(3A) But where a company (C) has an interest within subsection (3)(b), that interest is not an excluded interest if it is granted as a result of arrangements to which C or a related company is party and under which an estate in the land in question is to be conveyed by another party to the arrangements at the direction or request of C or a related company to any of—

- (a) a person who is not party to the arrangements,
- (b) C, or
- (c) a company related to C.

(3B) For the purposes of subsection (3A)—

- (a) “arrangements” includes any agreement, understanding, scheme, transaction or series of transactions (whether or not legally enforceable);
- (b) a conveyance by a person as nominee or bare trustee is to be treated as also being a conveyance by the person or persons for whom they are the nominee or trustee.

(3C) For the purposes of this section, a company (A) is related to another company (B) if—

- (a) A is a member of a group of which B is a member;
- (b) A is a relevant joint venture company and B, or B together with any other company which is a member of a group of which B is a member, has or have a substantial interest in A.”

*This amendment provides that a licence to use or occupy land that is granted as a result of arrangements under which an estate in the land is to be conveyed, at the request of a company or related company, is not an excluded interest for the purposes of clause 36 (and, accordingly, is an interest in land for the purposes of that clause).*

Amendment 6, in clause 36, page 28, line 35, at end insert—

“(4A) For the purposes of subsection (4), a licence falling within subsection (3A) to use or occupy land is to be treated as being disposed of when an estate in the land is, or would be, conveyed under the arrangements as a result of which the licence is granted.”

*This amendment provides that a licence of the sort mentioned in subsection (3A) of clause 36 (inserted by Amendment 5) would form part of a company’s trading stock for the purposes of that clause.*

Amendment 7, in clause 36, page 28, line 36, leave out “subsection (4)” and insert “this section”.

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 6.*

Amendment 8, in clause 36, page 28, line 38, leave out “an RP developer” and insert “a company”.—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 1.*

*Question accordingly negated.*

**Clause 58**

## ASSESSMENT, PAYMENT, COLLECTION AND RECOVERY

*Amendments made:* 9, in clause 58, page 44, line 43, leave out “entities that are” and insert “persons”.

*This amendment and Amendment 10 ensure that those liable to pay the economic crime (anti-money laundering) levy are referred to as “persons” in each place for consistency with other provisions of Part 3.*

Amendment 10, in clause 58, page 45, line 9, leave out “entities” and insert “persons”.—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 9.*

**Clause 78**VEHICLE EXCISE DUTY: EXEMPTION FOR CERTAIN  
CABOTAGE OPERATIONS

*Amendments made:* 11, in clause 78 page 63, line 6, leave out

“period ending with 30th April 2022”  
and insert “permitted period”.

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 12.*

Amendment 12, in clause 78, page 63, line 23, at end insert—

“(2ZD) Paragraphs (2ZE) and (2ZF) apply in determining the “permitted period” for the purposes of paragraph (2)(c)(d)(iii).

(2ZE) In the case of vehicles arriving in the United Kingdom on or after 28th October 2021, the “permitted period” means the period ending with—

- (a) 30th April 2022, or
- (b) such later date as regulations made by the Treasury may specify.

(2ZF) Where regulations made by the Treasury provide for this paragraph to apply in the case of vehicles arriving in the United Kingdom on or after a date specified in the regulations that is after 30th April 2022, the “permitted period” means the period—

- (a) beginning with that specified date, and
- (b) ending with such later date as the regulations may specify.

(2ZG) The later date specified in regulations under paragraph (2ZE)(b) or (2ZF)(b) must be no later than 31st December 2022.

(2ZH) Regulations under paragraph (2ZE) or (2ZF) are to be made by statutory instrument.

(2ZI) A statutory instrument containing regulations under paragraph (2ZE) or (2ZF) is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of the House of Commons.”

*This amendment (along with Amendments 11 and 13) enables the Treasury by regulations to extend the temporary extension of cabotage rights afforded by clause 78 beyond the current end date of 30 April 2022, but any such extension must end on or before 31 December 2022.*

Amendment 13, in clause 78, page 63, line 24, leave out subsection (3).—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 12.*

**New Schedule 1**“FREEPORT TAX SITE RELIEFS: PROVISION ABOUT  
REGULATIONS**PART 1**

## FIRST-YEAR ALLOWANCE FOR PLANT AND MACHINERY

1 Part 2 of CAA 2001 (plant and machinery allowances) is amended in accordance with paragraphs 2 and 3.

2 (none) In section 45O (expenditure on plant and machinery for use in freeport tax sites), in subsection (7), for the entry relating to section 45R substitute “section 45R (effect of failing to comply with ongoing requirements) and regulations under that section, and”.

3 (1) Section 45R (effect of plant or machinery subsequently being primarily for use outside freeport tax sites) is amended as follows.

(2) In the heading, for the words from “plant” to the end substitute “failing to comply with ongoing requirements”.

(3) After subsection (3) insert—

“(3A) The Treasury may by regulations make provision adding, removing or altering, or otherwise about, circumstances in which expenditure on the provision of plant or machinery is to be treated as never having been first-year qualifying expenditure under section 45O.

(3B) The power to make regulations under subsection (3A) may be exercised only in relation to expenditure incurred on or after the date on which the regulations come into force.

(3C) Subsections (3) and (4) of section 45P apply in relation to regulations under subsection (3A) as they apply in relation to regulations under that section.”

(4) In subsection (4), at the end insert “or regulations under subsection (3A)”.

(5) In subsection (5), after “this section” insert “or of regulations under subsection (3A)”.

(6) In subsection (6), at the end insert “or of regulations under subsection (3A)”.

4 (1) Section 570B of CAA 2001 (orders and regulations made by Treasury or Commissioners) is amended as follows.

(2) In subsection (3), after “section 45P,” insert “45R,”.

(3) In subsection (4), after “section 45P” insert “, 45R”.

**PART 2**

## STRUCTURES AND BUILDINGS ALLOWANCES

5 (1) Section 270BNC of CAA 2001 (structures and buildings allowances: power to amend meaning of “freeport qualifying expenditure”) is amended as follows.

(2) In the heading, at the end insert “etc”.

(3) In subsection (1)—

(a) the words from “change” to the end become paragraph (a);

(b) after that paragraph insert “, or

(b) make provision adding, removing or altering, or otherwise about, circumstances in which qualifying expenditure is to be treated as if it were—

- (i) freeport qualifying expenditure, or
- (ii) other qualifying expenditure,

including provision about assessments, adjustments to assessments, returns, amendments of returns and penalties.”

(4) In subsection (4)(b), after “subsection” insert “(1)(b) or”.

(5) At the end insert—

“(5) The power to make regulations under subsection (1)(b) may be exercised only in relation to qualifying expenditure incurred on or after the date on which the regulations come into force.”

**PART 3**

## STAMP DUTY LAND TAX

6 (1) In Schedule 6C to FA 2003 (stamp duty land tax: relief for freeport tax sites), paragraph 12 (power to change the cases in which relief is available) is amended as follows.

(2) In sub-paragraph (1)—

- (a) at the end of paragraph (a) insert “or”;

- (b) for paragraphs (b) and (c) substitute—
- (b) make other provision about the availability of relief under this Schedule, including provision—
  - (i) adding, removing or altering, or otherwise about, conditions that must be met in order for relief to be available,
  - (ii) about the withdrawal of relief, or
  - (iii) about returns where relief is withdrawn.”

(3) In sub-paragraph (4)(b), after “on” insert “sub-paragraph (1)(b) of this paragraph or on”.

(4) At the end insert—

“(5) The power to make regulations under this paragraph may be exercised only in relation to transactions with an effective date that is on or after the date on which the regulations come into force.”—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

See the explanatory statement for NCI.

*Brought up, and added to the Bill.*

## New Schedule 2

### “PUBLIC INTEREST BUSINESS PROTECTION TAX

#### PART 1

#### CHARGE

*Charge on value of assets held for qualifying purposes*

1 (1) Where—

- (a) a person (“P”) takes disqualifying steps in relation to an asset in disqualifying circumstances, and
- (b) the £100 million threshold condition is met in relation to the person (whether before, at the same time as or after those steps were taken),

P is liable to pay a tax equal to 75% of the asset’s adjusted value (see paragraph 3).

(2) The tax is to be known as public interest business protection tax and the Commissioners for Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs are responsible for its collection and management.

(3) P takes disqualifying steps in relation to an asset in disqualifying circumstances if—

- (a) it is reasonable to conclude that the asset was held by P wholly or partly for the purposes of it being used or being available for use for the benefit of a public interest business carried on by P or by a person connected to P,
- (b) steps are taken by P, or by P together with others, that result in the asset not being used to some extent, or being no longer available for use to some extent, for the benefit of the business,
- (c) the business becomes subject to special measures (whether before, at the same time as, or after those steps were taken),
- (d) the taking of those steps materially contributes to—
  - (i) the business becoming subject to special measures, or
  - (ii) a significant increase in the costs of carrying on the business, and
- (e) P was aware, or ought reasonably to have been aware, that the asset not being used, or being available for use, by the business would have the effect mentioned in paragraph (d)(i) or (ii).

(4) In this Schedule—

- (a) “qualifying purposes” means the purposes described in sub-paragraph (3)(a), and
- (b) “disqualifying steps” means steps described in sub-paragraph (3)(b), and steps may fall within that description whether or not—
  - (i) P or any other person receives any consideration in connection with, or otherwise in consequence of, the taking of the steps, or
  - (ii) P directly participates in all of the steps.

(5) Disqualifying steps include (for example)—

- (a) one or more steps that result in the disposal of the asset where some or all of the proceeds of that disposal are (to any extent) not applied for the benefit of the public interest business (including where some of those proceeds are so applied for a time, but subsequently cease to be);
- (b) one or more steps that result in the public interest business being deprived in substance of the benefit of the asset to some extent (including where the benefit of the asset is provided to the business at a greater cost to the business than would have reasonably been expected);
- (c) one or more steps that facilitate a person benefiting from the asset or its disposal to the detriment of the public interest business;
- (d) entering into arrangements which result in the asset no longer being held, or which result in it being held to a lesser extent, for qualifying purposes in relation to the public interest business (including arrangements that include transactions to which the person is not party);
- (e) directing, encouraging or causing another person to do something which results in the asset no longer being held, or which result in it being held to a lesser extent, for qualifying purposes in relation to the public interest business.

(6) Steps taken in contemplation of the taking of disqualifying steps (which might include steps taken in relation to the residence of P) are to be treated as disqualifying steps.

(7) Where the taking of a disqualifying step was delayed by the action of a public authority, that step is to be treated as having been taken at the time at which it would, but for that action, have been taken.

(8) In determining, for the purposes of sub-paragraph (3)(d)(ii) whether there has been an increase in the costs of carrying on the public interest business—

- (a) those costs are to be taken to include the costs of any person who, as a result of the special measures, takes over (in substance) the carrying on of any of the activities comprised in the carrying on of the business (such as the costs of a person to whom the customers of the business are transferred), and
- (b) whether costs have increased is to be determined by reference to what the costs of carrying on the activities comprised in the carrying on of the business would have been—
  - (i) had those activities all been carried on by the business, and
  - (ii) had the asset been available for use (including its being used to avoid or offset a cost) in connection with the carrying on of those activities on the same basis it had been available before the taking of the first disqualifying step.

(9) The £100 million threshold condition is met in relation to P if the combined underlying value (as determined in accordance with paragraph 3(2) and (3)) of all assets in respect of which disqualifying steps were taken in disqualifying circumstances by P and by any person who is connected to P exceeds £100 million.

(10) In this Schedule—

“asset” includes a part of an asset;

“disposal” includes anything which would be a disposal for the purposes of TCGA 1992.

*Meaning of “public interest business” and “special measures”*

2 (1) For the purposes of this Schedule, a business is a “public interest business” if it is—

- (a) an energy supply business, or
- (b) a business of a description specified in regulations made by the Treasury.

(2) Regulations may only specify a description of business if a special administration regime exists for persons carrying on businesses of that description.

(3) For the purposes of this Schedule a business is subject to special measures if—

- (a) the person carrying on the business enters special administration,
- (b) it is subject to arrangements, imposed in connection with the insolvency of the person carrying it on by or under an enactment (including by virtue of any licence required by or under an enactment), for the transfer of customers of the business to another business, or
- (c) such other circumstances relating to insolvency as may be specified in regulations made by the Treasury exist in relation to the business or the person carrying it on.

(4) In this paragraph—

“energy supply business” means the business of making supplies required to be authorised under—

- (a) a licence granted under section 7A(1) of the Gas Act 1986 (gas supply licences), or
- (b) a licence granted under section 6(1)(d) of the Electricity Act 1989 (electricity supply licences);

“special administration” means an insolvency procedure—

- (a) that is similar or corresponds to ordinary administration, and
- (b) under which the administrator has one or more special objectives instead of or in addition to the objectives of ordinary administration;

“special administration regime” means provision made by an enactment that provides for special administration;

“ordinary administration” means the insolvency procedure provided for by—

- (a) Schedule B1 to the Insolvency Act 1986, or
- (b) Schedule B1 to the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989 (S.I. 1989/2405 (N.I. 19)).

#### *Adjusted value of assets*

3 (1) To determine the adjusted value of an asset, take the following steps—

##### *Step 1 - value the asset*

Determine the underlying value of the asset.

##### *Step 2 - apply reduction to reflect potential losses as a result of taking steps*

Deduct an amount equal to 10% of the underlying value from that value.

(2) The underlying value of the asset is the greater of—

- (a) the fair value of the asset immediately before the first disqualifying step was taken in relation to it, and
- (b) the amount or value of any consideration paid directly or indirectly in connection with, or otherwise in consequence of, the taking of the disqualifying steps (whether paid to the person taking them or to any other person).

(3) Where it is reasonable to conclude that an asset was held partly for qualifying purposes in relation to the public interest business in question and partly for other purposes, reduce the underlying value so that it reflects the proportion of the asset that can be attributed (on a just and reasonable basis) to its being held for qualifying purposes in relation to the business.

## PART 2

### JOINT AND SEVERAL LIABILITY

#### *Liability of associated companies*

4 (1) This paragraph applies to any company, other than a company that is subject to special measures, that was associated, at any point during the disqualifying period, with a company (“the principal taxpayer”) that is liable to public interest business protection tax as a result of paragraph 1.

(2) A company is associated with another if—

- (a) one of the two has control of the other, or
- (b) both are under the control of the same person or persons.

(3) A company to which this paragraph applies is, together with the principal taxpayer, jointly and severally liable to public interest business protection tax.

(4) In this Schedule the “disqualifying period” means the period commencing with the day on which the first disqualifying step was taken and ending with the last day of the period in which the principal taxpayer must make a return under paragraph 8(1).

*Joint and several liability of connected persons and others who may benefit*

5 (1) This paragraph applies to a person (“R”) and any person connected to R if—

- (a) R or a person connected to R receives the proceeds (whether directly or indirectly) of any consideration paid directly or indirectly in connection with, or otherwise in consequence of, the taking of disqualifying steps by a person liable to public interest business protection tax as a result of paragraph 1 (“the principal taxpayer”), and
- (b) the sum of amounts received by R and persons connected to R is equal to or exceeds 5% of the adjusted value of the asset.

(2) This paragraph also applies to a person (“S”) and any person connected to S if—

- (a) S or a person connected to S had a qualifying interest in a company, partnership or unincorporated association liable to public interest business protection tax as a result of paragraph 1 (“the principal taxpayer”) during the disqualifying period, and
- (b) the sum of qualifying interests S and persons connected to S had in the principal taxpayer during that period was equal to or exceeded 5% (see paragraph 6(1) which defines “qualifying interest” as a proportion).

(3) This paragraph does not apply to a person if the person is liable to tax as a result of paragraph 4 in relation to the same asset.

(4) A person to whom this paragraph applies is, together with the principal taxpayer, jointly and severally liable to public interest business protection tax.

(5) But the liability of a person liable to tax as a result of this paragraph is limited to—

- (a) in the case of a person to whom this paragraph applies only as a result of sub-paragraph (1), the amount equal to the sum of the proceeds of consideration received (directly or indirectly) by R and persons connected to R,
- (b) in the case of a person to whom this paragraph applies only as a result of sub-paragraph (2), the amount equal to the proportion of the principal taxpayer’s liability that is the same as the sum of qualifying interests S and persons connected to S had during the disqualifying period, and
- (c) in the case of a person to whom this paragraph applies as a result of both sub-paragraphs (1) and (2), the greater of the amounts described in paragraphs (a) and (b).

(6) References in this paragraph to the receipt of the proceeds of consideration do not include the receipt of any amount pursuant to a loan if—

- (a) the parties to that loan are not connected,
- (b) the creditor carries on a business of lending money,
- (c) the loan was made by the creditor in the ordinary course of that business, and
- (d) the terms of the loan were agreed between parties dealing at arm’s length.

*Qualifying interests in company, partnership or unincorporated association*

6 (1) A person (“the qualifying person”) had a qualifying interest in a company, partnership or unincorporated association liable to tax (“the taxed entity”) during the disqualifying period if at any point during the period—

- (a) the qualifying person was beneficially entitled to a proportion of the profits available for distribution to equity holders of the taxed entity, or
- (b) the qualifying person was beneficially entitled to a proportion of the assets of the taxed entity for distribution to its equity holders on a winding up,

and the qualifying interest of the person is, for the purposes of paragraph 5(2)(b) and (5)(b), to be treated as the greatest of the proportions that applied at any point during the period.

(2) Chapter 6 of Part 5 of CTA 2010 applies for the purposes of determining the proportions of profits or assets of the taxed entity that the qualifying person is beneficially entitled to as it applies for the purposes of determining the proportions of profits or assets of a company that another company is beneficially entitled to (see, in particular, sections 165 and 166 of that Act).

(3) That Chapter has effect for the purposes of sub-paragraph (1) as if—

- (a) in sections 170(3) and 172(3) (shares or securities with limited or temporary rights), for “less than” there were substituted “more than”,
- (b) in section 174 (option arrangements)—
  - (i) in subsection (1), in Step 4, for “lowest proportion” there were substituted “highest proportion”, and
  - (ii) in subsection (2), for “less than” there were substituted “more than”,
- (c) in sections 175(3), 176(3), 177(3) and 178(3) (cases in which more than one of sections 170, 172, and 174 apply), for “lowest proportion” there were substituted “highest proportion”, and
- (d) sections 179 to 182 were omitted.

(4) That Chapter is to be read, for those purposes, with all modifications necessary to ensure that—

- (a) it applies to a company which does not have share capital or to a partnership or unincorporated association, and to holders of corresponding ordinary holdings in such a company, partnership or unincorporated association, in a way which corresponds to the way they apply to companies with ordinary share capital and holders of ordinary shares in such companies,
- (b) it applies in relation to ownership through any trust or other arrangement, in a way which corresponds to the way it applies to ownership through a company, and
- (c) for the purposes of achieving paragraphs (a) and (b), profits or assets are attributed to holders of corresponding ordinary holdings in partnerships, unincorporated associations, trusts or other arrangements in a manner which corresponds to the way profits or assets are attributed to holders of ordinary shares in a company which is a body corporate.

(5) In this paragraph “corresponding ordinary holding” means a holding or interest which provides the holder with economic rights corresponding to those provided by a holding of ordinary shares.

*Claim for relief*

7 (1) This paragraph applies to a person who is liable to tax as a result of paragraph 5 if the person can demonstrate that the potential benefit to the person in connection with the taking of disqualifying steps is less than the amount to which the person would otherwise be liable to tax.

(2) References in this paragraph to the potential benefit to the person are to the maximum amount or value by which the person has or could have benefitted, or could benefit, in connection with the taking of those steps, which may (for example) include by—

- (a) receiving, or being entitled (whether absolutely or conditionally) to receive, any amount in connection with the taking of the steps;

- (b) being entitled (whether absolutely or conditionally) to any assets, or distribution out of assets, whose value is affected by the taking of the steps;

- (c) being a person in respect of whom a power or other discretion may be exercised resulting in the receipt of any such amount, assets or distribution;

- (d) disposing of, or being able to dispose of, any such assets.

(3) A person to whom this paragraph applies may make a claim to an officer of Revenue and Customs for relief by way of a reduction of the amount to which the person is liable to secure that the amount does not exceed the potential benefit to the person.

(4) No account is to be taken in a claim under this paragraph of—

- (a) any amount of costs that may be incurred in connection with the realisation of a potential benefit unless that amount has been paid before making the claim, or

- (b) any losses associated with the taking of the disqualifying steps (as the underlying tax has already been reduced as a result of the application of step 2 in paragraph 3(1)).

(5) An officer of Revenue and Customs to whom a claim is made under this paragraph must determine the claim and make so much (if any) of the reduction claimed as the officer considers is just and reasonable.

(6) A reduction may be made by way of an assessment or the modification of an assessment, or otherwise.

(7) The officer must notify their determination of the claim to the person making it.

(8) A person who has made a claim under this paragraph that has not been determined by an officer of Revenue and Customs may apply to the tribunal for a direction requiring an officer of Revenue and Customs to make that determination within a specified period.

(9) Any such application is subject to the relevant provisions of Part 5 of TMA 1970 (see, in particular, section 48(2)(b) of that Act).

(10) The tribunal must give the direction applied for unless satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for not determining the claim within a specified period.

## PART 3

### ADMINISTRATION

*Requirement to file return and pay tax chargeable under paragraph 1*

8 (1) A person liable to tax as a result of paragraph 1 must make and deliver a return to an officer of Revenue and Customs before the end of the period of 30 days beginning with later of—

- (a) the day on which the person became liable,
- (b) the day on which the public interest business to which the tax relates entered special measures,
- (c) the day on which the £100 million threshold condition is met (see paragraph 1(9)), and
- (d) the day on which this Act is passed.

(2) References in this Schedule to the day on which a person became liable to tax as a result of paragraph 1 (however framed) are to the date on which the first of the disqualifying steps to which the tax relates was taken.

(3) A return under this paragraph must contain—

- (a) such information, accounts, statements and documents as are relevant to the person’s liability to tax, and
- (b) an assessment of the amount (a “self-assessment”), on the basis of the information contained in the return, the person is liable to pay.

(4) The Commissioners for Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs may by notice, published by the Commissioners in such manner as they consider appropriate, specify descriptions of information, accounts and documents that are relevant to a person’s liability to tax (and which accordingly must be contained in a return).



(5) A self-assessment may not be made and delivered under this paragraph after the end of the period of 4 years beginning with the day on which the person became liable to tax.

(6) Where a return is made under this paragraph, the amount assessed is payable on the day after the end of the period of 15 days beginning with the day after the end of the period referred to in sub-paragraph (1).

*Notice to file return in respect of joint and several liability under paragraph 4 or 5*

9 (1) An officer of Revenue and Customs may by notice require a person liable to public interest business protection tax as a result of paragraph 4 or 5—

- (a) to make and deliver to the officer a return containing such information as may reasonably be required in pursuance of the notice, and
- (b) to deliver with the return such accounts, statements and documents, relating to information contained in the return as may reasonably be so required.

(2) A notice may only be given to a person under this paragraph if the officer considers that there is a risk that the full amount of tax due from the principal taxpayer (see paragraphs 4 and 5) will not be recovered from the principal taxpayer.

(3) A notice under this paragraph must state the amount the officer determines is the liability of the principal taxpayer.

(4) A return required as a result of a notice given under this paragraph must contain an assessment of the amount (a “self-assessment”), on the basis of the information contained in the return and the amount stated in the notice in accordance with sub-paragraph (3), the person is liable to pay.

(5) A return required as a result of a notice given under this paragraph must be made and delivered before the end of the period of 30 days beginning with the day on which the notice was given.

(6) A person who has paid an amount of tax under or in pursuance of a notice under this paragraph may recover that amount from the principal taxpayer.

(7) Where a return is made under this paragraph, the amount assessed is payable on the day after the end of the period of 45 days beginning with the day on which the notice to which it relates was given.

*Time limits in relation to assessment under paragraph 9*

10 (1) A notice under paragraph 9(1) may not be given after the end of the period of 3 years beginning with the latest date provided for by whichever of sub-paragraphs (2), (3) and (4) apply.

(2) Where the liability of the principal taxpayer is determined under paragraph 12(1) (HMRC to determine tax where no return made in time), the date provided for by this sub-paragraph is the date on which the determination was made.

(3) Where a return has been made by the principal taxpayer, including where the return supersedes a determination under paragraph 12(1), the date provided for by this sub-paragraph is the latest of—

- (a) the last date on which notice of enquiry (see paragraph 13) may be given in relation to the return,
- (b) if a notice of enquiry is given, 30 days after the closure notice is issued,
- (c) if an appeal is brought against any conclusion stated or amendment made by the closure notice, 30 days after the appeal is finally determined.

(4) Where a discovery assessment (see paragraph 18) is made in relation to the liability of the principal taxpayer, the date provided for by this sub-paragraph is—

- (a) where there is no appeal against the assessment, the date when the tax becomes due and payable, and
- (b) where there is such an appeal, the date on which the appeal is finally determined.

(5) A self-assessment may not be made and delivered under paragraph 9 after the later of the end of the period of—

- (a) 3 years beginning with the latest date provided for by whichever of sub-paragraphs (2), (3) or (4) applies, and
- (b) 3 months beginning with the day on which the notice was given.

*Amendments and corrections of return*

11 (1) A person who makes a return under paragraph 8 or 9 may amend that return by notice to an officer of Revenue and Customs.

(2) An amendment under sub-paragraph (1) may not be made more than twelve months after the end of the period in which the return must be delivered (see paragraphs 8(1) and 9(5)).

(3) An officer of Revenue and Customs may amend a return under paragraph 8 or 9 so as to correct—

- (a) obvious errors or omissions in the return (whether errors of principle, arithmetical mistakes or otherwise), and
- (b) anything else in the return that the officer has reason to believe is incorrect in the light of information available to the officer.

(4) A correction under sub-paragraph (3) is made by notice to the person whose return it is.

(5) No such correction may be made more than nine months after—

- (a) the day on which the return was delivered, or
- (b) if the correction is required in consequence of an amendment of the return under sub-paragraph (1), the day on which that amendment was made.

(6) A correction under sub-paragraph (3) is of no effect if the person whose return it is gives notice rejecting the correction.

(7) A notice under sub-paragraph (6) must be given—

- (a) to the officer who gave the notice under sub-paragraph (4), and
- (b) before the end of the period of 30 days beginning with the day on which the notice under sub-paragraph (4) was issued.

*HMRC to determine tax where no return made in time*

12 (1) Where a person required to make a return as a result of paragraph 8 or 9 has not delivered that return, an officer of Revenue and Customs may determine to the best of the officer’s information and belief the amount of tax payable by the person.

(2) The power to make a determination under this paragraph becomes exercisable if no return is delivered before the end of the period in which the return must be delivered.

(3) The officer must give notice of a determination under this paragraph to the person, and that notice must state the date on which the determination is issued.

(4) A determination under this paragraph is to have effect as if it were a self-assessment contained in a return under (as the case may be) paragraph 8 or 9.

(5) But if a return is subsequently made containing a self-assessment of the tax, that determination is superseded by the self-assessment provided that return is made and delivered—

- (a) no more than 12 months after the date of the determination, and
- (b) no later than the end of the period within which a self-assessment may be made as a result of paragraph 8(5) or 10(5) (as the case may be).

(6) Where—

- (a) proceedings have been commenced for the recovery of any tax charged by a determination under this paragraph, and
- (b) before those proceedings are concluded, the determination is superseded by an assessment as a result of sub-paragraph (5),

those proceedings may be continued as if they were proceedings for the recovery of so much of the tax charged by the self-assessment as is due and payable and has not been paid.

(7) No determination under this paragraph may be made after—

- (a) in the case of a determination in relation to a person required to make a return under paragraph 8, the end of the period of 4 years beginning with the day on which the person became liable to tax, or
- (b) in the case of a determination in relation to a person required to make a return under paragraph 9, the end of the period referred to in paragraph 10(1).

(8) Where a determination is made under this paragraph, the amount determined is payable on the day after the end of the 14 day period beginning with the day on which an officer of Revenue and Customs notifies the person of the determination.

#### *Enquiry into return*

13 (1) An officer of Revenue and Customs may enquire into a return under paragraph 8 or 9 if the officer gives notice that the officer intends to do so (a “notice of enquiry”) to the person whose return it is (“the taxpayer”).

(2) The normal rule is that a notice of enquiry may only be given up to the end of the period of twelve months after the day on which the return was delivered.

(3) But if the taxpayer has amended the return under paragraph 11(1), a notice of enquiry may be given up to the end of the period of twelve months after the amendment was made.

(4) A return which has been the subject of one notice of enquiry may not be the subject of another.

(5) An enquiry extends to anything contained in the return, or required to be contained in the return, subject to the following limitations.

(6) Where a notice of enquiry is given as a result of an amendment of the return under paragraph 11(1) and that notice is given—

- (a) after the end of the period referred to in sub-paragraph (2), or
- (b) after a closure notice has been issued in relation to an enquiry into the return,

the enquiry into the return is limited to matters to which the amendment relates or which are affected by the amendment.

#### *Completion of enquiry*

14 (1) The enquiry is completed when an officer of Revenue and Customs informs the taxpayer by notice (“a closure notice”) that the officer’s enquiries have been completed.

(2) A closure notice must state the officer’s conclusions and—

- (a) state that in the officer’s opinion no amendment of the return is required, or
- (b) make the amendments of the return required to give effect to the officer’s conclusions.

(3) A closure notice takes effect when it is issued.

(4) The taxpayer may apply to the tribunal for a direction requiring an officer of the Board to issue a closure notice within a specified period.

(5) Any such application is subject to the relevant provisions of Part 5 of TMA 1970 (see, in particular, section 48(2)(b) of that Act).

(6) The tribunal must give the direction applied for unless satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for not issuing the closure notice within a specified period.

#### *Amendment of return by taxpayer during enquiry*

15 (1) This paragraph applies if a return is amended under paragraph 11(1) at a time when an enquiry into the return is in progress in relation to any matter to which the amendment relates or which is affected by the amendment.

(2) The amendment does not restrict the scope of the enquiry but may be taken into account (together with any matters arising) in the enquiry.

(3) So far as the amendment affects the amount stated in the self-assessment included in the return as the amount of tax payable, it does not take effect while the enquiry is in progress in relation to any matter to which the amendment relates or which is affected by the amendment.

(4) If an officer of Revenue and Customs states in a closure notice that the officer has taken account of the amendment and that—

- (a) the amendment has been taken into account in formulating the amendments contained in the notice, or
- (b) the officer has concluded that the amendment is incorrect,

the amendment does not take effect.

(5) Otherwise, the amendment takes effect when a closure notice is issued.

(6) For the purposes of this paragraph and paragraph 16, the period during which an enquiry is in progress in relation to any matter is the whole of the period—

- (a) beginning with the day on which notice of enquiry is given, and
- (b) ending with the day on which a closure notice is issued.

#### *Amendment of return during enquiry by HMRC to prevent loss of tax*

16 (1) This paragraph applies where an enquiry into a return is in progress in relation to any matter.

(2) If the officer forms the opinion—

- (a) that the amount stated in the self-assessment contained in the return as the amount of tax payable is insufficient, and
- (b) that unless the self-assessment is immediately amended there is likely to be a loss of tax to the Crown,

the officer may by notice to the taxpayer amend the self-assessment to make good the deficiency so far as it relates to the matter.

(3) In the case of an enquiry which, as a result of paragraph 13(6), is limited to matters arising from an amendment of the return, sub-paragraph (2) only applies so far as the deficiency is attributable to the amendment.

#### *Date by which payment to be made after amendment or correction of self-assessment*

17 Paragraphs 2 to 5 of Schedule 3ZA to TMA 1970 apply for the purpose of determining when an amount of tax is payable or repayable as a result of an amendment or correction of a self-assessment under this Schedule as if—

- (a) the reference in paragraph 2(1) of that Schedule to section 9ZA of that Act were to paragraph 11(1) of this Schedule,
- (b) in paragraph 2(3) of that Schedule—
  - (i) the reference to section 9B(3) of that Act were to paragraph 15(3) of this Schedule,
  - (ii) the reference to section 9B(3)(a)(i) of that Act were to paragraph 15(4)(a) of this Schedule, and
  - (iii) the reference to section 9B(3)(b) of that Act were to paragraph 15(5) of this Schedule,
- (c) in paragraph 2(4) of that Schedule—
  - (i) in paragraph (a), for “partial or final closure notice” there were substituted “closure notice”, and
  - (ii) for paragraph (b) there were substituted—
- (d) the reference in paragraph 3(1) of that Schedule to section 9ZB of that Act were to paragraph 11(3) of this Schedule,
- (e) the reference in paragraph 4(1) of that Schedule to section 9C of that Act were to paragraph 16 of this Schedule, and
- (f) the reference in paragraph 5(1) of that Schedule to section 28A of that Act were to paragraph 14 of this Schedule.

*Discovery assessment*

18 (1) If an officer of Revenue and Customs discovers—

- (a) that a person who ought to have been assessed to tax has not been assessed to tax,
- (b) that an assessment to tax is or has become insufficient, or
- (c) that any relief from tax which has been given is or has become excessive,

the officer may make an assessment (a “discovery assessment”) in the amount, or the further amount, which ought in the officer’s opinion to be charged in order to make good to the Crown the loss of tax.

(2) Where a person has made and delivered a return under paragraph 8 or 9 a discovery assessment may not be made in respect of the tax to which the return relates unless condition A or B is met.

(3) Condition A is that the situation mentioned in sub-paragraph (1) was brought about carelessly or deliberately by the person or a person acting on that person’s behalf.

(4) Condition B is that at the time when an officer of Revenue and Customs—

- (a) ceased to be entitled to give a notice of enquiry to the person, or
- (b) in a case where a notice of enquiry was given in relation to the return, issued a closure notice,

the officer could not have been reasonably expected, on the basis of the information made available to the officer before that time, to be aware of the situation mentioned in sub-paragraph (1).

(5) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (4), information is made available to an officer of Revenue and Customs if—

- (a) it is contained in the person’s return under paragraph 8 or 9, or in any accounts, statements or documents accompanying the return;
- (b) it is contained in any claim made under this Schedule by the person, or in any accounts, statements or documents accompanying any such claim;
- (c) it is contained in any documents, accounts or particulars which, for the purposes of any enquiries into the return or any such claim by an officer of Revenue and Customs, are produced or furnished by the person to the officer;
- (d) it is information the existence of which, and the relevance of which as regards the situation mentioned in sub-paragraph (1)—
  - (i) could reasonably be expected to be inferred by an officer of Revenue and Customs from information falling within paragraphs (a) to (c), or
  - (ii) are notified in writing by the person to an officer of Revenue and Customs.

(6) An objection to the making of an assessment under this paragraph on the ground that neither condition A nor B is fulfilled may only be made on an appeal against the assessment.

(7) Where an amount of tax is assessed under this paragraph, that amount is payable on the day after the end of the 14 day period beginning with the day on which the notice of assessment is issued.

*Assessment procedure*

19 (1) Notice of an assessment to tax on a person must be served on the person stating—

- (a) the date on which the notice is issued, and
- (b) the time within which any appeal against the assessment may be made.

(2) After that notice has been served on the person, the assessment may not be altered except in accordance with any express provision of this Schedule or of any provision of the Taxes Acts that applies to public interest business protection tax.

*Time limits for assessments*

20 (1) The normal rule is that an assessment of a person to tax (other than a self-assessment) may be made at any time within the period of 4 years beginning with the day (“the relevant day”) after the end of the period in which the person was required to make and deliver a return.

(2) But an assessment on a person in a case involving a loss of public interest business protection tax brought about carelessly by the person may be made at any time within the period of 6 years beginning with the relevant day.

(3) And an assessment on a person in a case involving a loss of public interest business protection tax brought about deliberately by the person may be made at any time within the period of 20 years beginning with the relevant day.

*Appeals*

21 (1) An appeal may be brought against—

- (a) any amendment of a self-assessment under paragraph 16 (amendment by HMRC during enquiry to prevent loss of tax),
- (b) any conclusion stated or amendment made by a closure notice, or
- (c) any assessment to tax which is not a self-assessment.

(2) An appeal may also be brought against a determination by an officer of Revenue and Customs of a claim for a reduction under paragraph 7, but only on the ground that it was not open to the officer to consider the reduction determined by the officer (including a determination not to make any reduction) was just and reasonable.

(3) Sections 47C to 57 of TMA 1970 (appeals) apply (subject to the other provisions of this Schedule) to an appeal under this paragraph as they apply to an appeal under the Taxes Acts.

(4) But in the case of section 55 (recovery of tax not postponed), that section has effect as if—

- (a) in subsection (1) for paragraphs (a) and (aa) there were substituted—
  - “(a) an amendment of a self-assessment under paragraph 16 of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to the Finance Act 2022,
  - (aa) a conclusion stated or an amendment made by a closure notice.”,
- (b) after subsection (3) there were inserted—

“(3ZA) But the payment of any amount of public interest business protection tax is not to be postponed unless HMRC or the tribunal (as the case may be) determines that the circumstances of the appellant are exceptional such that it would not be just to refuse postponement of the payment of that amount.”, and

- (c) in subsection (6), after “overcharged to tax” there were inserted “to the extent the postponement of the amount is not prevented by subsection (3ZA)”.

(5) If an appeal under sub-paragraph (1)(a) against an amendment of a self-assessment is made while an enquiry is in progress in relation to any matter to which the amendment relates or which is affected by the amendment none of the steps mentioned in section 49A(2)(a) to (c) of TMA 1970 may be taken in relation to the appeal until a closure notice is issued.

(6) Notice of an appeal must—

- (a) be given in writing;
- (b) specify the grounds of appeal;
- (c) be given within 30 days after the specified date to the relevant officer of Revenue and Customs.

(7) In relation to an appeal under sub-paragraph (1)(a)—

- (a) the specified date is the date on which the notice of amendment was issued, and
- (b) the relevant officer of Revenue and Customs is the officer by whom the notice of amendment was given.

(8) In relation to an appeal under sub-paragraph (1)(b)—

- (a) the specified date is the date on which the closure notice was issued, and

(b) the relevant officer of Revenue and Customs is the officer by whom that notice was given.

(9) In relation to an appeal under sub-paragraph (1)(c)—

(a) the specified date is the date on which the notice of assessment was issued, and

(b) the relevant officer of Revenue and Customs is the officer by whom the notice of assessment was given.

(10) In relation to an appeal under sub-paragraph (2)—

(a) the specified date is the date on which the notice under paragraph 7(7) was issued, and

(b) the relevant officer of Revenue and Customs is the officer by whom that notice was given.

#### *Duty to preserve records*

22 (1) A person liable to tax must—

(a) keep such records as may be needed to enable the person to deliver a correct and complete return in respect of the tax, and

(b) preserve those records in accordance with this paragraph.

(2) The records must be preserved until the end of the relevant day.

(3) In this paragraph “relevant day” means—

(a) in relation to a person liable to tax as a result of paragraph 1, the later of—

(i) the sixth anniversary of the day on which the person became liable to tax,

(ii) the day on which any enquiry into a return made and delivered by the person is completed, and

(iii) the day on which an officer of Revenue and Customs no longer has power to enquire into such a return,

(b) in relation to a person liable to tax as a result of paragraph 4 or 5, the later of—

(i) the sixth anniversary of the day on which the person was given a notice under paragraph 9(1),

(ii) the day on which an officer of Revenue and Customs no longer has power to give such a notice (see paragraph 10(1)),

(iii) the day on which any enquiry into a return made and delivered by the person is completed, and

(iv) the day on which an officer of Revenue and Customs no longer has power to enquire into such a return, and

(c) such earlier day as may be specified in writing by the Commissioners for Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (and different days may be specified for different cases).

(4) The Commissioners for Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs may by regulations—

(a) provide that the records required to be kept and preserved under this paragraph include, or do not include, records specified in the regulations, and

(b) provide that those records include supporting documents (including accounts, books, deeds, contracts, vouchers and receipts) so specified.

(5) Regulations under this paragraph may—

(a) make different provision for different cases, and

(b) make provision by reference to things specified in a notice published by the Commissioners for Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs in accordance with the regulations (and not withdrawn by a subsequent notice).

(6) The duty under this paragraph to preserve records may be discharged—

(a) by preserving them in any form and by any means, or

(b) by preserving the information contained in them in any form and by any means,

subject to any conditions or exceptions specified in writing by the Commissioners for Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs.

(7) A person who fails to comply with this paragraph is liable to a penalty not exceeding £3,000.

(8) But no penalty is incurred if the records which the person fails to keep or preserve are records which might have been needed only for the purposes of a claim under this Schedule.

(9) Sections 100 to 103 of TMA 1970 apply to a penalty under this paragraph as they apply to a penalty under a provision of the Taxes Acts to which those sections apply.

#### *Collection and recovery*

23 Part 6 of TMA 1970 applies to public interest business protection tax as it applies to tax within the meaning of that Act as if in section 69(1) (recovery of penalty or interest), before paragraph (c) there were inserted—

“(ba) penalties imposed under paragraph 56 to the Finance Act 2009 as a result of the modifications made by paragraph 28 of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to the Finance Act 2022;”.

#### *Overpaid tax*

24 (1) Paragraphs 51 to 51G of Schedule 18 to FA 1998 (overpaid tax) apply, as those provisions apply in relation to a claim for repayment or discharge of corporation tax, for the purposes of making a claim for repayment or discharge of an amount of public interest business protection tax (an “overpayment claim”) where the person believes the tax is not due.

(2) Those provisions have effect for the purposes of an overpayment claim as if—

(a) in paragraph 51—

(i) in sub-paragraph (4), the reference to Part 7 of Schedule 18 to FA 1998 were to paragraph 25 of this Schedule, and

(ii) in sub-paragraph (6), for paragraph (a) and (b) there were substituted—

(b) in paragraph 51A(3), for “the Corporation Tax Acts” there were substituted “—

(a) provision made by or under Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to the Finance Act 2022, or

(b) provision having effect for the purposes of public interest business protection tax as a result of provision made by or under that Schedule”,

(c) in paragraph 51B—

(i) in sub-paragraph (1), for “more than 4 years after the end of the relevant accounting period” there were substituted “after the last day on which a self-assessment may be made and delivered in relation to the tax (see paragraphs 8(5) and 10(5) of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to the Finance Act 2022)”,

(ii) sub-paragraphs (2) and (3) were omitted, and

(iii) in sub-paragraph (4), for “company tax return” there were substituted “return under paragraph 8 or 9 of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to the Finance Act 2022”,

(d) in paragraph 51BA(1)—

(i) in paragraph (a), for “paragraph 36 or 37” there were substituted “paragraph 12 of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to the Finance Act 2022”, and

(ii) in paragraph (b) for sub-paragraph (iii) there were substituted—the last day on which a self-assessment may be made and delivered in relation to the tax (see paragraphs 8(5) and 10(5) of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to the Finance Act 2022) has passed, and”,

(e) paragraphs 51C and 51D were omitted,

(f) in paragraph 51E—

(i) references to a discovery assessment were to a discovery assessment under this Schedule (see paragraph 18),

(ii) references to a discovery determination were omitted, and

(iii) in sub-paragraph (2)(a), for “restrictions in paragraphs 42 to 45” there were substituted “restriction in paragraph 18(2) of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to the Finance Act 2022,

(g) paragraph 51F were omitted, and

(h) in paragraph 51G—

(i) in sub-paragraph (1), for “company” there were substituted “person”, and

(ii) in sub-paragraph (3)(c), the reference to paragraph 51F(1)(b) were omitted.

#### Claims under this Schedule

25 (1) A claim under paragraph 7 or 24 (for relief from, or repayment or discharge of, tax) must be for an amount which is quantified at the time when the claim is made.

(2) A claim must be made within 4 years from the day on which the person whose claim it is became liable to the tax to which the claim relates.

(3) A person who has made a claim under this Schedule and subsequently discovers that a mistake has been made in it may make a supplementary claim within the time allowed for making the original claim.

(4) Paragraphs 2 and 2A of Schedule 1A to TMA 1970 (making of claims and keeping and preserving of records) apply to a claim under paragraph 7 of this Schedule but as if in paragraph 2A of that Schedule—

(a) in sub-paragraph (1) “in relation to a year of assessment or other period” were omitted, and

(b) the relevant day for the purposes of that sub-paragraph were the day on which an officer of Revenue and Customs has issued a notice under paragraph 7(7) of this Schedule in relation to the claim.

(5) Schedule 1A to TMA 1970 (claims etc not included in returns) applies to a claim under paragraph 24 of this Schedule but as if in paragraph 2A(1) of that Schedule “in relation to a year of assessment or other period” were omitted.

#### Penalty for failure to submit return

26 (1) Schedule 55 to FA 2009 (penalty for failure to make returns) has effect with the following modifications.

(2) Paragraph 1(2) of that Schedule has effect as if for the words before paragraph (a) there were substituted “Paragraphs 2 to 13P set out—”.

(3) The Table in that paragraph has effect as if at the end there were inserted—

“30	Public interest business protection tax	(a) Return under paragraph 8 or 9 of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to FA 2022 (b) Accounts, statement or document required under either of those paragraphs.”
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(4) That Schedule has effect as if before paragraph 14 there were inserted—

#### Amount of penalty: public interest business protection tax

13K Paragraphs 13L to 13P apply in the case of a return falling within item 30 in the Table.

13L P is liable to a penalty under this paragraph of £10,000.

13M (1) P is liable to a penalty under this paragraph if (and only if) P’s failure continues after the end of the period of 30 days beginning with the penalty date.

(2) The penalty under this paragraph is £10,000.

13N (1) P is liable to a penalty under this paragraph if (and only if) P’s failure continues after the end of the period of 3 months beginning with the penalty date.

(2) The penalty under this paragraph is 10% of any liability to tax which would have been shown in the return in question.

13O (1) P is liable to a penalty under this paragraph if (and only if) P’s failure continues after the end of the period of 6 months beginning with the penalty date.

(2) The penalty under this paragraph is 10% of any liability to tax which would have been shown in the return in question.

13P (1) P is liable to a penalty under this paragraph if (and only if) P’s failure continues after the end of the period of 12 months beginning with the penalty date.

(2) Where, by failing to make the return, P withholds information which would enable or assist HMRC to assess P’s liability to tax, the penalty under this paragraph is determined in accordance with sub-paragraphs (3) and (4).

(3) If the withholding of the information is deliberate and concealed, the penalty is 100% of any liability to tax which would have been shown in the return in question.

(4) If the withholding of the information is deliberate but not concealed, the penalty is 70% of any liability to tax which would have been shown in the return in question.

(5) In any other case, the penalty under this paragraph is 10% of any liability to tax which would have been shown in the return in question.”

#### Penalties for errors

27 Schedule 24 to FA 2007 has effect as if in the Table in paragraph 1 after the entry for “Machine games duty” there were inserted—

“Public interest business protection tax	Return under paragraph 8 or 9 of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to FA 2022.
“Public interest business protection tax	Return, statement or declaration in connection with a claim for a relief
“Public interest business protection tax	Accounts in connection with ascertaining liability to tax.”

#### Failure to pay public interest business protection tax on time

28 Schedule 56 to FA 2009 has effect as if in the Table in paragraph 1 of that Schedule, after the entry for item 1A there were inserted—

“1B	Public interest business protection tax	Amount payable under paragraph 8(6) of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to FA 2022	The date falling 30 days after the date specified in that paragraph as the date by which the amount must be paid
1C	Public interest business protection tax	Amount payable under paragraph 9(7) of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to FA 2022	The date falling 30 days after the date specified in that paragraph as the date by which the amount must be paid
1D	Public interest business protection tax	Amount payable under paragraph 12(8) of Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to FA 2022	The date falling 30 days after the date specified in that paragraph as the date by which the amount must be paid.”

#### Interest

29 Sections 101 to 103 of FA 2009 (interest) come into force on 6 April 2021 in relation to amounts payable or paid to Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs as a result of provision made by this Schedule.

#### Application of information, inspection and data-gathering powers

30 (1) Schedule 36 to FA 2008 (information and inspection powers) has effect as if, in paragraph 63(1) of that Schedule (meaning of “tax” for the purposes of that Schedule), after paragraph (c) there were inserted—

“(cza) public interest business protection tax.”

(2) Schedule 23 to FA 2011 (data-gathering powers) has effect as if, in paragraph 45(1) of that Schedule (meaning of “tax” for the purposes of that Schedule), after paragraph (c) there were inserted—

“(cza) public interest business protection tax.”.

#### *Documents*

31 (1) Section 115 of TMA 1970 applies to documents to be given, sent, served or delivered under provision made by or under this Schedule as it applies to documents to be given, sent, served or delivered under the Taxes Acts.

(2) The Income and Corporation Taxes (Electronic Communications) Regulations 2003 (S.I. 2003/282) have effect as if, in regulation 2(1)(a)—

- (a) the “or” and the end of paragraph (vi) were omitted,
- (b) for the “; and” at the end of paragraph (vii) there were substituted “, or”, and
- (c) after that paragraph there were inserted—
  - (i) Schedule (Public interest business protection tax) to the Finance Act 2022; and”.

#### *Disclosures to persons who are joint and severally liable to tax*

32 (1) Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs may disclose information about a person they consider liable to public interest business protection tax as a result of paragraph 1 for the purposes mentioned in sub-paragraph (2).

(2) Those purposes are—

- (a) the provision of information to a person Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs consider liable to public interest business protection tax as a result of paragraph 4 or 5 where that information may be relevant to the tax position of that person (which may include information about assessments, enquiries and appeals);
- (b) facilitating the recovery of amounts under paragraph 9(6) (recovery of amounts paid by persons joint and severally liable from principal taxpayer).

(3) Nothing in this paragraph is to be taken as limiting the circumstances in which information may be disclosed under section 18(2) of CRCA 2005 or under any other enactment or rule of law.

(4) Subject to sub-paragraph (5), no duty of confidentiality or other restriction on disclosure (however imposed) prevents the disclosure of information in accordance with this paragraph.

(5) Nothing in this paragraph authorises the making of a disclosure which—

- (a) contravenes the data protection legislation (save that the power conferred by this paragraph is to be taken into account in determining whether a disclosure contravenes that legislation), or
- (b) is prohibited by any of Parts 1 to 7 or Chapter 1 of Part 9 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (save that the power conferred by this paragraph is to be taken into account when determining whether a disclosure is prohibited by those provisions).

#### *Application of public interest business protection tax to partnerships and trusts*

33 (1) Where a person chargeable to public interest business protection tax as a result of paragraph 1 or 5 is a partnership the responsible partners are jointly and severally liable to any amount to which the partnership is assessed.

(2) The reference in sub-paragraph (1) to “the responsible partners” is to all the persons who are members of the partnership at any time during the disqualifying period.

(3) A partnership is treated as the same partnership notwithstanding a change in membership if any person who was a member before the change remains a member after the change.

(4) Where a person chargeable to public interest business protection tax as a result of paragraph 1 is a trustee, or a body of trustees, of the asset to which the tax relates, the tax may be assessed and charged on and in the name of any one or more of the relevant trustees.

(5) The reference in sub-paragraph (4) to “the relevant trustees” is to all persons who are trustees at any time during the disqualifying period, and any subsequent trustees.

#### *Territorial application of tax*

34 A person is chargeable to public interest business protection tax (whether under paragraph 1, 4 or 5) whether or not the person is resident in the United Kingdom.

#### *Power to provide for reliefs etc*

35 (1) The Treasury may by regulations make such provision as the Treasury consider appropriate—

- (a) about reliefs from public interest business protection tax;
  - (b) about exemptions from public interest business protection tax.
- (2) Regulations under this paragraph may—
- (a) make provision about the administration of any such relief or exemption (for example provision about the making of claims);
  - (b) include provision conferring a discretion on the Commissioners for Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs or on an officer of Revenue and Customs.

## PART 4

### SUPPLEMENTARY

#### *Anti-avoidance*

36 (1) This paragraph applies to arrangements if the main purpose, or one of the main purposes of the arrangements, is to—

- (a) reduce or avoid a charge to public interest business protection tax, or
- (b) otherwise avoid the effect of any of the provisions of this Schedule.

(2) Any such reduction or avoidance that would (in the absence of this paragraph) arise from such arrangements is to be counteracted by the making of such adjustments as are just and reasonable.

(3) Any adjustments required to be made under this paragraph (whether or not by an officer of Revenue and Customs) may be made by way of—

- (a) an assessment,
- (b) the modification of an assessment,
- (c) amendment or disallowance of a claim,

or otherwise.

(4) In this paragraph “arrangements” include any agreement, understanding, scheme transaction or series of transactions (whether or not legally enforceable).

#### *No deduction for public interest business protection tax*

37 In calculating profits, losses or gains for income tax, capitals gains tax or corporation tax purposes, no deduction is allowed in respect of public interest business protection tax.

#### *Information sharing*

38 (1) This paragraph applies to information that—

- (a) is held by the Secretary of State or the Gas and Electricity Markets Authority, and
- (b) is relevant to public interest business protection tax.

(2) Information to which this paragraph applies may be disclosed by whichever of the Secretary of State or Gas and Electricity Markets Authority holds it (or anyone acting on behalf of that person) to the Commissioners for Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs for the purposes of their functions relating to public interest business protection tax or any other tax.

(3) Subject to sub-paragraph (5), no duty of confidentiality or other restriction on disclosure (however imposed) prevents the disclosure of information in accordance with sub-paragraph (2).

(4) This paragraph does not limit the circumstances in which information may be disclosed under section 105(2) to (4) of the Utilities Act 2000 or under any other enactment or rule of law.

(5) Nothing in this paragraph authorises the making of a disclosure which—

- (a) contravenes the data protection legislation (save that the power conferred by this paragraph is to be taken into account in determining whether a disclosure contravenes that legislation), or
- (b) is prohibited by any of Parts 1 to 7 or Chapter 1 of Part 9 of the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 (save that the power conferred by this paragraph is to be taken into account when determining whether a disclosure is prohibited by those provisions).

#### *Application of the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968*

39 The Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1968 has effect as if section 1(1) of that Act (temporary statutory effect of House of Commons resolutions affecting listed taxes or customs or excise duties) contained a reference to public interest business protection tax.

#### *Power to apply, disapply or modify provisions of relevant tax legislation*

40 (1) For purposes in connection with the administration of public interest business protection tax, the Treasury may by regulations make provision about the application of relevant tax legislation to public interest business protection tax (including provision disapplying or modifying such legislation or applying legislation that would not otherwise apply).

(2) Relevant tax legislation means any provision made by or under—

- (a) the Taxes Acts, or
- (b) Part 3 of this Schedule.

#### *Regulations*

41 (1) A power to make regulations under this Schedule includes power to make—

- (a) consequential, supplementary, incidental, transitional or saving provision;
- (b) provision having retrospective effect.

(2) Regulations under this Schedule are to be made by statutory instrument.

(3) Sub-paragraph (4) applies to—

- (a) regulations under paragraph 2,
- (b) regulations under this Schedule that have the effect of limiting the application of, reducing or removing any existing relief or exemption from tax, or
- (c) regulations under this Schedule which have retrospective effect, other than regulations having retrospective effect which provide for a new or increased relief or a new exemption.

(4) A statutory instrument containing (whether alone or with other provision) regulations to which this sub-paragraph applies may not be made unless a draft of the instrument has been laid before and approved by a resolution of the House of Commons.

(5) Any other statutory instrument containing regulations under this Schedule is subject to annulment in pursuance of a resolution of the House of Commons.

#### *Interpretation of Schedule*

42 (1) In this Schedule—

- “adjusted value” is to be construed in accordance with paragraph 3;
- “asset” is to be construed in accordance with paragraph 1(10);
- “company” means a body corporate;
- “the data protection legislation” has the same meaning as in the Data Protection Act 2018 (see section 3 of that Act);
- “discovery assessment” is to be construed in accordance with paragraph 18(1);

“disposal” is to be construed in accordance with paragraph 1(10);

“disqualifying period” is to be construed in accordance with paragraph 4(4);

“disqualifying steps” is to be construed in accordance with paragraph 1;

“fair value”, in relation to an asset held by a person (“P”), means the amount which, at the time as at which the value is to be determined, is the amount which P would obtain from an independent person dealing at arm’s length for—

- (a) in the case of an asset comprising rights and liabilities, the transfer of P’s rights under the asset and the release of all P’s liabilities under it, or

(b) in any other case, the transfer of the asset;

“principal taxpayer” is to be construed in accordance with (as the case may require) paragraph 4(1), 5(1) or 5(2);

“public interest business” is to be construed in accordance with paragraph 2(1);

“qualifying purpose” is to be construed in accordance with paragraph 1;

“special measures” is to be construed in accordance with paragraph 2(3);

“tax” (except where the context otherwise requires) means public interest business protection tax;

“the Taxes Acts” has the meaning given by section 118(1) of TMA 1970;

“the tribunal” means the First-tier Tribunal or, where determined by or under Tribunal Procedure Rules, the Upper Tribunal.

(2) For the purposes of this Schedule—

- (a) whether a person is connected with another person is to be determined in accordance with section 1122 of CTA 2010, and
- (b) whether a person controls a company is to be determined in accordance with section 1124(2) of that Act.

(3) Subsections (5) to (7) of section 118 of TMA 1970 (meaning of references to bringing about loss of tax or situation carelessly or deliberately) apply for the purposes of this Schedule as they apply for the purposes of that Act.

(4) The Treasury may by regulations make further provision about the meaning and application of “fair value” in cases specified in the regulations.

#### *Commencement and expiry*

43 (1) This Schedule has effect in relation to the taking of disqualifying steps (whenever taken) in disqualifying circumstances where the public interest business in question becomes subject to special measures—

- (a) on or after 28 January 2022, and
- (b) before 28 January 2023.

(2) The Treasury may, for the date for the time being specified in sub-paragraph (1)(b), by regulations substitute such later date before 29 January 2025 as may be specified in the regulations.

(3) The power in sub-paragraph (2)—

- (a) may be exercised on more than one occasion;
- (b) may not be exercised on or after the date for the time being specified in sub-paragraph (1)(b).—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

*This new schedule provides for a new tax imposed by reference to the value of an asset that was held by a person for the benefit of a public interest business that enters special measures but was instead used in a way that materially contributed to it entering special measures, or to a significant increase of the costs of that business.*

*Brought up, and added to the Bill.*

### Schedule 1

#### ABOLITION OF BASIS PERIODS

*Amendments made:* 14, in schedule 1, page 91, line 38, leave out “(see Step 1)” and insert “(“the transition component”)”.

*This amendment and Amendments 15 to 17 ensure that a tax liability arising from the transitional arrangements for the coming into force of Schedule 1 may be reduced at Step 6 of the calculation in section 23 of the Income Tax Act 2007.*

Amendment 15, in schedule 1, page 91, line 39, leave out “that” and insert “the transition”.

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 14.*

Amendment 16, in schedule 1, page 91, line 39, leave out from “2” to end of line 42 and insert “,

- (c) the amount of the transition component left after Step 2 were left out of the calculation of net income (and subsequent Steps), and
- (b) for the purposes of Steps 5 to 7, the amount (if any) given by sub-paragraph (3) were treated as an amount of tax calculated at Step 4.”

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 14.*

Amendment 17, in schedule 1, page 92, line 1, leave out sub-paragraph (3) and insert—

“(3) The amount given by this sub-paragraph is the difference between—

- (a) the total amount of tax that would be calculated at Step 5 if Steps 1 to 4 were applied in accordance with sub-paragraph (2)(a) to (c) (ignoring sub-paragraph (2)(d)), and
- (b) the total amount of tax that would be calculated at Step 5 if Steps 1 to 4 were applied in accordance with sub-paragraph (2)(a) and (b) (ignoring sub-paragraph (2)(c) and (d)).”—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

*See the explanatory statement for Amendment 14.*

### Schedule 2

#### QUALIFYING ASSET HOLDING COMPANIES

*Amendments made:* 18, in schedule 2, page 95, line 45, leave out “(1)(b)(i)” and insert “(1)(b)(ii)”

*This amendment corrects a cross-referencing error.*

Amendment 19, in schedule 2, page 100, line 13, after “connected persons” insert

“(within the meaning of section 1122 of CTA 2010 (“connected persons”))”.

*This amendment clarifies what is meant by a person being connected to another.*

Amendment 20, in schedule 2, page 100, line 18, leave out paragraphs (i) and (ii) and insert—

- (i) any person who would be regarded as a participator (for the purposes of that Part) only as a result of being a creditor of the fund in respect of a normal commercial loan (within the meaning it has in paragraph 3) is not to be regarded as a participator,
- (ii) any interest a participator has as a creditor of the fund in respect of a normal commercial loan is not to be regarded as an interest of that participator,
- (iii) as if paragraph (a) of section 450(3) of that Act were omitted,
- (iv) paragraphs 5(5) and 6(5) and (6) of this Schedule apply for the purposes of determining the rights of participators in the fund as they apply for the purposes of determining relevant interests in a QAHC, and”

*This amendment provides that the provision of a commercial loan to a fund will not constitute an interest in it for the purposes of determining whether a fund is close and provides for the application of certain rules of this Schedule in making that determination.*

Amendment 21, schedule 2, page 100, line 31, leave out sub-paragraph (iii)

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 20.*

Amendment 22, page 100, line 34, at end insert—

“(5A) In making a determination under sub-paragraph (5)(b), neither a manager of a fund nor a general partner in a limited partnership that is a collective investment scheme is to be regarded as having control of that fund or scheme unless that manager or partner would be treated as having control of it as result of satisfying a condition in section 450(3)(b) to (d) of CTA 2010 (whether alone or with other persons).”

*This amendment ensures that managers and general partners of certain types of funds will only be regarded as having control of a fund as a result of their economic interest in it or as a result of their voting power.*

Amendment 23, in schedule 2, page 100, line 38, leave out from “the fund” to end of line 39

*This amendment removes an over-elaboration of the concept of voting power (in a fund).*

Amendment 24, in schedule 2, page 101, line 3, leave out “6(6)” and insert “6(7)”

*This amendment corrects a cross-referencing error.*

Amendment 25, in schedule 2, page 101, line 14, after “(5)(a)(i)” insert

“and (ii) (as they apply by virtue of sub-paragraph (5)(b))”.

*This amendment is consequential on Amendment 20.*

Amendment 26, in schedule 2, page 101, line 17, at end insert—

“manager”, in relation to a fund, means—

- (a) any person who is the manager of the property that is the subject of or held by the fund, or
- (b) any other person who has, or is expected to have, day-to-day control of that property.”

*This amendment defines “manager” for the purposes of Amendment 22 and paragraph 9(3) of Schedule 2.*

Amendment 27, in schedule 2, page 101, line 46, after “connected” insert

“(within the meaning of section 1122 of CTA 2010 (“connected persons”))”.

*This amendment clarifies what is meant by a person being connected to another.*

Amendment 28, in schedule 2, page 101, line 47, after “controlled” insert

“(within the meaning of section 450 of that Act)”.

*This amendment clarifies what is meant by a person having control of another.*

Amendment 29, in schedule 2, page 115, line 6, leave out paragraph (d)

*This amendment removes provision disapplying provision about intangible fixed assets that is otiose, given intangible fixed assets will not be within the ring fence business of a QAHC.*

Amendment 30, in schedule 2, page 120, line 27, leave out “regardless” and insert “security”.—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

*This amendment corrects an error.*

### Schedule 5

#### INSURANCE CONTRACTS: CHANGE IN ACCOUNTING STANDARDS

*Amendments made:* 31, in schedule 5, page 137, line 16, leave out “the words in brackets” and insert—

“(adjusted, where relevant, in accordance with step 2)”.

*This amendment clarifies which words are to be omitted from Step 4 in section 76 Finance Act 2012.*



Amendment 32, in schedule 5, page 137, line 18, after “etc)” insert—

“(i) in subsection (2), in paragraph (a) omit “(but see subsection (3))”;

*This amendment omits a reference in section 77(2) Finance Act 2012 to section 77(3), which is also being omitted.*

Amendment 33, in schedule 5, page 137, line 34, leave out paragraph (h) and insert—

“(h) in section 128 (relief for transferee in respect of transferor’s BLAGAB expenses)—

(i) in the heading, after “transferor’s” insert “excess”;

(ii) omit subsections (2) to (4);”—(*Lucy Frazer.*)

*This amendment ensures that the provisions of section 128 Finance Act 2012 relevant to the transfer of excess basic life assurance and general annuity business expenses in the context of a transfer under Part VII of the Financial Services and Markets Act 2000 are retained.*

### Third Reading.

**Lucy Frazer:** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read the Third time.

In the autumn Budget, the Chancellor set out a vision to build a stronger economy that would allow this country to bounce back from the pandemic. This Finance Bill takes forward measures that will help to turn that vision into reality and drive growth for our country long into the future. Its measures will support business across the UK, including our banking, creative and shipping sectors. In addition, the Bill will protect businesses and the public by clamping down on tax evasion and economic crime, improving trust and building a fairer UK economy.

I turn first to the measures in the Bill designed to safeguard and strengthen industry and the wider economy. To help businesses invest and grow, we are extending the annual investment allowance at its highest-ever level of £1 million until 31 March 2023. The £1 million AIA level means that more than 99% of businesses will have their plant and machinery expenditure covered.

We are also extending the support offered to the creative industries by providing additional tax reliefs to theatres, orchestras, museums and galleries as the sector recovers. These rates of higher relief will provide a further incentive for new productions, exhibitions and concerts up to April 2024.

Finally, reforms to the UK tonnage tax regime will encourage more firms to base their headquarters in the UK to use our world-leading maritime services industry and to fly the flag of the UK. This will bring jobs and investment throughout the country, and especially to our coastal communities.

I now turn to how the Bill will deliver stronger public finances. The Bill sets the rate of the bank surcharge so that the combined rate on banks’ profits will increase to 28% from April 2023. It also increases the surcharge allowance to £100 million. These changes will ensure that the banks continue to make a fair contribution while encouraging growth and competition for smaller groups within the UK banking market.

The 1.25% increase on dividend income rates from 6 April 2022 will help fund the health and social care settlement, ensuring that contributions are made based on employed and self-employed earnings. The Government are also introducing the new 4% residential developer tax on the most profitable developers. This will raise at

least £2 billion over the next decade to help pay for the removal of unsafe cladding, providing reassurance to home owners and boosting confidence in the UK housing market.

At the heart of this Finance Bill is the desire to safeguard taxpayers’ interests and deal with those who avoid paying their fair share. The economic crime levy will help deliver the Government’s objectives to combat economic crime and will raise an expected £100 million per year to fund anti-laundering measures. The levy is calculated by UK revenue and provides the fairest and simplest method for the anti-money laundering regulated sector to contribute further. That will cement the UK’s reputation as a secure country in which to conduct business and solidifies the Government’s ambition to permanently tackle economic crime.

As I mentioned earlier, the Bill’s measures will clamp down on tax avoidance and evasion. It will give HMRC more powers to tackle promoters of tax avoidance schemes by levying penalties on UK entities that enable them. The measures are accompanied by an increase in the duty charge on tobacco products by 2% and a rise in the minimum excise tax to 3% above RPI inflation, alongside new measures to tackle duty evasion. That will help reduce the long-term burden on the NHS and improve public health generally.

By targeting businesses that manipulate electronic records to evade tax, the Bill reinforces the Government’s efforts to tackle unscrupulous businesses that carry out electronic sales suppression. The measures are essential to Britain’s reputation as a global hub for businesses and as a secure and transparent place in which to conduct business.

I thank hon. and right hon. Members for their helpful and insightful contributions to the debates during the Bill’s passage.

To conclude, this Finance Bill supports our efforts to build a stronger economy. It tackles tax evasion and avoidance, and, ultimately, its measures will create a brighter and simpler future for industry, the economy and the UK as a whole. For those reasons, I commend it to the House.

6.43 pm

**James Murray:** When we first debated this Finance Bill on Second Reading in November last year, it was clear to us that it offered nothing to help people struggling with the rising costs of living and facing tax rises this April. Since that time, pressures on people across this country have only become more intense, and the need for the Government to act has only become more urgent.

Inflation is now at its highest rate in decades and energy bills are set to soar in April, just as the Chancellor is set to hike national insurance on working people. That tax rise, when combined with energy price rises and other tax hikes, will leave families on average £1,200 worse off a year. Yet there is nothing in the Bill to help with the cost of living. There is, however, a tax cut for banks in the Bill, despite bankers being widely expected to receive large bonuses this year, as investment banks’ profits have soared off the back of a wave of takeovers and mergers caused by the pandemic. It shows just how out of touch this Chancellor is. At the weekend, he decided to dig in over his tax rise for working people. By the middle of the week, he is using the Bill to cut taxes for banks by £1 billion a year.

[James Murray]

In earlier debates on the Bill, we were critical of the Government for not doing enough to combat economic crime. We welcome the principle of a levy, but we are left wondering why on earth legislation that would set up a register of overseas owners of UK property—a critical tool to tackle money laundering—has been left to gather dust. On Second Reading, we challenged the Government over their failure to establish such a register. Our country has earned the shocking reputation as the world's laundromat for illicit finance. A new public register would bring desperately needed transparency to the overseas ownership of UK property, and would help to stop it being used for money laundering.

Since that time, the need to bring transparency to the question of who owns high-end property in the UK has only become more urgent. Economic sanctions against Russia will never have the effect that they should as long as our Government let those who are linked to Putin and his regime hide their wealth in the mansions of Knightsbridge and Belgravia.

We also asked what the Bill does for another type of property: buildings with unsafe cladding that need to be remediated. We questioned Ministers on how they had arrived at their decision on the level of the residential property developer tax when so much more was needed to protect leaseholders from bearing the cost. Since we first raised our concerns about the detail of that tax, the Government have realised that they were wrong to make leaseholders in buildings of between 11 metres and 18 metres take out forced loans to cover the cost of cladding remediation in their buildings. The Housing Secretary now says that he is planning to convince developers to hand over £4 billion voluntarily. If he fails, we want to know how leaseholders and those in need of affordable homes will be protected. Despite our questioning earlier today, Treasury Ministers have been unable to offer people the reassurance they need.

Finally, there is no plan for growth in the Bill. We are stuck in a low-growth, high-tax cycle. With strong growth, we would have the chance to create new jobs, with better wages and conditions, in every part of this country. With low growth, it gets ever harder to meet the challenges we face, and the Tories have no choice other than to put up taxes.

The shadow Chancellor, my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds West (Rachel Reeves), has set out Labour's plan for growth: investing in skills, research and development, and the industries of the new green economy; choosing to buy, make and sell more in Britain; and creating jobs in every part of the country. We would build a stronger economy with our plan to give working people the respect they are due, to give people real economic security, and to ensure prosperity in every part of Britain. That is the approach that our country needs in order to grow and meet the challenges of the future.

Right now, people across the country need the Government to protect them from the cost of living crisis and protect our country from dirty money from Russia. All we have instead is a Prime Minister who does everything he can to protect himself. We opposed the Bill on Second Reading and, as our reasons for doing so have only grown stronger, we will vote against it tonight.

6.47 pm

**Alison Thewliss:** I thank the Government and the official Opposition Front-Bench teams for the way in which proceedings on the Bill have been conducted. We have all learned an awful lot about each other, and it has been a genuinely interesting process. I thank the Clerks, Chris Stanton and Kevin Maddison, for their support, without which we would definitely have struggled to put our amendments forward. I thank Clorinda Luck, one of the SNP's senior researchers, for stepping in at short notice to cover some of the research on the Bill—I am very grateful to her for that work.

Although some of the measures in the Bill are welcome, we in the SNP have to oppose it because it is such a missed opportunity to do so much more about economic crime and the scourge of money laundering and kleptocracy coming to the shores of these islands. There is a lack of action to tackle the misuse of Scottish limited partnerships and shell companies, and to tackle the money flowing through the very city we are standing in. The Bill is also a missed opportunity to do more on net zero in particular. Given last year's COP, there should have been a great deal more to focus minds and move to a greener and fairer economy.

The Bill is indicative of a Government who are removed from the problems that ordinary people face and who are without solutions to the challenges that our constituents are seeing right now: the challenges of inequality, the scars of 10 years of austerity, the cost of living crisis, which is making life so very difficult for so many people right now, soaring inflation and energy prices that are spiralling out of control.

Contrast that with the opportunity presented by Kate Forbes in the Scottish Parliament last week. With the limited powers that we have over the Scottish Budget, that Budget offers great hope to the people of Scotland. We look enviously at the powers that we could have as a full, independent, normal nation with the full levers to make the real inroads into inequality, to make life fairer, better and more just for the people of Scotland. So we cannot support this Budget and we wish that very soon we will have that full range of powers to make things better for our own citizens.

*Question put, That the Bill be read the Third time.*

*The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 226.*

**Division No. 183]**

**[6.50 pm**

**AYES**

Afolami, Bim	Barclay, rh Steve
Afriyie, Adam	Baron, Mr John
Aiken, Nickie	Baynes, Simon
Aldous, Peter	Bell, Aaron
Allan, Lucy	Benton, Scott
Anderson, Lee	Beresford, Sir Paul
Anderson, Stuart	Berry, rh Jake
Andrew, rh Stuart	Bhatti, Saqib
Ansell, Caroline	Blackman, Bob
Argar, Edward	Blunt, Crispin
Atkins, Victoria	Bone, Mr Peter
Bacon, Gareth	Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bacon, Mr Richard	Bowie, Andrew
Bailey, Shaun	Bradley, rh Karen
Baillie, Siobhan	Brady, Sir Graham
Baker, Duncan	Braverman, rh Suella
Baker, Mr Steve	Brine, Steve
Baldwin, Harriett	Bristow, Paul

Britcliffe, Sara  
 Browne, Anthony  
 Bruce, Fiona  
 Buckland, rh Sir Robert  
 Burghart, Alex  
 Butler, Rob  
 Cairns, rh Alun  
 Carter, Andy  
 Cartlidge, James  
 Cash, Sir William  
 Cates, Miriam  
 Caulfield, Maria  
 Chalk, Alex  
 Chishti, Rehman  
 Churchill, Jo  
 Clark, rh Greg  
 Clarke, rh Mr Simon  
 Clarke, Theo  
 Clarke-Smith, Brendan  
 Clarkson, Chris  
 Cleverly, rh James  
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey  
 Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse  
 Colburn, Elliot  
 Collins, Damian  
 Courts, Robert  
 Coutinho, Claire  
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey  
 Crosbie, Virginia  
 Crouch, Tracey  
 Daly, James  
 Davies, David T. C.  
 Davies, Gareth  
 Davies, Dr James  
 Davies, Mims  
 Davis, rh Mr David  
 Davison, Dehenna  
 Dinenage, Dame Caroline  
 Dines, Miss Sarah  
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan  
 Docherty, Leo  
 Donelan, rh Michelle  
 Double, Steve  
 Dowden, rh Oliver  
 Doyle-Price, Jackie  
 Drax, Richard  
 Drummond, Mrs Flick  
 Duguid, David  
 Dunne, rh Philip  
 Eastwood, Mark  
 Edwards, Ruth  
 Ellis, rh Michael  
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias  
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie  
 Eustice, rh George  
 Evans, Dr Luke  
 Evennett, rh Sir David  
 Everitt, Ben  
 Fabricant, Michael  
 Farris, Laura  
 Fell, Simon  
 Fletcher, Katherine  
 Fletcher, Mark  
 Ford, Vicky  
 Foster, Kevin  
 Frazer, rh Lucy  
 Freeman, George  
 Freer, Mike  
 Fuller, Richard  
 Fysh, Mr Marcus  
 Gale, rh Sir Roger  
 Garnier, Mark  
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat  
 Gibson, Peter  
 Gideon, Jo  
 Glen, John  
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert  
 Gove, rh Michael  
 Graham, Richard  
 Gray, James  
 Grayling, rh Chris  
 Green, Chris  
 Green, rh Damian  
 Griffith, Andrew  
 Griffiths, Kate  
 Grundy, James  
 Gullis, Jonathan  
 Halfon, rh Robert  
 Hall, Luke  
 Hammond, Stephen  
 Hancock, rh Matt  
 Hands, rh Greg  
 Harper, rh Mr Mark  
 Harris, Rebecca  
 Harrison, Trudy  
 Hart, Sally-Ann  
 Hart, rh Simon  
 Hayes, rh Sir John  
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver  
 Heaton-Harris, Chris  
 Henderson, Gordon  
 Higginbotham, Antony  
 Hinds, rh Damian  
 Hoare, Simon  
 Holden, Mr Richard  
 Hollinrake, Kevin  
 Hollobone, Mr Philip  
 Holloway, Adam  
 Holmes, Paul  
 Howell, John  
 Huddleston, Nigel  
 Hudson, Dr Neil  
 Hughes, Eddie  
 Hunt, Jane  
 Hunt, Tom  
 Jack, rh Mr Alister  
 Jenkinson, Mark  
 Jenkyns, Andrea  
 Johnson, Dr Caroline  
 Johnson, Gareth  
 Johnston, David  
 Jones, Andrew  
 Jones, rh Mr David  
 Jones, Mr Marcus  
 Jupp, Simon  
 Kawczynski, Daniel  
 Kearns, Alicia  
 Keegan, Gillian  
 Knight, rh Sir Greg  
 Kruger, Danny  
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi  
 Lamont, John  
 Largan, Robert  
 Latham, Mrs Pauline  
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea  
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward  
 Levy, Ian  
 Lewer, Andrew  
 Lewis, rh Brandon  
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian  
 Liddell-Grainger, Mr Ian  
 Logan, Mark  
 Longhi, Marco  
 Lopez, Julia

Lopresti, Jack  
 Lord, Mr Jonathan  
 Loughton, Tim  
 Mackinlay, Craig  
 Mackrory, Cherylyn  
 Maclean, Rachel  
 Malthouse, rh Kit  
 Mangnall, Anthony  
 Mann, Scott  
 Marson, Julie  
 May, rh Mrs Theresa  
 Mayhew, Jerome  
 Maynard, Paul  
 McCartney, Jason  
 McCartney, Karl  
 McPartland, Stephen  
 McVey, rh Esther  
 Menzies, Mark  
 Mercer, Johnny  
 Merriman, Huw  
 Metcalfe, Stephen  
 Millar, Robin  
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria  
 Mills, Nigel  
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan  
 Moore, Damien  
 Moore, Robbie  
 Mordaunt, rh Penny  
 Morris, Anne Marie  
 Morris, David  
 Morris, James  
 Morrissey, Joy  
 Mortimer, Jill  
 Morton, Wendy  
 Mullan, Dr Kieran  
 Mumby-Croft, Holly  
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll  
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew  
 Neill, Sir Robert  
 Nici, Lia  
 Nokes, rh Caroline  
 Norman, rh Jesse  
 O'Brien, Neil  
 Offord, Dr Matthew  
 Parish, Neil  
 Pawsey, Mark  
 Penning, rh Sir Mike  
 Penrose, John  
 Percy, Andrew  
 Pincher, rh Christopher  
 Poulter, Dr Dan  
 Pow, Rebecca  
 Prentis, Victoria  
 Pursglove, Tom  
 Quince, Will  
 Randall, Tom  
 Redwood, rh John  
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob  
 Richardson, Angela  
 Robertson, Mr Laurence  
 Robinson, Mary  
 Rosindell, Andrew

Rowley, Lee  
 Russell, Dean  
 Rutley, David  
 Sambrook, Gary  
 Saxby, Selaine  
 Scully, Paul  
 Seely, Bob  
 Selous, Andrew  
 Shannon, Jim  
 Shapps, rh Grant  
 Sharma, rh Alok  
 Shelbrooke, rh Alec  
 Simmonds, David  
 Smith, Chloe  
 Smith, Greg  
 Smith, Henry  
 Smith, rh Julian  
 Smith, Royston  
 Solloway, Amanda  
 Spencer, Dr Ben  
 Spencer, rh Mark  
 Stafford, Alexander  
 Stephenson, Andrew  
 Stevenson, Jane  
 Stevenson, John  
 Stride, rh Mel  
 Sturdy, Julian  
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond  
 Syms, Sir Robert  
 Thomas, Derek  
 Throup, Maggie  
 Timpson, Edward  
 Tolhurst, Kelly  
 Tomlinson, Justin  
 Tomlinson, Michael  
 Tracey, Craig  
 Trott, Laura  
 Tugendhat, Tom  
 Vara, Shailesh  
 Vickers, Martin  
 Vickers, Matt  
 Villiers, rh Theresa  
 Walker, Sir Charles  
 Wallis, Dr Jamie  
 Warman, Matt  
 Watling, Giles  
 Webb, Suzanne  
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather  
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John  
 Wiggin, Sir Bill  
 Wild, James  
 Williams, Craig  
 Williamson, rh Gavin  
 Wilson, rh Sammy  
 Wood, Mike  
 Wright, rh Jeremy  
 Young, Jacob

**Tellers for the Ayes:**  
**Alan Mak and**  
**Craig Whittaker**

#### NOES

Antoniazzi, Tonia  
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan  
 Bardell, Hannah  
 Barker, Paula  
 Beckett, rh Margaret  
 Begum, Apsana  
 Benn, rh Hilary

Betts, Mr Clive  
 Black, Mhairi  
 Blackford, rh Ian  
 Blackman, Kirsty  
 Blake, Olivia  
 Blomfield, Paul  
 Bonnar, Steven  
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben  
 Brennan, Kevin  
 Brock, Deidre  
 Brown, Alan  
 Brown, Ms Lyn  
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas  
 Bryant, Chris  
 Buck, Ms Karen  
 Burgon, Richard  
 Byrne, Ian  
 Byrne, rh Liam  
 Cadbury, Ruth  
 Cameron, Dr Lisa  
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan  
 Carden, Dan  
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair  
 Chamberlain, Wendy  
 Champion, Sarah  
 Chapman, Douglas  
 Charalambous, Bambos  
 Cherry, Joanna  
 Cooper, Daisy  
 Cooper, rh Yvette  
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy  
 Cowan, Ronnie  
 Coyle, Neil  
 Crawley, Angela (*Proxy vote cast by Owen Thompson*)  
 Creasy, Stella (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)  
 Cruddas, Jon  
 Cummins, Judith  
 Cunningham, Alex  
 Daby, Janet  
 Davey, rh Ed  
 David, Wayne  
 Davies, Geraint  
 Davies-Jones, Alex  
 Day, Martyn  
 De Cordova, Marsha  
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin  
 Dodds, Anneliese  
 Doogan, Dave  
 Dorans, Allan  
 Dowd, Peter  
 Eagle, Maria  
 Edwards, Jonathan  
 Efford, Clive  
 Elliott, Julie  
 Elmore, Chris  
 Eshalomi, Florence  
 Esterson, Bill  
 Evans, Chris  
 Farron, Tim  
 Farry, Stephen  
 Fellows, Marion  
 Ferrier, Margaret  
 Fletcher, Colleen  
 Flynn, Stephen  
 Foxcroft, Vicky  
 Furniss, Gill  
 Gardiner, Barry  
 Gibson, Patricia  
 Gill, Preet Kaur  
 Glindon, Mary  
 Grady, Patrick  
 Grant, Peter  
 Green, Kate  
 Green, Sarah  
 Greenwood, Lilian  
 Greenwood, Margaret  
 Griffith, Nia  
 Haigh, Louise  
 Harris, Carolyn  
 Hayes, Helen  
 Healey, rh John  
 Hendrick, Sir Mark  
 Hendry, Drew  
 Hillier, Dame Meg  
 Hobhouse, Wera  
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon  
 Hollern, Kate  
 Hopkins, Rachel  
 Hosie, rh Stewart  
 Howarth, rh Sir George  
 Huq, Dr Rupa  
 Hussain, Imran  
 Jardine, Christine  
 Jarvis, Dan  
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana  
 Johnson, Kim  
 Jones, Darren  
 Jones, Gerald  
 Jones, rh Mr Kevan  
 Jones, Ruth  
 Jones, Sarah  
 Kane, Mike  
 Keeley, Barbara  
 Kendall, Liz (*Proxy vote cast by Pat McFadden*)  
 Khan, Afzal  
 Kinnock, Stephen  
 Kyle, Peter  
 Lake, Ben  
 Lammy, rh Mr David  
 Lavery, Ian  
 Leadbeater, Kim  
 Lewell-Buck, Mrs Emma  
 Lewis, Clive  
 Lloyd, Tony  
 Long Bailey, Rebecca  
 Lucas, Caroline  
 Lynch, Holly  
 MacAskill, Kenny  
 Madders, Justin  
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid  
 Mahmood, Shabana  
 Malhotra, Seema  
 Maskell, Rachael  
 McDonald, Andy  
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm

McDonald, Stuart C.  
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat  
 McGovern, Alison  
 McKinnell, Catherine  
 McLaughlin, Anne  
 McMahan, Jim  
 McMorris, Anna  
 Mearns, Ian  
 Miliband, rh Edward  
 Mishra, Navendu  
 Monaghan, Carol  
 Moran, Layla  
 Morden, Jessica  
 Morgan, Helen  
 Morgan, Stephen  
 Morris, Grahame  
 Murray, Ian  
 Murray, James  
 Nandy, Lisa  
 Newlands, Gavin  
 Nichols, Charlotte  
 Nicolson, John  
 Norris, Alex  
 O'Hara, Brendan  
 Olney, Sarah  
 Onwurah, Chi  
 Oppong-Asare, Abena  
 Osamor, Kate  
 Osborne, Kate  
 Oswald, Kirsten  
 Owatemi, Taiwo  
 Peacock, Stephanie  
 Pennycook, Matthew  
 Perkins, Mr Toby  
 Phillips, Jess  
 Phillipson, Bridget  
 Pollard, Luke  
 Qaisar, Ms Anum  
 Rayner, rh Angela  
 Reed, Steve  
 Reeves, Rachel  
 Reynolds, Jonathan  
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell  
 Rimmer, Ms Marie  
 Rodda, Matt  
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd  
 Sharma, Mr Virendra  
 Sheppard, Tommy  
 Siddiq, Tulip  
 Smith, Alyn  
 Smith, Cat  
 Smith, Jeff  
 Smith, Nick  
 Smyth, Karin  
 Sobel, Alex  
 Spellar, rh John  
 Stephens, Chris  
 Stevens, Jo  
 Stone, Jamie  
 Streeting, Wes  
 Stringer, Graham  
 Sultana, Zarah  
 Tami, rh Mark  
 Tarry, Sam  
 Thewliss, Alison  
 Thomas, Gareth  
 Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick  
 Thompson, Owen  
 Thomson, Richard  
 Thornberry, rh Emily  
 Timms, rh Stephen  
 Turner, Karl  
 Twigg, Derek  
 Vaz, rh Valerie  
 Wakeford, Christian  
 Webbe, Claudia  
 West, Catherine  
 Western, Matt  
 Whitehead, Dr Alan  
 Whitford, Dr Philippa  
 Whitley, Mick  
 Whittome, Nadia  
 Williams, Hywel  
 Winter, Beth  
 Wishart, Pete  
 Yasin, Mohammad  
 Zeichner, Daniel  
**Tellers for the Noes:**  
 Sarah Owen and  
 Liz Twist

*Question accordingly agreed to.*

*Bill read the Third time and passed.*

## Business without Debate

### DELEGATED LEGISLATION

*Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),*

### RATING AND VALUATION

That the draft Non-Domestic Rating (Levy and Safety Net) (Amendment) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 10 January, be approved.—(*Scott Mann.*)

*Question agreed to.*

## Army Reserve

*Motion made, and Question proposed,* That this House do now adjourn.—(*Scott Mann.*)

7.3 pm

**Mr Richard Bacon** (South Norfolk) (Con): It is a great pleasure to have this Adjournment debate on the Army Reserve. I asked for this because I am concerned that a yawning gap is opening up between the laudable ambitions of Ministers in the Ministry of Defence and what is actually proposed for the reserve. Ironically, this debate takes place at a time when large numbers of reservists, on both sides, are central to the darkening military picture in Ukraine.

When I served in the Territorial Army Intelligence Corps in the 1980s, there was not necessarily an expectation of being deployed, because it would have meant that the third world war had started, but the situation has now been quite different for many years. Those joining the reserves now expect to be deployed, and for many reservists it is one of the attractions of joining. Indeed, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Defence has consistently made it clear that he sees the reserves as an important element of cost-effective armed forces. At the peak, they provided 23% of our forces in Iraq and 13% in Afghanistan. More recently, they have performed further crucial roles in the covid emergency and in dealing with cyber-threats.

Page 19 of the Ministry of Defence document “Future Soldier Guide”, in a section headed “Army Reserve Transformation”, states:

“Our nation’s Reservists will play a vital and pivotal role in delivering Future Soldier. We require a more capable, more ready and more usable Army Reserve, which is assured to deliver against mandated tasks across the UK or overseas. Every part of the Army Reserve will have a clear warfighting role and stand ready to fight as part of the Whole Force in time of war.”

**Adam Holloway** (Gravesham) (Con): On that point, as a former infantry officer, it strikes me that, if we remove support weapons, we obviously have a less capable unit, but we also lose the interest and the attraction to retain troops.

**Mr Bacon:** My hon. Friend makes a good point. Part of the way in which the reserves used to be recruited made clear the importance of formed bodies. The building of comradeship and interest and the use of civilian skills in the reserve forces was an important part of attracting people. I will say more about that because we do not want to lose them.

The MOD document continues:

“Over the coming years the Army Reserve will increasingly take responsibility for Homeland Protect and Resilience operations, supported by the regular component.”

That should increase focus and clarity and it should be very exciting. Unfortunately, serious issues on structure and resourcing threaten to blow away those good intentions. My first concern is that, at a time when the Regular Army is being reduced—again—it seems extraordinary that we are cutting the Army Reserve, too. Could the Minister confirm that the MOD plans to cut the establishment of the Army Reserve from 30,100 trained, with a further 3,000 on phase 1 training, to 27,100 trained, with a further 3,000 on phase 1 training? That is a cut of about 10%.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): First, I congratulate the hon. Member on bringing the debate forward. I concur and entirely support the figures to which he refers, because the figures that I have from within Northern Ireland indicate that the position is similar for us in Northern Ireland. I have been made aware of the proposed restructuring of our Army Reserve, medical units and infantry in Northern Ireland, leading to a 10% reduction in numbers. I declare an interest as a former reservist and part-time soldier for 14 and a half years.

Northern Ireland has a commitment to the reserves, an ability to recruit and a willingness to deploy. Indeed, Northern Ireland has contributed comparatively more to operations overseas than any other region. The reduction that the hon. Gentleman refers to is ludicrous. I fully understand the need to restructure and to meet up-to-date operational needs, but why throw away the willing volunteers that we have in Northern Ireland? I cannot understand where we are going.

**Mr Bacon:** I very much agree. The hon. Gentleman made the point that Northern Ireland has contributed disproportionately to the reserves. I should declare that when I did my final passing out camp in the intelligence corps, we shared our barracks with the Royal Irish Rangers; indeed, I passed out with a Royal Irish Rangers pipe band. I must say to anyone who has not experienced it that they should not knock it until they have tried it. There is nothing quite like marching in Army formation with an Irish pipe band. As he said, the Northern Irish have contributed hugely to the reserves and we are all in this House grateful to them for what they do.

Much worse than the actual cut in numbers is the way in which the cut is proposed, including the erosion of the already fragile structure of all our combat units, instead of simply closing a few. The essence of effective reserves, both for use in small operations and to form a basis for regenerating a larger army, is putting together a body of officers and soldiers who train, study and socialise together, building links of comradeship that can stand the test of combat.

Britain did that successfully in the two world wars and more recently in Iraq and in the early part of Operation Herrick in Afghanistan, where formed companies of infantry, and sub-units from other elements, were successfully deployed. Unfortunately, in the latter stages of Operation Herrick, that approach was torn up and reserve units were exclusively used to backfill regular ones—“augmentation”, as the Army calls it. That offered no command roles for junior reserve officers, just supporting posts.

The consequences were dire. The “Reserves in the Future Force 2020” report uncovered that the junior officer base of the Army had disintegrated, and applications for reserve Sandhurst courses collapsed. Putting that right and moving back towards formed bodies was at the heart of the rebuilding programme of the past decade. Indeed, in the past two years, we have seen a yeomanry squadron rotate successfully into Operation Cabrit in eastern Europe and two reserve infantry battalions, 6 and 7 Rifles, provide the framework for Operation Tosca in Cyprus.

That is why the widely discussed proposals for the cuts in the Army Reserve are so devastating. Instead of simply disbanding a few reserve units—perhaps from

[Mr Richard Bacon]

an area such as logistics where there is a successful record of using armed civilian contractors in Iraq and Afghanistan—I understand that the plan is to devastate every infantry battalion by reducing the manning in three company battalions to just 340 and in four company battalions to 430. Each company will consist of just two rifle platoons and a single section of support weapons, instead of a support platoon.

Besides the obvious point that this seems a very odd time to reduce our reserves of anti-tank weapons and mortars, that will leave each company much smaller and with no in-house staff for the residual support element. Given that nobody gets a full turnout, even when manning recovers from the devastation of covid, that would leave a sub-unit structure without the critical mass for company-level training. At battalion level, it will become impossible to generate a formed company for an extended deployment, as the proportion of even a well-recruited unit who can take many months off work in peacetime is inevitably limited.

That brings me to the state of the reserves recruiting programme. During covid, the collapse in activity was damaging to units, much of it, I suspect, concealed in the statistics by a failure to discharge non-attenders. So the decision largely to turn off the reserve pipeline for many months was ill judged, but, since it restarted last year, astonishingly, the marketing has been done without consultation or even co-ordination with reserve units, or with the reserve forces cadets associations with their local footprint and knowledge. The Minister will know that that has not produced the surge that the Army Reserve hoped for, and badly needs, after the setbacks of covid. I await the figures for the most recent quarter with some trepidation.

There is now a threat to the progress that has been made on reserve officer courses at Royal Military Academy Sandhurst. Three years ago, the post of deputy commandant reserves, which had played such a big part in the recovery of reserve officers, was abolished. Now, the decision has just been taken to sideline the reserve colonel at Sandhurst, to whom the various university officer training corps reported. The reserves depend on the OTCs for the bulk of their officer supply and much of their training, and almost all OTCs are commanded by regular officers. Now they will answer to a regular officer, too. So the senior reserve voice has been frozen out of that critical area for the health and regeneration of the Army Reserve. OTCs may become little more than recruiting organisations for the Regular Army.

Those concerns about manning are reinforced by a number of other emerging trends. At a time when covid and the recruiting pause have left such gaps, is it really a good time to suggest that, where units can recruit above strength and their neighbours cannot, they will be forbidden to do so? That would punish those who are successful, and make it a certainty that we will never recruit up to our new, further reduced target.

In a separate “Future Soldier” document, the reserve component narrative states at paragraph 3, line 4:

“An assured and capable Reserve will require a new approach to training, basing and force generation that sets the Army Reserve up for success. Reservists may not need to give more of their time; but making much better use of their time will be essential.”

That is exactly right, but let us look at the detail.

To take training first, many experienced reservists would say that the biggest waste of their time is the approach of many of the arms schools, which insist that reservists are trained at the same slow speed as regulars, despite reservists having a higher educational minimum standard and, crucially, needing to make progress in the short periods they can spare from civilian jobs. Some forward-leaning institutions, such as Chatham and Larkhill, have modularised, pushing out much of their courses to units and making use of distance learning. Others, such as Bovington and Leconfield, continue to insist on courses being almost all delivered on site and frequently at a very slow pace—a considerable problem for reservists whose day jobs and homes are far away.

What is being done to tackle those institutions that simply do not understand that reserves need to be prepared in a way that fits around their civilian work patterns?

Turning to basing, there are plans that elements of the reserve estate will be closed and that units will be grouped in larger, better centres. Although, in principle, this should improve some dire accommodation, we need to be cautious. Most journeys to training take place in the rush hour, so peak traffic journey times are critical in assessing the expectation that recruits with demanding day jobs will be willing to travel after a hard day’s work. This is particularly seen in threats to delete successful sub-units. Unless the alternative location is close, it will simply drive people away, further reducing manning.

**Mr Mark Francois** (Rayleigh and Wickford) (Con): I declare an interest of sorts, as a former TA infantry officer during the cold war. On a positive note, I am delighted to report that my godson Alexander Blackwell, who I saw today, recently graduated from Sandhurst as a second lieutenant in the Army Reserve.

The Territorial Army did great service in both the first and second world wars. Given that we now have 125,000 Russian troops ringing Ukraine, does my hon. Friend agree that we should never, under any circumstances, take our reserves for granted? Time and again, they have been literally the last line of defence.

**Mr Bacon:** My right hon. Friend is exactly right, and I fear that, at times, we have acted as if we seem to be taking them for granted, which we absolutely must not do.

One of the best ways of making the slender resources available to the reserve estate go further would be reducing bureaucracy in the Defence Infrastructure Organisation so that the reserve forces and cadets associations can crack on with using their local knowledge and the business acumen of their volunteers, as they used to do so successfully. On that subject, when will the Ministry of Defence publish the 2021 report of the RFCA external scrutiny team?

I am sure the Minister will be familiar with section 47 of the Defence Reform Act 2014:

“On receiving a report...the Secretary of State must lay a copy of it before Parliament.”

Heaven forbid that the Secretary of State would inadvertently break the law, but I understand he has had a copy of this report since last July.

On the question of force generation, right across the English-speaking world, from the National Guard with its presence in every American population centre to the Australian army reserve, reserve forces are proud of

their local ties and footprint. Earlier this decade, changes that paired reserve battalions with regular battalions wisely built on that here.

Earlier I stressed the importance of keeping the emphasis on formed bodies, which train, socialise and build comradeship to fight together. It is a shame that the Army's reserve narrative lists, for conditions short of war, supply individuals to regular units ahead of using formed bodies. That points towards the slippery slope that we went down in the dying days of Operation Herrick, with the destruction of the reserve officer corps.

Returning once more to the reserve component narrative of "Future Soldier":

"While Army Reserve will play an increased role, the management of the Army Reserve will change to ensure that employers are not adversely affected."

The greatest barrier to employer support is last-minute changes in call-out plans and arrangements that wreck the plans that employers have generously made to allow their employees to engage in military service. That happened frequently in Operation Rescript at the peak of the covid crisis and continues to happen on other operations. When will steps be taken to ensure that such last-minute changes are identified and recorded, and to ensure that the officers concerned are called to account?

To summarise, I welcome much of the Army's vision for the reserve, but I believe there is a real danger that the cuts to numbers and resources, and the structures emerging, will undermine them.

**Adam Holloway:** Given the long list of cuts, does my hon. Friend agree that the time has come to restore a separate vote for the reserves so that Parliament can know where the money is going?

**Mr Bacon:** That is a very good idea. Having served on the Public Accounts Committee for 16 years, I always like things that make it clearer where the money is going.

**Mr Francois:** As I now have the privilege of serving on the current Public Accounts Committee, I entirely endorse the sensible suggestion of my hon. Friend the Member for Gravesham (Adam Holloway).

**Mr Bacon:** I hope the Minister is listening, because my right hon. Friend is a man not lightly to be trifled with. Indeed, the hon. Member for Hackney South and Shoreditch (Dame Meg Hillier), the Chair of that Committee—with whom I co-operate extensively, as I chair the Public Accounts Commission, which provides the budget for the National Audit Office—is a lady not to be trifled with. I hope that the Minister and the Ministry of Defence will take that seriously, otherwise I think they may find that there are questions on it at future PAC hearings.

At a time when regular manpower is being cut, the Army Reserve is rightly being asked to do a great deal more, and it needs the structures, systems and resources that will allow it to deliver.

7.20 pm

**The Minister for Defence People and Veterans (Leo Docherty):** I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for South Norfolk (Mr Bacon) for his thoughtful and

constructive speech, and it is my great pleasure to respond to it. I am also very pleased to have heard the contributions of my hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Gravesham (Adam Holloway) and my right hon. and gallant Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford (Mr Francois), and I pay tribute to their own military service.

Let me establish the context of the debate before answering some of my hon. Friend's questions. I share his sense of the terrific value of our reserve forces. He outlined correctly their central role in our national security: we have already heard how critical that role has been in the operations in, for instance, Afghanistan and Iraq, and, of course, we have also seen their recent response to the covid pandemic in Operation Rescript. All Members will have seen in their own constituencies the terrific work carried out by both regular and reserve forces in assisting the national health service. In May 2020, a total of 2,300 reservists were in service in Operation Rescript, and we should also acknowledge their current work in delivering support to the Scottish Government in driving ambulances and assisting the NHS in Scotland. We should pay tribute to how they support our national resilience on health, day in and day out.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Rayleigh and Wickford rightly drew attention to the international context. Given the remarkable situation on the Ukraine border, we should acknowledge the central importance of the reserves in our defence capability: we see their remarkable range of expertise and professionalism as something that we can readily call upon, and something that is intrinsically valuable. It is part of our contribution to NATO, and it is something that we rightly appreciate. I hope that, despite the criticisms raised, my hon. Friend feels—this is at the heart of our doctrine outlined in Future Soldier, to which he alluded, and at the heart of the integrated review—that our Army Reserve retains a central role in our defence proposition.

Let me now turn to some of my hon. Friend's specific challenges. The 27,100 figure that he quoted relates only to the Army; it does not include 1,500 reservists in other parts of Defence, and the 300 who are undergoing training. If we look at the numbers in the round, we see that the story is quite positive. Those figures do not illustrate a depreciation in the strength of the Army Reserve, which is currently 26,230. Moreover, restructuring will give it the opportunity to shape itself correctly to enable us to deliver the most effective outcome. This is not just about having a very large establishment; it is about having a very high level—or a higher level—of availability and deployability, which the Future Soldier programme will seek to deliver.

**Jim Shannon:** The Minister has responded very positively to questions that I have asked in the House about recruitment in Northern Ireland, but, if he does not mind, I will ask him a direct question now. Figures that I have received about the proposed restructuring of the Army reserve medical units in Northern Ireland show a 10% reduction. Can the Minister confirm that that will not be the case?

**Leo Docherty:** I do not know the answer on that specific unit in Northern Ireland, but I will take that away and write to the hon. Gentleman.

[*Leo Docherty*]

Returning to the point about deployability, what we are seeking to achieve is a more potent and deployable reserve that can help us to respond to the threats we face. My hon. Friend the Member for South Norfolk referred repeatedly to Future Soldier. Although that reduces the structure of a large proportion of Army Reserve units, it does not do so to a size that impacts the overall strength of the Army Reserve. Through the work of the integrated review, we have sought to match the force to the threats and address the historical imbalance in the structure of the Army Reserve by standardising sub-unit numbers, which brings greater coherence. Our units now have a common structure based on whether they have three or four sub-units. By maintaining all our combat units, we have maintained the best possible geographical spread to assist with the increased role in homeland resilience.

The Future Soldier reserve structure places a warfighting demand on combat units for companies, squadrons, platoons and troops to augment regular units. My hon. Friend's central proposition was that augmentation is a bad thing, but in terms of agility and providing best impact, my judgment, through operational experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, is that a very powerful operational outcome was delivered by that system of augmentation, which, on balance, I think is a good thing.

**Mr Bacon:** On that point, the concern is that if there are no genuine command roles for junior reserve officers, the Minister will devastate the future recruitment for junior officers. They will increasingly understand that they will not have that opportunity if augmentation is all there is. I am not saying that augmentation is always a bad thing, but if the story gets abroad that it is the only thing and that junior reserve officers will not have command roles, we will not have junior reserve officers.

On the numbers, I would like to question the Minister a little further. He mentioned the 27,100 figure and then said there would be 1,500 in addition, taking it up to 28,600, and a further 300 taking it to 28,900. That is still significantly lower than the current establishment, which is 30,100, plus a further 3,000 on phase one training. That does sound to me like a diminution, although I thought I heard him say that it was not a diminution. Can he clarify that?

**Leo Docherty:** The 27,100 does not include 1,500 Army reserves who are in other tri-service units. It also does not take into account the 3,000 who are undergoing phase one training. Taken in the round, that gets us north of 31,000, which, overall, is very similar to where we are now. I therefore regard that as not a diminution of strength. It is also a case of looking at the deployability rate. We are seeking to drive up availability and deployability, which I think is currently at 60%. Let us drive that up. But I would rather have a higher rate of deployability, which is how we get a better outcome and better lethality from our reserves, than a larger establishment with lower rates of deployability. My hon. Friend will know that traditionally availability and deployability, judged by those who receive their bounty across Territorial or Army Reserve units, has been extremely low and that is something we seek to drive relentlessly upwards.

**Mr Francois:** Churchill called the Territorials “twice the citizen”, because after a hard day's work they go home, eat something quickly and dash out for training. When the Minister receives submissions asking him to close Army Reserve centres—I know that, as a Minister, he instinctively understands these things—will he look very carefully before signing them off? If we make the distance unrealistic to, after a hard day's work, get to the training centre, do the training and then get home, we will lose lots of good-quality people. Does he promise he will bear that in mind before he initials any submissions?

**Leo Docherty:** I do, and I am grateful for that comment. I will come back to what my hon. Friend the Member for South Norfolk was saying about that earlier. Proximity of training opportunities is crucial. It is a function of geography, and we take it seriously.

Let me return to what my hon. Friend was saying about opportunities for command for young reserve officers. Establishment laydown notwithstanding, the range of opportunity that the integrated review, the defence Command Paper and Future Soldier bring to young officers, and enlisted servicemen and women, are manifold and extremely exciting. We are entering an era in which we are seeking to be deployed on a wider and more sustained basis right across the world. The offer that we make in terms of operational experience and opportunity at every level, including sub-unit command at a junior level, is extremely exciting. That is the feedback that I get from the reserve soldiers I meet.

**Jim Shannon:** The Minister has been very responsive to our concerns. He has referred to deployability a couple of times. What will be the impact on deployability if there are 10% reductions in Northern Ireland? It is very important to us to have a Territorial Army—a reserve force—that can actually respond, and I think the Minister wants that. Let us air that issue of deployability for Northern Ireland.

**Leo Docherty:** I share the hon. Gentleman's sincere interest in the issue. I will write to him, relaying some information about future establishment strength and current deployability judged on bounty. That will be interesting for me, and I look forward to sharing that information with him.

**Adam Holloway:** Does the Minister believe that the new structure, in which each infantry company has lost the critical mass for training—barely 80 men—will attract good-quality officers to improve their attendance?

**Leo Docherty:** I think good people will principally be encouraged to join by the prospect of serving in exciting overseas operations. Look at the opportunities that exist in Kenya, Oman and right across the middle east in a more sustained fashion. The offer that we make—“If you join, you will have the prospect of serving”—is very exciting and should not be underestimated.

My hon. Friend the Member for South Norfolk make a good point about officer training corps. Importantly, he talked about estates. I reaffirm our interest, concern and sincere belief that training needs to be proximate to the people who are enjoying those opportunities. The Minister for Defence Procurement, my hon. Friend the Member for Horsham (Jeremy Quin), takes that very



seriously when he is making judgments about the estate. My hon. Friend the Member for South Norfolk asked when we would publish the RFCA 2021 report. That will be in due course, but we note his interest sincerely. I am grateful to have answered the debate tonight.

*Question put and agreed to.*

7.33 pm

*House adjourned.*



# Westminster Hall

Wednesday 2 February 2022

[SIR ROGER GALE *in the Chair*]

## Bees: Neonicotinoids

[*Relevant documents: e-petition 563943, Continue the ban on the use of Neonicotinoids, and e-petition 569214, Overturn the decision to allow the use of neonicotinoid pesticides.*]

9.30 am

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** Morning, ladies and gentlemen. May I, before we start, remind hon. Members to observe social distancing and wear masks when possible?

**Luke Pollard** (Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport) (Lab/Co-op): I beg to move,

That this House has considered Government approval for the use of neonicotinoids and the impact on bees.

It is good to see you in the Chair, Sir Roger. First, I declare an interest, in that my family keep bees on our farm in north Cornwall. I am also a patron of Pollenize, which is a brilliant beekeeping community interest company in Plymouth, and I can tell Members that all the honey it produces is delicious.

I bloody love bees. Bees might be small creatures, but their contribution to nature and to food production is huge. Up to three quarters of crop species are pollinated by bees and other pollinators. Bees are a symbol of a healthy environment. Bees, whether honeybees or bumblebees, are iconic British species, too. They are a weathervane species, against which we can chart nature's recovery or decline.

For me, bee health is non-negotiable. We are in the middle of a climate and ecological crisis. That means that we must not only act faster to cut carbon and do so fairly, creating green jobs; we must also protect nature, and that means taking difficult decisions to protect our natural world. We will never be nature positive if we dodge the difficult decisions or turn a blind eye to our role in the erosion of nature.

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this important debate. Does he agree that the legal requirements in the Environment Act 2021 to halt species loss by 2030 will not be worth the paper they are written on if, at the first hurdle, the Government actually fail and give a licence to something that their own scientific advisers are advising against?

**Luke Pollard:** I thank the hon. Lady for summing up my entire speech in one pithy intervention. She is absolutely correct, and I will seek to explain why, using more words, over the next 10 minutes or so.

Bees are not only in more danger every year; they are also more important every year. According to the UN, the volume of agricultural production dependent on pollinators has increased globally by 300% in the past 50 years. The UN also found that greater pollinator

density results in better crop yields, so it is also good for farmers. That is why this is such an important and urgent debate, because bee health in this country is not getting better; it is getting worse. Banning bee-killing pesticides will not on its own reverse the decline in bee populations, but if we cannot deal with this most apparent of ills, how will we deal with the hundreds of more difficult decisions that must follow in relation to protecting habitats and providing a guide to bee recovery?

**Tracey Crouch** (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): I, too, congratulate the hon. Gentleman on securing this important and very well attended debate. Will he join me in thanking and congratulating the local authorities across this country, including Kent County Council, that have put together plans, such as Kent's Plan Bee, to protect and enhance our bee populations and to do what they can to protect the natural environment across their counties?

**Luke Pollard:** I thank the hon. Lady for her intervention and I agree with what she says. Local government has a really significant role in nature restoration, and bee recovery in particular, because Ministers might be able to set the strategic framework, but it will be local government delivering that on the ground in all our communities. I commend Kent for the work that it is doing.

I am grateful to Buglife, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and the Wildlife Trusts nationally, and the Devon Wildlife Trust locally, for their help in preparing for this debate. The House of Commons Library has also been superb, producing a great briefing note. I am also grateful to hon. Members from all parties for stopping me so frequently over the past week or so to talk about bees and for asking me to mention their particular concerns in this debate. I hope that my speech will convey the strength of their feeling, on a cross-party basis.

I want to do three things. First, I want to make the case for the ban on bee-killing pesticides to be restored—no ifs or buts. Secondly, I want to challenge the Minister and the industry to do more to help sugar beet farmers, some of whom face financial losses and real difficulties because of aphids. Thirdly, I want to argue that in the middle of a climate and nature emergency, future authorisations of bee-killing pesticides must be subject to a parliamentary vote, rather than being quietly snuck out by Ministers.

Bee species and populations are in decline. Research suggests that a third of the UK bee population is thought to have vanished in the last 10 years, and since 1900 the UK has lost 13 out of 35 native bee species. Those are frightening figures, and the decline is continuing. However, I am concerned that, instead of taking meaningful action to protect our bees, the Government have chosen to temporarily lift the ban on Cruiser SB, a neonicotinoid pesticide that is banned under UK law except for certain emergency authorisations. That is not just a step in the wrong direction for our bees; it is a dramatic erosion of our steps towards being a net zero, nature-positive country.

One teaspoon of neonicotinoid is enough to kill 1.25 billion honeybees, equivalent to four lorry loads, according to Dave Goulson, professor of biology at the University of Sussex. We need more research on the

[*Luke Pollard*]

true effects of neonicotinoids on bee populations—not just on every species but on the different types of bee within a population. In particular, beekeepers are reporting that, in areas where neonicotinoids have been used in the past, the behaviour of queens is different from that of worker bees, for instance. More research is needed.

This is not the first time that we have discussed bees. Indeed, I have discussed them many times with the Minister, who is in her place. On 16 December last year, she told the House of Commons that there is a

“growing weight of scientific evidence that neonicotinoids are harmful to bees and other pollinators.”

I agree. The chief scientific adviser to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said that neonic use must be kept to an “absolute minimum” to address bee decline. I agree. However, the Government have not stuck to those words in the actions that they have taken.

When we left the EU, the Government promised to follow the science on bee-killing pesticides. They said that their decisions about emergency authorisations would be guided by two expert bodies, the Health and Safety Executive and the expert committee on pesticides. On 6 September 2021, the Minister told the Commons:

“Decisions on pesticide authorisation are based on expert assessment by the Health and Safety Executive.”

Lord Goldsmith gave the same commitment, word for word, to the Lords on 27 September.

Those words, however, have not rung true in actions. In January last year, both expert bodies recommended that emergency authorisations for neonic bee-killing pesticides should not be given for sugar beets. The expert committee on pesticides said:

“The requirements for emergency authorisation have not been met.”

It said that the risk to bees and freshwater biodiversity outweighed the benefit to sugar beets. That is important. The Health and Safety Executive came to a similar conclusion.

DEFRA has therefore lifted a ban on neonics against the overwhelming advice of its own expert bodies, by which it said it would be guided. That suggests that the decision was a political one, not a scientific one.

I know that some people will look at donations from big sugar to the governing party, but I do not subscribe to that argument. I think that it is more simple than that: when given the option to take bee health more seriously, the Government chose not to. It is not a bigger conspiracy than that. They simply chose not to act to support bee health in the way that they could have done. That sets a dangerous precedent. Neonics are largely banned in this country, but that does not mean anything if the Government are willing to authorise emergency use in circumstances that, frankly, are not emergencies.

I turn now to my asks. First, we know that 12 other European countries have decided to authorise neonics this year, but it is slightly odd that such a hard Brexit Government now hide behind what Europe does. Indeed, the Prime Minister promised to deliver a green Brexit, and the former Environment Secretary, the right hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove), said in 2018 that Britain would demonstrate “global leadership” on

environmental policy after Brexit. Why are we not leading when it comes to saving bees and other essential pollinators?

A commitment to support biodiversity must be delivered through action, not words or press releases. I want the ban on bee-killing pesticides restored and locked in. To do that, we need to look carefully at what alternatives are available to support sugar beet farmers.

**Mike Amesbury (Weaver Vale) (Lab):** Having secured the debate, my hon. Friend must be positively buzzing. I speak as a Mancunian—the bee, of course, being a historic symbol of Manchester. I now live in Frodsham, in my constituency, and the bee is also a symbol of Frodsham because the vicar of Frodsham, Rev. William Charles Cotton, was a beekeeper. I agree very much with my hon. Friend that the Government need to take control now and put deeds and actions, not just fine words, into play to save our bees and nature.

**Luke Pollard:** I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention—perhaps less so for his bee related joke, which I have managed to avoid in my remarks. He is right about the importance that bee populations have to local people, not just beekeepers. Bees are an iconic species—they are built into the fabric of our identity—and because of that, what happens to bees is important not just to scientists, beekeepers and honey lovers but to our entire country.

**Liz Twist (Blaydon) (Lab):** My hon. Friend is making a great speech setting out this issue. Does he agree that our constituents are really concerned about this issue and do not understand the Government’s reasoning? As far as they are concerned, bees need to be protected, and that must include this issue. Can I also put a plug in for another reverend, Rev. Tom Jamieson in my constituency, who works with an organisation called North East Young Dads and Lads, which is building links and bonds through beekeeping?

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** Order. I am conscious of the fact that, though a number of Members present are not on the speakers list and have not put in to speak, they are taking advantage of interventions to make speeches. Interventions are interventions.

**Luke Pollard:** I agree with my hon. Friend about how important bees are, but I also agree with her that people do not understand why this is happening. This emergency authorisation is important to the public. Sneaking it out does the Government no favours because it suggests that they do not have a strong argument in favour of its validity. If the case has not been made, I am afraid that the public will be left with only one conclusion, which is that the Government are simply not in favour of bee health, as I think the majority of the British public are.

I will now turn to sugar beet farmers in particular, nearly all of whom are located in the east of England. I want to make sure they are properly supported, because I do not doubt that they have had a difficult time in recent years owing to a number of issues affecting their crop. Sugar is a big business, and it is a high-value crop. British Sugar—one of the big sugar firms that dominate the market—recorded a £100 million profit in 2020. It is big business and I refuse to believe that this granulated

money-making machine is unable to provide sugar beet farmers with a fairer deal to help and support them against crop failures. Indeed, the latest sugar contracts put in place over the past 12 months offer considerably more support to sugar beet farmers, a point that I will return to later.

I know that the Minister is keen to explore gene editing to make sugar beet more resistant. Although I am not a fan of the lack of proper regulation and oversight of gene editing that she proposes, I know that DEFRA is quite keen on it, and often cites sugar beet as an example of a target species for gene editing. The Government themselves have said that they expect the sugar beet industry to no longer rely on bee-killing neonicotinoids by 2023—next year—through the development of pest-resistant varieties and greater use of integrated pest management.

As a former lead for Labour on farming, I have spoken up for our farmers when Government policy on subsidy reform, labour or trade deals harms them, but I also feel we need to speak up for their environmental commitments, in particular the National Farmers Union's hard-won plan to hit net zero by 2040. That is an ambitious policy that means changing the way in which farming works to be more sustainable, in terms of not just carbon but water use, soil health, chemicals and, in particular, nature recovery. We cannot have Ministers speaking of nature recovery on the one hand, while on the other greenlighting the use of bee-killing pesticides, whether as a spray or as a seed treatment, as they have in this case.

That brings me to my main ask of Ministers. I believe that the Government do not have the support of the public, the majority of beekeepers and farmers, or all their own MPs in authorising the use of bee-killing pesticides. As such, my proposal to the Minister is that future authorisations of bee-killing pesticides should be subject to a parliamentary vote, in which MPs would have a genuine opportunity to weigh up the pros and cons of using neonicotinoids. I suspect that the Minister would insist on a hard three-line Conservative Whip on such a Bill. Sitting as I am next to the Labour Deputy Chief Whip, my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood), I would not want to guess what we would do in that situation, but I do believe that MPs would think carefully about what to do. Saving the bees is such an important topic, but so is supporting our farmers, so MPs would consider that decision carefully, and the consequences of their votes would be carried by Members of Parliament with a responsibility to persuade and to explain and listen to their constituents. The climate and nature emergency is one of the defining issues of our time. Responding to it by making it worse should require a democratic mandate and robust parliamentary scrutiny, because we should be trying to resolve it and remove those problems.

I hope that the Minister will set out how she intends to invest in more robust scientific research to monitor the use of bee-killing pesticides by farmers and big sugar, as well as better protections against the need for it. What estimates has she made of how many bees and pollinators will be killed this year by authorisation of these pesticides? What is her plan for nature recovery in those areas where the neonicotinoid Cruiser SB will be used this year? What monitoring will be in place over the next five years to understand fully the impact on bee

and pollinator populations, not just in the fields where the pesticide has been used on crops but, importantly, in hedgerows and areas around them? What steps will she take to prevent the active ingredient of the pesticide, as described by the Bumblebee Conservation Trust,

“leaching...from the crop into wildflowers in and around the field margins”?

Some of the protections that have been built into the derogation are welcome. Raising the expected aphid incident level from a projected 7% to 19% before permitting the use of a treated seed is a welcome measure, as is the 32-month ban—up from 22 months last year—on growing flowering crops in fields where treated sugar beet has been grown, but they do not go far enough to justify the use of the pesticides. Frankly, I do not want bee-killing pesticides ever to be used.

If the Minister's argument is that they are to be used only in emergencies, I want to challenge the assumption that this is an emergency. I expect the Minister will claim that there is no alternative to the authorisation of neonicotinoids. I expect she will say that UK sugar supplies will plummet, sugar beet farmers will suffer hugely and that the nation would be forced to import more from abroad, from countries where neonicotinoids are used.

I want to refer DEFRA to its own modelling, which says that predicted losses from sugar beet this year would have been under £10 million, even if no neonicotinoids were used. That is assuming disease rates of more than double of those predicted last year. It also assumes that farmers would not have used alternative mitigation strategies, as we know many of them have. The Government have themselves said that they expect the sugar beet industry no longer to rely on bee-killing chemicals by next year, through the development of pest-resistant varieties and integrated pest management.

That is welcome but, if it is coming, it will not all come at once. We know that there are strategies that have been put in place this year. Is it really an emergency? I want to see sugar beet farmers supported, but I do not believe that the Government have done enough to demonstrate that this is an emergency. Indeed, the steps that the sugar beet industry—British Sugar and the growers—has put in place have helped the pain share, gain share.

The five tests that the Government use to define an emergency are woolly, and have been hidden away in assessments on the DEFRA website, rather than put in the public domain. That has done the Government no favours. That is why an annual parliamentary vote on the issue is important. We are in a climate and ecological emergency, but I do not believe we are in a sugar beet emergency. I support the farmers. Indeed, they are getting more support this year. That is why it is important that we put the priority correctly on bees and nature. I challenge the Minister to say that now is the time to update the national pollinator strategy, which runs until 2024. It needs updating sooner than 2024, and I would be grateful if the Minister could look carefully at bringing that forward, with a proper consultation on how more ambitious we can be to protect bees and pollinators.

I look forward to other contributions. We all love bees and we all want to back our farmers. The only question is how to do that. The issue is hugely symbolic, not just because bees matter but because it represents

[*Luke Pollard*]

one of the first challenges that we have faced since the passing of the Environment Act—whether we can achieve a net zero, nature-positive future. Being nature positive means more than planting a few trees; it means taking tough decisions that may be unpopular with some, because the benefits to nature outweigh the costs to some businesses. If we fall at such an early hurdle, on a species as popular as bees, how will we ever take the necessary steps to realise a future where England's green and pleasant lands are truly sustainable?

That is why we must take a stand against the use of bee-killing pesticides. I will also say this in political terms, and I make my intention clear. If the Government want to continue to use bee-killing pesticides, we must make it politically impossible for them to do so. We must ensure that the public know that this is an annual decision. MPs from all parties must be clear with their constituents on whether they support it. If we are to protect and save bees, we need to do more than tweet about it—although I do that a lot. We need to do more than say the words; we need to ensure there is action. We need an annual moment of action. If we do not have that, we will not secure the net-zero, nature-positive future. Let us save the bees. Our planet depends on it.

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** There are at least 11 Members seeking to participate. There are only two Front-Bench winding-up speeches. By my reckoning, we have about 45 minutes. Do the maths. I am not going to put a time limit on speeches, but if you take more than four minutes, somebody is not going to get in. I call Sir Robert Goodwill.

9.50 am

**Sir Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con):** I thank the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) for raising this topic. This is a debate we need to have, and we need to focus on the facts.

I should declare that I am a farmer, though not a sugar beet farmer. I am very fond of bees, not least because we grow field beans on our farm and we understand the role of pollinators. We should not dispute the fact that neonicotinoids are toxic to bees, although in a slightly more complex way than with other toxins—the behaviour of bees can be affected, which can result in hives failing to survive.

No farmer likes using pesticides; they are expensive and have an effect on the environment. In many crops, such as wheat, which can be affected by aphids, the farmer waits until a threshold of aphid attack is reached before using the sprays. A certain degree of predation can be coped with as the aphids feed on the plant and suck the sap. However, although winter barley can have an aphid attack in the growing season, it is also affected by a disease called barley yellow dwarf virus, which is spread by a virus vector. Farmers spray their barley crop in the autumn not because a threshold of aphids has been reached, but because they need to prevent the virus from being spread. The same situation occurs with sugar beet.

The sugar beet virus yellows is caused by three viruses—beet yellows virus, beet mild yellowing virus and beet chlorosis virus—and is spread by an aphid vector. It is a

bit like mosquitoes spreading malaria—one bite is enough to infect the plant. Farmers need to protect the crop. In a bad year, the crop can be affected up to as much as 30% on the yield, which is sufficient to make it unviable to grow.

Sugar beet is a biennial crop. It does not flower in the first year. Using a seed dressing when planting the seed—we are not talking about spraying it over the crop and bees that are flying around being affected—renders the plant toxic at that critical stage so that if an aphid feeds on the plant, it dies and does not spread the virus still further. It is our old friend *myzus persicae*, the peach-potato aphid, that spreads the virus.

This is not a problem only in the UK. Ten European Union countries have applied for similar derogations. France has a derogation that runs until 2023. There are alternatives, but, as the French have said, none of them works well enough on their own compared with the seed treatment. Some may not be good for the environment either. For example, the virus overwinters on many flowering weeds. Many farmers might be discouraged from putting in flower margins around their fields because that could overwinter the virus, which could then be spread into the crop. As farmers, we want our flower margins and a wide diversity on the crop.

I believe that the derogation is sensible. The biennial nature of sugar beet means that we do not have bees feeding on the pollen and nectar on the sugar beet crop in the same way that they would on a crop such as field beans, which is an annual crop.

We have seen a massive decline in oilseed rape in this country because we have lost the same type of seed treatment that controls the cabbage stem flea beetle. It is not a virus vector, but at the very early stage, when the first two cotyledon leaves emerge, the cabbage stem flea beetle will decimate the crop. Many farmers have stopped growing oil seed rape. We are into the law of unintended consequences, because oilseed rape is a massive source of pollen and nectar for the very bees we want to encourage. We need to be very careful that we do not just go with emotion. We all love bees and want to protect them, but we need to ensure that we have a diversity of break crops. As part of our new environmental land management scheme, we want to have more margins, more wildflowers and more diversity, but if we lose our two main break crops in the east of England—sugar beet and oilseed rape—it could unfortunately result in the opposite happening.

Oilseed rape is drilled in mid-August, grows through the winter and does not flower until the following spring, when the residues are not sufficient—I think scientists would make this point—to cause problems for bees. We need to be very careful that we do not throw the baby out with the bathwater, and it is sensible for the Government to allow a derogation, as 10 EU countries have done, to allow this to happen. I think that that will secure the viability of the UK sugar beet industry and not affect bees. It would be sensible to do more research as we put in place the derogations, which, by the way, are needed only if we have a mild winter and aphids over the winter. I would support that.

As I say, I am a great champion of bees, but many of the emails I get do not really take account of the science. We need to look at the science and the evidence, and I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will look at the science and realise that this is a proportionate

change and will help the sugar beet industry in the UK. We can import sugar, and we can stop producing sugar in this country, but I think it is important that we do things in a way that is proportionate and that also does not undermine our bee populations.

9.56 am

**Caroline Lucas** (Brighton, Pavilion) (Green): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Sir Roger. I congratulate the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) on securing the debate.

I would like to make it clear that I have enormous sympathy for farmers, who have faced unprecedented challenges in recent years in responding to covid, Brexit and increasingly unpredictable extreme weather events, and I completely understand their determination to protect their crops and livelihoods. None the less, I am profoundly concerned about the Government's emergency authorisation of Cruiser SB for 2022 to tackle the threat of yellow virus. Thiamethoxam is a banned substance for a reason, and this decision is a retrograde move. It is utterly at odds with the Government's legal requirement to halt species loss by 2030, as set out in the Environment Act. With COP15, the global biodiversity summit, just months away, the Government should be leading from the front to protect and restore nature, not giving a green light to the use of deadly toxins.

Many Members have set out the overwhelming scientific evidence of the harm caused by these pesticides, and I would like to refer them back to December 2020, when I asked DEFRA what assessment had been made of the potential environmental effects of approving Cruiser SB neonic in 2021. As it transpires, the neonic was not used last year, because an especially cold winter led to a fall in aphid numbers. None the less, the then Minister's reply assured me that the advice of the HSE and the expert committee on pesticides was being sought, and it implied that it would be respected. The Government's subsequent and continued disregard for the evidence presented by the very experts they have appointed is, at best, mysterious and, at worst, utterly shameful.

I would also like to remind colleagues of the Environmental Audit Committee's findings in its 2013 report, "Pollinators and Pesticides". I sat on that Committee and still do, and I particularly recall this recommendation:

"Defra policy on pesticides must be evidence-based. Where the available scientific evidence is either incomplete or contradictory, Defra must apply the precautionary principle."

The Government's decision to approve the use of this neonic flies in the face of the evidence we do have, and it is not consistent with a precautionary approach.

The Government should be giving legal protection to bees and other pollinators. As it stands, pre-approval tests for pesticides focus only on the short-term effects on honeybees, ignoring the long-term effects of pesticides on other wild pollinators altogether—the bumblebees, beetles and moths on which we rely. An amendment to the Environment Act sought to rectify that omission but, sadly, did not win Government support. The Minister could right that wrong now and commit to make consideration of the long-term impacts of the UK's pesticide use on pollinators a mandatory requirement for the assessment process. That would be an important first step towards embracing a new approach to farming and pest management that works in harmony with nature, not against it.

The Government should be investing in innovative and non-chemical alternatives to pest management, including better forecasting, crop rotation, natural predators and the use of resistant varieties, while at the same time supporting farmers to make the transition away from neonics. That could be done, for example, via the sustainable farming incentive in England and by supporting nature-friendly pest control.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from the Secretary of State's reply to a cross-party letter that I co-ordinated last year, in which he assured me that

"emergency authorisations for pesticides are only granted in exceptional circumstances where diseases or pests cannot be controlled by any other reasonable means."

What steps have the Government taken over the last 12 months to support farmers to invest in those other reasonable control measures? I would love to know the details of that. Will the Minister stop putting pollinators in persistent danger? Will she cancel the approval and instead spend the next 12 months ensuring that farmers can access non-chemical alternatives? Will she commit to a national action plan to end the use of pesticides, putting UK nature on a genuine path to recovery? We are all saying how much we like bees—we heard from the right hon. Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) how much he likes bees—but unless we are prepared to take action to make meaningful change, those are just empty words. With a nature and environmental crisis coming down the line at us, we cannot afford to do that.

10.1 am

**Dr Matthew Offord** (Hendon) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir Roger. I congratulate the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) on bringing forward the debate. I had a rather lengthy speech prepared, but I will raise just a few points to allow others to contribute. However, please do not interpret my brevity as indicating a lack of passion on this issue.

First, it is not just bees that are affected by neonicotinoids; it is also moths and butterflies, which play an equally important role in natural habitats and the food supply by pollinating crops and wild plants. Secondly, since the Government agreed to the moratorium on the use of neonicotinoids, further studies have been published that confirm that neonics can be damaging to pollinators without being fatal. The chemicals may not necessarily result in death, but the impact on the nervous system and the brain can make it difficult for such insects to function, such as the queen bee. That allows the assertion to be made that these chemicals do not kill pollinators, but that is incorrect.

In addition to those unintended consequences, there are further reasons to ban the use of neonicotinoids, including the contamination of the environment and the use of alternatives. Research conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations reported that the persistence of neonics in soil and water is causing large-scale adverse effects on pollinators, and concluded by saying that the organisation is still discovering the harmful effects of neonics.

Research published by Jactel, Verheggen, Thiéry et al in 2019 determined that an effective alternative to neonics was available in 96% of the 2,968 case studies analysed.

[Dr Matthew Offord]

In 89%, neonics could be replaced with one non-chemical alternative, including micro-organisms, semi-chemicals or surface coating of seed. The relevance of that lies in the pests' feeding habits. Leaf and flower feeders are easier to control with non-chemical methods, whereas wood and root feeders are more difficult to manage in the same way. The conclusion is that non-chemical alternatives to neonics do exist, but it will take Her Majesty's Government to promote them through regulation and funding.

The justification for the application of a previous derogation in 2020 was that 25% of the national crop of sugar beet was lost, resulting in a loss of over £65 million for the growers and processors. However, in 2013, the Environmental Audit Committee, which the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) and I served on, published its "Pollinators and Pesticides" report, which made a very clear recommendation:

"Economic considerations should not form part of environmental risk management decision making, but rather should be a function of a distinct and transparent subsequent political process."

That approach now appears to have been ignored.

For many years, people have said that DEFRA is not taking a sufficiently precautionary approach, so I appeal to the Minister today: please do not make this further evidence of that assertion true.

10.4 am

**Fleur Anderson (Putney) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Sir Roger. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) on bringing forward this important debate and raising awareness about decisions that are being made in secret—that is the feeling of many of my constituents who have written to me about bees. We may be an urban constituency, but we have beehives on the Granville Road allotments and on Albert Road. We have delicious honey from Southfields, which I have every year.

There is interest in this debate across the country for many reasons. I am concerned about this decision—not only because of the immediate impact it will have on the environment, but because of the way it is being made and what that shows about the attitude towards the Environment Act 2021. I was on the Bill Committee, and the ink is only just dry on the Act, but it is already being set aside. I am also concerned by the attitude towards expert advice. We should be following the science, but this decision has not done that.

In terms of the use of neonicotinoids, I am concerned about the damage to bees and aquatic life and about the damage from the run-off. I am concerned that support for farmers has not been sufficiently taken into account, because it does exist. I am concerned about abandoning the precautionary principle, which has been mentioned by other hon. Members. It is absolutely fundamental to our environmental decision making, but if it is not even being put in place now, after we have passed the Environment Act, what will happen to it in the future? We need to reassert the precautionary approach.

The Government's case rests on two justifications. First, it rests on the financial impact on sugar beet farmers, and I absolutely sympathise with and understand

their situation at the moment. However, the latest contracts between growers and British Sugar include an insurance scheme to offset possible losses due to the occurrence of the virus yellows. That needs to be considered in the context of the case for need, because the impact of the financial loss to sugar beet farmers has been taken into consideration.

Secondly, I am sure the Minister and the Government will say that there is a very limited use for this insecticide, that it will not be used on flowering plants and that there will be restrictions on what can be grown in contaminated soil for 32 months. Although I welcome those restrictions, I think the Government should go further. The UK expert committee on pesticides considered exactly this question and concluded that the environmental risk—especially of run-off into water and back into animals and other flowering plants in surrounding areas—is too great. When it met on 21 September 2021, the committee concluded that the requirements for emergency authorisation had not been met and that it cannot support the recommendation.

The committee was specifically asked to look into the risk to honeybees and any other additional measures that could be implemented to mitigate that risk. Instead of saying that there was a very low impact on honeybees—which there was, directly—and that additional measures could be implemented to mitigate that risk, the committee said no, it could not recommend that the ban be lifted. It said:

"There is new evidence regarding the risk from neonicotinoids globally which adds to the weight of evidence of adverse impact on honeybee behaviour and demonstrated negative impacts on bee colonies...Further evidence has been published on the occurrence of thiamethoxam in honey and of adverse effects on other bee species, and these effects should be considered in addition to chronic effects on honeybees...None of the suggested mitigation measures",

which I am sure the Minister will be laying out, and which I have been given in response to questions,

"protected off-crop areas and, if the authorisation is granted, further consideration needs to be given to how this could impact on growers involved in agri-environmental schemes which involved planting flowering margins."

The committee's conclusion was that it is

"unable to support an emergency authorisation under Article 53 of Regulation 1107/2009"

because of the reasons laid out by the Health and Safety Executive,

"the expected off-crop environmental effects and the impact of grower contract changes on the trigger threshold for use."

It is absolutely unacceptable that the Government say they will take into account expert panels, set up an expert panel, have the panel met in good time—at the same time as we are hosting COP26 and passing the Environment Act, which has the precautionary impact built in—and then disregard it straightaway.

**Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab):** My hon. Friend is making some excellent points and an impassioned speech. It is important that we clearly state that the science has been set out and the panel has been spoken to, but that the Government are being not only not cautious but reckless in their dismissal of the panel's views.



**Fleur Anderson:** I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend.

I could go on longer about the precautionary principle, but I do not have enough time. However, it was set out at the 1992 Rio conference on the environment, and it is absolutely essential that we consider it.

The impact on bees has been well documented. Neonicotinoids can damage the receptors to the insect's nervous system, causing paralysis and affecting learning, feeding, foraging and reproduction, eventually killing the insect. What the public want is for us to save the bees, save our environment and increase biodiversity.

I will conclude with some questions to the Minister. Why did she disregard the advice of the expert panel? What is she doing to stop the effect of run-off if the ban is lifted and neonicotinoids are used? What support is she giving to enable sugar beet farmers to tackle virus yellows without the use of neonicotinoids, rather than coming back year by year asking to lift this ban? What research is she doing into the declining bee population in the UK, and how can we save bees instead of killing them? What research is being done on the effect of neonicotinoids on bees in particular and on the effect of lifting the ban on or around affected fields? When will the Government update the pollinator strategy? And can we have an annual vote on lifting any bans, so that we can absolutely be held to account for decisions we make that have such a big impact on the environment?

10.11 am

**Dr Caroline Johnson** (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): I think we can all agree on three things: that bees are very important and we should protect them; that we have all eaten something containing sugar in the last 24 hours; and that the Government have to consider competing risks and balance them carefully. Given the accepted importance of bees, the Government have developed the pollinator strategy. Their new environmental land management schemes for farmers will encourage the growing of areas in which bees can find safe habitat, increase the number of other areas for habitat for bees, increase public awareness of the needs of bees and increase the understanding of health and disease in bees, so that we can manage those more effectively. I welcome all of that.

We also have to consider the importance of sugar. Sugar production is responsible for 9,500 jobs in the UK, many in my constituency. I should at this stage mention that my husband is a farmer, although this is the first time in 45 years that no sugar will be grown on the farm. There are also 7,000 businesses in the sugar supply chain, and 3 million tonnes of sugar is consumed in the UK every year. I appreciate that the Government are investing in trying to ensure that we have pest-resistant varieties, so that no chemicals will be needed because virus yellows will not be able to attack the sugar beet, but these are not available yet. We had an awful time in 2020, just two years ago. I remember being called by many constituents to look around their fields and seeing whole fields of crops that had turned yellow because of virus yellows. Farmers had spent many months growing and tending to those crops, only to find them failing.

The Government have to look at the various risks and ask what the alternative is. If our sugar crop fails, what do we have to do? We could import sugar beet

from Belgium, France, Denmark, Spain or one of the other 12 European countries where sugar beet is grown and where they also use neonics, often without the restrictions that the Government have proposed to impose. I heard Members mention the effect on net zero. Let us think about the alternative—importing sugar cane from overseas. What about the deforestation? Most sugar beet is not irrigated; it is just fed by the rain, but sugar cane, because of where it is grown, usually has to be irrigated. That is a 60% water use saving. What about the food miles? We know that sugar grown in the UK travels an average of 28 miles to the factory to be processed into sugar. It travels many thousands of miles, and is a much greater use of carbon dioxide, if imported for many miles across the world. When making environmental judgments, we cannot take the moral high ground and simply export the harm overseas, because we all live on the same planet, and I am sure we agree that we all need to protect it.

What are the farmers' alternatives if neonics are banned? Either not to grow sugar and to import it, or to use alternative, legal pesticides, which may be broader-spectrum, and potentially more harmful.

**Virginia Crosbie** (Ynys Môn) (Con): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech that also mentions farmers. My constituency of Ynys Môn has a strong beekeeping community represented by the Anglesey Beekeepers Association. We have many local honey producers, including Anglesey Bees, Mèl Môn, Felin Honeybees run by Katie Hayward. Does my hon. Friend agree that our farmers are key and that any chemicals, including neonicotinoids, should be used correctly to protect the bee population?

**Dr Johnson:** Absolutely. We must remember that bees are very important to farmers, as my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) made clear. Farmers do not wish to use pesticides that they do not need. Equally, they do not wish to see their entire crop fail, nor do we want the alternative of importing crops from overseas, where worse pesticides might have been used.

The Government need to balance the risk, and I think they have done so very carefully. There needs to be a threshold for virus yellows predictions for the year. Indeed, there was a derogation last year, but the seed treatments were never used because the threshold of virus yellows disease was not reached. The application is a seed treatment, which means it is not sprayed on to a flowering crop, potentially landing on bees as they fly past. It is a treatment put on to the seeds, giving protection in the early growth phase. It is not permitted for flowering plants to be grown in that field for 32 months, thus providing additional protection for the crop.

On balance, it is important that we always take an evidence and science-based approach, looking at the potential risks and benefits. Science will ultimately resolve the problem by providing disease and pest-resistant varieties, but I am glad that in the meantime there has been a proportionate and pragmatic Government response.

10.16 am

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) on securing the debate.

[Kerry McCarthy]

The note that the hon. Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson) ended on was interesting because the whole point of this debate is that the Government are not following the science. The expert committee on pesticides and the Health and Safety Executive have told the Government that the conditions for the use of these pesticides have not been met, and the Government have chosen to exploit a loophole and ignore the experts.

Those of us who were involved in the seemingly endless discussions on the Environment Act 2021, in pre-legislative scrutiny and Committees—at one point there seemed to be a Second Reading every other day—and on the Agriculture Act 2020, were always worried that the Government did not want to support the precautionary principle and did not want to see it embedded in law. That is why Labour Members tried to amend the Environment Act to give Parliament the power to scrutinise these decisions. The case has been made for that parliamentary scrutiny by several hon. Members today, but it was voted down by the Government.

We know how dangerous pesticides are to bees. I do not want to reiterate all the arguments, but we have heard that when exposed to neonicotinoids in low doses the bees' immune systems are harmed, making them susceptible to disease. Neonicotinoids disrupt bees' ability to navigate, forage and reproduce, and in high doses they cause paralysis and death. There is also research showing that pesticides become more dangerous when combined, including pesticides that are specifically marketed as safe for bees.

We have also heard why pollinators—as has been said, they include not only bees but flies, wasps, beetles, butterflies, moths and bats—are so important. Some 75% of our crop species require pollination. Pollinators are crucial in fertilising plants and sustaining our food systems. In China they have had to resort to pollinating fruit trees by hand because pollinators have been nearly wiped out by pesticide use. That should serve as a warning to us. As we have heard, there has been a drastic decline in pollinators here, too, falling by over 50% between 1985 and 2005.

The hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas) mentioned agroecology's approach to farming. Organisations such as the Soil Association, which is based in Bristol, have been highlighting the dangers of pesticides and promoting alternatives for years. They argue that if nature is properly harnessed to pollinate crops organically and to deal with pests, rather than relying on destructive pesticides that harm biodiversity, crop yields would be higher. Evidence has shown that margins with wildflowers for pollinators increase crop yield.

The sugar beet sector has said that there will no longer be a need for neonics by 2023 if integrated pest management approaches can be adopted instead. As the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion said, what are the Government doing to support that as an alternative to a reliance on pesticides?

It is not just pollinators that are at risk from the use of pesticides. Otters were nearly wiped out in the 1970s due to pesticide use. Thankfully, otter populations have recovered since those pesticides were banned, but they are still under threat from other so-called "forever chemicals", such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances.

**Sir George Howarth (Knowsley) (Lab):** My hon. Friend is making a very well-informed speech, as always. There seems to be some doubt between Members as to where the balance of science lies. My hon. Friends the Members for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) and for Putney (Fleur Anderson) have both said that the science does not back the Government's position. Does my hon. Friend agree?

**Kerry McCarthy:** I agree. We have heard from the experts and they have said that the case has not been made. I know that the Government have been quite dismissive of experts in the past, but that is the case. What is the point of asking for expert opinion if the Government do not abide by it? I suspect that in her response, the Minister will tell us that the Environment Act 2021 commits us to reversing biodiversity decline by 2030. Perhaps she could tell us how allowing the use of neonicotinoids in pesticides will help that? The Minister may also point out how the Agriculture Act 2020 rewards farmers who try to increase biodiversity on their farms. However, we heard in yesterday's debate in this Chamber that the Government are making a mess of introducing ELMS.

Later this year, the convention on biological diversity will meet in China; it is very unclear what the Government hope to achieve from the UK's participation. Perhaps it would be an idea to go along, promote the precautionary principle, and pledge to ditch the pesticides, protect our pollinators and genuinely promote biodiversity.

10.21 am

**Wera Hobhouse (Bath) (LD):** Many in the farming community support nature recovery, and they understand that business as usual is no longer acceptable. In striking that balance, they need the support of Government to help them work towards nature recovery. My parents-in-law used to have bees—at one point they had four hives. The bees were very much part of the family; they lived at the end of the garden to protect them from our children's ball games. I have come to know these wonderful and highly civilised creatures, that work incredibly hard on our behalf. We should put a very high value on them. I know how vulnerable they are to human interference.

The use on crops of pesticides containing neonicotinoids has an extremely damaging effect on the mobility of bees, and their use was banned by the EU in 2018. The Government originally agreed and promised that they would reintroduce them only when the scientific evidence changed. There has been no new evidence, but the use of pesticides has been allowed again. The Government should make the protection of our wildlife and the environment a priority, rather than going back on their word. The Government are using Brexit not, as they would like us to believe, to the advantage of people and the environment, but the opposite. They are reversing important decisions that were made for the protection of the environment.

Many organisations and constituents in Bath have reached out to me with great concerns over this issue, and the lack of consideration behind it. As we have heard, the expert committee on pesticides have warned how damaging neonicotinoids are for bees and aquatic life, but the Government have chosen to ignore them. That is not acceptable. In April 2021, I asked the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural

Affairs whether the Government encouraged the use of alternatives to neonicotinoids; the answer I received was that the Government were completely committed to reducing the use of pesticides. However, in the same debate, 10 minutes later, the Secretary of State said that until a suitable alternative to neonicotinoids was found, the Government would continue to grant dispensations for the use of them. There we have it—words of woolly aspiration, but when it comes to the crunch the Government actively support what I would call the gradual extinction of the UK's bee population.

The long-term harmful effects of the Government's careless attitude will be felt by all of us as it has huge implications for our food supplies. It is paramount that this Government wake up and impose much tighter restrictions on the use of neonicotinoids, rather than standing by and being complicit in the degradation of our wildlife, the quality of our environment and the long-term security of our food supplies.

10.25 am

**Lilian Greenwood** (Nottingham South) (Lab): It is a pleasure to see you in the Chair this morning, Sir Roger.

As we have heard loud and clear, my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) loves bees. I congratulate him on securing this debate and on the passionate, knowledgeable and eloquent case that he made on their behalf. Bees need protection. In the last half-century, half of Britain's bee, butterfly and moth species have declined; in the last 30 years, three bumblebee species have become extinct; and right now, almost one in 10 species of wild bee face extinction. This situation cannot continue.

Bees are our friends. Almost a third of the food that we eat relies on pollination, mainly by bees. That work—pollinating crops—by these notoriously industrious insects is worth millions of pounds each year. If we did not have wild pollinators to do that vital work for us, it would cost around £1.8 billion each year to replace them.

We need to speak up for our bees because we need them. They are not only essential for our farming system but ensure the diversity of our wild plants, and they also have a vital role in sustaining the natural habitats that we know and love. As my constituent Hilary told me when she asked me to attend today:

“This matter affects all our lives.”

Many of my constituents worry about the ecological emergency that we face. They wanted me to speak up to protect our bees and to oppose the Government plans that threaten the future of bees. My constituent Judith tells me:

“I have a wildlife garden and I have noticed the stark decline in the number of bees in recent years.”

She is right to be concerned. We cannot afford to put our bee populations at additional risk.

**Margaret Greenwood** (Wirral West) (Lab): Would my hon. Friend join me in congratulating the Flourish at Ford Way community gardening project in Upton, in my constituency, which does fantastic work through bee-friendly gardening, keeping hives and producing fantastic honey? Does she share the concern of my constituents, who have drawn attention to research by Professor David Goulson, an academic and author,

who has warned that just a single teaspoon of this type of chemical is enough to kill 1.25 billion honeybees—equivalent to four lorryloads?

**Lilian Greenwood:** I thank my hon. Friend for her intervention; she made a very important and valuable point.

As many hon. Members have said, bees are already under threat as a direct result of the way we live and the way we farm and use land, including the use of pesticides and particularly neonicotinoids. Although we have known for many years that neonicotinoids have a harmful effect on bees and other pollinators, recent studies have only confirmed and strengthened the evidence. As the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN has said, there is a consensus about the need to restrict the use of these chemicals.

As an EU member, the UK was part of creating a strict regime to regulate the use of these pesticides. An almost total ban on their use was put in place in 2018, because of the damage that they cause to bees. The then Environment Secretary—the right hon. Member for Surrey Heath (Michael Gove)—said that the Government supported that move, because we could not “afford to put our pollinator populations at risk.”

Those protective regulations are still part of retained law in Great Britain, but now the Government are authorising the use of a bee-killing pesticide. That is clearly a betrayal of promises given during debates on the Environment Act 2021, when we were assured that the Government would only strengthen the protection of nature. My constituent Stewart worries that the Government want to rescind that protection to prove that the UK has more freedom after Brexit. I am sure that he is wrong and I am certain that nobody voted for the freedom to kill bees.

Of course, the Government themselves claim that a benefit of Brexit is

“halting the decline in nature”

and

“strengthening our environmental regulation”.

However, for those words to mean something, we cannot allow the use of neonicotinoids, because that is not consistent with them.

Of course, UK farmers need our support. Living in Nottinghamshire, I understand the importance of sugar beet production. However, we cannot afford to take this risk with our precious pollinators, ignoring the Government's own scientific advice, especially when the Environment Secretary himself has admitted that it is not possible to

“rule out completely a degree of risk to bees.”

My constituent Christopher worries that with the country still entrenched in the battle against covid and the headline-grabbing scandals of the Prime Minister, it will be easy to forget the long-term policies that affect our natural world.

We all share a huge responsibility to protect our environment for future generations. Government must help our food producers to farm sustainably and invest in resistant crops. It is not too late to reverse this bad decision. Ministers can and must think again, maintain the ban on neonics and save our bees.

10.30 am

**James Wild** (North West Norfolk) (Con): I congratulate the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) on securing this debate. I rise to join the love-in for bees and to highlight the issues faced by sugar beet growers and processors in my North West Norfolk constituency. The growers in Norfolk, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and other parts of the country saw yields hit by 25% in 2020—in some cases, the loss was as much as 80%—because of virus yellows. As has been mentioned, that represents a hit to the sector of £65 million. I have met with growers in my constituency; like my hon. Friend the Member for Sleaford and North Hykeham (Dr Johnson), I have seen the damage that virus yellows does.

Given the dramatic loss of crop, an emergency authorisation application was made in 2021 and granted, but there is deliberately a high bar for that. Before an application can be granted, the Government have to consider five tests. There need to be special circumstances. There must be a danger. There must be no reasonable alternative. The authorisation must be necessary. And the product must be subject to limited and controlled use. Those are, rightly, tough tests. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Scarborough and Whitby (Sir Robert Goodwill) said, it is important to recognise that sugar beet is a non-flowering crop and so is not attractive to bees—the bees that we all love.

In 2021, the conditions attached to the emergency authorisation included a forecast of virus levels of 9%. That condition was not met, so no neonics were used. This year, the Government have toughened that test, so there would need to be a virus level of 19%. Furthermore, no flowering crop can be planted in the same soil for 32 months. Therefore it is a very limited authorisation. It is an insurance policy that may well not end up being used, as was the case last year.

Ultimately, we need to move away from neonics. I think everyone would agree with that. British Sugar, the National Farmers Union and the British Beet Research Organisation are all working on alternatives to tackle virus yellows through non-chemical alternatives, through gene editing, integrated pest management and improving natural resistance in the crop.

**Sir John Hayes** (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): I rise to support my hon. Friend and to speak on behalf of the many sugar beet growers in my constituency, which he knows well because we are neighbours. It is absolutely right to say, as he has emphasised, that there can be an agreement between those who want to balance nature and those who want to produce crops but also care about the environment, care about bees and care about the diversity that bees are at the heart of. We should not create a paradox, an artificial distinction between those who farm and grow and those who care about wildlife and nature.

**James Wild:** My right hon. Friend makes a very important point. Farmers in my constituency love bees; they love the pollinators. They are working on alternatives, and I want to see those alternatives come forward more rapidly, so that further authorisations are not needed in the future.

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** Jim Shannon—very briefly, please.

10.33 am

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): Thank you for calling me, Sir Roger. I congratulate the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) on bringing this debate forward. As a constituency MP for a rural area, I have worked for some time to raise awareness of this issue; as a landowner, I have been interested in it; and finally, as a grandfather, I am invested in the need to get it right when it comes to our bees and ecosystems. I am very fortunate to have neighbours, Christopher and Valentine Hodges, who have introduced beehives on our farm, in Greyabbey in the constituency of Strangford. They are introducing the black bee. It is a species that is under some threat, so the fact that they are doing that is something that we should be very grateful for.

A consensus is emerging on the need to restrict the use of NNIs—neonicotinoid insecticides. The fact is that without pollinators, we cannot eat and will die. We need to restrict the use of NNIs and that must happen now.

I am conscious of your direction, Sir Roger, but may I quickly say this? The Northern Ireland protocol ensures that Great Britain now operates a separate regime, which began on 1 January 2021, and is able to diverge from EU decisions when it comes to pesticide approval. May I ask the Minister, as I often do, what discussions she has had, and will she enter into discussions with the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Minister who has responsibility for the issues in respect of the protocol and with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister in the Northern Ireland Assembly?

What this debate, too, explains is that the Northern Ireland protocol is not simply a matter of a little extra postage paid or an additional form to be filled in; it is a matter of grave importance to our regulations and our environment in Northern Ireland. There can and should be no divergence UK wide. We should all take the issue of pesticides seriously, debate it together, as we are doing today, and apply the result UK wide—to everywhere. Currently, my constituents have no vote and no voice as to these regulations that affect their food intake and future security. That beggars belief.

I am a great believer that bees should be appreciated, respected and protected. From my time as a child in the 1960s, in my aunt Isobel's garden, marvelling at the wonder of honeycomb—where my love of honey came from—to becoming a man and understanding the vital role played by the humble bee, I have learned this lesson. In the absence of indisputable proof to the contrary, NNI pesticides are dangerous and harmful in the long term to our environment, food security and, indeed, our future.

I work with an Ulster Unionist party councillor in Ards and North Down Borough Council. He is also a farmer, and I conclude with his words: when the bees are gone, we are gone. With that in mind, we must do all that we can to prevent that happening. Robust NNI regulations play a massive part in this, and should consequently be retained and implemented in UK law.

10.35 am

**Margaret Greenwood** (Wirral West) (Lab): I appreciate you calling me to speak in this very important debate, Sir Roger. I have received a great deal of correspondence from constituents about the Government's authorisation of an emergency application in England for the use of Cruiser SB pesticide, which contains the neonicotinoid thiamethoxam. I share their concerns, not least because the Government have not heeded the conclusions of the Health and Safety Executive or their own expert committee on pesticides, which found that

"The requirements for emergency authorisation have not been met"

and that pollution from the pesticide would damage river life.

As the Wildlife Trusts have pointed out, these neonicotinoids

"will have a devastating impact on pollinators, wildflowers, and waterways—at a time when nature needs to be urgently put into recovery."

The Government have even accepted, as recently as last December, that there is a

"growing weight of scientific evidence that neonicotinoids are harmful to bees and other pollinators."

Why have Ministers gone ahead and granted the authorisation?

Some of my constituents have highlighted the crucial role that bees play in maintaining a healthy environment. One constituent made the specific point that, by allowing the use of deadly pesticides, the UK Government undermine the urgency and incentive to invest in and implement alternative, less harmful control methods. That perhaps ties in with a point that the RSPB made concerning the importance of upholding the ban on highly toxic pesticides, such as neonics, and instead working to support our farmers to reduce their reliance on these harmful chemicals. As one of my constituents asks:

"How can the UK government approve using such material, it goes against all common sense and scientific reason?"

Clearly this is something that many Wirral West residents care passionately about, and I share their concerns.

The Wildlife Trusts have been very clear that the Government's authorisation is "short sighted". They say that, by authorising the use of neonics, the UK Government are damaging their ability to meet the legal requirement contained in the Environment Act 2021 to halt and reverse the decline of nature by 2030. That is because pollinators such as bees are vital to enhancing biodiversity. Without thriving populations of pollinators in the UK, we will struggle to halt the decline of other species. I would very much welcome the Minister's comments on that specific point; it is an important one that the Minister should address this morning.

I urge the Government to listen to the concerns of wildlife charities, many of which echo the views of my constituents, listen to the views of their own experts and think again.

10.38 am

**Daniel Zeichner** (Cambridge) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve with you in the Chair, Sir Roger. I am so grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) for securing the

debate. We know that his love of bees is legendary, and his introduction to the debate tackled a series of very complicated issues very thoroughly and effectively, as did all the contributions this morning. There is a big question for the Minister to answer: why was the emergency authorisation decision made? I look forward to her answer.

What has come through very loud and clear in the debate is that farming and the environment must not be seen as in conflict. They have to be addressed together, and we have to find ways of making them work. So many of us have had so many emails from constituents on this subject—we can see that from the attendance in the Chamber this morning. I should say at the outset that I am a species champion for the ruderal bumblebee, which sadly I still have not met, but I am looking for one. They are quite rare, and that is a significant point. Like many other Cambridgeshire MPs, I am a vice president of the Cambridgeshire Beekeepers' Association, and in my first flush of enthusiasm as a newly elected Member I turned up at its annual general meeting, which completely nonplussed the attendees—I have not embarrassed them since. What that shows is that we all care about bees.

I note that one of the first speeches that I made in this place, back in 2015, was a debate on this very subject. One always looks back nervously to see what one said—particularly when one picks up a brief much later on. I was delighted to find that my final words were that we should listen to science and ensure

"that our bees and farmers can flourish."—[*Official Report*, 7 December 2015; Vol. 603, c. 236WH.]

Both matter.

I must also say at the outset that I understand how farmers feel at the moment. From my conversations with them, they so often feel that the tools they need for the job are being systematically taken away, and that is very difficult for them, because nature does not compromise. The problems keep coming, and if farmers do not have the tools to deal with them, it is really hard.

However, as I have said from the beginning of this speech and before, for us, pollinator health is just not negotiable. This is not something that can be traded off, which is a theme that has come through in many of today's contributions. I listened closely to those contributions, particularly from those Members who represent the east of England. I am an east of England MP, and I know how many jobs are at stake. The hon. Member for North West Norfolk (James Wild) made that point very clearly: it is a huge number of jobs. It is very important to the local economy, and we have to find ways of making it work.

Looking back on the 2015 debate, I noticed that one speaker who followed me said that the lesson to learn from DDT

"is that we must not take risks...I ask the Minister please not to take unnecessary risks with the environment and with human health"—[*Official Report*, 7 December 2015; Vol. 603, c. 238-40WH.]

That was not the Minister here today, but one of her colleagues, the Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the hon. Member for Taunton Deane (Rebecca Pow). The Minister also contributed to that debate, which was much more about oilseed rape and cabbage stem flea beetle. The debate has now moved on to thiamethoxam and sugar beet, which shows that a lot has already been done. However, looking back over the past couple of years, I do not think the

[Daniel Zeichner]

Government covered themselves in glory last year, because the Health and Safety Executive advice that is available this year was not so easily available last year: it took Friends of the Earth using freedom of information requests and some testy exchanges at DEFRA questions, which the Minister may remember. I appreciate that the bar has been set higher this year, but from talking to the experts at Rothamsted Research, that does not necessarily mean that it will be that dramatically different if the weather is different. Of course, last year we were saved by the cold weather; at this point, it does not look like that is going to come to the rescue this year.

The key point, though, is that the Secretary of State has ignored the expert advice, as we heard clearly from my hon. Friend the Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport in his introduction, as well as from my hon. Friends for Putney (Fleur Anderson), for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and for Wirral West (Margaret Greenwood) and the hon. Member for Brighton, Pavilion (Caroline Lucas). Virtually everyone has asked why that advice has been overridden, and it is absolutely clear—to those who made their way through the lengthy reports, including the Cruiser SB application, and found their way to page 193—that the test is not considered to be met. I will not take Members through those 193 pages, but there is a simpler account from the expert committee on pesticides, which came to the same conclusion. It also added an extra one, which is worth pulling out given some of the contributions that have been made:

“None of the suggested mitigation measures protected off-crop areas and, if the authorisation is granted, further consideration needs to be given to how this could impact on growers involved in agri-environmental schemes which involved planting flowering margins.”

That point has been made on a number of occasions, and I do not see that it has been properly addressed.

If we look back at some of the history of these debates, many academic studies and reports have been written. I was particularly struck by one produced by Buglife, written by Matt Shardlow—a very detailed account, written a few years ago—which deals with the point about run-off. One point that has not been raised in this debate so far is that this is not just about Cruiser SB: foliar neonicotinoid sprays, Biscaya and InSyst, are also being authorised. There is a real risk of those chemicals getting into the water, and I was particularly struck by the impact on the river Waveney, which that report said was the most heavily polluted river, exceeding the average annual chronic pollution limit. That is relevant, given the interest people have in the water quality of rivers at the moment. The report named not just the Waveney, but the Wensum—for me, that was particularly personal, because that measurement was taken at Ellingham Mill, where my parents used to live. For people in the east of England, this really matters.

Why has the Secretary of State made this decision? The hon. Member for Hendon (Dr Offord) made an important point about the economics behind this—it has to be about economics, hasn't it? That is the only explanation. In fact, DEFRA has produced something that I am not sure most people have seen—a very detailed economic analysis of the impacts of virus yellows on sugar beet production. Again, I do not have the time to go into it in detail, but it shows that over a six-year average, there is a potential loss of £14.4 million,

and reference has already been made to 2020, which was a particularly hard year. Of course, there is an economic issue, but as has been rightly said by a number of Members, there are other alternatives too, and clearly people are working on them.

Yes, the peach potato aphid is a real menace—there is no doubt about it—but there are ways in which it can be tackled through integrated pest management, better rotation and better husbandry. None of this is easy, and it is not the same everywhere. Different people get different results, and it is all very unpredictable, but it also has to be put into context—again, the point about the potential threat to pollinator health was well made by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East. Look at the value that pollinators bring to our economy: they are estimated to be worth between £430 million and £603 million to UK agriculture in general.

The issue is not simple, and these are tough decisions for farmers. In many ways, it is a gamble trying to judge the weather and when the aphid will fly. If people plant too early, they will lose the sugar beet. It is an economic argument. As we have heard, British Sugar is a very viable business and makes money. Through the virus yellows assurance scheme, it has already gone down the road of providing some compensation and some way of pooling the risk on this issue. At the end of all this, we know that bee health is non-negotiable, so why on earth has the Secretary of State chosen to override all the expert advice? We would make a different decision, and I think that decision would be better not only for bees but for farmers, as we create a nature-positive vision for the future.

10.46 am

**The Minister for Farming, Fisheries and Food (Victoria Prentis):** Sir Roger, it is great pleasure to serve with you in the Chair, particularly as I think you would rather have been speaking in the debate. I congratulate the hon. Member for Plymouth, Sutton and Devonport (Luke Pollard) on securing the debate, and I thank Members for taking part in this really important discussion.

I should probably declare my interest. We have two hives of bees at home, and they are an integral part of our orchard management, particularly for my apple and pear crop.

Let me set out the problem. We all eat and enjoy sugar—some of us rather more than we should. It is important to remember that 63% of the sugar that the UK consumes is made from home-grown sugar beet, and we had an interesting debate on food security in this Chamber yesterday. Sugar beet seedlings are very vulnerable to aphid predation. The aphids spread the devastating virus yellows, which can seriously reduce both the quantity and quality of the crop. The disease is more widespread in certain years, particularly after mild winters.

As we have heard, neonics were previously used as a pesticide to tackle the problem. We banned their use outside in 2018, at the same time as the EU, because of a growing body of academic evidence that they could be damaging to bees and other pollinators. That affected my farm in respect of growing oil seed rape. We had grown the crop since 1974, but we no longer do so. In this, we are not alone, and the planted area of oil seed rape is not much more than half the level that it used to be before neonics were last used.

**Dr Johnson:** Will the Minister give way?

**Victoria Prentis:** I will not, as I have a great deal to get through.

Oil seed rape is significantly different from beet. As we all know, it is a beautiful flowering crop, and its pollen and nectar attract bees. Beet is harvested before flowering, so the crop itself does not pose a direct threat. Protecting bees and other pollinators is a priority for the Government through the pollinator strategy, and this is a way to bring farmers and researchers together in order to improve the status of pollinating insects.

The need to take action to protect sugar beet is not restricted to this country. Twelve beet-producing EU countries have granted emergency authorisations for neonics since 2018. Their authorisation conditions have been less stringent than ours—for example, none has applied a threshold to determine whether the product should be used. There is no doubt that if our crop suffered major damage because of aphid predation and we did not allow the use of a neonic in an emergency, we would have to import beet from countries where these products are used.

We have now had three years to grow the crops without neonics. In 2019, perhaps because of residual levels in the soil, and in 2021, after a cold winter, the virus threat was low. However, 2020 saw severe damage, with about a quarter of the national crop being lost, as we have heard. Some individual growers were even more severely affected. Imports were needed to enable British Sugar to honour its contracts. Partly because of that, a smaller crop was planted in 2021, with some growers understandably reluctant to take the risk.

Taking into account both the scientific evidence and the economic analysis, the decision was taken to grant exceptional temporary use of Cruiser this year. In order to mitigate the risk, conditions of the authorisation include a reduced application rate, as well as a prohibition on any flowering crop being planted in the same field within 32 months of a treated sugar beet crop. Our chief scientific adviser advised us on that mitigation.

There will be an initial threshold for use, meaning that the seed treatment will only be used if the predicted level of virus is above 19% of the national crop. If that threshold is not met, the treatment for the seed will not be used. That is exactly what happened in 2021. It will only be used in an emergency.

I would like to provide what I hope will be some reassurance to Members. The maximum amount of neonics that could be used on English crops, if the threshold is reached, will amount to 6% of what used to be used prior to 2018. In reaching our decision, we were informed by the advice of HSE, and the views of the UK expert committee on pesticides and DEFRA's chief scientific adviser, who has been involved at every stage of the process. We also considered economic issues and were informed by analysis provided by DEFRA economists.

The scientific advice identified risks to pollinators, and the restrictions we have applied for are designed specifically by our chief scientific adviser to mitigate those risks. Some residual risk remains, but we judge that it is sufficiently low to be outweighed by the benefits to sugar beet production of using the product.

In taking this decision, we wanted to be as transparent as possible and give hon. Members, as well as members of the public, access to the information that informed the decision-making process.

**Daniel Zeichner:** The Minister says the risk is judged to be sufficiently low. Could she say a little more about how that judgment was arrived at?

**Victoria Prentis:** If I have time, I would be delighted to. I refer the hon. Gentleman to the full set of reasons given by the Secretary of State on gov.uk, because that gives the complete decision.

DEFRA agrees with HSE that it is not possible to completely rule out a degree of risk to bees from flowering plants in or near the field in the years after the neonic use. That is the concern. However, our chief scientific adviser suggests that the risks are reduced to a large extent by the 32-month ban on flowering crops.

The materials have been made publicly available. I was very keen to do that and to make sure that the decision was as transparent as possible. We have published several accompanying documents outlining the key elements involved in making the decision. There is nothing sneaky about the decision. The details are all available on gov.uk.

On the suggestion that we have a parliamentary vote on the issue, I am happy to look again at how the system works. We will be outlining our ideas about the new system in the national action plan, which will be published this summer. I politely say that there are at least 10 to 15 applications for emergency authorisations every year for different products. I see the hon. Member for Nottingham South (Lilian Greenwood) sitting over there—I do not know whether the Whips would be thrilled if we had to vote on each of those, nor perhaps would it be a good use of parliamentary time.

There is no doubt that this is an issue in which parliamentarians take an interest. That is right, and I am always happy to discuss these decisions with anybody who wants to. Please come and talk to me about the specifics of the decision or the science at any point.

Looking to the future, it is of course important that industry works hard on the development of alternative sustainable approaches to protect sugar beet from the viruses. Those include the development of new tolerant seed varieties, measures to improve crop hygiene and husbandry, and modern breeding techniques, such as gene editing. British Sugar and NFU Sugar attended a parliamentary event this week. I was able to talk to them about how they could interact better, telling us about the new products and ideas they can put in place to deal with the problem in future.

Ultimately, our food security relies on a healthy environment and thriving pollinators. Sustainable agriculture and supporting nature go hand in hand. In our agricultural transition, we are already incentivising farmers to do the right thing. This year, we are piloting a standard that will help farmers to transition away from the use of pesticides, and incentivise alternative ways to control pests.

This decision was not taken lightly, and is based on a robust scientific assessment. We will continue to work hard to support farmers and to protect and restore our vital pollinator populations.

10.56 am

**Luke Pollard:** I thank all speakers in today's debate. Across parties, Members are clearly passionate about the restoration of bee populations, as well as about supporting our farmers. As the shadow Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for Cambridge (Daniel Zeichner), said, those objectives need to be shared, rather than in competition. Otherwise, farmers, nature and all of us will lose out.

I am grateful to the Minister for her response, but I do not think she adequately explained why she chose to override scientific advice with this decision. I also note that she did not concentrate on the 2023 date after which neonicotinoids will not be used again. I anticipate that this will be the last debate we need to have on the use of neonicotinoids. Any debate on the subject this time next year would need to be subject to a parliamentary vote on just neonicotinoid use, rather than on other emergency authorisations. The Government have clearly set out a transition to a point where we will not need to use bee-killing pesticides. If bee-killing pesticides are still to be used, we are in danger of not meeting our obligations under the 25-year environment plan, the Environment Act or the declaration of a climate and nature emergency that Parliament passed in 2019.

I am grateful that the Minister said that nothing sneaky was involved in the decision, but nothing science-led seems to have been involved either. That is the problem we have here. I look forward to the action plan coming out and, I hope, the early revision of the national pollinator strategy. A comprehensive consultation starting this year would be a useful way to signal the intention to restore bee populations. I am grateful to you, Sir Roger, for being in the Chair, and for all the contributions, particularly from those who contacted us but were not able to speak in the debate. I hope that the cross-party strength of feeling makes it clear to the Minister and the Secretary of State that bee-killing pesticides should never be used again.

**Sir Roger Gale (in the Chair):** I thank all hon. Members for managing the time in a manner that has enabled all those who wished to do so to participate.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered Government approval for the use of neonicotinoids and the impact on bees.

## Kettering General Hospital

[DEREK TWIGG *in the Chair*]

11 am

**Derek Twigg (in the Chair):** Before we begin, I remind Members to observe social distancing and wear masks. I will call Philip Hollobone to move the motion and then the Minister to respond. There will not be an opportunity for the Member in charge to wind up. That is the convention for 30-minute debates, as I know the Member is well aware.

**Mr Philip Hollobone (Kettering) (Con):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered the redevelopment of Kettering General Hospital.

It is a delight to see you in the Chair, Mr Twigg.

I thank Mr Speaker for granting me this debate, and I welcome the Hospitals Minister to his place. I also welcome my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Andrew Lewer), who is kindly here to support the calls for the redevelopment of Kettering General Hospital. I thank the very hard-working, dedicated and loyal workforce at Kettering General Hospital for all they do to address the healthcare needs of the local population across Northamptonshire, particularly north Northamptonshire—in particular, Simon Weldon, the group chief executive, and Polly Grimmett, the director of strategy at Kettering hospital.

The Hospitals Minister knows Kettering hospital well and has always been extremely attentive and courteous to the healthcare needs of the local population in Kettering and beyond. He kindly visited the hospital on 7 October 2019, and he has responded to Adjournment and Westminster Hall debates on the hospital on 23 October 2019, 8 June 2021 and 10 September 2021. We have had regular meetings with him, most recently on 17 January this year.

I welcome the Government's unprecedented investment in the NHS as a whole, and their commitment to the national hospital building programme. It has resulted in commitments to Kettering hospital of £46 million for an on-site urgent care hub, £350 million in health infrastructure plan 2 funding for 2025-30 and a write-off in 2020 of all the hospital's £167 million trust debt. That is a total investment package for the hospital of a staggering £563 million, which is the biggest ever investment in Kettering General Hospital.

Kettering hospital is 125 years old this year. It has been on the same site ever since its inception in 1897. It is a much-loved local hospital that I hope will have a bright future. Let me reassure the Minister that I am not asking for more money. I welcome his recent decision that the two funding streams—the £46 million for the urgent care hub and the £350 million HIP2 funding—be meshed together, so that a synthesis of investment can be provided to the hospital. I have said this to the Minister before, and I repeat it today: promises are one thing, but delivery is quite another, and we now need the cash. The hospital needs the £46 million in cash so that works can continue.

In announcing the award of £46 million for the new urgent care hub in the debate on 23 October 2019, the Minister himself said:



“My officials and NHS England will be in touch with the trust to discuss further details, in order to ensure that funds are released and that work starts on the project as swiftly as possible. I am conscious of the urgency that my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering highlighted.”—[*Official Report*, 23 October 2019; Vol. 666, c. 30WH.]

I welcomed those words, but that was over two years ago. While we have been promised £46 million, the hospital has not yet received the cash.

My first main ask is for the imminent provision to KGH of the £46 million sustainability and transformation partnership wave 4b funding, which was first pledged in the debate here in October 2019, so that the initial enabling works for the redevelopment of the hospital can continue to 2023-24. Secondly, I reinvite the Minister to visit Kettering hospital. He has kindly visited before and has promised to visit again. I hope that that visit will take place soon.

Thirdly, can we have confirmation that the NHS's new hospitals programme team will approve, and give feedback on, the hospital's strategic outline case for its redevelopment, which was submitted early last year, so that the hospital can develop the next stage—an outline business case—in May 2022? Fourthly, can the Minister confirm that he will look favourably on Kettering hospital's eligibility for £53 million of slippage from other more complicated and larger hospital development schemes—such slippage will inevitably occur across the redevelopment of 40 hospitals—so that work can continue on the Kettering site all the way through to the 2025 to 2030 HIP2 period?

The hospital is straining at the leash to get the redevelopment project under way. Initial work has already commenced, but the hospital must go through various approval processes to fulfil the NHS's investment requirements. Essentially, there is a three-stage business case approval process: a strategic outline case, an outline business case and a final business case.

The hospital submitted its SOC early last year, but it has not yet received feedback from the new hospitals programme team to inform the outline business case, which it is keen to submit in May this year. Once the OBC is achieved, feedback is required for the final business case. The big risk is that these various business case approval processes are extended too long, which will mean that substantial development on site will be held up.

The second risk is that the hospital needs the cash from the £46 million to allow the initial enabling work to continue. That work covers things such as the reprovisioning of car parking, clinical and office spaces to create construction space for the redevelopment itself, as well as road and utility diversions and site clearance. Without the cash from the £46 million, the risk is that those enabling works will have to stop, and that would be of extreme concern to local people.

The third risk is that the trust does not receive any slippage money from the other 40 hospital building programmes around the country. The Kettering scheme is relatively small, compared with some of the very large hospitals being rebuilt, but it is flexible. It can respond extremely well to receiving any slippage money from those other projects.

**Andrew Lewer** (Northampton South) (Con): My hon. Friend is giving a remarkably impressive run-through of some of the complex bureaucracy and procedures. I

want to pick up on his point about integration. Does he agree that Northampton General Hospital and Kettering General Hospital working together more efficiently provides some promising opportunities? While I cannot join him in saying that I will not ask the Minister for more money, because Northampton General Hospital is in the next stage of needing this sort of funding, I join him in asking the Minister to come and look at Northampton General Hospital and Kettering General Hospital as soon as possible.

**Mr Hollobone:** I thank my hon. Friend for his helpful intervention. How about this as a constructive suggestion? Would it not be wonderful if, on visiting Kettering, the Minister was able to call in at Northampton on the way? We are only 18 miles apart. Northampton and Kettering hospitals work together under the same NHS trust umbrella, and there is a lot of close working between the two hospitals. I recognise the need for more investment in Northampton hospital as well. I congratulate my hon. Friend on all his work for his constituents, which I know is hugely appreciated.

The risk is that, if Kettering hospital is not allowed to begin work on its full business case approval process this summer, the hospital will miss its 2023 target date for substantial construction on the site. The hospital continues to work towards a timetable that sees construction start on site in 2023. This is an accelerated timeline, because the hospital is eager to go on what is a relatively low-risk project. The hospital does not need to do any land deals; it owns all the land. There is strong local support among health system partners and planners. The hospital is keen to use repeatable designs from other hospital projects that have worked well elsewhere.

Can we have feedback from the new hospital programme team on the business case and designs for the hospital, so that the hospital can incorporate national thinking on programme priorities such as digital, net zero carbon and modern methods of construction? Can we have, as early as possible, the selection by the new hospital programme team of an appointed construction partner to work with the trust on developing the final scheme details, and can the hospital have the funding to cover the fees associated with this stage of the design? The risk is that, unless this support from the new hospital programme team is forthcoming, work on the hospital's main scheme may have to come to a stop, with key resource being stood down and reassigned. I am sure the Minister wants to avoid that.

It is welcome news that the trust has received confirmation that the £46 million can be combined with the £350 million, so that it is a united programme. However, at present, there is no process in place to allow the hospital to start accessing these funds once existing programme budgets run out in March this year. Unless the trust is able to access these funds this year, early enabling work required to prepare the site for construction in 2023 will not be completed and the main build will not be possible on time.

One thing that keeps the chief executive awake at night is the power plant at Kettering hospital: £25 million of the money required for enabling work relates to the need for a new energy centre on site to replace the temporary plant and life-expired distribution system. This is an immediate risk to patient safety due to ongoing shutdowns caused by testing and repair work.

[Mr Hollobone]

If the Minister were kind enough to agree to visit the hospital, I am sure the trust would want to show him the power plant, which is in urgent need of attention. If we get the £46 million, the scheme can progress, enabling works can continue and the hospital will be on track for early construction work beginning in 2023.

I reiterate that Kettering hospital is a much-loved local hospital. It serves all the residents of Kettering, Wellingborough, Corby and others, sometimes including patients from Northampton. We live in one of the fastest-growing areas in the country. Corby has the country's highest birth rate, and Kettering hospital expects a 21% increase in the number of over-80s in the local area in the next five years alone. The area has committed to at least 35,000 new houses over the next 10 years. The local population is set to rise by some 84,000, to almost 400,000 people. The A&E now sees up to 300 patients every single day in a department that is sized to safely see just 110. Over the next 10 years, the hospital expects the number of A&E attendances to increase by 30,000, up from 100,000; that is the equivalent of almost 80 extra patients every day.

The A&E is full. It was constructed in 1994 to cope with just 45,000 attendances each year. By 2045, 170,000 attendances are expected. Seventy per cent. of the buildings on the main site are more than 30 years old, and there is a maintenance backlog of £42 million. Sixty per cent. of the hospital estate is rated as either poor or bad. Local people know that this investment is needed. The Government have also accepted that the investment is needed. What we need now is the cash to make sure that the works can start on time in 2023.

11.16 am

**The Minister for Health (Edward Argar):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Twigg. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Mr Hollobone) on securing this debate. By my tally, this is the fourth debate I have responded to that he has secured on the future of Kettering General Hospital and its redevelopment. That fact reflects his commitment to this issue on behalf of his constituents, and his typically courteous but tenacious approach to the matter. I will put on record, as they are unable to be here, the work done by my hon. Friends the Members for Wellingborough (Mr Bone) and for Corby (Tom Pursglove) in this respect. I welcome the intervention from my hon. Friend the Member for Northampton South (Andrew Lewer).

The topic is not a new one for this House to discuss, but it is an extremely important one. I hope that I might move matters a little bit further forward in this debate for my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering. It was a pleasure to meet him, my hon. Friends the Members for Wellingborough and for Corby and Simon Weldon on 17 January to discuss Kettering General Hospital and receive an update on its plans. I join my hon. Friend the Member for Kettering in paying tribute to Simon and all of the team at Kettering General Hospital and at Northampton General Hospital for the work they have done, not only in the past two years, but day in, day out every year, to support the local community and provide first-class care.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering made, as ever, a generous offer to visit Kettering General Hospital with him. It was a pleasure to do so in 2019, when he

gave me a very warm welcome in Kettering. I also take his suggestion of visiting Northampton at the same time. Without setting a specific date, my aim is to try to visit him during the February recess—I will discuss this with him. It is not a long haul for me from my constituency in Leicestershire to his in Kettering or Northampton, so that is what I will hope to do, subject to that working for the trust. Ministers are often surplus to operational requirements in a busy trust at busy times, but I suspect that Simon will welcome me to explain what progress he has made. That is my commitment to my hon. Friend.

As my hon. Friend set out, Kettering General Hospital is part of the broader foundation trust, and continues to work closely with the central programme team in taking forward the rebuild of Kettering General as a new hospital for his community. It is part of the broader programme to build 40 new hospitals by 2030. On 13 January, Natalie Forrest, who is the senior responsible owner for the new hospital programme, and officials attended a virtual meeting with the chief executive and staff from Kettering General to discuss progress and provide an update on the scheme in the context of the programme. As my hon. Friend knows, Kettering General Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has received £4.4 million of funding to develop its plans for the rebuilding of Kettering General Hospital. They were successful in securing funding back in 2019, at that stage for a new urgent care hub, which would transform the provision of urgent and critical care in the area. I know that officials are in discussion with the chief executive of the hospital trust regarding the trust's plans for enabling works on the Kettering General Hospital site and have set out what will be required for these proposals to be assessed as quickly as possible, once business cases are received from the trust, which is in line with what my hon. Friend would expect of appropriate processes for spending public money.

I will provide a little background. The Department wrote to the chief executive on 16 June last year to confirm that, at his request, the urgent care hub and new hospital programme schemes could be brought together as a single pot of money, to maximise the benefits that local people could derive.

Essentially, my hon. Friend asked why things have not progressed since 2019. That is largely because the trust changed its plans. That money was ringfenced for an urgent treatment centre. We had discussions about that with the trust and accepted its proposal to merge the two pots of money. That then necessitated their coming forward with proposals about how they would spend that money as part of the enabling works for a broader scheme. If changes are made, it is right that those changes are justified, in the context of the appropriate stewardship of public money.

The hub and the new hospital that are to be built both share a set of common enabling works, which have been factored into the new hospital development plans. As a result, the trust is incorporating the urgent care hub delivery into that broader plan. It means that the hub will now be part of the first stage of the building of the new hospital, enabling the more efficient use of resources to deliver better results.

In respect of the business case for that plan—I know that my hon. Friend is keen that there is progress on that as swiftly as possible—my officials have been in touch with the trust recently, most recently yesterday and before that on 26 or 27 January, asking the trust to

put forward its proposals for those enabling works. We need those to progress the business case. My officials continue to nudge the trust gently, saying, "Please submit your proposals for that and the business case for it". My commitment is that my officials will consider those proposals as swiftly as they can, once they have received them. As I understand it, given the scale of the enabling works, they would not need to go through the full internal approvals process, but the trust needs to submit a business case for that element.

The second element, which I know my hon. Friend and the trust are keen to see being advanced as swiftly as possible, is the new boiler room and power plant. Essentially, that would have to go through the full approvals process, but I understand that the board of the trust is due to meet in April to agree and finalise its proposal and business case on that work. As soon as it submits that, I can commit to my hon. Friend that—assuming that it is up to scratch, which I am sure it will be—it will go before the first joint investment committee of the Department following its submission, so that it can be considered as swiftly as possible.

At the moment, if I may put it this way, the ball is in the trust's court, for it to send its proposal and business case over. However, my commitment is that as soon as the trust does so, I will task officials with considering them as swiftly as possible.

**Mr Hollobone:** I thank the Minister for his very helpful comments. I think that the ball, in part, may be in the trust's court, but there is perhaps another ball with the new hospitals programme team. I say that because the hospital submitted its strategic outline case to the NHS a year ago and what the trust requires is feedback on that, to inform the development of its outline business case. So would the Minister be kind enough to look at that feedback?

**Edward Argar:** I am happy to look at that. The point I am making to my hon. Friend is that for the moneys that he and the trust wish to draw down from the £46 million, we do not have the business cases from the trust that would enable that work. I suspect that they will be winging their way to the Department pretty swiftly following this debate and as soon as they arrive we will look at them. Regarding the broader business case for the overall scheme, I will turn to that, if I may, in just a moment.

All the new hospitals that will be delivered as part of the programme, including Kettering, are required to work with the central team and, with the support of regional and local trust leadership, to design and deliver their hospitals in keeping with a consistent and standardised national approach. This collaborative approach is intended to help each trust to get the most from its available funding, while avoiding repetition of work and design, and ensuring that adherence to the principles, which my hon. Friend alluded to, of repeatable design, modern methods of construction and net carbon zero, is embedded from the outset, to maximise the potential benefits of the programmatic approach, as well, of course, as providing better value for money for the taxpayer.

All the projects that are part of that 40-hospital programme need to ensure that their approach is consistent with the programme, which that has been developed over the past year and has reached a greater level of maturity. Therefore, there will be individual conversations

with trusts about where they align with the programme, or where they may need to adapt to meet that national approach.

My hon. Friend touched on the trust's desire to go faster and begin the main project construction in 2023. In the spirit of openness, my only caveat to that is that, in the nature of funding through multiple spending review periods, it is not the case that a pot of money is earmarked for each programme and is just waiting to be drawn down; there is a profiling of moneys made available by the Treasury. I appreciate the trust's eagerness to go faster, and I appreciate my hon. Friend's clear steer that he believes it is capable of going further and faster, but we need to look at it in the context of all the other schemes and the availability and profile of moneys being made available. I just sound that slight note of caution, so I will not commit to a date, much though he tempts me to do so.

**Mr Hollobone:** I appreciate the Minister's comments. I would just highlight that there are some very large new hospital programmes out there that will not be achieved on time. Kettering is a relatively small, flexible and modular scheme that is perfectly placed to pick up on any slippage from some of the larger schemes.

**Edward Argar:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, because I was about to turn to his final ask, which was whether the Department would look favourably on Kettering's scheme if there was slippage from other schemes in the course of the spending review period. Although I cannot prejudge in this place that Kettering will be top of the list, he makes a strong case. It is absolutely right that we look at schemes and have a list of schemes that we believe could fill the gap if moneys are not going to be spent in year. It is important that that contingency is built in, and my hon. Friend makes a strong case for Kettering to be one of the hospitals that is considered for acceleration if it is ready and the moneys become available. I will not prejudice the advice that I will be given by officials as to which schemes are most mature, but he makes his case clearly and forcefully on the Floor of the Chamber.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend not only for the opportunity to discuss and debate Kettering General Hospital, but for the opportunity to visit Kettering. On my last visit, I received a very warm welcome from him and the team at the hospital. In what I have said today, I hope I have ensured that I get an equally warm welcome when I come and see him this month. Like him, I am keen to see all these schemes progress, and I am keen to see the benefits that the schemes will realise.

In the context of Kettering General Hospital, my hon. Friend continues to be an incredibly powerful advocate for the interests of his constituents and those in the wider area of Northamptonshire who are served by the hospital. I look forward to continuing to work with him very closely in the future, as well as with the trust's chief executive and team, other hon. Friends from Northamptonshire and my team in the Department, to help progress these very exciting and important plans, which will make a huge difference to his constituents' lives in the years ahead.

*Question put and agreed to.*

11.28 am

*Sitting suspended.*

## Cystic Fibrosis: Prescription Charge Exemption

[Relevant document: *e-petition 326574, Make prescriptions free for everyone with Cystic Fibrosis.*]

[MR VIRENDRA SHARMA *in the Chair*]

2.30 pm

**Mr Virendra Sharma (in the Chair):** Before we begin, I remind Members to observe social distancing and wear masks.

**Paul Maynard** (Blackpool North and Cleveleys) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered prescription charge exemption and cystic fibrosis.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma, and to open this debate on a matter that I know is of very great interest to a significant number of people in the country. I am very grateful to all those who have emailed me over the past few days since the debate was announced, not least those who contributed via the Chamber engagement programme that the House of Commons runs. Their comments and insights have certainly deepened my understanding, and I hope that their contributions will enrich the debate in particular. I am also grateful to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust for its members' contributions, and for the support and briefings that it has given me.

I am sure that hon. Members here today are more than aware of cystic fibrosis. It is one of the few serious, life-threatening, chronic conditions for which people are still required to pay prescription charges. The Cystic Fibrosis Trust estimates that there are around 2,500 people in England who did not qualify for free prescriptions and are faced with a lifelong financial burden. Indeed, the Cystic Fibrosis Trust calculates that there are now more adults than children with cystic fibrosis.

This issue has concerned me not just over the past few weeks but for 25 years, since I was first diagnosed with epilepsy. The consultant told me, somewhat bizarrely, that one upside of the diagnosis was that at least I would now get free prescriptions. I said, "What?" That was news to me; I was not even aware such a thing existed. I had not required medication for my cerebral palsy, and had been a relatively healthy teenager. It had never occurred to me.

At the same time as I had the good fortune to be diagnosed with epilepsy, I had an even weightier burden to carry: I was the health policy officer for the Conservative party, as we languished in opposition. It was a slightly odd time, I have to say—perhaps that gives hope to those opposite that all things change in time. I not only had to deal with the somewhat bizarre queries of Ann Widdecombe at 6 am when I rang her up, but got to see all the briefings and lobbying that came across my desk. One of the early ones was from the Cystic Fibrosis Trust, telling me about the particular predicament that its members were in: not being entitled to free prescriptions. I thought to myself, "How perverse! They have a lifelong, life-limiting, chronic condition for which they cannot get prescriptions, yet, for my epilepsy, which is chronic and can have devastating consequences, I do get free prescriptions."

It is not just a case, like mine, of taking some five tablets over the course of the day to manage epilepsy. As Gayle told me,

"My daughter takes more than 50 tablets a day to treat the condition. When you compare this to other serious lifelong conditions that are exempt from prescription charges it is impossible to understand why CF is not included and this outdated decision needs to be rectified".

The lack of an exemption leads to some perverse situations. As Sarah told me,

"Thankfully I developed diabetes, which is a horrible thing to be grateful for. As a result of getting another health condition which comes with more challenges for my health, it meant I was exempt from paying all prescription charges".

Go back to that first word that she used: "Thankfully". What a bizarre thing to have to say with regard to diabetes.

At this point, I should pay tribute to someone who is not here today: Bob Russell, the former Member for Colchester, whom older Members here will know well. He campaigned non-stop on this issue. It is worth cycling back to what he said in 2013, the last time that we debated this issue in the House. He said:

"Those with long-term conditions do not choose to be ill. They face a daily routine of various types of medication and physiotherapy to maintain any quality of life."—[*Official Report*, 10 July 2013; Vol. 566, c. 511.]

Those words are as true today as they were back in 2013—and back in 2003, 1993, 1983 and all the other many times that this issue has been discussed.

When I first researched this issue 25 years ago, I was even more surprised by the fact that the exemption list was based on a list of conditions that had not been reviewed since as far back as 1968—before man had made it to the moon—with the exception of the addition of cancer in 2008. My contention to the Minister today is a simple one. It is the one I urged my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox), when he was shadow Health Secretary, to pose to the then Health Secretary Alan Milburn in 1999. Why has the list not been reviewed since 1968? People live with cystic fibrosis well into adulthood these days, which was not the case in 1968. Why can we not review matters and take modern medicine into account? In particular, why is it fair for me to get free prescriptions when they cannot?

As Anna told me:

"The exemption list was introduced in 1968 when children born CF were not expected to live to their teens. Now more than ever, with the life-changing personalised medicines that are available to the majority of CF patients, life expectancy will be massively increased. Therefore, CF should be reconsidered for exemption as most patients will now be living relatively normal lives."

**Ruth Jones** (Newport West) (Lab): I thank the hon. Member for giving way; he is making a powerful speech. As a former physiotherapist who used to treat children and young people with cystic fibrosis, I know exactly the point he is making. Living in to adulthood is fantastic and brilliant, but people are being penalised. Is it not right that those people should not have to worry about having to take medication? It should be a right.

**Paul Maynard:** The hon. Lady is exactly right, and I will demonstrate why with a few examples from people with CF. For those living with CF, medication, physio

and general health all have to be considered when planning the simplest activity. Being unwell frequently interferes with work and education. As Sam says:

“Due to the nature of the illness I have been unable to work full time after previously trying. Prescriptions is another cost I have to pay despite barely getting any financial support from the government. To me it shows a lack of understanding the fact the medication ultimately contributes to us staying alive and gives us the best chance of trying to contribute to society.”

We could easily be having a debate about other long-term conditions, such as asthma, which are not included either. I could point to transplant patients, a category that would not have existed in 1968 but who rely on drugs to sustain their lives. If any Scottish National party or Plaid Cymru Members were present, they might have cited the example of prescription charge regimes in Wales and Scotland. Opposition Members might bring up the claims and calls of the wider Prescription Charges Coalition. I will leave it to them to make those points; those views are not necessarily shared by Government Members.

I want to focus, laser-like, on this single issue. We have seen in today’s newspapers the success that such an approach can have. The long campaign on hormone replacement therapy by the hon. Member for Swansea East (Carolyn Harris) finally got some good news. It is clear that we need to undertake a thoroughgoing review, setting out what conditions have been brought into scope since the Medicines Act 1968, through advances in medical science. Those might be conditions that did not, or could not, have existed in 1968, or conditions where life has now been further prolonged.

I am sure I can predict some elements in the Minister’s reply, because they were made by former Labour Ministers and in 2013. I am sure we will hear of the wonders of prescription prepayment certificates at just £2 a week—what could be better value? That is less than the price of a cup of coffee at Costa. But many living with a long-term medical condition such as CF can be economically disadvantaged by their condition, by prescription charges and by paying for the annual prepayment certificate, which costs £108. That adds to their financial burden.

According to the Cystic Fibrosis Trust, about one in 10 people with CF—just under 1,000 in the case of that survey—received emergency grants of about £150 from the trust in 2020-21. More than half of those grants were awarded for daily living costs, such as food. As Tracy told me:

“A few years ago I had to take redundancy due to ill health...I had previously paid for a prepaid prescription certificate but could not afford to renew it when it ran out. After 3 months without medication, I was in a poor state of health, constantly coughing, very weak, unable to lie down or even sleep sat up due to the accumulation of mucus in my lungs. After 4 nights without sleep I saw my GP who gave me a prescription for a strong course of antibiotics and steroid tablets. We had to miss a payment on a household bill so that I could pay for my prescription. The first course of antibiotics didn’t clear the infection, so I needed a further one. I had to borrow money from a family member to pay for it...Eventually, I was able to claim PIP which allowed me to pay for my own prescriptions again. I consider myself lucky to have someone who was able to help me out when they saw how ill I was.”

There is also a serious risk that those who incur prescription charges for their CF may not take their essential medicines, particularly if they are experiencing financial hardship, or in higher education on a limited income. Over a third of those who replied to the Cystic

Fibrosis Trust survey said that they had not taken medication because of the cost of prescriptions. As Anna told me:

“During university I didn’t take my medication simply because I couldn’t afford the fees. The blunt fact here is that people with CF take anywhere from 10-30 different medications a month. People with CF have been charged an insane amount of money when there is a system in place meant to protect people with long-term health conditions from being financially penalised—however they are being kept from the exemption list.”

The cost to the Government of righting what I believe to be a moral wrong is £270,000. As a former Minister, I know that that sort of money can often be found with a good rattle down the back of the ministerial sofa—a bit of jingling of the coins. However, there must be darker, deeper and slightly odder reasons why successive Governments—of all colours, and I look across the Chamber as I say that—have refused to review the 1968 list, despite all the pressure and reasonable arguments to do so. I cannot begin to imagine why Ministers are saying no.

If anyone wonders what this change might mean for CF patients, they should listen to Mario:

“My partner would then feel supported by the government rather than left on her own. The relationship to her medicine would change from financial to purely medical. Support, hope and fairness is the minimum we ought to give to people with life-threatening long-term conditions such as cystic fibrosis.”

Or listen to Donna:

“CF patients have enough problems to face, we should do anything we can to help. CF drugs may be expensive, but lung transplants cost even more.”

I will leave the final words to Sharon, another survey contributor:

“I would have more money available to pay for life’s other essentials. It would be pleasing to see the end of an injustice as I have no choice but to take this life lengthening medication and shouldn’t be required to pay for it when if I had been born with another condition, I wouldn’t have to.”

I hope that the Minister listens to those pleas and reasonable questions, and sets out the Government’s agenda to right what I believe to be a wrong.

2.43 pm

**Kerry McCarthy** (Bristol East) (Lab): It is always a great pleasure to see you in the Chair, Mr Sharma, and I congratulate the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) on securing this debate.

As some Members might know, I have a personal interest in this issue, as my niece Maisie has cystic fibrosis. She was diagnosed when she was just a few weeks old. Actually, it was during that little period after Christmas: it was her mother’s birthday on 28 December and her dad’s birthday on the 30th, and she was taken to hospital because her progress had started to go backwards. One of the welcome developments since she was born is that there is now a heel prick test, so that newborn babies are screened for CF, which prevents people from having to go through a similar situation.

Maisie is one of those who is benefiting from access to the new drugs that have been developed recently, and at 17 she is doing really well. The same is true of one of my constituents, who is just a little older. His dad tells me that it is as if he had never had cystic fibrosis. That is great news and I congratulate all those who have been involved in developing these drugs—Kalydeco, Orkambi

[*Kerry McCarthy*]

and its version for children, Symkevi, and Trikafta—and in making them freely available on the NHS. The former Health Secretary, the right hon. Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock), was obviously instrumental in that process and I thank him for it. Of course, I also thank the Cystic Fibrosis Trust for spearheading that campaign.

I also want us to remember those for whom these medical advances came too late. My constituent Lee Partridge tragically lost both his daughters to CF: Richelle at the age of 26 in 2015, and Lauren at the age of 19 just a few months later in January 2016. Perhaps if they had been born a decade later, the new drugs would have saved their lives. These medical developments happen so quickly. No sooner had the campaign paid off and Orkambi been approved than Trikafta was suddenly around the corner. I must admit that my sister, Maisie's mother, did not even realise that there was another campaign to mount because it came so quickly afterwards.

I hope this means that cystic fibrosis will eventually become a condition that people live with to a normal age, rather than being something that they die from. We are here today because while it used to be the case that sufferers rarely survived into adulthood, life expectancy has increased almost fourfold since then and, as we have heard, there are now more adults than children with cystic fibrosis. If that had been the case back in 1968, when the list of exemptions from prescription charges was drawn up, there is no doubt that cystic fibrosis would have been on that list. It seems quite anomalous. We ought to treat conditions like for like, based on need. We cannot live in the past with this fixed state from 1968, which has become pretty meaningless.

Today I have received an answer to a written question requesting the figures for how many adults have to pay for cystic fibrosis prescriptions. I was told that those figures are not collected. We know that about 89% of all prescriptions are dispensed free of charge, but we do not know specifically what that means for adult patients with cystic fibrosis. The Cystic Fibrosis Trust estimates their number to be around 2,500 people in England.

Although the three drugs I have mentioned that target CF at its root cause are free to patients, which is obviously good, many patients often need to pay for additional medication to prevent lung and sinus infections, therapies to aid digestion, antibiotics and so on. Those who live in poorer areas are statistically more likely to contract severe lung infections, meaning that they are more likely to have to pick up the bill for antibiotic prescriptions. Having a lifelong condition incurs all sorts of hidden charges, including the cost of traveling to medical appointments or buying specific foods to cater to dietary needs. We are lucky in Bristol to have both an adult and a child cystic fibrosis unit, but someone living in Milton Keynes, as my niece does, has to travel to Oxford for their treatment. As the cost of living crisis escalates over the coming months, disabled people will face increasing energy bills and food costs, and many will experience the burden of stressful work capability assessments—we know that the Government are bringing in tougher sanctions on jobseekers. Shouldering the cost of a prescription-exempt chronic condition can mean a choice for some people between paying the bills and affording essential meds.

I was recently contacted by Martin, a constituent whose 19-year-old son James has cystic fibrosis. James works part time. Last year, his claim for disability allowance stopped when he reached adulthood, and his personal independence payment application was refused. Martin currently pays for James's prepaid prescription certificate, but he worries that a change in his own financial situation would mean that he would not be able to foot the bill for his son's prescription. What is ironic is that Martin himself has insulin-dependent diabetes, which entitles him to free NHS prescriptions. He cannot even begin to understand how he is deemed eligible while his son is not, meaning he does not pay for his own prescriptions but does pay for his son's.

Martin is not alone in his opinion—96% of people who responded to a Cystic Fibrosis Trust survey described the prescription charges as unfair. It certainly gives rise to the question why CF patients should be treated differently from others with other lifelong conditions that exempt them. I asked the Health Secretary last year whether the Government plan to review the list of conditions exempt from prescription charges. A junior Minister responded to confirm that the Government did not plan to do so.

The former Liberal Democrat Member Bob Russell has been mentioned. I always use Bob Russell as an example of why early-day motions are perhaps not all they are cracked up to be. For years on years—it might have been two decades—Bob queued to be No. 1 on the early-day motion list so he could call for an exemption from prescription charges for cystic fibrosis patients. He always got lots of signatures, because his early-day motion was No.1 and first in the booklet, but we are still here debating the issue. When I am trying to explain to my constituents why my signing an early-day motion will not change the world, Bob is the example I use. It would be lovely if we could move on from having these debates and making the same points over and over again. There is no logical reason for it, other than the point that if the Government reopen the 1968 list they will have to review other conditions as well, because people are living longer due to medical advances. I do not think that is a very moral reason for not doing it.

We get told that patients who are not exempt from prescription charges can apply for a prepaid prescription certificate that costs £2 per week. However, that is £104 per year; everything adds up, and I have already mentioned increasing fuel bills and food prices. That is £104 per year that they should not be paying. Grants are available through charities such as the Cystic Fibrosis Trust to support those in urgent need, but they are in high demand. Between 2020 and 2021, one in 10 people with cystic fibrosis received an emergency grant from the trust; the majority of those grants went towards basic living costs.

There is a serious risk that cystic fibrosis patients who incur prescription charges may avoid taking essential medicines, especially if they are already in financial hardship. People living with chronic conditions in Wales do not have to face the same difficult choice between medication and heating their homes, as all NHS prescriptions are free there.

**Ruth Jones:** My hon. Friend is making a powerful speech. Would she agree with me that, for all of us living in Wales, the fact that all of our prescriptions are free means that people do not have to worry about not having the money to take life-saving medication?

**Kerry McCarthy:** That is certainly true. I know that some people would say that this would mean that Government money would be used to subsidise the 11% of people who pay for their prescriptions at the moment. However, the figures that we have talked about and the unfairness of the current situation seem totally wrong.

Although I hope that cystic fibrosis becomes a condition people can live with, that drugs can manage the condition and that people do not suffer from too much, I would still not want to be in the situation of having it. It is still a condition where people have to have daily physiotherapy, take drugs such as Creon before eating any food, and make regular trips to the hospital. They have to be very careful to avoid infection and had to shield during covid. When people are paying that sort of price, giving them an exemption from prescription charges is not too much to ask. I hope that the Minister will finally commit to reopening the 1968 list, and make sure that cystic fibrosis patients do not have to pay this amount anymore.

2.52 pm

**Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) for securing this debate today and for the very passionate speech he gave.

There are 2,500 people in the UK who suffer from cystic fibrosis; my wife, Sinead, is one of them. My wife was really poorly through childhood and up until the age of 18. She never got diagnosed with a condition; it was just considered a bad cough and a few digestive problems. In fact, a local GP thought she was a bit of a nuisance as she kept going back. At the age of 18—imagine this—she was just about to finish her A-levels, go to university and start her journey through life, when she was finally diagnosed with CF. She was told by a GP and people at the hospital that she probably would not live until she was 30. That was a good outcome, back then.

Undeterred, my wife carried on, went to university, did her studies, took her medication, did her physio—she did all the right things—in the hope of becoming a schoolteacher. She qualified with a degree at university and then went on to become a teacher. This was way before I met her. She has told me that paying the prescription charges was a struggle for her, because she had her student loans to pay off and she wanted to buy a house to live independently; she had dreams of living independently because she was fighting against time. She only had a few years to live; she did not think she would be here by the age of 30, so she had to plan her life out. She struggled—she really struggled.

Then, in a sort of blessing in disguise, my wife's illness took a turn for the worse: she got CF-related type 1 diabetes, which meant that she could get free prescriptions. The irony is incredible: she has a life-limiting condition such as cystic fibrosis, which—let us be honest—is an early death sentence, yet the only way to get free prescriptions is to get another condition that is not as life threatening. I know diabetes is serious—my wife said that, actually, she would sooner have CF than diabetes, because it is a nightmare taking her insulin.

However, our brilliant NHS has sorted that: she wears a patch with a sensor that tells her when she needs insulin. That is really good. Nevertheless, it was a real battle.

Living with someone with CF is a struggle. I met my wife 12 years ago. She is the best thing that has ever happened to me, if I am honest. I saw her at night, when she was getting really bad. When she was 32 or 33, she was told she had only a couple of years to live, and she was put on the list for a double lung transplant. We went down to the Royal Papworth Hospital, had the assessment and did all that stuff. I used to be awake with her at night—giving her physio, patting her back—while she was coughing up cups and cups of blood and throwing up.

Sometimes, we would go out for a meal and, as soon as we went out into the cold air, she would throw everything up. Because of the coughing, there is a big struggle for a CF patient to keep their food down. Most people do not know that—I did not even know what CF was before I met my wife. There is a constant struggle to keep their weight on. The heavier they are, the healthier they are and the better their lung capacity. My wife had to eat 4,000 or 5,000 calories a day. That is a lot of food. She had to eat lots of junk food—pizzas, chocolate, chips; every bit of junk food—which totally contradicted her diabetes. It was a battle between two illnesses to keep her fit and healthy.

My wife was on the transplant list for about two years. We had six calls; five were false alarms. We would get the call and get blue-lighted down to Papworth Hospital in Cambridgeshire. She would get ready for theatre, they would tell us about the donor and, then, about half an hour before surgery, they would come to us and say, "I'm sorry—it's not a match. You've got to go home." We would have to drive two and a half hours back up to Ashfield—that is a long journey of about 100 miles. There would be deathly silence in the car. We would not talk to one another; we were both upset, thinking, "Well, that's it. You've got just a few months to live." That happened five times.

On the sixth time, in December 2019, we got to Papworth and they said, "It's a goer. We're going ahead." We got there at about 1 o'clock in the afternoon and she had the surgery that night. The lady whose organs she was receiving was still on a life support machine; she was still alive, but was, sadly, brain dead. When they turn the machine off, they disperse the organs all around the country to wherever they are going. It is a wonderful thing that our NHS does.

When the doctors told my wife that she was going to have the transplant, she broke down in tears and said, "I don't want it." We had to have a conversation, which was pretty blunt: "If you don't have it, you won't be here in a couple of months." It did not take long to make her mind up. She is a braver person than me, and she had the surgery. She went into theatre at about 7 o'clock. Halfway through, the surgeon came out and said that they were really struggling; they had got one lung out and one lung in, but they could not get the other lung out. It was not looking good. Her mother and I were there, at Papworth.

Anyway, a couple of hours later, the surgeon came out again and said that they had got the lung out. They were fighting against time, because they only have a short amount of time. After about 14 hours, he came back down and said they had done it and were just

[Lee Anderson]

sewing her up back up. She was fine after that, although it was a struggle. I think that people do not realise that a patient can get over the physical part—although it is a lot of pain, a lot of painkillers and a lot of medication—but the mental part is very tough. For my wife, knowing that she had somebody else's organs inside her body, with the fear of rejection, was tough.

I hope that gives hon. Members a little insight into what it is like for a CF patient. It is hard to sympathise and empathise without having been there. That is the journey my wife went through. She always says that she cannot understand why she has this horrible condition but she cannot get a free prescription. Our spare bedroom is like a chemist's. There are thousands of tablets. She takes over 50 tablets a day and now her transplant tablets as well, and the only reason she gets a free prescription is that she has diabetes. It seems absolutely crazy. I understand the argument that people get PIP or disability living allowance, and I understand that they should use that for extra living costs—I get that—but lots of CF patients out there do not get DLA or PIP. It is a real struggle, and we should take that into consideration.

I read this morning that the Cystic Fibrosis Trust says the cost to the Government would be about £270,000 a year if they waived prescription charges. To put that into context, it is similar to a Premiership footballer's weekly wage or the salary of a newsreader on the BBC—my favourite channel. That amount of money is what we are talking about.

We are limiting chances for people. Obviously, my wife went on to be a primary school teacher and make a fantastic contribution to society. For 10 years, she taught lots of children and made a real difference. She was able to do so not because she was financially secure, but because she did not have the extra debt of prescriptions. Fortunately, or unfortunately, she got diabetes, which made it less expensive for her but resulted in more hassle and more tablets.

However, we have new drugs such as Trikafta, which I thank the Government for introducing about 18 months ago and which, by the way, is a game-changer. A number of parents have contacted me to say, "This is brilliant. My child is going to live a near-normal life." My wife did not get that chance. She had to have a transplant, so she is on limited time.

It seems now that we have done all this brilliant work and got these brilliant drugs that extend lives and let people live a more normal life—but living longer costs more money. I do not think that is fair, but I get both sides of the argument. It is not "one size fits all". There are plenty of people with CF who have a few quid in the bank. We are comfortable in my household. My wife and I are all right—I get a decent salary—but there are people with CF who are a lot worse off than me, and I know from experience and talking to the CF community through social media that there are people out there for whom every penny counts and who skip their medication. If people with CF skip their medication, there is a good chance that could put them in hospital. Even worse, it could end up killing them, because skipping medication for a condition like this literally kills people.

I ask the Minister to have a serious think about waiving prescription charges. Like I say, it is not "one size fits all". I do not personally think that everybody should get free prescriptions, because some people get extra benefits—the DLA, PIP or whatever—that are supposed to help them, but the Minister should take into account that it is a very costly job being a CF patient. They need extra food, and there is all the travel to the hospital and the doctors to have their blood done. It is an absolute nightmare. My wife has many trips to the hospital every single month, and there is the added cost of going down to Papworth once every three months for check-ups and stuff like that. The CF community is very small in this country, and not many people know much about it. I am fortunate that I know a little bit about it through my wife, so I can tell that story. I hope the Government listen, and I hope there can be some compromise.

3.3 pm

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to speak on this issue. I thank the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) for leading the debate, as he often does, on an issue that is of particular interest to him. Again, he has shown his expertise and knowledge on the subject matter.

I also thank the hon. Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson) for his personal contribution. There is no better way to tell a story than by recounting personal experience, which he has, and we thank him for disclosing it and making it public. He is right about the ESA and PIP—they are there to help—but those people are not working. Therefore, the money that they have coming in is also to try to keep their household surviving. It is not as though they have a whole lot of extra money to put into things, because they do not. That is a fact of life.

I am the Democratic Unionist party's health spokesperson, and I am very pleased to participate in this important debate. I think the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) and I have been in nearly every debate on this issue in Westminster Hall, for whatever number of years that may be. I cannot remember ever not following her—I am always following in her footsteps. I thank her for her knowledge and for telling her story. We may have heard it before, but it does not lessen the impact on the family.

The issue is quite simple. A list of exempt medical conditions was written by the Government over 50 years ago in 1968, and although in the UK there are now more adults than children living with cystic fibrosis, the Government have never updated the list. I am very clear, as was the hon. Member for Ashfield, that they should change the list of exempt conditions. The Minister is a good man—I am not saying that to pacify him in any way or to be smart: he is a good man. The relationship that he has with every MP, including myself, has always been very amenable, and he tries to solve problems. Not to put the Minister under any pressure, but we look to his good nature to give us some hope on where we are with this issue. It is simple: it is time to get CF on the exemption list.

The Cystic Fibrosis Trust can offer a one-off grant for the first 12 months of prescription prepayment charge, which gives individuals free prescriptions for a year. That does not help with the payments that are due after. As the hon. Member for Ashfield and others have



referred to, it is about the ongoing costs. The Government stated in 2021 that they had no plans to review or extend the prescription charge medical exemptions list. That was disappointing; there is no sense in saying otherwise. I felt particularly aggrieved. I do not think it is too late for the Minister to take the issue back to his Department and see whether it is possible to change that decision.

Cystic fibrosis is a genetic condition affecting more than 10,600 people in the UK. One in 19 people in the UK is said to carry some types of the cystic fibrosis gene. Cystic fibrosis accounts for 9,500 hospital admissions and over 100,000 hospital bed days a year. If we add up those costs and the ongoing visits to the GP, there must be a financial argument to make CF an exempt condition. I would suggest that there might be a cost saving in that process.

Given that cystic fibrosis impacts so many people daily, not only in Northern Ireland but across the UK, I believe there are further steps the Government can take to ensure that prescription charges are waived. I had a debate on asthma here about a month five weeks ago, which raised concerns about why people with lung conditions are not on the Government exemption list. Lung disease is the third-largest killer in the UK, and at least one in five people will develop a lung condition in their lives. A recent survey showed that 57% of people skipped getting their prescriptions for asthma, as they struggled to afford it. In our society, in this day and age, I find it incredible. There are questions that people need answered.

I do not see it as acceptable that people with lifelong respiratory diseases must pay up to £100—or £104, as the hon. Member for Bristol East said, to be exact—for prescription charges each year. Through a series of parliamentary questions, I asked the Government why there are still prescription charges for lung diseases. The Minister knows that I am fond of him, but I am really disheartened that the Government will not take this small step, for a small cost, to make their life slightly easier. There are many leading charities and organisations that provide the best support for people suffering from cystic fibrosis and other respiratory diseases, but it should not be solely down to them to fix the problem.

My request to the Minister is simple. I urge him and his Department to hear the pleas of the hon. Members for Bristol East, for Ashfield and for Blackpool North and Cleveleys, who each gave personal examples of people affected. I have constituents who are affected. In Northern Ireland, they are fortunate enough that their CF drugs are being paid for. I am asking the Minister here, in the mother of Parliaments, to take our case to the Secretary of State for Health or whoever it needs to be presented to.

The fee may not seem like a lot, but it is to families on lower incomes, who simply cannot work due to diseases like cystic fibrosis. Over the years, I have had constituents come to see me. It is tragic to watch people with cystic fibrosis gasping for the breath that we take for granted. My plea is on their behalf. The fee is a large chunk of money for something they cannot control and will never go away. For the one in five that will at some point be diagnosed with a lung disease, I urge the Minister, who is a good man, to take immediate action and follow closely behind Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and remove—immediately if possible, or tell us when it can be done—prescription charges.

3.10 pm

**Sir John Hayes** (South Holland and The Deepings) (Con): I had not intended to contribute to this debate, Mr Sharma. As you know, because I gave you written notice, I could not be here at the outset and I cannot stay for the end, and it is not conventional to contribute on that basis, so I am grateful for your indulgence in allowing me to do so. I decided to contribute only when I heard the superb speech of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson), which was both moving and informed by the most intimate personal experience. Sometimes in this place, that inspires us to contribute, and I will briefly say why.

Long before Bob Russell was invented, in the dim and distant past, and before my 19 consecutive years as a Front Bencher, I was a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed Back Bencher, fortunate in the late 1990s to come up in the ballot for private Members' Bills. It was the only private Member's Bill I have ever had—we cannot have one as Front Benchers, and I have not had one since. I chose to introduce a Bill to do exactly what my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) has requested today, which is to remove prescription charges for those suffering from cystic fibrosis. I did so, believing all that has been said in this debate by all who have contributed.

I went to see the then Labour Minister, a nice man in the House of Lords—Lord Hunt—who was a good, diligent Minister. He gave me a fair hearing as I put the case with all the vehemence but reason that has typified this debate. Unfortunately, I was not able to persuade him, and subsequent Health Ministers have remained unpersuaded. I put the case because I have a personal story too, but it is a story with a less happy ending than that told by my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield. I had a close friend who suffered from cystic fibrosis, and her experience catalysed my commitment to try to do something about it.

My friend was a very young woman who worked for me when she contracted cystic fibrosis. She had two lung transplants at the Freeman Hospital, in the days when they were an extreme rarity—very few single lung transplants had been done in the early 1990s. She survived them both and did well, got married and had a baby. Later, she was due to be the godmother to my youngest son, who is now 17 years of age. When I asked her to do it, she said, “You know I won't be around for his 21st birthday.” Sadly, she was not even around for his christening because, as my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield said, people who have transplants are always likely to die of something other than the condition that originally provoked the transplant. My friend died of cancer in Derbyshire Royal Infirmary when my son was a tiny baby and the day after I had been to see her with the infant in my arms.

Jane, my dear friend, made me know how important this cause is, and made me understand why my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) has done us a great service in bringing it before this Chamber and to the Minister's attention. Having been a Minister many times—I am sorry to put my hon. Friend the Minister in this position, because he is a personal friend as well as being an hon. Friend—I know that if he were to say today in this debate, “We are going to do this,” it would happen, because in the great scheme of things it is not a huge decision for the Government. But, my goodness, it is an immense one

[*Sir John Hayes*]

for people such as the wife of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield and my late, dear friend. For that reason, I say to the Minister that he should stand up now and say that the Government will consider this or, better still, that they will do it. He would be remembered forever as the Minister who responded to a Westminster Hall debate on the basis of the strength of a cross-party argument that had such weight and substance—such vehemence expressed on behalf of those who suffer—that it persuaded him to act immediately. I hope that he might at least commit to considering this again, because it is a just and worthy cause. So many people would celebrate a small step for the Government, but a huge step for them.

**Mr Virendra Sharma (in the Chair):** It was the right decision to let you come in. Thank you very much for your contribution.

3.15 pm

**Feryal Clark (Enfield North) (Lab):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship this afternoon, Mr Sharma. I pay tribute to the hon. Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) for securing this important debate and for his continued campaigning on this issue. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy), the hon. Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson), the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) and the right hon. Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes). As has been said, hearing the personal stories of Members brings to the fore the reality faced by CF patients, which is really important, and I thank Members for sharing those personal stories.

As we have heard this afternoon, cystic fibrosis affects over 10,000 people in the UK, with one in 25 people being carriers of the CF gene. CF is a degenerative condition with symptoms that often start in early childhood, get progressively worse and affect people's quality of life. Although there is no cure, treatments are available to help manage the condition and reduce its effects. Sadly, life expectancy for those living with CF is still shorter than that of the general population. People living with CF are also more susceptible to other conditions, including diabetes, osteoporosis and liver issues.

Despite the debilitating nature of CF, people living with the condition face a complex and discriminatory system when it comes to accessing prescriptions. The system of prescription charges is complex for most people, but for those living with long-term health conditions, it can present multiple challenges.

As all Members have said, there are several exemptions from prescription charges, based on demographics, income and pre-existing conditions. When it comes to pre-existing conditions, the list of conditions that are exempt from prescription charges was first created in 1968, as we have heard. In the 54 years since, we have seen immeasurable changes in our understanding of long-term conditions and the outcomes of people living with them, yet just one addition has been made to that list in those 54 years—just one. That leaves those living with CF in the position of needing to have another long-term condition to access free prescriptions. This two-tier system leaves thousands of people with the same conditions facing different circumstances.

We know the difficulties faced by those living with CF who have to pay for their prescriptions. The costs of prescriptions can put people off taking the medication they need, as we have heard. With the costs continuing to rise, those problems are only going to get worse. That not only leaves people suffering more than necessary but, as set out very eloquently by my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol East, will cost the NHS more money in the long term and further increase pressure on primary care.

At a time when the cost of living is continuing to rise, the Government ought to consider what more they can do to support people with these essential costs. The fact that one in 10 people living with CF were given emergency grants by the Cystic Fibrosis Trust to help them fund their medication shows how serious this problem is. No one should be forced to choose between paying for their prescription and risking their lives. Sadly, we know the financial pressures that those with long-term conditions often face. As the hon. Member for Strangford mentioned, surveys have shown that 29% of people living with CF have not taken their prescriptions due to financial pressures. Too many people are forced to make dangerous choices that they should not have to.

The inequality in prescriptions for those living with CF is clearly a cause for concern, and something that the Minister needs to look at. In December, he stated in response to a written question that the Government's "policy on entitlement to help with prescription charges in England is based on the principle that those who can afford to contribute should do so, while those who are likely to have difficulty...paying should be protected."

What weight has he given to the financial difficulties of those living with long-term conditions such as CF when establishing his principles?

Furthermore, as I and other hon. Members have pointed out, the medical exemption list for prescription charges has been updated just once since 1968. Given the Government's levelling-up agenda, one would assume that this would be a perfect opportunity to bring health policy properly into the 21st century. Given the powerful arguments that we have heard this afternoon, I hope the Minister's position has progressed from the response he gave to the written question just a few weeks ago. For him to say that the Government have "no plans" to look again at this, despite the overwhelming changes in our health service in the last 54 years, is frankly slightly baffling. What reassurances can he give those living with CF that the Government understand their condition as it is now, not as it was in 1968?

The Minister furthermore suggested that capping charges at £108 for those living with long-term conditions through a prepayment certificate provided support. This highlights a failure to grasp just how serious the financial pressures faced by those living with long-term conditions such as CF are. Those living with CF face an outdated and unfair system that is wholly removed from the world as it is today. If the Government truly believe in levelling up, it is time for the Minister to look at this issue again.

3.23 pm

**The Minister for Health (Edward Argar):** It is a pleasure as always to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys (Paul Maynard) on securing this important debate and thank all hon. Members who

have taken part. Although this issue falls within Lord Kamall's ministerial portfolio rather than mine, it is privilege to answer in this place and to engage in this debate.

Nobody here today, and nobody viewing our proceedings or reading them when they are written up in *Hansard*, can fail to have been moved by the experiences and stories that we have heard. Hon. Members on both sides of the House told moving stories about their constituents—in the case of my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson), who spoke of his very personal experience, it was his wife, Sinead. As hon. Members have said, it is always incredibly powerful and moving in this place when an hon. Member is willing to share their own experiences, not just with this House and colleagues but essentially with the public. It was powerful, it was personal and it was poignant, and I thank him for that.

I also thank the hon. Member for Bristol East (Kerry McCarthy) for her contribution, in which she set out—again, very movingly—very personal stories, to make this real. It is very easy in this place for us to slip into talking about policies and grand strategies and to not always relate that to people and individual lives and experiences. I am very grateful to the hon. Lady. I do not always agree with her on everything in a political context, but I certainly agree with her on EDMs. I share the experience. I remember Bob Russell from the time before I was a Member, when I worked for previous Members in this place. I admire his belief in the power of EDMs, although I have to say that I do not share it and, like the hon. Lady, I occasionally have to explain to constituents and others who understandably think that an EDM moves the agenda forward, that it rarely does, but that it may, on occasion, put down a marker.

As ever, I am grateful to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for his comments. He mentioned that he has been in just about every debate on this subject, along with the hon. Member for Bristol East. Given his assiduity in attending debates in this House, that could be said for a vast array of subjects, on which he has given well-informed and eloquent contributions, not only representing his constituents, but putting issues of national concern on the agenda.

**Jim Shannon:** The Minister referred to the former Member, Bob Russell. I recall him standing at the door to be No. 1 on EDMs. I put in at least two EDMs every week. Their purpose is not to change policy, but to raise awareness or congratulate some person or group that has been active in the community. For me, that is what EDMs are about.

**Edward Argar:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his spirited defence of early-day motions, of which he makes powerful use, as he does with every opportunity he has to speak in this place.

My right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings (Sir John Hayes) is no longer able to be here, but he made a valuable contribution, and I am grateful to you, Mr Sharma, for allowing him to speak—even if, as a former Minister, he should have known better the consequences of seeking to tempt me to make policy at the Dispatch Box without cross-Government agreement, which might have led to an early termination

of my ministerial career. He made a powerful point, as all hon. and right hon. Members have done, and I will turn to some of those points in a moment.

Before I do so, I want to recognise the fantastic work undertaken by the Cystic Fibrosis Trust, which does a fantastic job on behalf of people living with cystic fibrosis and their families, and in bringing the condition and the needs of people with it to the attention of this House, and more widely. I also acknowledge the work of the Prescription Charges Coalition, of which the Cystic Fibrosis Trust is a member. It has worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the help available to patients with the cost of their prescriptions and campaigns on an issue that its members feel strongly about. In our democracy, whether or not we agree on the policy position, it is right that we recognise those who get out there, campaign and seek to drive change and policy. It is important to recognise those who are active in our democracy in that way.

As we have heard, cystic fibrosis is a life-limiting condition affecting many thousands of people in the UK. It is not only a life-limiting disease but, as we heard from my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield, a disease that can impact on the quality of life and the life experiences of those affected and their families. While there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, there are treatments available on the NHS to help reduce the effect of symptoms and make it easier to live with.

It is not that long ago that conditions such as cystic fibrosis saw life expectancy so low that many were advised not to expect to live beyond their teens. Thanks to advancements in treatments, better care and the work of organisations such as the Cystic Fibrosis Trust, people with cystic fibrosis are now living for longer, with a better quality of life, with half of those with the condition living past the age of 40. Children born with cystic fibrosis today are likely to live longer than that. That is a positive story and a reflection on our medical and scientific advances.

I turn to the crux of the debate. When the medical exemption list was drawn up in 1968 in agreement with the British Medical Association, it was limited to readily identifiable, permanent medical conditions that automatically called for continuous, lifelong and, in most cases, replacement therapy without which the patient would become seriously ill or even die. As the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Enfield North (Feryal Clark), alluded to, there has been a review since 1968—only one—which resulted in the addition of cancer in 2009.

When the exemption list was drawn up, decisions on which conditions to include were based on medical knowledge at the time—for instance, children with cystic fibrosis were not expected to live to see adulthood—and it is entirely understandable that, given advances in treatment and increases in life expectancy, those who are now living with cystic fibrosis for a lot longer should wish to pursue exemption from prescription charges to help them maintain their quality of life with the drugs that are essential to their quality of life. The issue of prescription charges was reviewed more broadly in the round in the 2010 Gilmore report, which did not recommend further changes at that stage.

As the hon. Member for Enfield North alluded to, I know that the answers that Ministers have given, stating that the Government have no immediate plans to review

[Edward Argar]

the list, will have caused disappointment to right hon. and hon. Members and to those with this condition. We do think it would not be right in this context to look at one condition in isolation, separate from other conditions, because others would rightly argue that their condition was potentially equally deserving of an exemption if it fitted the same criteria. My hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys has rightly advanced the case of cystic fibrosis, and I entirely understand why, but I know that he will also recognise that other conditions might qualify for consideration in the same way, or for the same case to be made for them by right hon. and hon. Members.

When the exemption list was first put in place in 1968, 42% of items on prescription were free; now 89% are free. There has been considerable change in that space, but to go to the heart of what right hon. and hon. Members have asked for today, were my right hon. Friend the Member for South Holland and The Deepings in his place, I would disappoint him by saying that, as he will appreciate, I cannot make policy standing at the Dispatch Box. It is important that everything is considered carefully. Although this is not my policy, I will continue to reflect on the points that have been made by right hon. and hon. Members today and by campaigners on this issue. I will also ensure that I will not only speak to my noble Friend, the Minister with portfolio responsibility for this issue, but draw to his attention the transcript of today's debate.

**Kerry McCarthy:** I have just realised that it is groundhog day—I missed an ideal opportunity to weave that fact into my speech, as I think all of us would have done. Is there anything the Minister could say that does not make us feel like we have been here many times before? He has said that he will reflect on these points, but is there not something a little bit more concrete that he can give us a commitment on, so that we feel that we are perhaps making some progress?

**Edward Argar:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady. She may or may not always agree with me, but I will always endeavour to be straight with the House, even when the message may not always be the one that Members want to hear. I cannot stand here now and say that there will be a review of that list; it is important for me to be honest with her. What I can say—which she may feel is insufficient, and I entirely respect her if she does—is that I will reflect on the points made today and the issues raised. I will discuss this issue with my noble Friend and ensure that the points that have been made in this debate are conveyed to him, but it would be wrong of me to commit to something that I am not in a position to commit to. The hon. Lady rightly presses her case, but I know that she will appreciate my position, and it is important that I am honest with the House in that respect.

I touched on the help with prescription costs previously, and the number of items. While I know that this is not at the heart of the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys, it is still important that I put on record the point that I alluded to: when medical exemptions were introduced, only 42% of all NHS prescription items were dispensed free of charge. That figure is now around 89%, and around

60% of the English population do not pay prescription charges at all. Many people with medical conditions not on the exempt list already get free prescriptions on other grounds, as my hon. Friend the Member for Blackpool North and Cleveleys said, with current exemptions providing valuable help for those on the lowest incomes.

**Jim Shannon:** In my contribution, I referred to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, where prescription charges are free. I have knowledge of Northern Ireland, though not of Scotland and Wales, and understand that we follow the rules of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in the UK but have some liberty about what we add on. I understand that the Minister is not responsible for this. He is a good man who has been honest with us. What we wish to be conveyed from this debate, to the person who is responsible, is that the same should happen here as in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

**Edward Argar:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman. I will finish the point I was making and then respond to his. We have already heard about the annual certificate, which can be purchased by direct debit in instalments, meaning that a person can have all the prescribed items they need for just over £2 a week. I take the point from the hon. Member for Bristol East that that may still not solve the problem for everyone, but that route provides a significant potential reduction in costs.

I shall now respond to the point raised by the hon. Member for Strangford on the devolved Administrations, and the broader approach to prescription charges. Although we have surprisingly managed to stray away from it for quite a while, any debate on this subject will touch on the different positions of England and the devolved Administrations, given the latter's abolition of charges for prescriptions. I suspect that many people will ask why there is that difference in approach. Health is a devolved matter and the devolved Administrations have full discretion over how they spend their budgets and the choices they make, presumably choosing to spend a proportionately larger share of those budgets on prescriptions.

We have opted for a different approach in England. We also recognise that prescription charges, more broadly, raise significant revenue, which provides a valuable contribution directly to NHS services in England. In 2019-20, they contributed just over £600 million in revenue to NHS frontline services. There is always a balance to be struck, and I suspect that we shall return to this topic, with Members taking different views.

With regard to the key point made by the hon. Member for Strangford, although I am not directly responsible for this area of policy I will continue to reflect on that. In this House, there are times when individual debates or speeches—I look at my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield—resonate, and cause Ministers to turn them over in their head and reflect on the points made. All hon. Members will be able to point to speeches they have heard on different topics in the main Chamber that stay with them. They go away from that debate, still reflecting on what that right hon. or hon. Member has said. My hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield has had that effect today. I will reflect carefully on what he said, within the context that I cannot make policy at the Dispatch Box. In response to the point made by the

hon. Member for Strangford, I will pick up that issue and convey the sentiments of Members speaking today to my noble Friend Lord Kamall, and ensure that he has a copy of the transcript of the debate.

I conclude by thanking all hon. Members for their contributions. Often, people judge what goes on in this place by the half an hour or 40 minutes that they see at 12 noon on a Wednesday on both sides of the Chamber and what happens there. Many people do not see what happens in Westminster Hall, where, in a measured and sensible way, people can discuss, debate and sometimes disagree on issues that really matter and impact on the lives of individuals or particular groups of people. This debate is one that those that clears a very high bar for the quality of the contributions, for the importance of the subject and for its ability to cause us to leave this Chamber continuing to reflect on what we have heard.

3.40 pm

**Paul Maynard:** I thank all those who have participated, particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson). We are all grateful to him for not just speaking on a personal basis, but illuminating a debate far better than I could from my more dry, academic analysis. I thank him for his personal contribution, and I thank all hon. Members for a constructive debate. I recognise the point that the Minister made; making a commitment on the hoof at the Dispatch Box can be career-limiting. I know that myself, as I reflect on what I once said on rail and aviation, which I suspect led to my defenestration. Saving High Speed 2 can be terminal for a career, perhaps. None the less, I hope he will take the issue back to Lord Kamall, and that he might encourage him to meet me and other interested Members to hear what the Gentleman whose brief it is thinks of the matter.

**Edward Argar:** I am happy to reassure my hon. Friend that I will certainly convey his request for a meeting to my noble Friend.

**Paul Maynard:** We have something concrete on which to conclude the debate.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Resolved,*

That this House has considered prescription charge exemption and cystic fibrosis.

3.41 pm

*Sitting suspended.*

## UK-Andean Trade Agreement: Human Rights

4 pm

**Mr Virendra Sharma (in the Chair):** I remind Members to observe social distancing and wear masks. There will not be an opportunity for the Member in charge to wind up, as is the convention for 30-minute debates.

**Tony Lloyd (Rochdale) (Lab):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered human rights and the UK-Andean Trade Agreement.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. This debate concerns human rights and the UK's trade agreement with the Andean countries of Ecuador, Peru and Colombia. For the benefit of the Ecuadorians present, Ecuador is not one of the countries of concern to me; Peru—though only a little—and Colombia are the objects of my concern.

It is commonly agreed that any trade agreement nowadays should go beyond merely the management of trade flows between different countries. The then Foreign Secretary, who is now the Justice Secretary, said in January 2021 that

“we shouldn't be engaged in free trade negotiations with countries abusing human rights”.

That is clear and unequivocal. The Minister for the Middle East, North Africa and North America, the right hon. Member for Braintree (James Cleverly), told the Commons last July that

“our commitment to human rights is a foundation stone of our foreign policy... We will ensure that we use our trade relationships not just to export products and services but to export our principles and values.”—[*Official Report*, 20 July 2021; Vol. 699, c. 800.]

That is a strong, powerful statement.

Even in their report to the House on the trade agreement with the Andean countries, the Government stated:

“The UK has long supported the promotion of our values globally and this will continue as we leave the EU. We want to ensure economic growth, development and labour and environmental protection go hand-in-hand.”

There we have it: human rights, labour standards and environmental protection should all be part of any modern trade agreement.

It gets a little better; there are strong statements in the agreement itself. Article 1 states:

“Respect for democratic principles and fundamental human rights...underpins the internal and international policies of the Parties. Respect for these principles constitutes an essential element of this Agreement.”

Article 269 commits both parties to

“the promotion and effective implementation in its laws and practice...of internationally recognised core labour standards”.

Sadly, there is no mechanism to enforce that. There are no sanctions and no discussion of what we do when things go wrong. There is an acceptance that we should have domestic advisory groups on both sides to represent civil society, trade unions, employers and so on, which could monitor adherence to labour standards and human rights commitments. I shall be asking the Minister where we are with our own domestic advisory group in the UK.

I will start with Peru, which in many ways is an easier case. Peru generates concern around environmental standards. Back in 2017, Peruvian civil society representatives and their European counterparts filed a

[Tony Lloyd]

complaint before the European Commission against the Peruvian Government for failure to comply with environmental and labour obligations under the free trade agreement with the EU, was then the guiding trade agreement. The Peruvian Government continue to fail to establish clear objectives and indicators to monitor progress on tackling these big environmental issues, so there is concern about Peru.

Colombia is a country I know reasonably well. It had a horrendous civil war, which in a way continues. It reached, in part, a negotiated solution. However, that has not stopped the huge erosion of basic human rights, including the right to life and others.

**Jim Shannon** (Strangford) (DUP): The hon. Gentleman often brings human rights issues to Westminster Hall about which he and I are on the same page, as we are today. While respect for democratic principles, fundamental human rights and the rule of law should be an essential part of any agreement, does he not agree that we need not simply words but actions? We should not continue to trade with those whose flagrant disregard for and abuse of human rights is prevalent and persevering. I believe that he will now illustrate, in addressing what has happened in Colombia—land grabs and murders of peasant people—that those in authority there have a disregard for life itself.

**Tony Lloyd:** I am grateful for the hon. Member's support. He is absolutely right. I will continue on exactly that theme.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has information about 196 human rights defenders—those who protect the population more generally and go out of their way to act as a human shield—who were killed in 2021. They faced increasing death threats in the aftermath of protests last year. In the first 24 days of this year, 10 human rights defenders were murdered. The International Trade Union Confederation rates Colombia as one of the worst countries in the world for workers' rights and documents 22 trade unionists who have been murdered in the last year. Colombia is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be active in a trade union.

**Ian Lavery** (Wansbeck) (Lab): It is good that an issue as important as international human rights has been brought to this Chamber. Does my hon. Friend agree that we have to start dealing with such issues in Colombia? Only on Monday, José González Marín, an agricultural workers trade union representative, was shot six times and killed, the rationale being that he wanted the UK-Colombia free trade agreement suspended. This cannot continue.

**Tony Lloyd:** My hon. Friend makes a powerful case. That someone was shot for being a trade unionist going about trade union activities is simply an outrage. The right to life is a fundamental right. The right to protest is a fundamental right. In this country in the past, trade unionists may have faced imprisonment, but rarely death, I have to say. It is shocking that that is still the way things are in this world.

More than 1,200 Colombian social leaders, often representing the indigenous community, are estimated to have been murdered since the 2016 peace agreement

was signed. I was involved in supporting the creation of that agreement, so I bow to nobody in recognising its importance, but we recognise that it did not solve the problem of violence. Worse than that, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has verified that at least 46 people—two of them state agents, the rest civilians—were killed during protests, with at least 28 of those killings attributed to the police. One young woman, who may not count as one of the 28, was gang-raped by the police and took her own life as a result.

State repression and widespread killing of protestors by the police breaches every democratic principle known to us all. Rather like my hon. Friend said, the question arises of what the remedy should be. The problem with the Andean agreement is that it ultimately makes no demand on the authorities in Colombia or, indeed, Peru. The UK did not consider the Colombian Government's failure to uphold many of their obligations under the peace agreement when negotiating the Andean agreement. I recognise that the agreement is a roll-over of the EU agreement, but the human rights commitments are nevertheless real, despite the violations that contravene the commitments of the Colombian Government, who have failed to live up to their own expressed intentions.

Will the Minister say where we are on this? I recognise that the treaty is in transition. What do we say to the Colombians and to the Peruvian Government about the gross breaches of the standards to which they agreed and to which we as a country are committed to uphold in our trade negotiations?

Like my hon. Friend, the Trades Union Congress has joined the Colombian trade unions in asking for the agreement to be suspended until there are effective measures to ensure that human rights are observed and, in the case of Peru, that environmental and labour standards are upheld. Clearly, in the absence of any capacity to do that, what matters is how we monitor human rights abuse. What do we do in terms of our dialogue with the Colombian authorities?

I mentioned that there is provision in the treaty for the establishment of domestic advisory groups that ought to be able—through civil society, trade unions, employers' organisations and civil organisations such as non-governmental organisations and the like—to say what the situation is on the ground and to be listened to. Only by listening away from Government sources do we get the real information on the ground.

I have listened over the years. I was a Minister in the Foreign Office years back. As a recipient of Foreign Office advice about Colombia from our embassy, I did not always find it to be as complete as the information that one would get from civil society and from those on the ground who saw the erosion of standards in people's real lives and, brutally, people's real deaths. Where are we up to with the establishment of the domestic advisory groups? It is so important that we have the capacity to monitor, to inform and, where appropriate, to give real criticism and look at whether we want to be part of a trade agreement that is so lacking in enforcement.

More broadly, will the Minister comment on our policy with respect to free trade agreements and human rights clauses? If this is the example that we are using with other regimes where we know that there are regular human rights abuses, we will be creating a very difficult future for our commitment to maintain human rights and to maintain pressure on labour standards and,

importantly, environmental standards. We are likely to be talking in the near future to Brazil and other Governments in Latin America. I have to say that the present Brazilian Government would probably not pass muster in terms of their commitments on human rights standards, so what does the Andean agreement say about our ability to work in the future where human rights are central to the whole operation?

I know that the Minister is a trade Minister and is not directly responsible for our embassies, although there are trade representatives in them. What kind of information and advice pertinent to the agreement do the Minister and her colleagues get from our embassy in Bogotá? The ambassador is due to speak to groups of MPs in the not-too-distant future, so I hope that we will hear that directly from him, but he will perhaps give a little more information to Ministers than to a Back-Bench MP, however interested in Colombia I am.

**Ian Lavery:** Does my hon. Friend agree that we expect human rights issues in countries to be discussed and ironed out in free trade agreements, arrangements, discussions and negotiations? He has just explained how many people have been killed only this year, and it continues. I would think that the UK Government do raise this issue, but the fact that they do so and nothing happens is not acceptable. What does he think should happen with these negotiations? We cannot continue to turn a blind eye.

**Tony Lloyd:** That is almost exactly where I want to end. We have got to an agreement. The Government and the Opposition agree that human rights, labour standards and environmental standards are fundamental. That has been enshrined by the then Foreign Secretary, by Foreign Office Ministers and by trade Ministers too. We are in agreement that Colombia is a very difficult case. Peru is perhaps less difficult, but it nevertheless causes some problems. There are therefore two problem countries out of the three Andean treaty countries. In that context, what is the value of writing human rights clauses into an agreement if, in the end, nothing is done about the erosion of standards?

We have to rethink the way that we do things. We have to rethink whether sanctions or a road map need to be delivered, saying that we expect change and transformation. In the end, we expect to have the capacity, if our interlocuters in Bogotá or other capitals—in Peru, Brazil or wherever—are not conforming, to say, “We really can no longer live with this agreement.” I put it to the Minister that the time has now come to listen to the call, from the Colombian trade unions in particular, for us to suspend this agreement until such time that there is a recognisable road map for human rights, labour standards and environmental improvement.

4.16 pm

**The Minister for Trade Policy (Penny Mordaunt):** I start by thanking the hon. Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd) for securing this important and well-attended debate. These debates are very helpful to get things on record and to raise awareness about particular issues. They are also very helpful to Ministers, because they enable us to take some time to do a deep dive into areas that we normally would not pay a huge amount of attention to, because of the demands on our time.

The debate has caused me to take some time this week to look at the tragic details of the cases that he and other Members have raised—there are hundreds of cases. These are not just lists of names; there are stories behind them about what those individuals were working towards and what they were trying to secure for their communities. These are people who have been killed and murdered and, as hon. Members have said, been victims of other crimes too, including sexual violence. They were trade unionists, they were protestors and they were environmental campaigners—as well as many other things. Their murders, and the murders of members of their families, including children, are horrific. Colleagues have done the House a service in reminding us about what has gone on and what continues to go on. I thank the hon. Member for Rochdale for that.

**Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP):** I thank the Minister for giving way, I congratulate the hon. Member for Rochdale (Tony Lloyd) for securing this debate and I apologise for arriving a few minutes late. While the Minister is paying tribute to those who have been murdered, I want to add to the record Dr Luz Marina Arteaga, a social leader from the Matarratón and El Porvenir communities in Colombia. I and the hon. Member for Rhondda (Chris Bryant) had the huge privilege of meeting her several years ago during our visit with the ABColombia group. She was found dead towards the end of January, murdered for standing up for the rights of her community. We have written directly to the Foreign Secretary about that—I hope we will hear back soon. I want to add that to the record and emphasise the necessity for accountability mechanisms in these trade deals. As the hon. Member for Rochdale said, these are not worth anything in writing if they are not acted upon.

**Penny Mordaunt:** I thank the hon. Member for raising that particular case. If we were to raise every case we would be here for several weeks; there are large numbers of individuals and their families falling victim to this activity. The countries that the hon. Member for Rochdale is concerned about are of concern to the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office; they are on its watchlist for human rights abuses. As well as the levers that the Government have, which I will come on to, we have a huge amount in the UK that we can deploy to try and improve this situation. Our trade unions are a part of that suite of things that we have to offer as a country. When we talk about global Britain, we often do not talk about what they do, but I know from previous roles that they do a tremendous amount to build capacity and highlight the plight of vulnerable individuals. We have done good work both in the FCDO and in other Departments—the Department for Work and Pensions, for example—to try to use that knowledge and expertise to grow capacity in organisations elsewhere.

Government can be a catalyst for reform and for improving human rights around the world. In formulating our trade policy, for which I hold the brief, I try to balance off what the best way of doing that is. I am very conscious that trade in itself is a force for good. Our trade dialogue gives us a platform to raise human rights issues. Just in autumn last year, I and another Minister from our Department went to Peru to discuss issues related to trade, and were able to raise other issues alongside that debate. Trade is also important for poverty alleviation. I am very conscious that, as we come out of

[Penny Mordaunt]

the pandemic and, we hope, recover swiftly from that economic blow, removing barriers to trade is a vitally important component of that.

I am also acutely aware that the communities that hon. Members have mentioned this afternoon have suffered terribly during the pandemic. Many of them have lost millions of jobs, and those individuals have little or no state support, and so are more vulnerable to exploitation. Organisations, civil society voices and trade union voices that we want to strengthen are increasingly important at this time.

We have many other tools in Government outside of our trade negotiations. We shape our official development assistance programmes to reflect concerns about human rights. To give the hon. Member for Rochdale an example from another situation, we reshaped our ODA programming following the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. We still wanted to work there, and there was a need for us to be there, but it was not appropriate to continue as we had been. We do adapt—our policies are not set in stone. They can adapt, and our FTA policies and programmes enable us to do that.

We have spent to date £68 million through the conflict, stability and security fund to support the implementation of a peace agreement in Colombia, as the hon. Member for Rochdale will know. As I said, that country is on the FCDO's human rights priority country watchlist. Our Minister met with human rights defenders and social leaders in November last year to talk extensively about those issues.

**Ian Lavery:** There have been 40 community activists killed already this year, and there have been 13 massacres. As I have said twice already, that cannot continue. Can the Minister give this House assurances that, in any discussions with the Colombian authorities, No. 1 on the agenda will be human rights in that country? We should be doing everything that we possibly can to remedy that issue. If they will not listen, if they continue to turn a blind eye, does the Minister have any ideas about how best to progress this?

**Penny Mordaunt:** When we meet Ministers and other people who can assist us in other countries, that is absolutely part of our core script. On visits, we as Ministers, but also our officials, will listen to organisations in country as well. It is incredibly important that we do that and that we have a good understanding. Of course, through our networks around the globe, and particularly in those countries, we ensure that these things are monitored and reported back to our ministries. I will come on to what we can do, because as the hon. Member and other hon. Members have said, the situation persists.

Crucially, we have also put in place a multi-million pound project to help to transform the approach taken by the Colombian national police on human rights, social conflict and gender. I mention those things because addressing them is part of how we—the UK—can help to resolve the situation, and protect and strengthen civil society.

The hon. Member for Rochdale asked me some specific questions on our engagement. I have mentioned the engagement that my Department has had with Peru recently. Last year, three UK Ministers visited Colombia.

In addition, there were regular calls between officials, as well as virtual visits—given some of the restrictions we faced—by Lord Ahmad and the UK international ambassador for human rights. Most recently, a Foreign Office Minister visited Colombia in November to attend an event marking the five-year anniversary of the signing of the 2016 peace agreement, which obviously provided opportunities for her to raise these issues, which she did.

I will respond to some of the questions that the hon. Member for Rochdale asked about our position on monitoring; then I will answer the questions put by the hon. Member for Wansbeck about how we can apply some teeth to such monitoring.

The hon. Member for Rochdale asked about monitoring of the commitment and ensuring that we deal with countries that try to adhere to the core standards of the agreement. We have an annual trade committee, under which we have several specialised committees, with those countries' partners. That is obviously the successor to the EU structure, which he alluded to. It meets on an annual basis and is due to meet again in March. It helps to ensure compliance with the terms of the agreement, as well as providing a framework for ensuring that commitments are met and that the agreement is functioning effectively. It also supports our objectives, including our human rights objectives.

Regarding the UK's domestic advisory group—clearly, the countries have their own such groups, but I will talk about ours—we launched a public expression of interest for that in January. It is an independent group of expert organisations that will monitor the implementation of the trade and sustainable development chapters of the UK's FTAs, including those with the countries that the hon. Member for Rochdale is concerned about. The UK's DAG is expected to be in place shortly—later this year—and engagement with the UK Government and partner countries will be regular and ongoing. Partner countries to these agreements will also establish their own respective DAGs and we have discussed the issue at the UK's first trade and sustainable development committees, which began last year and will continue this year. We have regular discussions with those countries at ministerial and official levels, and our annual trade committee and associated sub-committees provide a platform to do that.

The countries' trade agreements include binding provisions on trade and sustainable development, or TSD, on both labour and environmental standards, and they provide for an annual TSD committee, which I have already alluded to. Those are an opportunity for the UK to raise concerns with partner organisations and we will do so if necessary. However, that is how we will monitor what is happening. What hon. Members want to know is how we will apply some teeth to this process.

Clearly, we take a bespoke approach to our FTAs, but all our FTAs contain either chapters or parts based on human rights. Those provisions differ and have a different focus, depending on the particular needs of the situation that we are dealing with. For example, there may be chapters on gender or indigenous people. That is what "good" looks like in an FTA; that is what we work to. However, the reasons for including such provisions are not just because it is a nice thing to do—

**Mr Virendra Sharma (in the Chair):** Order.  
*Question put and agreed to.*



## Nationality and Borders Bill: LGBTQ+ People

4.30 pm

**Mr Virendra Sharma (in the Chair):** Before we begin, I remind hon. Members to observe social distancing and wear masks.

**Olivia Blake (Sheffield, Hallam) (Lab):** I beg to move,

That this House has considered the potential effect of provisions in the Nationality and Borders Bill on LGBTQ+ people.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Sharma. Before I begin, I would like to refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests for the support I receive from the excellent Refugee, Asylum and Migration Policy Project. I also pay tribute to the organisations in my constituency and across Yorkshire—such as the South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group, City of Sanctuary Sheffield, ASSIST Sheffield, Time to be Out and so many more—that do such vital work supporting asylum seekers and refugees in my region.

The Nationality and Borders Bill is a wide-ranging piece of legislation. There are so many problems with it that it has been difficult for Members to address them all as it has passed through Parliament. Today, I want to shed some light on the potentially devastating impact this legislation will have on LGBTQ+ asylum seekers and refugees.

I have spoken to many campaigners advocating on behalf of LGBTQ+ communities, and every organisation I have contacted is appalled by the Bill. They are appalled because LGBTQ+ people seeking sanctuary are already met with a system full of obstacles and challenges.

In a world where homosexuality is still illegal in 70 countries and punishable by death in 11, it is shocking that across Europe, one in three applications from LGBTQ+ asylum seekers is refused because officials simply do not believe the applicant. According to the University of Sussex, four in 10 people report being rejected because decision makers did not consider them to be persecuted or at risk of persecution in their home country, while more than a third felt interviewers did not listen to their story or ask relevant questions.

In the UK, the story is no less bleak. Around 2,000 people fleeing persecution because of their sexual orientation seek asylum here every year, with only about a quarter of those applications granted by the Home Office. However, when those decisions are challenged, almost half of those who have been refused win their appeals. Those numbers alone suggest that something is very wrong at the Home Office. They speak to what researchers at the University of Sussex have described as a “culture of disbelief” that is a symptom of a wider hostile environment for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. As ever, it is the most vulnerable who suffer the most. Ministers should put themselves in the shoes of someone running from violence and abuse for their sexuality or gender identity to truly understand what that is like to go through.

Currently, under UK law, to be granted asylum, a person must demonstrate that if they were forced to return to their country of origin, there is a reasonable degree of likelihood they would be persecuted. They are

compelled to prove their sexual orientation to Home Office officials who, as I have said, have been told to be intensely suspicious of anything said to them.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle (Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op):** I had a constituent who was from Venezuela. He was told to return. He had married a British person. He was told that he could be more discreet in Venezuela and have no problem, and then return via the marriage route—he had no problem and should not worry. Is there not a problem in the Home Office looking at technical processes rather than at human beings? It expects people to be able to fit into boxes that are just not them.

**Olivia Blake:** I completely agree. I have huge sympathy with my hon. Friend's constituent. I am sure that story has been told many times before.

Imagine being an LGBTQ+ person who lives in one of those countries where homosexuality is illegal, or where it is punishable by death: you live in a constant fear of being outed. Every day is a struggle to erase any evidence of your identity. If you fail or slip up, or accidentally reveal that you are gay or bisexual or do not feel at home in the gender that society has assigned you, you will face horrific consequences. You finally manage to escape, and after what has probably been a very traumatic journey, you find yourself in an interview room in the UK. What will you say when you sit down with Home Office officials and they ask you to produce evidence of your identity—the same evidence that you have been erasing your entire life? How can you prove anything to them? You might think of contacting a former romantic partner from your country of origin, but what if they are unwilling to provide the evidence, for fear of being outed too? Or, even worse, what if they have already been imprisoned or even killed for their gender identity or sexuality? You cannot even rely on family members, who often do not feel safe enough to write a statement for the Home Office. They may even have disowned you for your identity.

Instead of seeking to right those wrongs and to address this impossible situation, the Nationality and Borders Bill increases the burden of proof for asylum applications. Clause 31 says that instead of a reasonable degree of likelihood, the threshold should be far higher and should be based on the balance of probabilities that a person will face persecution if they return.

What if someone does not even have the language to describe their own sexuality and gender identity? What if they come from a culture that describes them in very different terms? I recently heard from a woman who had been accused of witchcraft in her home country for having relationships with other women. After violence and intimidation, she fled to the UK, where she said to officials that she faced persecution for witchcraft. They simply did not understand. They looked on in confusion and denied her application. Only after living here for some months did she have the words to describe herself as a lesbian.

These are not isolated stories. The people who come here have been brutalised and traumatised. They often cannot immediately find the words to describe what they have been through and why. In many cases, they are explaining those difficult and complex experiences in a language that is not their own and that does not easily translate.

[*Olivia Blake*]

Proposals in this Bill make life for people such as that woman and countless others much harder. Under new measures, people could be forced to produce relevant evidence by a fixed date. If they miss that deadline, the Bill allows for the evidence to be given minimal weight.

Evidence is evidence. A person does not stop being LGBTQ+ over time, nor does the threat to someone's wellbeing in their country of origin diminish. Any legal pretence that it does will have devastating impacts on the most vulnerable LGBTQ+ people. For them, it is already a challenge to gather evidence. For many, proving their sexual orientation or gender identity is impossible. For some, explaining it is difficult. There are also so many reasons why a person simply would not want to disclose their sexuality or gender identity to people they do not know and do not trust.

The asylum system is not a hospitable place at the moment for someone who is openly LGBTQ+. As we process asylum applications, it is bitterly and cruelly ironic that we often incarcerate people who, in their country of origin, face prison sentences for their identity and sexuality.

LGBTQ+ people already face disproportionate levels of abuse in the asylum centre system. Detaining more people who make asylum claims will only make those statistics worse. The new rules for the so-called group 2 refugees also discourage LGBTQ+ people from telling their stories with their genuine claims for asylum. The UN has already said that the distinction in the Bill between group 1 and group 2 refugees undermines the 1951 refugee convention.

I am worried that giving one group of refugees lesser temporary rights and ratcheting up the uncertainty they face could also force LGBTQ+ refugees to continue to hide their identity, for fear of being returned to their home country. After all, why would anyone disclose their sexuality and gender ID if they knew they could be deported? It could be used to press charges against them once they are sent home and put them at further risk.

I know the Government are aware of some of these issues. Organisations such as Rainbow Migration, a group fighting for LGBTQ+ people in the UK immigration system, have been loudly sounding the alarm. In September 2021, the equality impact assessment for the Bill admitted that it risked indirectly disadvantaging protected groups, including LGBTQ+ people. Six days after the publication of that assessment, I questioned the Minister in Parliament. Back then, he said he was new to his role and had to get up to speed before he could comment in full. Now that he has had time to do his homework, I look forward to hearing what he will do. He told me then that he fully expects the Government to be sympathetic in taking proper account of the issues that I raised.

I would like to reach out to all hon. Members here today. The Nationality and Borders Bill will soon return to the House. When we draft and debate such legislation, we write the future stories of countless thousands fleeing the worst of circumstances. Every pen stroke of every amendment can make a difference to some of the most vulnerable people in the world.

Every day, LGBTQ+ people flee from violence, threats and abuse, but they cannot flee from who they are. As legislators, we can choose. We can either allow those

horrific experiences to follow them here, inscribing yet another chapter of trauma into the lives of people who have already suffered enough, or we can turn the page and write something new. I hope that is what every hon. Member here chooses to do as the Bill comes back to the House in the coming weeks.

4.43 pm

**Tim Farron** (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): It is a great pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. I congratulate the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (*Olivia Blake*) on securing this important debate and on making an excellent speech. Like her, I want to declare the support provided to me in my office by the Refugee Asylum and Migration Policy project.

The Nationality and Borders Bill is a peculiarly awful piece of legislation, designed to solve problems that do not exist, ignore problems that do, and play to a gallery rather than seek to make a difference. The negative impact that this Bill will have on LGBTQ+ asylum seekers is a prime example of what is wrong with the Bill. LGBTQ+ people will be disproportionately affected by clause 11, which is the Government's choice to differentiate on the basis of method of entry into the United Kingdom. They are much more likely, as we have heard, to be categorised as group 2 refugees, and experience second-class treatment at best. Despite fulfilling refugee criteria, they will have very limited leave to remain, reduced refugee family reunion rights, and no recourse to public funds. That will have a huge impact on their ability to integrate. It will affect their wellbeing, mental health, access to services, and ability to work, settle and fully participate in UK society.

**Lloyd Russell-Moyle**: Does the hon. Member agree that the two-track system affects people from different regions differently? I am the chair of the all-party parliamentary group for Kurdistan in Turkey and Syria. Many of the people crossing in the boats are Kurds, because there are no legal ways for Kurds, who may be Syrians in Turkey, to come to the UK. The UK says that Turkey is a safe place for them, but we know that Turkey persecutes Kurds, and the majority of Kurds who come via informal routes get granted asylum here. The Bill would make that much harder for our allies, the Kurds, who fought for us in Syria.

**Tim Farron**: Spot on. I appreciate the hon. Gentleman's intervention, because it frames how ludicrous it is to have a system that sees people as "good refugees" or "bad refugees". The reality is that creating a second tier of refugee, which the Government sometimes refer to as "illegal route"—there is no such thing as an illegal refugee—is in contravention of international agreements on the matter.

I will reel of a list of countries myself. Cameroon, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Nigeria and Uganda—these are the most common countries of origin for people claiming asylum on the basis of their sexuality. They are also countries where many individuals are persecuted because of their sexual orientation, but they are not seen as areas of conflict or instability and as such do not warrant inclusion in the UK resettlement scheme. As the hon. Gentleman just mentioned, as a result, those people will be treated as second-class asylum seekers. If they can find their way here, it will probably be through very unsafe routes—although safer than

staying put, I ought to add. Those fleeing those countries can therefore come here only by the so-called illegal routes—irregular, informal routes.

It is important to recognise that even if those people were in a region where they could access the UK resettlement scheme, they may still remain at risk, due to their sexuality, in neighbouring countries that they would pass through on the way to safety, which for other refugees might be places of safety. They would obviously prefer to move on to safety rather than wait in camps in a country that is unsafe for them. Further to that, it is highly likely that LGBTQ+ people will not feel safe coming forward and identifying themselves as a person eligible for resettlement, because it is quite possible that their families and communities could be the source of the persecution. The Government's choice to penalise further the late production of evidence will disproportionately impact LGBT people. It is therefore wrong.

There are reasons why, as the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam, rightly set out, LGBT+ people are less able to access safe routes to the UK than other categories of refugees. It is important, therefore, that refugees are treated the same, regardless of their method of travel. The conditions that refugees are granted should not be dependent on how they reach the UK. There are many valid reasons why people have no choice but to use irregular routes. None of us wants people to have to resort to using criminal gangs to access safety.

**Alex Sobel** (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): The hon. Member mentioned Uganda. In 2014, it passed an anti-homosexuality Bill into law, which created a big outpouring of refugee communities. The problem that many Ugandan refugees had was that, although in neighbouring countries the laws were not as strict as Uganda's, they did not want to identify themselves as LGBTQ and to have it known. Their only option would be to come to a country such as the UK. We need to recognise that.

**Tim Farron:** The hon. Member is absolutely right. That is what is wrong with the Bill. He sums up the problem of having this nonsense, immoral, two-tier system. We do not want people to use criminal gangs to get here, but if the Government will not provide safe routes for those people, they will have to do that and we should have compassion for them.

Irregular journeys and the fact that we are an island mean that people will travel through other countries before reaching the United Kingdom. Data shows that most refugees remain in neighbouring or other European countries. Many countries take more asylum seekers per capita than the United Kingdom. The international refugee system relies on countries sharing the refugee population. We cannot rely on certain countries to host all the refugees who reach them just because they happen to be the first point of arrival in Europe, for example. It is not fair on Greece, Italy and so on. It does not work. We need to do our bit. Treating certain kinds of refugee as second class or worse is wrong, and likely to be against international law. How can we look Putin in the eye at this terrible moment and challenge him over his breaches of international law when we risk doing so ourselves? It is not just generally about having a second, lower-tier of less worthy refugees, but in particular the way that we make life demonstrably harder for LGBTQ and other marginalised communities. That is wrong; the Government must rethink it.

**Mr Virendra Sharma (in the Chair):** I will call the Front Benchers by 5.10 pm. We have three speakers, so if you could manage to stick to five minutes, I will not have to cut the debate.

4.51 pm

**Kirsty Blackman** (Aberdeen North) (SNP): Thank you, Mr Sharma, for the excellent job you are doing chairing the debate. I extend genuine thanks to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake). I am not just going through the motions of thanking the Member in charge; this is a hugely important debate, and I particularly enjoyed the video that she put on Twitter earlier, which clearly laid out the information and I thought it was incredibly helpful.

My colleagues have covered some of the detail and some of the clauses of the Nationality and Borders Bill. We disagree with the entire Bill, but I want to talk specifically about the issues facing LGBTQ people. I do not get why the UK Government have chosen to take this direction in the Bill. We all agree that life is more difficult for someone who is LGBTQ+. They are more likely to be persecuted or discriminated against. That is demonstrably the case.

It is especially the case for those who live in a country that has systematic prejudice built into the authority systems and also into the family system and the traditions. That makes it even more difficult for an LGBTQ+ person to live their life. As has been said, it is not something that someone grows out of and they suddenly forget that it is a part of their reality; it is that person's self for their entire life. Why would the Government decide to make it more difficult for LGBTQ+ people to claim asylum in the UK? I cannot get my head around it. I would like the Government to explain why they have chosen to go down this route when so many organisations have raised concerns, made it absolutely clear and provided evidence about how much more difficult things would be as a result of the Government's actions.

I want to focus on a couple of things. If somebody is coming from a country where they have had to hide their sexuality or gender identity from the Government, officials, and everybody in authority they have ever had a conversation with, how can we expect them to sit down with Home Office officials and openly talk about it? They have spent their entire lives having to hide it from officials for fear of being imprisoned, being killed or facing incredibly serious prejudice and discrimination from those authority figures. How can we expect these people to be able to sit down in a room with Home Office officials and say, "Yes, absolutely. I am gay" when they have spent their entire lives hiding it? I do not understand how the bar can change on this issue when it has been made clear that it is difficult enough under the current route.

I also want to highlight, and I will not talk for terribly long about it, that there is a significant number of asylum seekers in the UK at the moment. That means that a number of non-dispersal authorities have asylum seekers placed in them. In areas, such as mine, and in areas outside Glasgow, which is a dispersal authority that is used to dealing with and supporting refugees, there is not the infrastructure to provide that level of support. We have hardly any immigration lawyers who deal with asylum claims in Scotland—never mind Aberdeen.

[Kirsty Blackman]

We are looking at raising this bar when the situation has already been made more difficult because of the lack of support. Given that in Scotland, we do not have the systems in place outside Glasgow, refugees in Aberdeen city and Aberdeenshire are finding it more difficult because they cannot access the systems that they would normally get support from, so why are we not cutting them slack? These people should be cut slack at this moment, rather than having the bar lifted and things made more difficult. I appreciate that there is a huge number of organisations, such as Rainbow Migration, that are doing a great job, but they do not have that significant presence in my constituency; they do not have that significant presence in Aberdeen; they do not have the ability to assist the refugees in explaining their case and making that clear.

I would ask the Government, at this moment, particularly where non-dispersal authorities are having to support refugees, what slack will be cut? What support will be given to ensure that people can make the proper claims? We all agree that there are a number of people who should be able to make these claims and should be granted asylum. How will we provide them with the support that they need to make those claims when we are already failing to do so within the current system?

4.56 pm

**Stuart C. McDonald** (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. I also pay tribute to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake), who made an excellent speech. In fact, I agree with pretty much everything that has been said all the speeches so far, so I can be pretty brief. Indeed, I can be brief because I have spoken for hours on end on the subject of this Bill, and I do not need to go into every single last detail of why we find the whole measure fairly horrendous. Well, not fairly—it is absolutely horrendous.

Starting on a note of consensus, I think I would say that we agree—or I agree—that the asylum system, if not broken, is at breaking point, but I believe that it can be saved. Unfortunately, far from fixing it, this Bill absolutely breaks it beyond the point where it can be salvaged at all. That is true for all asylum seekers, but is particularly true for those who are LGBTQ+.

As we heard earlier, we should address all sorts of issues that are not addressed in this Bill: the delay in the asylum process; the impoverishment that asylum seekers face because of the appalling levels of asylum support; the ban on work; poor-quality decisions; a failing accommodation system; inappropriate and overused detention; and the lack of safe legal routes, which has already been mentioned. Those all apply to all asylum seekers, including LGBTQ+ asylum seekers.

However, there are particular issues for that group, some of which have been touched on already. Those have not been addressed in this Bill, but they must be addressed. Those issues are, for example, how the Home Office conducts interviews, and the assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices that many claimants face. That applies not just to those doing interviews at the outset, but sometimes to immigration judges and the Home Office presenting officers who appear before them.

There is also still a significant problem with interpreters. Asylum applicants are often supported by people from the very country from which they have fled homophobic and transphobic prejudice. Much more needs to be done to ensure that those people feel safe and secure with the interpreters provided to them.

On analysis of evidence, LGBT claims based on sexuality are often criticised because statements of support from friends and colleagues in this country are described as “self-serving”—whatever that means—yet, if they do not provide those very statements, their absence is criticised as fatal to the application. We have heard about the standard of proof already being too high. It is supposed to be “at real risk” at the moment but, in reality, it is often set way above that thanks to the culture of disbelief, which has been described already.

We still have the problem, which was referred to in one intervention, of the idea that people could simply return to their countries of origin and exercise their discretion. That idea should have been done away with, and we thought it had been by the Supreme Court a number of years ago, but, in reality, it still lingers around in the Home Office system.

On detention, why is it that LGBT individuals are not in the adults at risk policy? There are various other points in Home Office policy where their vulnerability is recognised, but why is that not the case when it comes to detention? The list of issues goes on, but I must stop there so that I can press on.

We have spoken at length about why we object to the Nationality and Borders Bill. In our view, it is illegal and immoral. At heart, it is a Bill about deliberately—intentionally—making life miserable and making life worse for people in this country to try to disincentivise other people from coming here to seek refuge. It is an appalling concept, when we think about it like that. It will cost an astronomical sum of money. I want to see the economic impact assessment, which we have been promised for months on end—we still have not seen it, despite being three quarters of the way through the parliamentary process.

Nothing in the Bill is going to make things better. It is going to make everything worse at every single stage for asylum seekers, including LGBTQ+ individuals. When they arrive here, they will be criminalised, with an offence that could see them imprisoned for up to four years. It is an astonishing concept. Their claims will be deemed invisible for six months. Essentially, we just add six months on to the already horrendous waiting time. What on earth does that solve?

The Bill seeks to increase the use of Napier-style warehouses for asylum seekers, even offshoring individuals. These measures have particular consequences and challenges for LGBTQ+ individuals. The Bill also complicates the process. We have heard already that we are going to see the standard of proof increased from real risk to the balance of probabilities. We need to think about what exactly that means. A Home Office decision maker could decide they are 49% sure—

**Mr Virendra Sharma (in the Chair):** Order.

**Stuart C. McDonald:** Do you want me to wind up, Mr Sharma?

**Mr Virendra Sharma (in the Chair):** Yes.

**Stuart C. McDonald:** I will wind up quickly. We could have a decision maker almost certain that the applicant before them has accurately described the events and the persecution that they suffered in their country, but if they fall slightly short on the balance of probabilities, even if that decision maker is 100% sure that LGBTQ+ people will face persecution on return, that claim will be refused because of this new higher standard of proof.

The whole Bill is an absolute shambles. We need to hear in detail today, clause by clause, what the Home Office is going to do on each of the provisions to protect LGBTQ+ asylum seekers. We also need to hear much more about resettlement. It is often said to be the answer to all these criticisms, but how is resettlement going to help anybody in the LGBTQ+ community?

5.2 pm

**Nadia Whittome** (Nottingham East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Sharma. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake) for securing this important debate. I pay tribute to her for her tireless work on this issue and on protecting and extending the rights of LGBTQ+ people, regardless of their passport, country of birth or immigration status.

The Nationality and Borders Bill will have a deliberate, devastating impact on the rights of refugees, migrants and people of colour. Refugee Action has described it as

“the biggest attack on the refugee protection system that we have ever seen”.

Approximately 2,000 LGBTQ+ people claim asylum in the UK each year, fearing persecution in their home countries. This Bill will make it harder for any refugee to find safety here, but for this group, it is even more concerning. Many people who have been welcomed into our country's LGBTQ+ community would simply not be here if the Nationality and Borders Bill had been law at the time they made their claim.

LGBTQ+ refugees are already put through dehumanising so-called tests to prove their identity and are still disbelieved by the Home Office. The Bill increases the threshold to prove that they are LGBTQ+ even further, taking it from the internationally accepted standard of reasonable degree of likelihood to the far stricter balance of probabilities.

If they are granted the new temporary protection status, LGBTQ+ refugees could be forced to hide their identity while in the UK for fear of persecution if they are made to return to their country of origin. For trans refugees, that might prevent them from transitioning—from changing their name, altering their gender expression or undergoing medical treatment—and that will have devastating consequences for their mental health and wellbeing.

The introduction of accommodation and offshore processing centres also poses particular risks for LGBTQ+ people, such as experiencing violence and abuse in these settings. Those seeking asylum should be housed in the community, not far-flung islands, derelict barracks, or unsuitable hotels such as the ones in which many refugees are being housed in my constituency.

The severity of this Bill's impact cannot be overstated. This Government are risking not only breaching international law, but sending people to their deaths.

If LGBTQ+ allyship does not extend to the most marginalised in our community—our refugee siblings—it means very little at all, so I urge the Minister to listen to what all of us have said today; to listen to our words, and those of refugee organisations and refugees themselves; and to please take a stand in his own Department.

5.5 pm

**Anne McLaughlin** (Glasgow North East) (SNP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Mr Sharma. Contrary to everything the Government claim, the Nationality and Borders Bill is not some piece of wonder legislation that will fix a broken system. It will not break the business model of people smugglers or offer any safe and legal routes to these islands, although the Minister is going to say that it will. It is called the anti-refugee Bill for a reason, and, as we have heard in some powerful contributions, the Government have gone to extraordinary lengths to ensure that it punishes the most vulnerable in the flawed belief that deterrence works.

I congratulate the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake) on securing the debate. We must keep pushing on this terrible Bill generally and emphasising who it will affect, but I am glad that she has given us the opportunity to look at it through the lens of the LGBTQ+ community, given that there are 70—I had 69, but she told us 70—countries across the globe where being gay is still considered a crime. The hon. Member said something that I found quite moving: you can flee, but you cannot flee from who you are, and why should you?

The former leader of the Lib Dems, the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) talked about differential treatment being more likely for people in the LGBTQ+ community. Although the hon. Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle) did not speak in the debate, his many interventions demonstrated a strong understanding of what is happening. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) talked about people spending their life in hiding, and what happens to them when they get here. She asked why, and I will come on to that. My hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald), who served on the Bill Committee with myself and the hon. Member for Halifax (Holly Lynch), as usual showed a forensic understanding of what is going on. The hon. Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome) talked about the devastating consequences for trans people—let us not forget them.

I would like to talk about Bahiru, an extremely brave gay man from Ethiopia, where homosexuality is still punishable by up to 15 years in prison and LGBTQ+ people are at huge risk of violence and persecution. I thank *PinkNews* for telling his story. Growing up, he suppressed his sexuality to keep himself and his family safe, but eventually managed to connect with a few members of the community, meeting as a secret and underground group. What shocked him was the lack of knowledge of LGBTQ+ issues, especially safe sex, so he took it on himself to change that situation and educate those around him. He managed to get those travelling back to Ethiopia from abroad to bring condoms and other items unavailable in Ethiopia so he could distribute them around the community—a brave, selfless, and noble thing to do—and he did all of this in the knowledge that he was at risk of being found out, criminalised and prosecuted.

[Anne McLaughlin]

It was not long before the word was out, and Bahiru received threats to out him and release his photo and personal information. He knew his life was in danger. He said,

“I had to escape. I could not even hide in my own parents’ house, because the violence could have come from any side.”

He was lucky—he had been to the UK recently, so he had an active visa and the support of organisations that he had been working with—but most people who are forced to flee their homes in fear of their lives have no time or way to access the very few safe and legal routes. When he arrived in the UK, he was put into shared accommodation with people who had brought their prejudices with them from other countries with homophobic laws and he spent months fearing for his safety. That type of communal living for asylum seekers has been described as a powder keg of different views, prejudices, languages, traumatic experiences and lifestyles. Bahiru was scared to challenge the views of others, saying,

“The homophobic tendencies, the tensions, the passing comments that people make and jokes about sexual minorities, it was awful.”

He was mentally, physically and emotionally burnt out.

The Nationality and Borders Bill will warehouse asylum seekers like Bahiru in large-scale detention centres. The Government are already trialling places such as Napier barracks and Penally to see how that will work. I should say at this point that I am to visit Napier barracks tomorrow with the APPG on immigration detention. I was at best disappointed by, and at worst deeply suspicious of, the refusal of Home Office officials to allow us MPs to speak to residents without officials being present. Will the Minister intervene today and allow them the chance to speak with us freely? If there is nothing to hide, there is no reason not to allow that.

It is hard to imagine much worse than warehousing, but the Bill paves the way for asylum seekers to be warehoused and processed offshore—to be shipped around the globe to any country willing to strike a deal with the UK. Who is to say where that might be and what that country’s laws on sexuality might be? At his asylum interview, Bahiru was asked to prove his sexuality. He described the process as “very heteronormative”, saying, “It’s only heterosexuals who could ask you to prove you are gay.” He knows of people who took pictures of themselves having sex with other people as evidence. Imagine how degrading and humiliating that must be.

In addition, people like Bahiru face the prospect of differential treatment, with a requirement to present themselves without delay to authorities, which they are less likely to do for a multitude of pretty obvious reasons; they could lose their rights to public funds and family reunion, and they could be issued with priority removal notices, along with a requirement to provide relevant evidence by a fixed deadline. Bahiru is applying for indefinite leave to remain, but for him the uncertainty is still there.

The experiences I have described should act as a warning. Everything an LGBTQ+ asylum seeker or refugee goes through today will be made much, much worse when the Bill is passed. We should not be considering legislation that aims to strip dignity and basic human rights from people. We should not be talking about legislation that will make it even harder than it already

is for an LGBTQ+ person to prove their sexual orientation or gender identity. We most certainly should not be shipping people across the globe for processing.

I am grateful to the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam for bringing the debate to the House. My experience tells me that we will get very little out of the Minister today, although something tells me he has fixed it so we can see those people tomorrow, without Home Office officials—I saw him typing away. My hon. Friend the Member for Aberdeen North asked why it is like this, and my hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East said that the Government are intentionally trying to make things worse for people. The Bill is ideologically driven, and although I predict the Minister will say he is hurt and offended that we could think such a thing, the conclusion that the Government simply do not care about these people is the only one I can reach if the Bill proceeds.

5.12 pm

**Holly Lynch** (Halifax) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve with you in the Chair, Mr Sharma.

I start as others have by thanking and paying tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake). In her typically powerful opening speech, she shared some bleak statistics on the situation around the world, reminded us that the death penalty still exists in 11 countries and that there are regions of the world where homosexuality is equated with witchcraft, and finished with a really powerful sentiment: you cannot flee from who you are. I thank her very much for securing the debate and bringing the Nationality and Borders Bill gang back together—we spent a lot of time together in the Bill Committee—to revisit some of the really important points that we need to continue to push the Government on.

Attempting to build a cross-party consensus on these issues is incredibly important, especially when we are discussing a Bill that has the potential to affect vulnerable people and those at increased risk of harm in a multitude of different ways. The Minister and I both served on the Committee scrutinising the Nationality and Borders Bill, so we are returning to strongly held and familiar differences of opinion on a great deal of the legislation, but I am sure we all agree on just how many members of the LGBTQ+ community continue to face human rights abuses, gender-based violence and threats across the world, which is utterly unacceptable.

As we have heard, about 70 countries still criminalise same-sex relations. Everyone should feel able to live their life openly and safely, and to be proud of who they are. For those who seek sanctuary in the UK, it may be the first time they feel able and safe enough to express themselves and truly embrace their identity without fear of repercussions. In 2020, there were 1,012 asylum applications lodged in the UK where sexual orientation formed part of the basis of the claim, representing 3% of all asylum applications. In 2020, there were 440 grants of asylum or an alternative form of leave to remain to applicants where sexual orientation formed part of the basis of their asylum claim—7% fewer than the previous year. Furthermore, last year, nearly half of appeals relating to LGB asylum applications were granted. We have a moral obligation to get this right, to recognise why LGBTQ+ people might not be safe where they are and to design an asylum system that recognises that with compassion and understanding.

The Government's own equality impact assessment accepts that there is a risk of indirect discrimination against this group but says it will be mitigated through monitoring. I am sorry, but, as the Minister knows, we have been here before. I cite Napier barracks as the reason why I do not accept that the Government will do the right thing in looking after particularly vulnerable groups of people. The Government ignored public health and fire safety advice and failed to identify vulnerabilities within the cohort accommodated there. I appreciate that that was before the Minister's time in office, but the Government had to be dragged to every incremental improvement, very slowly made, at Napier and Penally barracks. Rainbow Migration outlined in its written evidence to the Women and Equalities Committee:

"The "Suitability Assessment for Contingency Accommodation" and the "Allocation of accommodation policy" do not mention LGBTQI+ people at all, thereby deeming them suitable to be accommodated in the barracks, despite the issues that arise for LGBTQI+ people in this type of accommodation."

The Minister's thinking that we would have any confidence in the Government marking their own homework on looking after vulnerable people in the asylum system and adapting accordingly is, I am afraid, for the birds. That is why we are here.

The part of the Bill that gives me greatest cause for concern, particularly for to LGBTQ+ people, as others have said, is about the principle of late disclosure undermining credibility in both the asylum and modern slavery provisions. When we debated the specific modern slavery measures in the Bill Committee, I and others made the point that the additional barriers to protection and entry into the national referral mechanism contradicted the Home Office's statutory guidance that that a victim's early accounts may be affected by the impact of trauma, which can result in delayed disclosure, difficulty recalling facts or symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. These well understood principles must apply to LGBTQ+ people, as acknowledged in the Home Office guidance on sexual orientation in asylum claims. I ask the Minister once again why measures that go against the Home Office's statutory guidance have been included in the Bill.

The reality and impact of those measures is perhaps best understood when listening to those who have personally experienced our asylum system. Much like the hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Anne McLaughlin), who told the story of a young man from Ethiopia, I will share Samir's story. Samir remembers how hard it was to take the first steps in his asylum process. He had to recount the traumatic things that had happened to him in his home country. He had also never openly discussed the fact he was a gay man before. He said:

"It was the first time talking about my sexuality...just saying aloud the word gay, it was very surreal. I knew that although I was scared, this was my only chance for me to tell my story...and if I didn't, I knew that my case would be dismissed and they would send me back."

Samir's asylum claim was initially rejected, only to be challenged following legal assistance provided to him by Rainbow Migration, which offers free legal advice, and he was eventually granted refugee status. There are a multitude of reasons why someone who is LGBTQ+ might need time and support to disclose their experiences. It is our view that, given the vulnerabilities of those groups and the Government's own guidance, the clauses will most adversely affect those most in need of protection and undermine our moral and legal obligations.

Before I conclude, I thank and pay tribute to the hon. Member for Westmorland and Lonsdale (Tim Farron) for his contribution. He made the point that the notion of a good refugee and bad refugee, and the way the Government seek to legislate for that, contravenes international law. He was assisted in making that point with examples from my hon. Friend the Member for Brighton, Kemptown (Lloyd Russell-Moyle).

I thank the hon. Member for Aberdeen North (Kirsty Blackman) for her typically powerful speech. In a number of cases, a person will have had to hide their identity from their Government, but we ask them to openly share it with ours without that understanding of any difference.

The hon. Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) also made a typically powerful contribution on the difference in the standard of proof, a point also made by my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam. I also thank my hon. Friend the Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome) for reminding us of the stark consequences if we return somebody to a country that does not recognise their sexuality or gender identity or, quite frankly, does worse than fail to recognise it.

The Minister understands my concerns about the Bill and its potential to detrimentally impact on those most in need of asylum—those who have the hardest stories to tell. My hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield, Hallam is therefore quite right to highlight its impact on LGBTQ+ people. The Bill is currently being debated in the House of Lords, and Labour Front Benchers have tabled an amendment that would disapply late disclosure penalties to those who have made a claim on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. I am aware of several other amendments tabled by Baroness Lister, Lord Etherton and others that all seek to deliver similar safeguards. I hope the Minister can say whether the Government are minded to accept any of those proposals.

In many of our previous exchanges, the Minister has cited the provision of further detail in the statutory guidance. Only today, in response to a written question about the timing, the Minister said to me that any statutory guidance

"will be developed in line with usual process, which includes any requirements to consult. The timetable for implementing the guidance will be dependent on the passage of the Nationality and Borders Bill."

I thank the Minister for that clarity and if he has anything further to add it will be incredibly welcome.

We do not believe assurances that can be provided only in guidance. We need comprehensive measures that introduce necessary safeguards. I hope the Minister has listened to the concerns voiced today and I strongly encourage the Government to adopt the amendments about to be debated in the Lords.

5.20 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Tom Pursglove):** It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Sharma. I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam (Olivia Blake) for securing this debate on what is undoubtedly an extremely important topic.

[Tom Pursglove]

I want to say at the outset that many of the reforms in the Nationality and Borders Bill are being introduced against the backdrop of these terrible crossings of the English channel. People are putting their lives in the hands of evil criminal smuggling gangs. They are putting themselves at great risk. These groups treat people as cargo, with no regard whatsoever for human life. I make no apology for feeling very strongly—

**Nadia Whittome:** Will the Minister give way?

**Tom Pursglove:** I am very conscious that we have a lot to get through; a lot of points have been raised in the debate, so I will make some progress. I am very mindful of the need to stop those crossings. That is front and centre of the policy that we are delivering through this Bill. Nobody needs to get into a small boat in order to reach safety. I am also concerned when we debate these issues that I hear a lot of criticism of policy, but I do not hear much by way of a credible alternative.

We have had an extensive debate this afternoon on these matters, and that has also been the case throughout the Bill's passage through both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, where these clauses were debated yesterday. I acknowledge this House's interest in the issue. As well as the Nationality and Borders Bill, there is a lot of work that is going on internationally to address those issues and to advocate the values we hold in this country and believe others around the world should adopt. A global envoy is dealing with this. My right hon. Friend the Member for Cannock Chase (Amanda Milling) also has responsibility within the Foreign Office for advancing that agenda.

Several points have been raised in the course of the debate and I would like to deal with each of them in turn. First, on differentiation, currently all those who seek our protection are treated in the same way, regardless of factors such as whether they came directly to the UK or have been illegally present in the UK for a long period before claiming asylum. We will change that by introducing a new form of temporary refugee permission to stay, meant for people who meet the requirements of refugee status in the UK but who may not have come directly to the UK or who have not claimed asylum without delay once here. Decision makers who are considering granting someone temporary refugee protection status will work on a case-by-case basis, taking properly into account all of the relevant factors. That may include taking into account that the delay in claiming asylum may have been as a result of the claimant being fearful of presenting to the authorities as a LGBT+ person.

The Government very strongly believe, and would argue, that all the measures that we are advancing are compliant with our international obligations. With regard to accommodation, centres will build on current capacity while ensuring that individuals have simple, safe and secure accommodation while their claims and removals are being processed. One of the things that I want to see happen—and I am determined to see it happen—is that cases are considered more quickly, that we make sure that those who require our sanctuary are helped and supported as quickly as possible and get that sanctuary, and that those with no right to be here are removed as quickly as possible. To me, that is the safe, decent and humane thing to do.

I would like to clarify that individuals will also have opportunities to disclose the information and supporting evidence as to why they should not be housed in accommodation centres, which could include reasons linked to their sexuality. I should make the point that the accommodation centres are not detention; people are free to come and go as they please. In any event, we do not detain people indefinitely, and various safeguards are built into the arrangements and set-up to ensure that that is the case. Again, I would expect appropriate consideration of all relevant factors when deciding what accommodation is appropriate for any given individual. If people have particular needs, it is right that they are accommodated within the community.

**Stuart C. McDonald:** Will the Minister give way?

**Tom Pursglove:** I am afraid I have got a lot to get through.

A lot of points have been raised, and I want to deal with one that was made by the hon. Member for Glasgow North East (Anne McLaughlin). Knowing colleagues as I do, I think it is fair to say that nobody would walk around anywhere on a visit in silence, and I am pleased to say that everybody on the visit tomorrow will have the opportunity to speak to those at Napier. That is exactly the same arrangement as when I visited Napier a few weeks ago, and I welcome the opportunity for Members to speak to people there.

On safe third country removals, our intention is to reduce the draw of the UK by removing protection claimants to a safe country if they have a connection to a safe country where they could and should have claimed asylum. We will also make it easier to move asylum seekers from the UK to a safe country while their asylum claim is pending. A safe country is one where there is no real risk of persecution or harm to individuals sent there, and which will not send individuals to a country where they could be persecuted. Any vulnerabilities will be taken into consideration, and any representations from the claimant will be considered ahead of any removal to a safe third country. Again, this could include matters that are linked to an individual's sexuality. Of course, we will only ever work with countries that are compliant with the refugee convention and any obligations under relevant human rights law. I should add that we do not return people if to do so would put them in danger, and the Home Secretary also has discretion to provide sanctuary to individuals if there is a risk to their lives.

On the one-stop process, late evidence and damage to credibility, the Bill will introduce a new and expanded one-stop process to ensure that asylum, human rights claims and any other protection matters are considered at the earliest opportunity. Where evidence is provided late without good reason, that should be taken into account by the decision maker as damaging to a claimant's credibility; but where there is good reason, there will be no damage. I should add that this is not a new concept: it has underpinned existing immigration legislation under not just this Government, but previous Governments.

I am conscious of the time and that the hon. Member for Sheffield, Hallam will want to sum up, so I will wrap up my remarks. I will very gladly comment on the outstanding matters that I have not been able to reach in the short time we have had available, and I will place that in the Library so that Members can see my remarks.



5.28 pm

**Olivia Blake:** I will use the last two minutes, if colleagues do not mind. Everyone gave such strong and meaningful speeches in the debate, and I am thankful to those who have taken part.

I want to respond with the words of refugees in Stonewall's 2016 report, "No Safe Refuge", which is about the current system. One asylum seeker said:

"The interviewing officer was surprised to see a person like me talking about these things. He doesn't believe I am transgender. 'You don't look transgender!'"

Another said:

"I had my head rammed through a door. I was bullied. The guy they put me with was a nightmare, the guy was a bully. I reported that but nothing was done about it."

Another said:

"The officer didn't approach the heterosexual couple, she approached the lesbian couple straight away. She didn't even say to them excuse me. She said: 'There are different religions in here and different cultures in here I ask you to respect that and there are also children in here.'"

The comments about mental health are probably the most concerning. One asylum seeker said:

"I tried to commit suicide twice. I didn't know how to do it but I had that urge in me to do it. I broke the mirrors and tried to cut myself."

Another said:

"I am having very difficult moments. I get flashbacks of exactly what happened—"

5.30 pm

*Motion lapsed, and sitting adjourned without Question put (Standing Order No. 10(14)).*



# Written Statements

Wednesday 2 February 2022

## HOME DEPARTMENT

### Police Grant Report (England and Wales) 2022-23

**The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse):** The Secretary of State for the Home Department, my right hon. Friend the Member for Witham (Priti Patel), has today laid before the House the Police Grant Report (England and Wales) 2022-23 (HC 1084). The report sets out the Home Secretary's determination for 2022-23 of the aggregate amount of grants that she proposes to pay under section 46(2) of the Police Act 1996. Copies of the report are available from the Vote Office.

The allocations that have been laid before the House today are as set out in my statement and provisional Police Grant Report of 16 December 2021.

In 2022-23 the overall funding settlement for the policing system will total up to £16.9 billion, a £1.1 billion increase on the 2021-22 funding settlement. Available funding to Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) will increase next year by up to an additional £796 million, assuming full take-up of precept flexibility. This would represent an increase to PCC funding in cash terms of 5.8% on the 2021-22 police funding settlement. Council tax levels are a local decision and elected Police and Crime Commissioners will rightly want to consider what they are asking people to pay to fulfil their strong desire to keep our streets safe. The council tax referendum principles in England are not a cap, nor do they force local authorities to set taxes at the threshold level. Rather they are an additional local democratic check to prevent excessive increases, determined by the House of Commons.

The table available as an attachment online documents funding to PCCs for 2022-23, including precept.

Attachments can be view online at:  
<http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statement/Commons/2022-02-02/HCWS577/>.

[HCWS577]

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE

### Trade With Israel Policy Update

**The Secretary of State for International Trade (Anne-Marie Trevelyan):** The call for input on a future trade agreement with Israel has launched today.

The UK is committed to our trade and investment relationship with Israel, one of the Middle East's most dynamic and innovative economies and the world's 30th largest economy in 2020. <sup>[1]</sup> This deal aims to secure more access for British goods and services, opening significant new opportunities for UK business which could boost trade with Israel, worth £4.8 billion in 2020. It aims to cement the UK's position as a world leader in innovation, and digital and services trade.

The UK signed a trade continuity agreement with Israel in February 2019 which replicated the scope of the EU-Israel agreement. The UK-Israel Trade and

Partnership Agreement includes provisions on tariff liberalisation, customs and trade facilitation and public procurement but does not include many key areas of a comprehensive FTA such as services, data, or intellectual property, which we hope to include in the new agreement.

The call for input will provide businesses, individuals, and other interested stakeholders with the opportunity to give valuable feedback and highlight their priorities for our future trading relationship with Israel.

The feedback received from stakeholders will be crucial when shaping our mandate, and will inform detailed negotiations preparation, and policy positions. The Department for International Trade is committed to ensuring future FTAs and their provisions are good for British businesses and the British economy.

The UK aims to begin negotiations for an upgraded trade deal with Israel this year, focused on creating even greater opportunities for UK businesses. These new negotiations would allow us to go further to boost trade with Israel, whose demand for global imports is forecast to grow almost twice as fast as the global average between 2019 and 2030.<sup>[2]</sup> There is significant scope to expand our trade in services, including digital services—which grew a remarkable 73% between 2010 and 2020. This would complement our services-based economies and cement the United Kingdom as an international services hub.

Following the consultation, the UK and Israel share a desire to launch negotiations during 2022. The call for input will seek to support the goal of greater economic prosperity for businesses and will ensure that their needs are heard. The Government are committed to transparency and will ensure that Parliament, the devolved Administrations, UK citizens and businesses are kept regularly updated on negotiations.

<sup>[1]</sup> IMF World Economic Outlook, October 2021, 2020 data.

<sup>[2]</sup> Source GTO September 2021.

[HCWS578]

## DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

### Levelling up our Communities: Government Response to Danny Kruger MP's Report

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nigel Huddleston):** I wish to inform the House that the Government have today published their response to the report by my hon. Friend the Member for Devizes (Danny Kruger) on levelling up our communities. This response is published alongside the levelling up White Paper, which sets out the Government's wider approach to levelling up.

The pandemic has shown the significant power of charities, social enterprises, community groups and volunteers in supporting people in their local communities, complementing the delivery of public services, and demonstrating the values of generosity, public spirit and neighbourliness. My hon. Friend's report contains recommendations to the Government on how to sustain the community response to covid-19, and how to enable civil society's contributions to levelling up.

The Government would like to thank my hon. Friend for his dedicated work on this issue, and welcome his well-considered and detailed report. We would also like to thank the volunteers, charities, social enterprises and community groups involved in the consultation process.

Our response has been carefully considered and outlines the Government's position against each of my hon. Friend's 20 recommendations. Work is already underway to implement many of the report's recommendations, including the launch of the faith new deal pilot fund and the volunteering futures fund.

The response includes the Government's commitments to:

Strengthen engagement between faith groups, national and local government through the £1 million faith new deal pilot fund;

Reduce barriers to community organisation and volunteering, including through the £7 million volunteering futures fund;

Promote community ownership and strengthen local institutions through the £150 million community ownership fund;

Strengthen social value commissioning within the public sector as set out in the national procurement policy statement in June 2021; and

Testing the community covenants model to ensure that communities have a greater say in decisions important to their local area, including how local services are delivered.

A copy of the Government response to my hon. Friend's report will be placed in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS579]

# Petition

*Wednesday 2 February 2022*

## OBSERVATIONS

### TRANSPORT

#### Legal protections of cats

*The petition of residents of the United Kingdom,*

Notes that there are approximately 12.2 million cats kept as pets in the UK; further that around 230,000 cats are killed as the result of a road traffic accident every year, according to the most recent statistics available; and declares that cats should be granted the same legal protections that dogs are given if they are involved in an accident with a motorist.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to take into account the concerns of the petitioners and take immediate action to ensure that motorists are required to report accidents involving cats to the police.

And the petitioners remain, etc.—[Presented by Nigel Mills, Official Report, 25 January 2022; Vol. 707, c. 973.]

[P002706]

*Observations from the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Department for Transport (Baroness Vere of Norbiton):*

#### Summary

The Government have no plans to ensure motorists are required to report accidents involving cats to the police.

A focus for this Government is to make roads safer for all users, which will in turn reduce the risk to all animals.

#### Detail

Under section 170 of the Road Traffic Act 1988, a driver is required to stop and report an accident involving specified animals including horses, cattle, asses, mules, sheep, pigs, goats or dogs, but not cats or wild animals. This requirement arises from their status as working animals rather than as domestic pets. To introduce such a measure within the provision of section 170 would require primary legislation.

Having a law making it a requirement to report road accidents involving cats would be very difficult to enforce and we have reservations about the difference it would make to the behaviour of drivers, who are aware that they have run over a cat and do not report it.

Although there is no obligation to report all animal deaths on roads, Rule 286 of The Highway Code advises drivers to report any accident involving an animal to the police, and if possible, they should make enquiries to ascertain the owner of domestic animals and advise them of the situation.

The Government recognise how distressing it can be for someone to lose a pet, especially without knowing what has happened. We committed in our manifesto, and reaffirmed in our action plan for animal welfare, to introducing compulsory cat microchipping and plan to introduce the necessary legislation this year. We understand that the vast majority of local authorities now have arrangements in place to scan dead cats and dogs found by the roadside and we will continue working with them and other stakeholders to develop and promote best practice in this area.



# Ministerial Correction

Wednesday 2 February 2022

## JUSTICE

### Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill [*Lords*]

*The following is an extract from Second Reading of the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill [*Lords*] on 5 January 2022.*

**James Cartlidge:** The shadow Work and Pensions Minister asked for clarity on the issues around the ceiling breaches and so on. As the Chief Secretary to the Treasury made clear in his opening speech, no member will see a reduction in their benefits as a result of the 2016 valuations. I hope that provides some reassurance to the shadow Minister. **UK asset resolution schemes currently pay out benefits of about £530 million per annum;** this is a cost the Government already bear.

The policy creates a more efficient situation for paying these pensions and ensuring the current schemes will have a stable benefit.

[*Official Report, 5 January 2022, Vol. 706, c. 112.*]

*Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Justice, the hon. Member for South Suffolk (James Cartlidge).*

An error has been identified in my response to the debate on Second Reading of the Public Service Pensions and Judicial Offices Bill [*Lords*].

The correct information should have been:

**James Cartlidge:** The shadow Work and Pensions Minister asked for clarity on the issues around the ceiling breaches and so on. As the Chief Secretary to the Treasury made clear in his opening speech, no member will see a reduction in their benefits as a result of the 2016 valuations. I hope that provides some reassurance to the shadow Minister. **UK asset resolution schemes currently have total pension liabilities of around £1.5 billion;** this is a cost the Government already bear. The policy creates a more efficient situation for paying these pensions and ensuring the current schemes will have a stable benefit.





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# MINISTERIAL CORRECTION

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**not later than  
Wednesday 9 February 2022**

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