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HOUSE OF COMMONS
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PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Monday 25 April 2022

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The House met at half-past Two o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Speaker's Statement

Mr Speaker: Before we start today's business, I want to say something about the article in *The Mail on Sunday* yesterday about the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner). I said to the House last week, in response to a point of order about a different article, that I took the issue of media freedom very seriously. It is one of the building blocks of our democracy. However, I share the view expressed by a wide range of Members—including, I believe, the Prime Minister—that yesterday's article, which reported unsubstantiated claims, was misogynistic and offensive. That is what we believe.

I express my sympathy to the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne for being subjected to this type of comment, which, in being demeaning and offensive to women in Parliament, can only deter women who might be considering standing for election, to the detriment of us all. That is why I am arranging a meeting with the chair of the press lobby and the editor of *The Mail on Sunday* to discuss this issue affecting our parliamentary community. I am also arranging a separate meeting—I believe we now have a time this evening—with the right hon. Member for Ashton-under-Lyne.

Oral Answers to Questions

HOME DEPARTMENT

The Secretary of State was asked—

Safe and Legal Routes to UK: Nationals of Ukraine and Afghanistan

1. **Dr Philippa Whitford** (Central Ayrshire) (SNP): What steps her Department is taking to increase the number of safe and legal routes to the UK for nationals of (a) Ukraine and (b) Afghanistan. [906542]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): Thank you, Mr Speaker, for your statement.

The Government have introduced two new safe and legal routes for Ukrainian nationals: the Ukraine family scheme and the Homes for Ukraine scheme. As of 21 April, more than 71,000 visas had been issued under both schemes. Under the schemes, neither route is capped, and the Ukraine extension scheme permits Ukrainians who are already in the UK to extend their stay.

Dr Whitford: Members from throughout the House have called on the Government to make it easier for people from Ukraine to seek sanctuary in the UK. Will the Home Secretary explain why the schemes for those who try to flee the Taliban are so limited and why, according to her own Department, the Nationality and Borders Bill does not establish safe and legal routes for those fleeing war, conflict or persecution?

Priti Patel: First, the new plan for immigration spells out absolutely the Government's approach to safe and legal routes. As I have said many times in the House, every safe and legal route needs to be bespoke, based on the crisis that we are seeking to address.

Secondly, in response to the hon. Lady's question about Afghanistan, she will know that under the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme we will welcome up to 20,000 at-risk people who have been affected by the most appalling events in Afghanistan. That scheme was announced last year and will include women and girls and members of minority groups, given their vulnerability.

Holly Lynch (Halifax) (Lab): A family who are still in Ukraine have been reporting back to their Homes for Ukraine sponsors in Halifax that they have been able to hear the bombs getting closer every day of their 29-days-and-counting wait for a visa. The family in Ukraine have twins under the age of 10 who have, remarkably, had their visas processed at different speeds. A Home Office whistleblower has described the scheme as "designed to fail". Government figures show that 40,000 visas have been issued under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, yet just 6,600 Ukrainians have actually arrived in the UK, because families who need to travel together cannot do so because the visa of just one family member, often a child, is delayed. Will the Home Secretary explain why, if 40,000 visas have been issued, so few Ukrainians have arrived in the UK? What is she doing to correct the situation?

Priti Patel: I thank the hon. Lady for her question because she makes an important point. There are a number of points to make in response.

First, on the reason why low numbers have come to the UK, as I have already said, more than 71,000 visas for both schemes have been granted. The Minister for Refugees, Lord Harrington, went to the region just 10 days ago to find out why and what more could be done to bring over families who have been granted their visas to come over. First and foremost, as we have heard repeatedly from the Ukrainian Government and from Governments in the region—[*Interruption.*] Would the hon. Lady like to stand up and respond? First of all, those families want to stay in region. That is a fact and that is exactly why we are working with the various Governments in region.

The hon. Lady made an important point about families and younger children. Much of that is down to the checks, because they are not always travelling with parents. Safeguarding checks are being undertaken to ensure that they are all linked members of families. They are important checks that have to take place.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): Less than half of 1% of Ukrainians fleeing Putin's war have so far found shelter in the United Kingdom. There are currently more sheltered

in Ireland than are sheltered here, despite our neighbours being 13 times smaller in terms of population. The real reason for this situation is the unnecessary, inappropriate and shambolic visa system that the Home Secretary has decided to impose. Approximately 140 other countries allow visa-free access. Surely, even at this late stage, the Home Secretary must lift visa requirements for all, or at least some, Ukrainians fleeing Putin's war and get things moving.

Priti Patel: I have repeated many times the reason why we have checks and visas. I appreciate the political difference between the Government and the hon. Gentleman's party, but we are not members of the EU; we do not have open borders. I acknowledge that he has a fundamentally different point of view when it comes to open borders and not having checks on those who come to our country but, in this case, security checks are vital.

Illegal Immigration

2. **Craig Tracey** (North Warwickshire) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to prevent small boat crossings in the Channel. [906543]

18. **Jonathan Gullis** (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to prevent illegal immigration to the UK. [906559]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Tom Pursglove): There is a whole of Government effort to counter these dangerous and unnecessary crossings. That effort is reflected in the recent changes that the Government have made to operational primacy. We continue to work closely with the French to prevent crossing attempts, guiding vulnerable migrants in France towards support there, and tackling the vile criminal gangs that profit from them.

Craig Tracey: I have raised small boat crossings with the Department on a number of occasions, and I am grateful for the continued efforts to bring the crossings to an end and to ensure that we control illegal immigration. Does the Minister agree that it is important that we use every single power we have to prevent these illegal crossings, which continually put lives in danger; to clamp down on the gangs that facilitate them; and to continue to provide the legal routes by which so many people have already made safe crossings?

Tom Pursglove: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to highlight the distinction between illegal entry into this country and people coming via safe and legal routes. I know that his constituents in North Warwickshire and Bedworth feel very strongly that the Nationality and Borders Bill needs to pass into law. We need its comprehensive measures to build on our existing powers, to get to grips with this issue, and to tackle it fairly but robustly. I am sure that he will join me in encouraging the other place to get on and pass the Bill this week.

Jonathan Gullis: The people of Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke are delighted with this groundbreaking economic and development partnership with Rwanda, which will help to break the business model of vile people smugglers once and for all. Does my hon. Friend

share my concern and that of my constituents that the Labour woke warriors are quite happy to stick with the status quo, meaning that more people are going to leave safe mainland France, risking their lives and putting thousands of pounds in the hands of smuggling gangs, which will mean more death in the channel and illegal economic migrants continuing to enter the United Kingdom?

Tom Pursglove: One thing we absolutely know is that my hon. Friend's constituents are very perceptive. They will recognise that the Labour party has no credible alternative that recognises the scale of the challenge and all its complexities. We need the measures in the Bill; we need the Rwanda model to come to fruition. We are getting on and delivering on that priority.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): To avoid desperate Ukrainians being added to those trying to cross the channel, the Government's schemes for Ukrainians need to work. Can the Minister explain why the very helpful Members' hub in Portcullis House has been stopped from issuing permission-to-travel letters to MPs? I dealt with a family last week. For two of the family members, the letters were sent to me and I could let the family and their host family here know, and they were all happy about it. For the third family member, the system was stopped at the end of the last week, and officials are saying that they are now no longer allowed to issue MPs with those permission-to-travel letters. It is a complete shambles. Will he sort it out?

Tom Pursglove: The right hon. Gentleman will recognise that I am not the Minister with direct responsibility for the refugee scheme, but I will gladly ensure that his feedback is heard by my noble Friend Lord Harrington. If the right hon. Gentleman would like to share details of those specific cases, we will gladly look at them at pace.

Amy Callaghan (East Dunbartonshire) (SNP): Despite this Government continually patting themselves on the back, there remain far too many cracks in the Homes for Ukraine scheme. In a recent article published by *The Guardian*, an anonymous whistleblower has revealed that he dealt with numerous cases in which UK visas had been issued for an entire family apart from just one child, effectively stopping the family from travelling to safety. Over the past few weeks, I have been in contact with a constituent who has been doing all she can to help a family from Ukraine who are in that exact scenario, but she is getting nowhere. What is the Minister doing to plug those gaps and to ensure that entire families, not just individuals, can reach the UK safely?

Tom Pursglove: If the hon. Lady can provide the specifics of that case, I will happily ensure that that is looked at quickly. It is also fair to say that the number of caseworkers dedicated to this work has been increased, and we try to ensure that cases are grouped so that families are processed consistently together, which makes sense, but I would be delighted to look at the specifics of this case.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister Stephen Kinnock.

Stephen Kinnock (Aberavon) (Lab): The deeply misjudged Nationality and Borders Bill and the Rwanda offloading plan will not only make cracking down on criminal people traffickers much more difficult, but make the cost to the British taxpayer criminally expensive. The British people deserve to know how their taxes are being spent, not least because the failed Australian model ended up costing £1 million per refugee. I ask the Home Secretary how many refugees she expects to send to Rwanda each year. The Prime Minister says it is tens of thousands; is that correct? How many can they house in the detention centres? What will the cost per single refugee be? What will the £120 million be spent on? Finally, given that her most senior civil servant refused to sign off on the plan, when will the Home Secretary publish a comprehensive cost forecast of her unworkable, extortionate and profoundly un-British Rwanda offloading agreement?

Tom Pursglove: The hon. Gentleman clearly did not pay much attention to the statement last week and the responses given. The British people deserve to know what his alternative is. I would politely suggest there is none.

Marco Longhi (Dudley North) (Con): I thank the Home Secretary, the Minister and all her team for bringing about the so-called Rwanda plan. I know the whole of Dudley is behind her, as is the rest of the country—unlike the Labour party, which has no plan. I ask the Home Secretary and her team to continue with the same steely resolve that I know she must have applied to get here as they move on to delivery and implementation.

Tom Pursglove: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support for the policies we are bringing forward. He recognises the gravity and importance of the issues we are dealing with. We will not rest while people continue to put their lives in the hands of evil criminal gangs, whose only concern is to take a profit from those individuals. They do not care whether people get here safely. That has to stop, we have a plan to stop it and we are going to get on and deliver it.

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): The Minister claimed that the Rwanda scheme will be a way of diminishing the small boats crossing the channel, but he will be aware that at least one Member of this House does not support his scheme: the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May), who is not only a former Prime Minister, but a former Home Secretary. Can he explain to the House why he disagrees with his colleague, and what makes him so sure that his scheme will not fall in the courts?

Tom Pursglove: I have huge respect and admiration for my right hon. Friend the Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May). The bottom line here is that there is no single intervention that will resolve the issue, but we must strain every sinew. We believe this is an important policy intervention that will shift the dynamic and help to preserve lives. That is a fundamental imperative and we cannot put a cost on it. I am convinced that this policy will deliver, along with the wider package of measures we are introducing. I encourage the right hon. Member for Hackney North and Stoke Newington (Ms Abbott) to be in the right Division Lobby this week and to pass the Nationality and Borders Bill into law.

Violence Against Women and Girls

3. **Alexander Stafford** (Rother Valley) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to tackle violence against women and girls. [906544]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): Tackling violence against women and girls is a top priority for this Government. Since publishing our cross-Government tackling violence against women and girls strategy last July, we have launched a communications campaign to challenge perpetrators and to drive rejection of these awful crimes. We have supported the introduction of a new national policing lead and provided more than £27.5 million for 79 local projects to improve women's safety in public spaces.

Alexander Stafford: Violence against women and girls is both horrific and, unfortunately, endemic. It must be stopped. Will my hon. Friend join me in welcoming our plans such as the tackling domestic abuse plan, which, alongside the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, will play a vital role in stamping out these horrific crimes?

Rachel Maclean: I thank my hon. Friend for his astute observations and strongly agree that that Bill is absolutely vital as part of our package of measures to respond to violence against women and girls. The House will like to be reminded, no doubt, that it contains measures to ensure that serious criminals, including sex offenders, will be punished more harshly and spend longer in prison. It strengthens management of sex offenders, introduces more electronic tagging, and ends the automatic halfway release from prison for serious and violent sex offenders. It is therefore a shame that Labour Members persist in voting against the Bill. I very much hope they will change their stance at the next opportunity.

Mr Speaker: I call the Chair of the Select Committee, Dame Diana Johnson.

Dame Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab): The Home Affairs Committee recently published its report on rape investigations and prosecutions. We very much welcome the Government's making male violence against women and girls a strategic policing requirement. However—following on from the news today about sexual offences taking record times to get to court—we also recommended that all police forces should have specialist rape and sexual assault units, as there is clear evidence that they investigate better, make better decisions and, very importantly, communicate with complainants far more effectively. When will the Government make sure that all police forces have specialist RASSO—rape and serious sexual offences—units within their constabulary?

Rachel Maclean: I thank the right hon. Lady for all the work that she is doing, across the piece, on tackling violence against women and girls. She is right to say that this is a huge priority for the Government. On training for police forces, she will know of the work that we are doing in the end-to-end rape review. We are taking a forensic look across the whole system, including through the work of Operation Soteria across all the

police forces. That includes a strategic and comprehensive approach to training police officers. We want to go further than ever before in training and equipping our fantastic policemen and women to investigate and bring to justice the perpetrators of these crimes.

Mrs Maria Miller (Basingstoke) (Con): In the Home Office's violence against women and girls consultation last year, viewing violent pornography was linked to aggressive attitudes towards women. What action is my hon. Friend taking to address that really worrying issue, particularly given the Online Safety Bill that is currently going through the House?

Rachel Maclean: I thank my right hon. Friend for her continuous involvement in and advocacy on these issues. She will know that the Online Safety Bill includes a range of measures to make the internet much safer for everybody. Everybody should have a right to view the internet without coming across this disgusting material. In addition, our domestic abuse plan and our tackling violence against women and girls strategy include significant funding for tackling the perpetrators and deterring them from entering into these forms of behaviour in the first place.

Mr Speaker: I call shadow Minister Sarah Jones.

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): Shocking new figures today show that sexual offence victims face the longest ever wait for their day in court, with some rape victims waiting four years. The Conservatives seem to have given up on law and order and given up on victims. That is because their leader has given up on obeying the law. Of the 300 rapes committed today, fewer than three perpetrators will make it to the inside of a courtroom, let alone the inside of a prison cell. Is it not the case that under the Tories dangerous perpetrators are being let off and vulnerable victims of this awful crime are being terribly let down?

Rachel Maclean: This is exactly why we have introduced to the House the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill. If the hon. Lady was listening to my earlier remarks, she would have heard me setting out the stronger sentences, the increase in electronic tagging for these perpetrators and the raft of protections to keep women and girls safer. She will also know through the many exchanges that we have had in this House of the work that we are doing on the end-to-end rape review across Government. This is a cross-Government effort bearing down on the very challenging issue of rape prosecutions. We are determined to return those prosecutions to a much better rate and we are working across Government to do that.

Fraud

4. **Sarah Green (Chesham and Amersham) (LD):** What steps her Department is taking to tackle fraud. [906545]

The Minister for Security and Borders (Damian Hinds): Fraudsters should have no space to operate, and later this year we will publish our renewed strategy on how we protect the public and businesses, reduce the impact on victims, and increase the disruption and prosecution of fraudsters.

Sarah Green: The Minister knows that fraud accounts for more than a third of all crime. Last year, Thames Valley police in Chiltern and South Bucks, which covers my constituency, had 194 Action Fraud victim care reports. One constituent told me, with great distress, that they had stopped reporting scams, because they think that Action Fraud has become a crime reporting agency and is no longer a crime investigation agency. We need a new service dedicated to effectively tackling online fraud, not just recording it. Will the Minister commit to establishing a new online crime agency to do just that?

Damian Hinds: I can confirm to the hon. Lady that we are making constant improvements to Action Fraud through the City of London police, and are also investing in a wholly new Action Fraud system for 2024. In the meantime, I encourage her constituent and all our constituents to report fraud. One particularly striking statistic is that more than 76,000 scams have been automatically taken down as a direct result of our constituents forwarding scam emails to the suspicious email reporting service.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister, Naz Shah.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): In 2021, fraud and computer misuse increased by 47%. In 2020, an estimated 99.99% of total cyber-crime went unpunished. Just weeks ago, academics at the University of Oxford estimated that during covid alone, £37 billion—or one third of the total NHS annual budget, and twice the annual budget for policing—is likely to have been lost to fraud. When working families are facing rising energy costs and a cost of living crisis, and are paying more and more taxes and more for services, can the Minister tell me why, under this Tory Government, gangs of criminals are getting a free run at the public purse?

Damian Hinds: Gangs of criminals certainly do not get a free run, and we will be investing and doing more than ever before to bear down on fraud. During the covid era—the trend had started already, but it accelerated then—while other forms of crime got depressed, there was a boost to some of this distanced crime that people do over their computers. Crime overall across the world is changing, and our response must change in a way that is commensurate to that. We must ensure that we take the most effective action. Part of that is the spending review commitment that has just been made; there is also the new economic crime levy, which represents an additional £400 million over this spending review period.

Fuel Supplies: Environmental Protests

5. **Andrew Selous (South West Bedfordshire) (Con):** What recent discussions she has had with police forces to help ensure that oil depots are able to supply fuel to petrol stations in the context of recent environmental protests. [906546]

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): In advance of the recent irresponsible and self-defeating protests, there has been regular engagement with the police, local authorities and industry to ensure that these protests can be managed effectively, and that there is no risk to fuel supply. All fuel supply points are fully

operational, and we will continue to work closely with the police and industry to ensure that supplies are maintained.

Andrew Selous: Does the Minister agree that while the right to protest is a fundamental liberty, this type of behaviour just infuriates the public, whom we need to get on side with our net zero campaign? It is particularly unfair to the self-employed. If they cannot get fuel for their vehicles, they cannot get to work and they do not get paid. Will he ensure that the police and the law stay on the side of the law-abiding, so that everyone can earn an income?

Kit Malthouse: I certainly will ensure that, and my hon. Friend is right to point out the impact, particularly on those who rely on their vehicles for their work, of these irresponsible and self-defeating protests, many of which have been extremely dangerous. It is worth also reflecting on the other impact, which is that hundreds of police officers are pulled away from policing neighbourhoods across the UK, because forces provide each other with mutual aid. We have brought police from as far away as Scotland, the south-west and Wales to help deal with these protests, and that has a direct impact on crime in all our constituencies. We are all committed environmentalists and want less use of fossil fuels, but this is not the way to achieve it.

UK Airport Passport Control Delays

6. **Julie Elliott** (Sunderland Central) (Lab): What recent assessment she has made of the extent of delays at passport control in UK airports. [906547]

24. **Dame Caroline Dinenage** (Gosport) (Con): What plans she has to improve airport immigration wait times. [906565]

The Minister for Security and Borders (Damian Hinds): Easter saw Border Force maintain a secure and effective border, with minor inbound border control disruption, in a period with one of the highest levels of international travel in the past two years. Before Easter, in February and March 2022, more than 85% of queue measurements were under 45 minutes for non-EU passengers.

Julie Elliott: I thank the Minister for that response. I recently wrote to him regarding the experience that my constituents, the Collins family, had at Newcastle airport when returning from holiday at a quarter to 11 at night a week or two ago. The father is a British-born citizen, and the mother has settled status and is of German origin. The children are both British and German citizens. They describe Border Force, which was not allowing the little boy, Nico, who is five years old, into the country, as being “hostile” and “unpleasant”, and as having an “unsympathetic manner”. That is not the way that anyone should be treated by Border Force, certainly not a five-year-old child. The child had his German passport; his British passport was waiting at home. When the family showed Border Force an email that they had received saying that, they were eventually allowed in—a five-year-old child, who is a British citizen, was eventually allowed into his home. What has the Minister to say? I think an urgent investigation and an unreserved apology to the Collins family are required.

Damian Hinds: I thank the hon. Lady for bringing that experience to the Floor of the House of Commons. I am, of course, sorry that any such distress was caused to a family, and particularly to a child so young. She will understand that it is difficult for me to talk about a particular case at the Dispatch Box without having all the facts available, but I will be happy to follow up with her separately.

Dame Caroline Dinenage: It appears that travellers are experiencing severe delays not only at passport control, but with processing passport applications and renewals. Although I fully understand that the Minister has set out the pressures that staff are facing, can he reassure me that backlogs will be addressed and airport issues will be sorted out before my constituents go on their summer holidays?

Damian Hinds: I reassure my hon. Friend that, in spite of the fact that there has been a surge in demand, as she would expect considering the patterns that we have seen in the past couple of years and the fact that international travel is now returning, that is absolutely something that the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster), who leads on passport issuing, is across to ensure that the necessary capacity is there.

Ruth Cadbury (Brentford and Isleworth) (Lab): Passport delays are affecting our constituents’ ability to take holidays and take up jobs abroad. There are ever-lengthening queues at passport control, and generous constituents who signed up for the Homes for Ukraine scheme are having their first experience of the Home Office’s chaos. When will the Home Secretary realise the impact that her Department’s appalling record on managing the gateways into and out of our country is having on the UK’s reputation, here and across the world?

Damian Hinds: I take extremely seriously the experience of passengers coming through British airports and seaports. There is a distinction between outbound and inbound—

Ruth Cadbury *indicated dissent.*

Damian Hinds: No, there really is. When we talk about Border Force and passport control, that is about inbound. As I said in my answer to the hon. Member for Sunderland Central (Julie Elliott), there are times when queues grow, and I do not like to see that happen. Sometimes it is because of factors beyond our control, such as so-called flight bunching when lots of flights arrive together or when flights are late. Border Force is working extremely hard to try to project demand as best it can to ensure that the staffing is there, and it is taking considerable measures to match up to that demand.

Border Force

7. **Virginia Crosbie** (Ynys Môn) (Con): What steps she is taking to strengthen the effectiveness of Border Force. [906548]

16. **Andrew Rosindell** (Romford) (Con): What steps she is taking to strengthen the effectiveness of Border Force. [906557]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): Border Force officers work tirelessly, not just to secure our borders but on all sorts of security work to safeguard our borders, and to intercept illicit and counterfeit goods at airports and at sea. That work covers more than 140 major sea and airports across the UK. I have commissioned an independent review of Border Force to identify ways in which its operation can be improved.

Virginia Crosbie: My Ynys Môn constituents are concerned about illegal immigration. Will my right hon. Friend thank Border Force—its staff in Holyhead have increased from 20 to 60—for its work? Can she reassure people across Anglesey that the Government remain committed to giving refuge to all those who need it, while acting compassionately and swiftly to remove those who do not?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I, too, have seen the work under way and what the teams do at Holyhead, which is incredible on many fronts; there is not only passenger work, but commercial work. She is right to highlight the issue of illegal migration and the work that Border Force does on that. The House has discussed some of that today. Holyhead is the second busiest port in the UK, and as a result of Brexit the team has expanded—she will know that; she has met them, as have I—from 20 to 60, meaning more skilled local jobs for her constituents.

Andrew Rosindell: Will my right hon. Friend assure me that as the Government rightly help those most in need from Ukraine, they will continue to make the security of the British public a priority through the use of biometrics and other security checks for refugees entering the United Kingdom?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. First and foremost, we have security checks for very good reasons to do with the domestic safety of our homeland. At the same time, work is under way, as he will be aware, on the digitalisation of our borders, which is part of the post-Brexit global Britain work that is taking place. In fact, all Ministers from not just the Home Office but the Cabinet Office are heavily involved in that work.

Drinks Spiking

8. **Duncan Baker** (North Norfolk) (Con): What steps her Department is taking to tackle drinks being spiked. [906549]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): The Government take this issue extremely seriously. We are taking a range of actions, including reclassifying GHB and related substances from class C to class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. These are the so-called date rape drugs that have been used in drug-facilitated crime, and we are of course considering the case for a specific criminal offence to target spiking, should it be required.

Duncan Baker: A constituent who has got in touch with me has had the dreadful problem of having her drink spiked. It has been a dreadfully traumatic experience, but on top of that, she can no longer go out and socialise with her friends because of the anxiety it has

caused. What tougher sentencing we can introduce, and what preventive measures can we take to stop this dreadful crime ever happening again?

Rachel Maclean: My hon. Friend is right that drink spiking and needle spiking have a very serious impact. I fully understand the anxiety of his constituent, and of course all our hearts go out to her. I very much hope that she will take some reassurance from the funding that the Government have provided to the Norfolk police and crime commissioner. He has been granted £427,000 for a range of practical initiatives designed to keep women safe on the streets at night, including drink spiking kits, taxi marshals, street pastors and more. I am sure his constituent will be pleased to know that there is already a range of offences under which people can be imprisoned, and some of those offences attract a life sentence.

HM Passport Office: Service Standard Times

9. **Grahame Morris** (Easington) (Lab): What steps she is taking to ensure that HM Passport Office meets the service standard times for processing passport applications. [906550]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): During the pandemic period, over 5 million people delayed applying for a British passport. This has led to unprecedented passport demand. To meet this, we have increased output to unprecedented levels. Since April 2021, HMPO has introduced a range of contingency measures, including technical improvements and a bolstering of its resources. This has helped to deliver record output, with over 1 million applications processed last month alone.

Grahame Morris: My experience cannot be unique; I think it is echoed by other Members in the House. This Easter, families and children in my constituency lost holidays due to the Passport Office failing to meet its service standard times. In telephone communications with the Passport Office, my staff and I have been misadvised and hung up on, and have received a series of broken promises. MPs once had valuable and effective links with passport offices to resolve complaints. Notwithstanding the contribution of the Home Office Parliamentary Private Secretaries—I thank them for their interventions—why can I not deal with my excellent local Durham passport office to resolve complaints, instead of waiting for hours, and failing to make progress, on so-called bespoke MP hotlines?

Kevin Foster: I would just point out that between January and March, over 90% of cases were completed within six weeks, but we advise people to allow up to 10 weeks for their application. Again, we are getting through this, but I recognise the point that the hon. Member makes about MPs' contacts. That is certainly a point we will pick up; we need to make improvements there.

Mr Speaker: I call the SNP spokesperson, Stuart C. McDonald.

Stuart C. McDonald (Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East) (SNP): The hon. Member for Easington (Grahame Morris) is certainly not alone: all our constituents are having to cancel holidays, miss funerals and rearrange

visits, with even the new 10-week target routinely being missed. What will be done to avoid that predictable mess getting worse? Can we be assured that the 10-week target will not be lengthened further as we approach the summer?

Kevin Foster: I go back to the fact that we dealt with 1 million passport applications last month alone. To put that in context, we usually deal with 7 million in a whole year. Where there are compelling and compassionate circumstances, such as a funeral, applications can be expedited. For some time we have advised people to allow up to 10 weeks for an application to be processed. Last year we sent 4.7 million texts reminding people whose passports had expired to renew them. We have no intention of further extending the standard. We are processing most passports well within that time, but this is a virtually unprecedented surge in demand, and if people are planning to travel this summer, we advise them to get their application in as soon as possible.

Simon Hoare (North Dorset) (Con): “Unprecedented” might be true, but the surge should absolutely have been foreseeable. I hear what the Minister says; my constituents tell me that in their experience, the process has been either very good or an absolute shambles. I agree with what the hon. Member for Easington (Grahame Morris) said: there needs to be a better interface between Members of Parliament and the Passport Office. Constituents going abroad for a family funeral, for a holiday or for business reasons are not getting through to the office, and are lied to by officials when they do. Something needs to be done to arrest that, and quickly.

Kevin Foster: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. Early in January, we were processing about 60,000 passports a week, and by mid-March we had nearly trebled or even quadrupled the output of the service. I agree that we must review the performance of the hotline for MPs, particularly for instances where there are compelling or compassionate reasons for expediting an application.

Refugee Convention 1951

10. **Carol Monaghan** (Glasgow North West) (SNP): What recent assessment she has made of the effectiveness of the Government’s implementation of the 1951 refugee convention. [906551]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Tom Pursglove): Part 2 of the Nationality and Borders Bill defines the key provisions of the refugee convention. In developing this policy we have considered factors such as the law in other jurisdictions, case law and academic works. All provisions of the Bill, as well as our asylum policy framework, are a good-faith, effective interpretation of the refugee convention and are compatible with it.

Carol Monaghan: The Nationality and Borders Bill as it stands does not comply with the 1951 refugee convention. Former Supreme Court judge Lord Brown has said of the Bill that

“several of these provisions flagrantly breach our obligations as interpreted by the UNHCR”.—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 4 April 2022; Vol. 820, c. 1882.]

Lord Brown has tabled an amendment to ensure compliance with the convention. Will the Minister confirm that the Government will support Lord Brown’s amendment?

Tom Pursglove: I thank the hon. Lady for raising that point. Under the Vienna convention, it is for Parliament to interpret our international obligations. We will always act in accordance with our international obligations; we have made that consistently clear. The Bill has been through appropriate due diligence, and we will get on and deliver it.

Economic Crime

11. **Kevin Hollinrake** (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): What recent steps her Department has taken to tackle economic crime. [906552]

The Minister for Security and Borders (Damian Hinds): Tackling economic crime is a key Government priority. We have expedited legislation—the Economic Crime (Transparency and Enforcement) Act 2022—to crack down on Russian dirty money and corrupt elites in the UK. We have also set up a new dedicated kleptocracy cell in the National Crime Agency to target sanctions evasion and corrupt assets hidden in the UK.

Kevin Hollinrake: I thank the Minister for that answer. GPT Special Project Management was fined roughly £28 million by Southwark Crown Court last year for bribery offences. The key whistleblower in that case was my constituent, Ian Foxley. He has had 11 years without a single penny in income because he blew that whistle, as nobody will employ him now, of course. Does my right hon. Friend agree that if we want to crack economic crime, we must incentivise whistleblowers to come forward, and protect them when they do? Will he listen carefully what my hon. Friend the Member for Cheadle (Mary Robinson) says tomorrow in introducing her 10-minute rule Bill, when she will set out the case for whistleblower reform?

Damian Hinds: My hon. Friend is right about the value of whistleblowers, who should be able to come forward without fear of recrimination. We have continued to improve the whistleblowing framework, including by extending eligibility for protections and introducing a reporting requirement for prescribed persons—the bodies to whom people can make a whistleblowing disclosure. My hon. Friend has campaigned consistently on this matter and is expert in it, and I am keen to meet him to discuss his points further.

Operation Pitting Evacuees

12. **Jamie Stone** (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): What support her Department is providing to people who were evacuated under Operation Pitting. [906553]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Kevin Foster): We continue to support those who were evacuated under Operation Pitting—the UK’s largest evacuation operation in some decades—in particular with the search for permanent accommodation, based on working with local councils to identify that.

Jamie Stone: Operation Pitting has evacuated some 15,000 Afghans. Altogether, refugees and asylum seekers are costing the UK a surprising £4.7 million a day in hotel accommodation, of which £1.2 million is spent on Afghan refugees, but hotels are clearly not the best option for education and schooling of children. We would like to have those refugees in the north of Scotland and the highlands, and they would like to come to the highlands. Will the Minister meet me to discuss how we can expedite that?

Kevin Foster: I am delighted to hear that housing is available in the highlands to support these people. We would be keen for them to make their new home in the highlands, which is a fantastic part of our United Kingdom. I would be delighted to meet the hon. Member to discuss how we can get those families on the way to a permanent home in a welcoming community.

Ms Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con): Operation Pitting was a remarkable success in evacuating Afghans, but also remarkable is the number of Afghan women seeking refuge who have been left behind and are now on the Taliban hit list. I have been trying to chase updates on a number of Afghan women but have been unable to get any response from the Home Office. It has been made clear to those women that the Taliban will kill them unless they can escape Afghanistan. Will the Minister meet me to try to help me to progress their cases?

Kevin Foster: I am very happy to meet my hon. Friend to discuss those women's cases. Of course, through the Afghan citizens resettlement scheme we are working with groups such as the UNHCR to identify those who would be particularly affected by Taliban rule.

Asylum Seekers: Relocation to Rwanda

13. **Bambos Charalambous (Enfield, Southgate) (Lab):** What estimate she has made of the cost to the public purse of the Government's policy to relocate asylum seekers to Rwanda. [906554]

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): Our world-leading migration and economic development partnership with Rwanda will be a major boost to Rwanda and allow us to focus our efforts on people in need, not those who have the ability to pay people smugglers to make dangerous, illegal journeys from safe countries such as France.

Bambos Charalambous: The policy of sending asylum seekers to Rwanda is unworkable and unethical, and it will either cost billions or result in so few people being sent to Rwanda that it will not act as a deterrent to all the evil people smugglers. Will the Home Secretary tell me how much the policy will cost per person, or what her maximum budget is?

Priti Patel: We have discussed this several times in the House in the last week. The UK is providing an initial investment of £120 million of support for the partnership as part of the new economic transformation and integration fund. I heard what the hon. Member's party said—Labour Front Bench Members were chuntering about this last week—in calling the policy extortionate and unworkable. Of course, that is completely illogical because if it is not workable, it will not cost the British taxpayer money.

Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con): The Home Secretary deserves immense credit for her plan and her robust approach to deterring illegal immigration. The fact that we have not seen any small boat crossings in the last three days is evidence that some of the pull factors are being removed. Does she agree that if that trend continues, the cost of the policy will take care of itself?

Priti Patel: I thank my hon. Friend for his question and comments. First, Labour is still trying to work out that doing nothing is not an option at all, because people have died. Secondly, the policy is exactly that: it is all about deterrence as well as ensuring that we can provide the right safe and humane approach for people who need our asylum system while cracking down on people smuggling gangs.

Topical Questions

T1. [906567] **Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab):** If she will make a statement on her departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for the Home Department (Priti Patel): The Nationality and Borders Bill is the vehicle for the new plan for immigration. That is how we will address the challenge of illegal migration for the first time in over two decades through comprehensive reform of our asylum system. Illegal migration is facilitated by evil people smugglers, and the British public despise those people smugglers and want their Government to act to remove foreign criminals as well as deal with the whole issue of illegal migration. The Bill will mean that we can better protect and support those in need of asylum, deter illegal and dangerous routes of entry to the UK and, of course, remove more easily those with no right to be here. The Bill has already been strongly endorsed by the elected House, and it is vital that the other place now works to ensure that it becomes law.

Cat Smith: Last week, I met directors of the Lancaster business improvement district to discuss antisocial behaviour in our city centre. Will the Home Secretary accept my invitation to come to Lancaster to meet the directors of Lancaster BID and hear about the work they are doing to fund a BID warden to support police in Lancaster city centre to reduce antisocial behaviour?

Priti Patel: I thank the hon. Lady for her question. If I may, I would like to pay tribute to both her police force and the police and crime commissioner, Andrew Snowden. I was in Lancaster recently, about a month ago. I would be delighted to visit again, I really would. I want to emphasise the power of business improvement districts in dealing with issues such as antisocial behaviour, giving businesses the confidence they need and ensuring they have police support so they can carry on investing in their businesses and creating jobs locally.

T2. [906568] **Gareth Bacon (Orpington) (Con):** At the beginning of questions today, my right hon. Friend pointed out that as of last week over 70,000 visas had been issued to Ukrainians. Does she agree that, along with our £450 million package of military aid for Ukraine, the unprecedented package of sanctions against Russia, and world-leading aid provision, that demonstrates our unwavering commitment to the Ukrainian people in their hour of need?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. This is a point to reflect on the United Kingdom's contribution to the Ukraine effort. As well as the long-standing aid and military support, the Government's commitment and the Prime Minister's leadership, over 70,000 visas have been granted, and rightly so, to people who are fleeing war and persecution. And, of course, our schemes are completely uncapped.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper.

Yvette Cooper (Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford) (Lab): I have been contacted about a pensioner who found nothing was done about serious harassment by her neighbours; shop owners who said nothing was done about someone who repeatedly smashed their windows; a burglary victim given nothing more than a crime number, and a rape victim who found herself being investigated rather than the rapist until the case was dropped—victims who are all being badly let down. Under the Conservatives, even though more crimes are being reported to the police, arrests and prosecutions have gone down sharply. Why is the Home Secretary letting so many more criminals off?

Priti Patel: On the contrary, the right hon. Lady may want to back our Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill when it comes to police, crime, courts and sentencing. She will also reflect on the fact that when the statistics for crime in England and Wales for year ending September 2021 were published, neighbourhood crime was 33% lower than the previous year, burglary offences were lower than the previous year, and other offences including robbery, vehicle offences and theft from the person were also down. This is a Government who have invested record sums in policing and training. Look at the work we are doing with police and crime commissioners across the country. There are a few other points that, if I may, Mr Speaker, I would like to make to the right hon. Lady. When it comes to courts—

Mr Speaker: Order. Home Secretary, I have to get through these topicals. I want to help you, so you need to help me.

Yvette Cooper: The Home Secretary is out of touch with what is happening in communities across the country. Overall crime is up by 14%. Right across the country, fewer rapists, fewer thieves and fewer burglars are being sentenced because they are not being arrested or taken to court in the first place. Since 2015, arrests by the police are down by a third, charge rate is down by nearly two-thirds, and cautions and community penalties have more than halved. It does not matter what her rhetoric is, the reality is much more bleak. This is the equivalent of hundreds of thousands more criminals getting away with their crimes.

Mr Speaker: Order. I say to both parties that we really do want you to have good questions, but when with more substantial questions like that please ask them earlier and do not try to force them into topicals. All you are doing is stopping me calling the Back Benchers who did not get in earlier. So please, let us work to help each other.

Priti Patel: When it comes to backing the police and sorting out the criminal justice system, if the right hon. Lady's party was at all serious she would back the Bill, back the police and the back reforms to the criminal justice system.

T4. [906571] **Harriett Baldwin** (West Worcestershire) (Con): Since Putin's evil invasion of Ukraine, Poland has given refuge to well over 2 million people. When members of the British Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union met our Polish counterparts recently, they said that one way in which we could help here was by setting up mayor-to-mayor twinning links. In the light of that, does the Home Secretary welcome the twinning arrangement between Pershore in West Worcestershire and Wry in Poland?

Priti Patel: I commend my hon. Friend on the initiative that she has shown through this twinning arrangement. It is incredibly important, and the House should pay tribute to our friends in Poland, and the Polish Government in particular, for everything that they have been doing to support Ukrainians.

T5. [906572] **Ian Byrne** (Liverpool, West Derby) (Lab): In 2017, the UK Government introduced a visa concession for offshore wind farm workers, which was extended for one year in July 2021. That visa concession effectively allows offshore wind farm companies to undercut the pay and conditions of British seafarers and exploit overseas workers. A few weeks ago, the Prime Minister committed to expanding offshore wind farms. In the light of the disgraceful decision by P&O Ferries to sack 786 British seafarers and replace them with exploited foreign labour, will the Home Office commit to ending the offshore wind farm worker concession to ensure that UK seafarers can compete fairly for these jobs?

Priti Patel: The hon. Gentleman makes very important points. I am happy to pick that up directly with him. I do not have time to give him a full answer now, but I will happily speak to him about it.

T6. [906573] **Antony Higginbotham** (Burnley) (Con): In recent months, we have seen an increase in totally unacceptable antisocial behaviour in Burnley and Padiham town centres, as well as dirt bikes racing up and down the Padiham Greenway. Will the Home Secretary meet me in Padiham to talk to businesses and residents about what more we can do to tackle that issue?

Priti Patel: I would be delighted to come to his constituency to do exactly that. Perhaps we can have a conversation about the safer streets fund, which will certainly assist with that issue.

T9. [906576] **Anne McLaughlin** (Glasgow North East) (SNP): I am getting sick and tired of the fact that every time any Opposition Member talks about our disgust with the "abandon people in Rwanda" scheme, Government Members start shouting, "What are your plans?" If they had paid any attention during the six full weeks of debate on the Nationality and Borders Bill or had read up on the multiple amendments that we tabled, which Conservative Members voted down, they would know what our plans are—

Mr Speaker: Order. The question is meant to be to Ministers, not Back Benchers.

Anne McLaughlin: The main response to this issue should be safe and legal routes. The Government keep saying that they have them. I submitted a written question asking for the detail of all the routes available, and the detail of those routes fits on half a page, because there are practically none for the entire world.

Priti Patel: If the hon. Lady has read the new plan for immigration—I hope she has—she will be very clear about the Government’s policy on safe and legal routes. I have outlined today a number of safe and legal routes to which the Government have committed, including two routes for Ukrainian nationals and the two routes for those who fled Afghanistan last year.

T7. [906574] **Alexander Stafford** (Rother Valley) (Con): People smugglers are evil. People have been exploited, beaten, robbed, raped and have even died, and we need to do everything that we can to stamp out this evil trade. Does my right hon. Friend agree with me and the vast majority of Rother Valley residents that the Rwanda plan is not only the right thing to do, because it will cut down on illegal immigration and reduce pressure on public services, but will ultimately save lives?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Although Opposition Members yell about the lack of support, I will come back to a number of points. First, doing nothing is not an option. We have to do everything that we possibly can to break up these evil people smugglers, who are unhinged and will stop at nothing to exploit individuals. Secondly, through the new plan for immigration and our wider work through the Nationality and Borders Bill, which is coming back to the House tomorrow, we want to bring our plan together and deliver for the British people.

Kevin Brennan (Cardiff West) (Lab): On 31 March, Lord Harrington had to apologise for inadvertently misleading the other place when he said that a drop-down arrow was available on the form for Ukrainian refugees in the Ukrainian language. When he apologised, he said that that was “in train”. Will the Home Secretary fess up and confirm that it is Home Office policy not to have a translated version of the form, or if it is, where is Lord Harrington’s severely delayed train?

Priti Patel: For Home Office officials who work on the scheme, there is guidance about dealing with different languages in the applications, but I am very happy to pick the matter up directly with the hon. Gentleman.

T8. [906575] **John Lamont** (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): I very much welcome the fact that dozens of visas have already been granted by this United Kingdom Government for Ukrainians to come to the Scottish Borders in my constituency. Will the Home Secretary work with me to iron out the last remaining issues for some of my constituents with processing the applications, to ensure that more Ukrainians can come to the Scottish Borders?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Work is under way to ensure that we can bring more Ukrainian nationals through our two routes to Scotland. I am very happy to meet him and the Minister to discuss the matter further.

Mary Kelly Foy (City of Durham) (Lab): Today, my constituent Graham Hughes is doing his latest humanitarian run to Poland. He hopes to return with a Ukrainian refugee and her 11-year-old daughter, who recently managed to escape the horrors of Mariupol shortly before the evacuation routes closed but are now waiting anxiously in Lviv. Despite Graham and his partner having applied to sponsor them nearly a month ago, they have yet to be granted passage to the UK. Graham and Katherine are ready to bring these people to safety in Durham. Will the Home Secretary do everything possible to expedite that?

Priti Patel: Through the hon. Lady, I would like to pass on our thanks to her constituent who is now travelling to Poland. I will need the details, if I may take them from her, to ensure that the visa side and the sponsorship side match up, and then we can pick this up.

Ruth Edwards (Rushcliffe) (Con): Will my right hon. Friend join me in congratulating Nottinghamshire police on hitting their recruitment uplift target a year ahead of schedule, so we now have more police officers in Nottinghamshire than at any time in the past 10 years? Can she commit to a date when the long-promised police funding formula review will start?

Priti Patel: I commend Nottinghamshire police and their outstanding chief constable for all the work that the team have been doing. They have been really focusing on driving down crime through recruitment and the training of new officers. My hon. Friend rightly asks about the police funding formula, which is under way through the Minister for Crime and Policing. It is deeply complicated, as my hon. Friend will be well aware, but we are happy to report back on it.

Stephanie Peacock (Barnsley East) (Lab): One mother from Barnsley submitted her daughter’s passport application in January, five months in advance of their holiday next week, but she is yet to receive it. My office has had to wait two hours to speak to someone at the Home Office today. What is the Home Secretary doing to address the unacceptable delays in passport applications?

Priti Patel: The hon. Lady will have heard the comments from the Under-Secretary of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Torbay (Kevin Foster), about work at the Passport Office. The hon. Lady said that her constituent submitted her passport application in January. If we can have the details, we will pick the case up, but that is a very unusual delay—there must be a problem.

Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Con): Now then: the world-class Rwanda plan has been welcomed by anybody who actually lives in the real world, because it saves lives in the channel. Unfortunately, that lot opposite do not live in the real world. Does the Home Secretary agree that the Labour party now has a chance to either back the plan or back the criminals?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend, as ever, is very clear. It is world-class and a world first, and we are proud of it. It is a partnership that our partners in Rwanda are proud of as well; they have an exceptional history of resettlement of refugees. My hon. Friend is absolutely right; the British people want change—they absolutely do. We say to everyone today, “Back the plan, but also back the Nationality and Borders Bill.”

Judith Cummins (Bradford South) (Lab): I am extremely concerned about the safeguarding of our young people at outdoor music festivals, which attract more than 7.1 million people, many of whom are under 18. There is currently more licensing provision for the recycling of a plastic cup than for our young people, who have suffered serious sexual assault, including rape, by spiking. Will the Minister work with me and others to create a gold standard of licensing for these events in order to protect our young people?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department (Rachel Maclean): I am very happy to work with the hon. Lady—we have already spoken

about the issue, and I am grateful for her interest in it. As the country gets back to festivals this summer, we all want young women and girls—and all young people—to enjoy themselves safely, so I will work with the hon. Lady across Government to take forward the asks that she has presented to us.

Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con): I have been alarmed to hear of large-scale and dangerous hare coursing in my constituency. Heavily armed people are coming on to farmers’ land and then livestreaming the chases to China, where they are the subject of heavy betting. Will my right hon. Friend support Thames Valley police in their efforts to tackle this appalling offence, and reassure farmers in Buckinghamshire that rural crime will always be taken seriously by this Government?

Priti Patel: My hon. Friend is absolutely right to raise this issue. He knows of the strength of feeling about it among Front Benchers and others on our side of the House, which is why we have the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill—we are urging all Members to back it. I commend Thames Valley police in particular for all that they are doing on this.

Ukraine Update

3.35 pm

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

It is 61 days since Russia invaded Ukraine, and 74 days since my Russian counterpart assured me that the Russian army would not be invading. As the invasion approaches its ninth week, I want to update the House on the current situation and the steps that we are taking to further our support for the Ukrainian people.

It is our assessment that approximately 15,000 Russian personnel have been killed during their offensive. Alongside the death toll are the equipment losses. A number of sources suggest that, to date, over 2,000 armoured vehicles have been destroyed or captured. That includes at least 530 tanks, 530 armoured personnel carriers, and 560 infantry fighting vehicles. Russia has also lost more than 60 helicopters and fighter jets. The offensive that was supposed to take a maximum of a week has now taken weeks. Last week Russia admitted that the Slava-class cruiser Moskva had sunk. That is the second key naval asset that the Russians have lost since invading, and its loss has significantly weakened their ability to bring their maritime assets to bear from the Black sea.

As I said in my last statement, Russia has so far failed in nearly every one of its objectives. In recognition of that failure, the Russian high command has regrouped, reinforced and changed its focus to securing the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. A failure of the Russia Ministry of Defence command and control at all levels has meant that it has now appointed one overall commander, General Dvornikov. At the start of this conflict, Russia had committed more than 120 battalion tactical groups, approximately 65% of its entire ground combat strength. According to our current assessment, about 25% of those have been rendered not combat-effective.

Ukraine is an inspiration to us all. Its brave people have never stopped fighting for their lands. They have endured indiscriminate bombardment, war crimes and overwhelming military aggression, but they have stood firm, galvanised the international community, and beaten back the army of Russia in the north and the north-east.

We anticipate that this next phase of the invasion will be an attempt by Russia to occupy further the Donbas and connect with Crimea via Mariupol. It is therefore urgent that we in the international community ensure that Ukraine gets the aid and weapons that it needs so much.

As Defence Secretary, I have ensured that at each step of the way the UK's support is tailored to the anticipated actions of Russia. To date we have provided more than 5,000 anti-tank missiles, five air defence systems with more than 100 missiles, 1,360 anti-structure munitions, and 4.5 tonnes of plastic explosive. On 9 March, in response to indiscriminate bombing from the air and escalation by President Putin's forces, I announced that the UK would supply Starstreak high-velocity and low-velocity anti-air missiles. I am now able to report that these have been in theatre for more than three weeks, and have been deployed and used by Ukrainian forces to defend themselves and their territory.

Over the recess, my ministerial team hosted a Ukrainian Government delegation at Salisbury plain training area to explore further equipment options. That was quickly

followed by the Prime Minister's announcement of a further £100 million-worth of high-grade military equipment, 120 armoured vehicles, sourcing anti-ship missile systems, and high-tech loitering munitions for precision strikes.

However, as we can see from Ukrainian requests, more still needs to be done. For that reason, I can now announce to the House that we shall be gifting a small number of armoured vehicles fitted with launchers for those anti-air missiles. Those Stormer vehicles will give Ukrainian forces enhanced short-range anti-air capabilities, day and night. Since my last statement, more countries have answered the call and more have stepped up to support. The Czech Republic has supplied T-72 tanks and BMP fighting vehicles, and Poland has also pledged T-72 tanks.

The quickest route to help Ukraine is with equipment and ammunition similar to what they already use. The UK Government obviously do not hold Russian equipment, but in order to help where we do not have such stock, we have enabled others to donate. Alongside Canada and Poland, the Royal Air Force has been busy moving equipment from donor countries to Ukraine. At the same time, if no donor can be found, we are purchasing equipment from the open market. On 31 March, I held my second international donor conference, with an increase in the number of countries involved to 35, including representatives from the European Union and NATO. So far these efforts have yielded some 2.5 million items of equipment, worth more than £1.5 billion.

The next three weeks are key. Ukraine needs more long-range artillery and ammunition, and both Russian and NATO calibre types to accompany them. It also seeks anti-ship missiles to counter Russian ships that are able to bombard Ukrainian cities. It is therefore important to say that, if possible, the UK will seek to enable or supply such weapons. I shall keep the House and Members on each Front Bench up to date as we proceed.

The MOD is working day and night, alongside the US, Canada and the EU, to support continued logistical supplies, but not all the aid is lethal. We have also sent significant quantities of non-lethal equipment to Ukraine. To date, we have sent more than 90,000 ration packs, more than 10 pallets of medical equipment, more than 3,000 pieces of body armour, nearly 77,000 helmets, 3,000 pairs of boots and much more, including communications equipment and ear defence.

On top of our military aid to Ukraine, we contribute to strengthening NATO's collective security, both for the immediate challenge and for the long term. We have temporarily doubled the number of defensive personnel in Estonia. We have sent military personnel to support Lithuanian intelligence, resilience and reconnaissance efforts. We have deployed hundreds of Royal Marines to Poland, and sent offshore vessels and Navy destroyers to the eastern Mediterranean. We have also increased our presence in the skies over south-eastern Europe with four additional Typhoons based in Romania. That means that we now have a full squadron of RAF fighter jets in southern Europe, ready to support NATO tasking. As the Prime Minister announced on Friday, we are also offering a deployment of British Challenger 2 tanks

to Poland, to bridge the gap between Poland donating tanks to Ukraine and their replacements arriving from a third country.

Looking further ahead, NATO is reassessing its posture and the UK is leading conversations at NATO about how best the alliance can deter and defend against threats. My NATO colleagues and I tasked the alliance to report to leaders at the summit in June with proposals for concrete, long-term and sustainable changes. Some of us in this House knew that, behind the mask, the Kremlin was not the international statesman it pretended to be. With this invasion of Ukraine, all of Europe can now see the true face of President Putin and his inner circle. His intention is only to destroy, crush and rub out the free peoples of Ukraine. He does not want to preserve. He must not be allowed to prevail. Ukrainians are fighting for their very lives and for our freedoms. The President of Ukraine himself said as much: if Russia stops fighting, there will be peace; if Ukraine stops fighting, there will be no more Ukraine.

Mr Speaker: We now come to the shadow Secretary of State, John Healey.

3.43 pm

John Healey (Wentworth and Dearne) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. His presence is welcomed this afternoon by the whole House. We know that it is not entirely his fault, but it is nearly seven weeks since he was last able to give us a statement on the situation in Ukraine. That was the day after President Zelensky addressed this House. The Secretary of State said then, as he did this afternoon, that he would keep the House up to date. May I say, on behalf of the public, that we would welcome more regular statements as the Russian war on Ukraine continues?

Like the Secretary of State, we salute the bravery of the Ukrainian people, military and civilians alike. That bravery is led by President Zelensky personally, but it is typified by the military last stand of the troops at the Azovstal steel plant and by the people's resistance in Russian-occupied Kherson. We also renew our total condemnation of this brutal Russian invasion of a sovereign country and our determination to see that all those responsible for the mass graves in Mariupol, for the crimes, rapes and assassinations in Bucha and for the civilian bombings in almost every town and city across Ukraine are pursued to the end for their war crimes.

We welcome the role that the UK is playing and the further UK military assistance to Ukraine that the Secretary of State has outlined today, which has Labour's full support. He says the UK has provided 5,000 anti-tank missiles and 100 anti-air missiles, but these direct donations are a fraction of the total. Can he tell us the total of such weapons provided so far by western allies? Has the MOD yet signed contracts and started production of replacement next-generation light anti-tank weapons and Starstreak missiles?

This is the first day of the third month of Putin's invasion, and it is a new phase, as the Defence Secretary said. What is needed now is no longer old, spare weapons from the Soviet era but the new NATO weapons that Ukraine will need for Putin's next offensive against Odessa or Kyiv. We need to shift from crisis management

in response to the current conflict to delivering the medium-term military support that Ukraine will need. What is he doing to ensure this step change in support?

Given that 5 million refugees have now left Ukraine, what is the Secretary of State doing to offer the 700 personnel still held at high readiness in the UK for humanitarian help? Is it still the case that the MOD has offered only 140 armed forces personnel to help sort out the shameful shambles of the Home Office's visa and refugee systems?

I just got off the tube after visiting NATO's Allied Maritime Command in Northwood. They took my phone off me, so I did not realise we were having this statement, which is why I am using handwritten notes this afternoon. This is a proud, professional, British-led multinational command, and I pay tribute to it for the work it is doing, day in and day out, to keep us all safe.

NATO has proved to be such a powerful security alliance because it pools multinational military capacity, capability and cash, with an annual budget of more than \$1 trillion, to protect 1 billion people, but Ukraine reminds us that the greatest threat to UK security lies in Europe, the north Atlantic and the Arctic, not in the Indo-Pacific. This reinforces NATO as the UK's primary security obligation, but the Secretary of State gave us only a paragraph on NATO.

Our leadership in NATO could be at risk as Britain falls behind our allies in responding to this invasion of Ukraine. More than a dozen European countries are now rebooting security plans and defence spending, but the UK has not yet done either. I therefore urge the Secretary of State to revisit the integrated review, to review defence spending, to reform military procurement and to rethink his Army cuts. We will be dealing with the consequences of Putin's war for many years to come, and now is the time for longer-term thinking about how the strategy for European security must change.

Mr Wallace: I am grateful to the right hon. Gentleman. We spoke last week about the timing of this statement, which I had hoped to make tomorrow, but the United States has called a 40-nation meeting in Germany and I will therefore not be here. I took the opportunity to make this statement when I could. I am sorry if he has cut short his trip, and I would be delighted to arrange with the Navy for him to return to the headquarters, without his phone, for longer in custody.

As I said, I promised to keep the House updated, and I have not only briefed a number of colleagues from this House, from across parties, on a number of occasions, but given Members access to our intelligence officials and senior generals in order that they can get the latest throughout. My hon. Friend the Minister for the Armed Forces has responded to two debates and answered one urgent question—I will not take the credit for the UQ; Governments get asked UQs, but they provide an opportunity. We will continue to update all Members, and I am happy to have another cross-House dial-in for all Members on the subject—it is incredibly important that we do so. Just as it is important that we calibrate our response to Russia, it is important that the Government calibrate their response within the House, so that we make sure that everything is not a surprise to Members and that we consult as we go along.

[Mr Wallace]

The right hon. Gentleman asked about NLAWs and Starstreaks. We have an ongoing relationship with the industry, and we will be replacing them or are replacing them. Not surprisingly, there is now a lot of interest in those British-made products, but it is very important that we replenish our stocks. Obviously, we are in that line to do so. The Treasury has agreed to fund the new-for-old replacement of those, but it is very important, given the state of the Russian Government, that we make sure we replenish as soon as we can. There is a daily relationship with our industry; the Minister for Defence Procurement speaks to those in the industry at least once a week, and the Prime Minister will soon convene a meeting with all the leads to make sure that we are doing everything we can, not just for ourselves but for Ukraine and others. Sometimes there is a bit of juggling whereby I release something that we do not yet need, so that another country can have it first or it goes to where the threat is more pressing, or we persuade a friendly country to divert its order so that it can come to us or to Ukraine. We are often involved in that basic defence diplomacy, whereby we know a country is buying something such as an NLAW, it does not need it right now and we see whether we can take it off its hands and it then delays its order. We try to make sure we do that as much as possible.

I am delighted to place in the House the international update on how much has been donated. Obviously, some countries are more open than others about what they have done, so I will place in the Library a table showing those things. It is not for me to let another country's identity be known if it wishes to keep that secret, but what we can publish, we shall.

I can inform the House that in the past week alone we have supplied 1,000 anti-tank weapons, 14 Wolfhound armoured vehicles and 4,000 night-vision goggles. I can update further that to date we have also supplied 5,361 NLAWs—up from the original 2,000; more than 200 Javelins; and 104 high-velocity and low-velocity anti-air missiles—this will grow to more than 250. Obviously, if we supply any more new weapon types, I will inform the House as we do so.

On NATO, one of the discussions we will have on the sidelines tomorrow is, obviously, the future for NATO. A few weeks ago in Brussels, NATO Defence Ministers tasked NATO to go away and come back with its long-term plans. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that we are in crisis management and the short-term response, but we need a long-term plan. We need to know what NATO will look like and how western Europe—or Europe, including many of its new members—will contain Putin after all this has passed. We are dealing with a man who has clearly been involved in an illegal invasion of a country and war crimes against the Ukrainian people. We need to know how we are going to live with that neighbour in Europe, should he still remain. That is an important consideration for all of us and it goes to the heart of defence reform and our spending. Of course, as I have always said, as the threat changes, so must our defence posture, which includes funding. As I have said publicly, in the here and now we are getting the spending we need, but he is right to raise the issue of medium-term and long-term funding, which we will definitely be looking at.

The right hon. Gentleman made a point about how we are now “the only country”, but that is because we were the first country; when we had our £24 billion settlement, no one else in NATO had yet gone there. Sweden had gone there but it was not in NATO, and so had Australia. So his comments are slightly punishing Britain for being the first, because we did this way before the invasion of Ukraine and a lot of the increases he is talking about have been afterwards. That is not to say that we should not look at what more we can all do and how that knocks into other areas.

Mr Speaker: I call the Chair of the Defence Committee.

Mr Tobias Ellwood (Bournemouth East) (Con): You heard it here first, Mr Speaker: there was a request for more urgent questions that I am happy to oblige.

I very much welcome the statement, which focused on the operational. However, the reality is now dawning not only that this conflict could last for months—indeed, years—but, more widely, that Europe has entered a new and dangerous era of insecurity. I therefore pose two fundamental questions to the Secretary of State. First, what does success in Ukraine look like? Are we doing enough to prevent Ukraine from losing but not enough to make sure that it wins? What is our strategy? Is it to push Russia back to the pre-February lines or, indeed, to liberate the entire Donbas region? If it is in Europe's wider security interest to see Putin humiliated in Ukraine, the entire mainland must be liberated. That must be our strategic aim.

The second fundamental issue, on which the Secretary of State touched, is our defence posture. Threats are increasing, but pressures on our armed forces and equipment are growing. Is it not now time to increase defence spending to 3% of GDP?

Mr Wallace: My right hon. Friend is a doughty campaigner for spending 3% and I consider him my long-range artillery when it comes to the lobbying in the long term, whatever we see as a result of the situation in Ukraine. Our strategic aim is twofold: first, Putin must fail in Ukraine—he must fail in his invasion—and I think he is on course to do that; and he must fail in his occupation of Ukraine, and I think he has definitely failed to achieve that. The fine tuning of that is as much a matter of Ukraine's choice as it is anybody else's. Ukraine gets to choose where it wishes to settle for peace. We will do everything we can to support it.

For my part, I want Putin not only beyond the pre-February boundaries; he invaded Crimea illegally and Donetsk illegally, and he should comply with international law and, in the long run, leave Ukraine. Overall, Putin needs to wear the cost and the consequence of what he has done on his shoulders.

Mr Speaker: We now come to the SNP spokesperson.

Dave Doogan (Angus) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for advance sight of his statement. We on the SNP Benches welcome the additional measures that the United Kingdom is taking to support Ukraine, and we also welcome the Secretary of State's engagement with the SNP leadership in this place.

The statement highlighted the bravery of Ukraine's defence forces, but I am sure the Secretary of State also acknowledges that alongside that bravery is an exceptional

tactical efficacy, in stark contrast to the Russian invaders. I am sure he would have no hesitation in agreeing with that observation.

The Secretary of State highlighted in his statement Russia's apparently reduced ambition to consolidate in the east of Ukraine, around Donbas, and to try to secure a land bridge to Crimea through Mariupol. Will he reassure the House that enduring economic pressure and further military support will continue to frustrate Russian ambition and aggression?

It was a great pleasure for me to meet in Warsaw earlier this month the Royal Marine commandos from 45 Commando in Arbroath. What more can NATO allies do to ensure that our partners on NATO's eastern flank are further reassured of NATO's determination to stand firm against any and all aggression towards our allies?

Finally, I welcome the details of the £100 million for higher-grade equipment, including anti-ship missiles, but the Secretary of State will be all too well aware that we cannot get an awful lot of higher-grade equipment for £100 million. I would welcome any further advice he can give the House on that. On the anti-ship role specifically, will the Secretary of State confirm that Brimstone missiles will have no role in that application? If possible, will he discuss with us what role the UK's Harpoon missiles will have in that application? If we are not donating UK stocks of Harpoon missiles, is that because we do not have enough ourselves?

Mr Wallace: On the Harpoon missiles, we are not currently providing them. Our Harpoon missiles are launched from ships, and very few nations launch Harpoon missiles from land—I do not think any do nowadays. There is a lot of media around this invasion and not a day goes by on which I do not have to counter stories that have somehow appeared. I think some of them are made up. The AS-90s going to Ukraine was another story—it appeared in the *Express* this weekend—but no, they are not. I do not know where that story came from, but it is not true.

On Brimstone missiles, we made a commitment 18 months or two years ago, when we were selling a fast-attack patrol boat to Ukraine, that we would sell it armed with maritime Brimstone missiles. Those ships are not yet in the country; they have not yet been purchased or delivered. However, if we decide to provide Brimstones in whatever guise, I will inform Members of this House when we do so. I will not close that off as an opportunity; it is a perfectly legitimate thing. There are different sophistications between block 1, which is just land Brimstone, and the at-sea developments that we have never bought. They have a range of capabilities. First and foremost, if we do provide Brimstone, we will look to provide it for the land, using stock that we already hold, but not as yet for the sea.

What more can we do for our eastern colleagues? I always advise colleagues of the Joint Expeditionary Force—many Members present already know about it—which is a tremendous group of the 10 Nordic countries. I recently asked colleagues from around the House to the dinner when we had the JEF summit here in the UK. The JEF is composed of the Scandinavian and Baltic states, the United Kingdom and Iceland. It is a tremendous grouping of people. Some people describe them as the beer-drinking nations; I am less charitable

and describe them as the nations with probably the worst weather in Europe—that is what uniquely binds us together. We are the doers in Europe; we get on and do, we share, and we exercise and train together. The JEF also involves Finland and Sweden. I think it is a very good group.

As for 45 Commando in Arbroath, they have done and are doing an excellent job in Poland, as the hon. Gentleman said. They are incredibly professional, and there is more work for them to do.

Dr Julian Lewis (New Forest East) (Con): It is clear that the supply and use of missiles has turned military assets such as ships, aircraft and tanks into costly losses and liabilities. The one gap appears to be artillery. I know the Secretary of State said that we are supplying some artillery, but as earlier episodes show, the counter to a weapons system is not necessarily the same weapons system but a missile to destroy it. What can be done to prevent Russia from using artillery to raze cities to the ground without engaging Ukrainian forces properly, which is the one area in which it still seems to be succeeding?

Mr Wallace: My right hon. Friend has put his finger right on the heart of the current race. The race is on to equip the Ukrainians with the same long-range capabilities that Russia has, so that they are not outranged and pinned down. That is why we started first and foremost by sourcing 152 mm around the world—Soviet calibre—so they can keep going with that.

In parallel, we and a number of nations are exploring providing either 105 mm, which is our main lightweight gun, and the 155 mm in more mobile versions than the big armoured AS90s. One thing that this modern battlefield is showing is that people had better move quickly once they have fired their guns, because they can be very quickly found by pretty cheap off-the-shelf unmanned aerial vehicles. Exactly as my right hon. Friend said, there is a race on in parallel. We have now seen a number of eastern countries providing 155 mm howitzers; that unlocks NATO ammunition. We will play our part and make sure it gets to them.

In addition, the intelligence around artillery has to be improved, so we are exploring counter-battery radar, so that as soon as Russia fires a shell at you, you know exactly where it came from, and you can return the favour.

Mr Barry Sheerman (Huddersfield) (Lab/Co-op): The Secretary of State may have heard that I have been calling for a more regular performance. I am a great admirer of his, but I have been starved of his company. I am very pleased that he has made the statement—many of us are encouraged by the information he has given—but is he aware that the people of Mariupol have been dying of starvation and lack of water? We have a Navy; has it not been possible to supply food, water and that sort of stuff by sea? I may not be a logistics or military expert, but it seems strange that those people have been starving and we have not sent food.

Mr Wallace: I understand the hon. Gentleman's deep sense of frustration—not at listening to me, but regarding the people of Mariupol. The nations of the Black sea govern the Black sea through the Montreux convention, a very old piece of law, and at times of war they can

[Mr Wallace]

shut the Black sea to any nation other than Black sea nations. Turkey did that at the very beginning, which disadvantages Russia more than anyone else, and therefore we could not go in even if we wished. I have already spoken to the Turks and the Romanians about minesweeping capability, because it is clear that this summer a lot of the grain will not go out through Ukraine, but it might go out through neighbouring countries such as Romania. That is very important. At the moment, however, it is not possible for us to put ships into the Black sea and, while Russia will not be able to replace its ships, that gives it another sense of strength in trying to control the area. That is why the Ukrainians need anti-ship missiles to ensure they get at least some access to their coastline.

Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con): As Russia flounders on the battlefields of Ukraine due to the bravery of the Ukrainians, President Putin has raised the possibility of using tactical nuclear weapons. Can my right hon. Friend ensure that the Government and our allies do everything they can to deter President Putin from taking that disastrous step?

Mr Wallace: We have all seen with concern the playing in of nuclear weapons by Putin, either in earlier statements or recent test fires. I remind colleagues that NATO is a nuclear alliance; Britain, America and France are in possession of nuclear weapons, and that is first and foremost a strong deterrent to him. He can invest in many other different missiles, but fundamentally some are out there right now under the sea; our brave men and women of the Royal Navy, silent and able to deliver a nuclear effect if they had to in defence of this kingdom or in defence of NATO. It is important that Putin does not forget that.

Mr Kevan Jones (North Durham) (Lab): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement and commend his leadership and that of his team throughout this crisis. He has already outlined an impressive list of equipment that we, our NATO allies and our EU allies have provided for Ukraine. Some of what we provide is legacy equipment and some is from inventory. Can he assure me that the cost of that is coming from the Treasury's central reserve and not the Defence budget?

Mr Wallace: The right hon. Gentleman asks an important question. Yes, to date we have gifted in aid £200 million to Ukraine, which we propose will grow to £500 million, and the Treasury has agreed to old for new in funding that replacement.

Bob Seely (Isle of Wight) (Con): I wrote to the Secretary of State last week about a few issues; I hope he will have a chance to look at the letter today, which comes with a present from some Ukrainian soldiers. Returning to the issue of 155 spec, which is a potential game-changer, is he saying that we are leaving that up to other countries because we do not have the field guns ourselves? Will he look at supplying AS90 or has he ruled AS90 out altogether? Secondly, there are some specific naval supplies mentioned in the letter, but more generally, from Odesa to Zaporizhzhia, there is still a lack of body armour and medical kits. What reassurance can he give me on that?

Mr Wallace: We will be flowing more body armour to Ukraine next week. The United States is sending 200,000 155 shells and, I think, two battalions-worth of 155 tubes—I am not a gunner, but apparently that is the term—and at the same time we will scour whatever we can. The Ukrainians are also interested in our 105 guns and we will look to provide those. The AS90 is a very old 155 armoured vehicle, as my hon. Friend knows; it is over 40 tonnes, and one of the challenges is to get it from one side of Ukraine to the other, with low loaders and big logistics. If we can help to source 155s that are more mobile and modern, that is the better way to proceed.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I too put on record my thanks to the Secretary of State for his co-operative attitude towards me as an Opposition spokesperson for defence. At a recent meeting of the Servant of the People party, which incidentally is a sister party to my own party, an impassioned plea was made: as the Russians have retreated from parts of Ukraine, they have left a ghastly and deadly legacy in the shape of landmines. The Ukrainians are doing their very best to get rid of this hideous calling card, but already a number of Ukrainians have been killed in their efforts to get rid of the landmines. We in the UK possess the equipment and skills to help to rid Ukraine of landmines, so may I ask the Secretary of State to look kindly on that request from Ukraine?

Mr Wallace: Yes, of course we will look at that issue. It has not appeared yet in the shopping list from the Ukrainians to me, but the hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. I visited Mariupol and places in other countries a few years ago and saw the minefields left behind after 2014, when the Russians destroyed everything and then left minefields across acres of farmland to impoverish the people there and leave their mark.

Daniel Kawczynski (Shrewsbury and Atcham) (Con): I very much welcome my right hon. Friend's announcement that there will be a deployment of British Challenger 2 tanks to Poland to allow our Polish allies to send the Soviet-era tanks to Ukraine, but, to my knowledge, there has not been an agreement within NATO to facilitate Polish MiG fighter jets being sent to Ukraine. As this war continues, we are very much aware of the need for the Ukrainians to have additional air capability to take on the Russians. Will he use his good auspices in the coming NATO meetings to press our American allies on this issue?

Mr Wallace: My hon. Friend makes a good point. This is really about bilateral enabling rather than NATO, as an organisation, but he is right. In fact, the Ukrainians are after ground attack aircraft more than air-to-air ones, and so, rather than the MiG-29s, the Su-30s and those sorts of aeroplanes. I will certainly raise it tomorrow with my US counterpart when I see him. It is important, but at the moment we are focused on the deep long-range artillery.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): While taking nothing away from the incredible performance of the Ukrainian army in defending its country, we all cannot help but be struck by how completely useless the Russian forces seem to be and how inefficient in organising themselves

in this campaign. Having said that, there are increasing reports of mercenaries being used by the Russians. To what degree are they involved in this conflict, and is there any way to prevent them from getting into positions where they can participate?

Mr Wallace: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right to point out the Russians' woeful performance. I do not celebrate the loss of anyone's life, and when I see the huge casualty rates of Russian soldiers, I think, as a former soldier, that it is a disgrace and a betrayal of those young men. It is hard to have sympathy when clearly it is not just the generals who are engaged in the war crime and butchery that we have seen, but mothers and wives in Russia are left behind because the arrogance of generals, poor performance and corruption has led many of those young men to their deaths.

On the hon. Gentleman's point about mercenaries, yes, we see evidence of the Wagner Group now being actively deployed in Ukraine. We have seen some free Syrian fighters. We have seen media reports around Chechnya volunteers. The Wagner Group is a pain and a pest globally used—deniably, apparently, but it is not really that deniable—as an arm of the Kremlin. We have seen it in Africa. We see it in Mali now. We have seen it in Libya and elsewhere. The international community needs to come together to deal with the Wagner Group because whatever happens in Ukraine—its members are not getting very good kit and they are being some of the first to die, so it is not a great recruiting advert for it—it is going to be a problem that we have to deal with.

Mrs Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): I commend the Secretary of State for the actions he has taken to help Ukraine. In history, this will be seen not just as war crimes but as a genocide. Will he work with me to persuade the Foreign Office that, although obviously different from the Holodomor in the 1930s, this will be seen as a genocide in the same way?

Mr Wallace: What is really important on the accusation of both genocide and war crimes is that it does not need a politician to make that allegation. We are lucky in this part of the world to have the International Criminal Court, courts in the Hague and independent investigators who are right now collecting evidence and will be able to point a finger without any favour or political agenda. That is a really important difference between us and them. The Russians would love politicians in the west to be standing up and pointing fingers because then they can say, "You would say that, wouldn't you?" I want to see our respected judiciary and our law enforcement agencies gathering the evidence and then putting it to the people who politically we all think are clearly responsible for many of the problems in Ukraine.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): I commend the Secretary of State not only for his statement today, but for his diligence and commitment over the past number of months. He may recall that I suggested during a previous statement that NATO being publicly so explicit that there would be no troops on the ground was a vulnerability for Ukraine. As we see, the Russians are becoming more desperate and diabolical in the tactics that they use, from rape to war crimes, genocide, the threat of chemical attack and potential technical and

tactical nuclear attack. How sustainable does he believe it will be for the international community to give support, but stay far removed?

Mr Wallace: When NATO says, "NATO deployment", what it is referring to is NATO deployment. It is perfectly possible around the world for Britain, France and others to deploy unilaterally. We deployed into Poland recently. We are doing that not as a NATO country, but as Britain supporting one of our oldest allies. When this phase finishes, and let us hope it does soon—we had Op Orbital in Ukraine, we had British trainers on the ground right up until pretty much the last and we sent the Ranger regiment to train people on NLAWs just before the invasion—we will inevitably wish to go back to help Ukraine in its long-term planning. It is important that we help them move out of crisis to a long-term plan and a long-term ability to defend themselves, and Britain will always offer that opportunity with our training of troops. When we start doing that is open to debate, but I do not rule anything out.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I commend my right hon. Friend for his leadership and work, and the work of his colleagues, in ensuring that our friends, the Ukrainians, are able to defend themselves. I was recently in Lithuania. The Lithuanians made it clear to me that the Baltic states are deeply worried by some of the behaviour of one or two members of NATO. They commended the UK for its leadership against any kind of attempted settlement. There was the slow behaviour of the Germans at the time, until the UK pushed them to do more on the banking system, SWIFT and so on.

One of the things the Lithuanians were questioning me about was whether NATO looks strategically. My right hon. Friend said just a few minutes ago that each individual country looks at these arms trades and transfers separately, but does NATO now see that, once Ukraine has succeeded in defending itself from defeat, it must move on to the next bit of the posture, which is to be able to move on to the offensive? Does NATO therefore look at all these arms, including aircraft, as raised by my hon. Friend the Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski), as a way for Ukraine to take the fight back to the Russians?

Mr Wallace: My right hon. Friend probably served in northern Germany, like me, where permanent presence was used as one of the most important deterrents to the then Soviet Union. We were not just there for the short term; we were there for a very long time. When we are asking NATO to come up with a long-term plan, it has to involve such things as the long-term containment of Russia. He is correct that the best defence is offence. Showing that we are well-equipped, capable, ready, deployable and deployed is one of the best ways of making President Putin cease what he is doing. I do not think that means NATO deploying outside of its borders, but it does mean ensuring that we are very quick to respond and are overmatching Russia in everything it wishes to explore, so that Putin does not dare do it.

Hilary Benn (Leeds Central) (Lab): As this war has intensified, the distinction between providing defensive, as opposed to offensive weapons has largely disappeared, as increasingly heavy equipment is being transferred. The Secretary of State said previously to the House that

[Hilary Benn]

he would support the provision of suitable aircraft to the Ukrainian air force. Further to the question asked by the hon. Member for Shrewsbury and Atcham (Daniel Kawczynski), what is the Secretary of State's current assessment of the appetite of countries to provide to Ukraine suitable aircraft that could be used in this new phase of the conflict?

Mr Wallace: There are some that have an appetite; there are not many. Some of the equipment is quite old—a lot of the MiG-29s in the east come from the fall of the Berlin wall, so hon. Members can gauge their age. There are some useful ground attack aircraft in Europe and, as I say, I would defend any one of those nations' options of deploying them. One of the ways that we could help to support them is by backfilling by supplying our Typhoons to patrol their skies and so on. The hunt is still on. If anyone comes forward, I am happy to support them. Sometimes they have been updated with third countries' equipment, which gives those countries a veto, and I will work to persuade those third countries to release any holds on them as well.

Felicity Buchan (Kensington) (Con): Russia has clearly suffered serious logistical issues in the first phase of the conflict. What other lessons have we learned from the first phase and to what extent can we use those lessons as we enter what seems to be a new phase?

Mr Wallace: The first lesson, "Don't take Russia at its word; take it on its action", is the most important lesson for many in the international community. We gave up on that a long time ago, but that is the first thing. There will be a lot of lessons. I would not rush into that, because we also need to learn from the Ukrainians, who are rightly focused on fighting rather than on a feedback loop to us, which will be essential in understanding it.

The big lesson is that we must prove to the world that ripping up international law and being more brutal than an adversary still does not get someone to win. One calculation that President Putin and his generals have is, "We don't care about human life; we don't care about international law; and if we just maintain that, somehow, we'll achieve victory—irrespective of the cost and the human suffering." The international community has to be totally unified in demonstrating that as folly.

Carol Monaghan (Glasgow North West) (SNP): I thank the Secretary of State for his update on the deployment of UK personnel along NATO's eastern flank. Can he detail what role they are playing in the humanitarian response, including supporting the processing of visas for Ukrainian refugees? Alongside all the military equipment, is the UK looking at delivering potassium iodide to civilians in Ukraine?

Mr Wallace: On medical supplies, my right hon. Friend the Health and Social Care Secretary has provided significant amounts of health stocks, but I am happy to look at that further for the hon. Lady. On the issue of visas, we have offered and we have fulfilled any request from the Home Office. If it asks for more, it will get more, if that is what is required to speed up the process.

Stephen McPartland (Stevenage) (Con): I pay tribute to our brave Ukrainian friends and I commend the Secretary of State for his steadfast support for them. Stevenage is home to MBDA, which manufactures Brimstone. Can he clarify whether we will be making Brimstone available? What can we do to upgrade the Ukrainians' advanced cyber capabilities to disrupt Russian communication command and control?

Mr Wallace: On the latter, I cannot really comment on those operational issues. All I will say is that Britain and Ukraine had a long-held cyber relationship many years before the invasion and we continue to understand its cyber needs.

MBDA has done an amazing job with the multinational consortium, including BAE and others, in the making of the weapons systems that are being used right now. As I have said, I do not have any objection in principle to some of the Brimstone variants being deployed into Ukraine. In principle, we agreed to sell Brimstone anti-sea some months ago—18 months or two years ago. If we decide to put Brimstone in, we will of course ensure that the Chair of the Select Committee and the Front-Bench teams are notified. They are still a short-range missile—the block 1s have a range of about 7 km—and they are not strategic. The right hon. Member for Leeds Central (Hilary Benn) asked about defensive and offensive, but we now need to move to tactical versus strategic. We are still not in a strategic place. With its range, Brimstone would be a tactical weapons system but nevertheless very efficient and capable.

Stephen Kinnoch (Aberavon) (Lab): The Secretary of State will have seen the recent Defence Committee report that was very critical of the Government's decision to deploy the Royal Navy in basically taking over Border Force and dealing with the small boats issue. It defined that policy as "ill-defined" and "prematurely announced". What assessment has he made of the risk that Operation Isotope could lead to the diversion of scarce Royal Navy resources at this time, when the focus surely has to be on our national security and on deterring Vladimir Putin's aggression?

Mr Wallace: The hon. Gentleman will be relieved to know that there is no such risk. The P2000 patrol boats were not going anywhere other than UK shores. Nor indeed were inshore vehicles, or the batch 1 offshore patrol vessels; they were not going to go anywhere else. The rest of it has really been about bringing a military command and control mindset, and the ability to mass and mash together intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities to the better command and control umbrella over the whole thing. That is what we are trying to do, that is what we are starting to deliver, and it is as much about a cultural change as anything else.

Mark Pawsey (Rugby) (Con): On a recent visit to Georgia with the all-party parliamentary group on Georgia, we saw joint working between Georgian troops and NATO personnel, largely from the countries that the Secretary of State referred to earlier. Could he say a little more about the joint working that we are doing with Ukrainian forces to enable them to use to maximum effect the very valuable military equipment that the UK is providing?

Mr Wallace: Georgia is a very important partner for us around the Black sea. It obviously knows itself what it is like to be on the wrong end of a Russian invasion, and it is very important that we help Georgia's resilience to that. It is also important that we recognise what Russia, having consolidated, then tries to do in countries such as Georgia, which is divide, corrupt and continue to manipulate. That is why it is very important that Britain's relationship with Georgia is a long and enduring relationship to help it with its own resilience.

Hywel Williams (Arfon) (PC): Delivering the defensive equipment that has been so vital to Ukraine's success in resisting the Russian invasion has been really instrumental, and I think the Government deserve all credit for their work in that respect. But could the Secretary of State state what the UK's current overarching aims in this conflict are, and confirm that support for Ukraine will continue long term irrespective of who occupies No. 10?

Mr Wallace: I am grateful and thank the hon. Member for his comments. Our objective is to push, or help Ukraine push back Russia from both its actions since February, and if Ukraine takes the choice to continue to try to push Russia out of its illegally occupied territories, then of course the west and the international community will stand by it in doing that. I think, in its simplest form, Britain wants to help Ukraine be free to choose. What it chooses is slightly secondary to the fact that it has the freedom to choose in the first place as a sovereign state. That is what we are all trying to work for, and the only country that does not want to do that is Russia.

Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): One of the main lessons from this conflict seems to be that, alongside the courageous resistance of the Ukrainian people and the military, one of the reasons it has not gone to plan for Russia is the failure of its logistics in seemingly running out of food, fuel and other supplies. Could my right hon. Friend confirm that one of the lessons we will learn and the whole world should learn from this is that top-quality logistics, such as the UK armed forces have, is even more essential perhaps than military manpower?

Mr Wallace: It is really important. We see, from photographs, Russian soldiers going to war with not much equipment, poor equipment, rations that are years out of date, not just a few days or weeks, and all of that has a horrendous effect on morale. We see them at war with cheap handheld radios—not their own radios, because they do not work—and we see them badly prepared. Bad battle preparation leads to defeat often and that is often the mess they are in. We saw that some very expensive equipment got stuck in the mud because they used cheap tyres from somewhere else. Those things matter. It is also an important lesson for our defence that sometimes the less sexy things are actually the things we should invest in. They are often the things first cut when the Treasury comes calling and you pay for it in the end.

Mr Ben Bradshaw (Exeter) (Lab): Is the Secretary of State concerned that, if Putin is allowed to retain the territories in the south and east that he has invaded, he

will claim that and be able to claim that to some extent as a kind of victory? In that context, what does he think of the comments of retired General Philip Breedlove, the former NATO commander in Europe, today, who said that now might be the time for NATO or a coalition of the willing to at least consider having troops on the ground in the north and west of Ukraine, so that more Ukrainian resources are freed up to fight in the south and east?

Mr Wallace: It is definitely a valid suggestion. If we were to fast-forward to a frozen conflict in which 80% of Ukraine was still sovereign, it would be entirely up to Ukraine to decide who it wanted to invite on to its territory, and for what purposes, just as it invited us there for Operation Orbital. People seem to forget that until this invasion, Ukraine was a sovereign country with two occupied parts. Ukraine had British, Swedish and Canadian soldiers on its territory, and we went exercising with 5 Airborne Brigade last year; that is all possible. If Putin decides to hunker down for some form of frozen conflict, we should remember two things: first, he will be back for more, because that is what he did in 2014; and secondly, he still does not control Ukraine.

Rob Butler (Aylesbury) (Con): Today is Anzac Day, when we commemorate the sacrifice of Australians and New Zealanders in conflict. Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to those who lost their lives at Gallipoli, and since then? Does he agree that Australia and New Zealand are important partners in supporting Ukraine, not least with New Zealand's Hercules aircraft and crew, which recently arrived in the UK?

Mr Wallace: Yes, it is really important to remember the sacrifice made by New Zealand and Australia in a theatre of a war so far away. It is also important to recognise their solidarity with us on this conflict. Australia has given the United Kingdom funds to help purchase equipment for Ukraine. Australia and New Zealand recognise that this is a war of values, and a battle to show that the despot cannot and must not be allowed to win. They are doing everything they can to stand by us. We should not forget that, and we should also be very grateful for it.

Patrick Grady (Glasgow North) (SNP): How much Ministry of Defence spending in Ukraine is being counted as official development assistance? What steps is the Secretary of State taking to ensure that ODA spending by other Departments is not at the expense of other situations around the world where there is a desperate need for aid?

Mr Wallace: I understand the furrow that the hon. Gentleman is trying to plough, and I will send him a letter. I do not think any of the spending is being counted in that way, from what I can tell. It certainly does not appear, in my submission, that this is a diversion; the question is simply, "How can we help the Ukrainians? How much does it cost? Can we afford to take the risk with our own supplies? If not, can we buy the supplies from somewhere else, and will the Treasury reimburse us?" It is really simple.

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): The Secretary of State is right to salute the bravery of the heroic Ukrainian forces and highlight the failures of the Russians, but that should not in any way allow us to become complacent about the threat that Russia continues to pose. I hear what he said about the Ukrainians deciding where we go from here, but does he agree that there can be no return to normality in our relationship with Russia until it has got out of all the areas that it has invaded in this invasion?

Mr Wallace: There can be no return to normality for President Putin and his inner circle. What they have done, despite international warnings from presidents and prime ministers who endlessly asked them not to do it, is build their own cage—and they are living in it. From my point of view, they need to remain in it.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): We have already seen that the war in Ukraine will not be brief, and Vladimir Putin's intentions will not be limited. With that in mind, are the Government beginning to look strategically, long-term, at the implications of the situation in Ukraine and the ambitions of Vladimir Putin?

Mr Wallace: There are two parts to that. The first is the need for some form of commission or get-together to plan Ukraine's long-term defence, its posture and how it will equip itself, because just like any other army, it will become exhausted and worn out. Also, it is important that we—not just Britain or the EU, but the international community—do not forget that when all this is over, we have to help Ukraine to rebuild over the long term. Russia is destroying things—one need only look at the photographs—and they will not be rebuilt in a few weeks. If the international community is serious about sending a message to Putin, it should do so, but not just militarily, now; this is also about long-term development, and access to economic freedoms and prosperity. That will demonstrate the difference between Russia and Ukraine.

Wayne David (Caerphilly) (Lab): In the very near future, it is extremely likely that Sweden and Finland will apply to join NATO. What commitments has our country given to stand by Finland and Sweden, should they face Russian aggression?

Mr Wallace: I talked earlier about the joint expeditionary force. Irrespective of whether those countries joined NATO, it would be incomprehensible to me if Britain did not, for example, go the aid of Sweden should it be attacked or invaded. It is a fellow European country with huge links to our country, the same values and so on. One of the reasons why the JEF—Finland and Sweden, plus eight NATO countries—is such an important grouping of nations is that we totally share the same values, and have the same professionalism in our armed forces and the same capabilities. Britain signed a memorandum of understanding with Sweden—originally, I think, in 2014—to further our defensive co-operation, and we are working to see what more we can do in the near future.

Jonathan Edwards (Carmarthen East and Dinefwr) (Ind): Ukraine is facing a financial crisis, with the *Financial Times* reporting that revenues are at around half of pre-war levels, and the fiscal gap for this month alone is projected to be \$7 billion. The International Monetary Fund has approved an administered account for countries to make donations through a secure vehicle. Has the UK made a contribution to the account? What efforts are being made, together with partners, to provide Ukraine with hard cash?

Mr Wallace: We have given, I think, more than £100 million in aid, but I will write to the hon. Gentleman with details about the IMF fund. He is right that we need to focus on that as much as on military aid. The United States announced a significant amount of funding for Ukraine only over the weekend.

Margaret Ferrier (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind): I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. The International Atomic Energy Agency has announced that it will undertake a mission to Chernobyl, after gunfire in the area raised concerns about the potential for a major radiation leak. Will the Secretary of State say what discussions he has had with the IAEA, and what it expects to find?

Mr Wallace: If I am not mistaken, the IAEA's relationship is with the Foreign Office and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. However, I will happily find out the answer for the hon. Member. Of course, we are concerned about activity around Chernobyl and other things. I do not think that Russia did what it did around Chernobyl by accident.

Football Governance

Mr Speaker: Before I call the Minister to make a statement on the Government's response to the fan-led review of football governance, I must put on record my disappointment that the Government have apparently already trailed their response extensively to the media. It seems to me that we have a courteous Minister, but somehow Downing Street seems to ignore him and decides to put everything that the House should hear first out to the media. It is not satisfactory. It is discourteous, not only to the House but to the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch), who has put in so much work in this area. It is very disappointing that anybody could believe that she should be cut out. When she catches my eye, she will be given more time to put her case about all the hard work that she has done.

This might just be a lesson for the Government to stop being discourteous. Think about the people who get elected—those on both sides of the House. I do not blame the Minister, as I know that Downing Street loves getting these messages out on a Sunday night, but why has it not recognised that even the Prime Minister is a Member of this House? It might be good for us all to hear things first. As I say, the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford would not normally be given extra time, but I reassure her and the House that more time will be given to her.

4.38 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Nigel Huddleston): First, I accept your comments, Mr Speaker—I certainly mean no discourtesy to this House—and I will have discussions about them with colleagues. With permission, I would like to make a statement setting out the Government's response to the independent fan-led review of football governance. This is further to my written statement issued earlier today. The Government's response has been provided in hard copy to the Vote Office, and I will place a copy in the Libraries of both Houses.

First, I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) for all her hard work, and indeed I thank the entire panel for their diligence on the review. I also thank colleagues from across the House and all stakeholders who have debated these matters at length—in many cases for a number of years. Most importantly, I want to thank the dozens of clubs and thousands of football fans from across the country who contributed to the review. They sit at the heart of the review and our response to it.

Football is a defining part of our national identity and has been a central part of British life for over a century. English football has had some extraordinary success. Our premier league has grown to become the most watched sports league in the world. However, good governance of our clubs has not kept pace with that expansion and development. The football pyramid has come under threat in recent times, with clubs risking collapse. Many fans have felt alienated from their clubs. It is obvious that reform is needed to keep our national game alive and thriving.

The Government have already taken strong action to support the reform of football. This includes financial support to help clubs through the pandemic, and amendments to competition law to provide financial

stability to English football. We also committed to undertaking a review of football governance in our manifesto—a review led by fans, for fans, to protect the future of professional football in this country. In late November, the independent fan-led review of football governance published its report. I am today pleased to announce the publication of the Government's response to that report. Our response acknowledges the clear case for reform and sets out our approach to moving forward. It marks a significant step in protecting our national game. Today, I am confirming that the Government will introduce an independent regulator for football, in law, as part of a wider plan for reform. An independent regulator is just one of 10 strategic recommendations set out in the report. I am pleased to say that the Government will endorse all of the review's strategic recommendations. Some are for the Government to implement, and some are for the football authorities to take forward. We expect them to take action, too.

As well as surveying thousands of fans directly, the review benefited from over 100 hours of engagement, involving representatives of over 130 clubs. This all built a clear picture of the challenges in the game. The review, and our response, are for the fans who make our national game what it is, and without whom football would be nothing. To coincide with the response, we are also publishing the findings of a Government-commissioned study by academics and football finance experts Kieran Maguire and Christina Philippou. Their analysis confirms that there is a widespread issue of fragile finances across English football clubs, and that action is needed to secure the sustainability of the game.

The sum total of our plans amounts to significant reform. In our response, we are committing to publishing a White Paper in the summer, which will set out further details of the implementation of this reform. Through a new financial regulation regime, the regulator will usher in a new era of financial competency and sustainability for our clubs. We also recognise that who runs our football clubs goes hand in hand with how they are run, so the regulator will establish a new owners and directors test, replacing the three existing tests, in order to ensure that only good custodians and qualified directors can run these vital community assets. The strengthened test will include a new integrity test. Recent events have shown the importance of our having confidence in the custodians of our football clubs.

Fans have a crucial role to play in the future of football in this country, and for that reason we believe that fans should be properly consulted by their clubs on key decisions. The regulator will therefore set a licence condition that sets out a minimum level of fan engagement to ensure that clubs are meaningfully engaging fans. We also acknowledge the crucial role that football clubs play in the identity of this country, particularly in the communities that are so intrinsically linked with their local team. The stadium, colours and badge are an integral part of that. We therefore believe that they should have additional protections. That includes a mechanism requiring fans to consent before any changes are made to those key items.

Our manifesto commitment was instigated by the financial jeopardy that so many clubs were being pushed into. The long-term health of professional football in this country is dependent on fairer distributions throughout the football pyramid. That is why we agree that the Premier League should strengthen its support across

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the football pyramid. We expect further action from the football authorities on this important recommendation. If they do not come to an agreement on financial flows through the pyramid, we reserve the right for the regulator to have powers in this area.

Football also needs to ensure that there is a clear and supportive pathway for players. That is why we agree with the recommendation that the welfare of players exiting the game needs to be better protected. I have asked the football authorities to act with urgency on that matter.

Taking forward those recommendations and securing the future of football is a key priority of this Government, but that priority stretches beyond Government. The review contains actions specifically for the Football Association, the Premier League, the English Football League and the Professional Footballers' Association, on which we expect to see action, without waiting for Government legislation.

The majority of the review looked at issues related to the men's game. Women's football has gone from strength to strength over the past few years, with a record number of tickets sold for this year's European women's championship to be hosted here in England. The Government have shown that we are right behind women's sport in every aspect, so we will launch a dedicated review of women's football in this country.

As well as the women's football review, I am pleased to confirm that the FIFA women's World cup and UEFA European women's championship finals will be added to the listed events regime. As a result, the tournaments will continue to be available to free-to-air television broadcasters, hopefully inspiring the next generation of Lucy Bronzes and Ellen Whites.

The changes that we have set out represent a real turning point for football and will have a considerable impact on clubs. It is crucial that we get this right to give confidence to fans and future investors. That is why we will set out further details on how reforms will be implemented in a White Paper in the summer, and we are committed to legislating to make football reform a reality. We will implement the reforms as soon as possible.

We are paving the way for a more sustainable, accountable and responsible future for football—one that ensures that fans are front and centre of our national game. I commend this statement to the House.

4.47 pm

Jeff Smith (Manchester, Withington) (Lab): I thank the Minister for his statement and for advance sight of it. I also thank the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) and all those who contributed to her excellent and timely review of our national game.

I welcome the confirmation that the Government are supporting the strategic recommendations of the fan-led review. Labour has been calling for the plans to be fully implemented ever since the review was published and, in particular, for the independent regulator for English football, which is key to reform. But however the Government try to spin it, today's announcement of a White Paper and further delay will come as a disappointment to fans.

The fan-led review was a rigorous and wide-ranging piece of work, based on engagement with every possible interest group alongside more than 20,000 individual fan responses to a survey, and supported by an expert advisory panel from the world of football. As the Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the hon. Member for Croydon South (Chris Philp), rightly said when doing the media rounds this morning,

“there has been huge input from fans up and down the country”.

Eleven years after the Culture, Media and Sport Committee report, three years after the collapse of Bury, a year after the disastrous European super league proposal and five months after the publication of the fan-led review, we do not need further consultation or a road map. We need a clear timetable and new legislation to be included in the Queen's Speech in 15 days' time.

The need for urgent action is clear. Oldham Athletic were relegated from the English football league on Saturday after years of mismanagement ending in fan protests. Derby County are in ongoing crisis and were relegated from the championship this week—not because the players are not good enough, but because of bad owner management and governance. Those two historic clubs, founding members of the premier and football leagues respectively, have been hit hard because of reckless owners.

In the wake of the Ukraine war and sanctions, Chelsea are in limbo. Many supporters want the review recommendations to be incorporated in the club's sale. The Government are missing an opportunity to embed fan representation, as recommended in the review, and give supporters a say on changes to the heritage assets of their club.

The Minister's statement, although welcome, left some questions unanswered. The Minister could not rule out to the Select Committee recently that a regulator might be located within the FA. Can he do so now? We believe that it is vital for the regulator to be truly independent.

The statement confirmed that the Government are accepting all 10 of the strategic recommendations. That is good, but can the Minister confirm that the Government support the 47 detailed recommendations in the report? Perhaps more importantly, are there any that they do not support?

The announcement today will do nothing to break the impasse on the redistribution of funding. The fan-led review gave the Premier League and the EFL until the end of 2021 to work it out between them, but that has not happened: the bodies have not been able to come to an agreement for months. If they fail, the review proposes action from the regulator, but on the current timescale—unless the Minister can tell me otherwise—a regulator will not be in place until at least 2024. At what point will he intervene urgently to get the Premier League and the EFL to an agreement?

The dedicated review of women's football, which was an important recommendation in the review, is really welcome. Can the Minister give any more detail on who will chair it, what timescale it might follow and how its recommendations will be taken forward in due course?

The Government have said all along, quite rightly, that they accept in principle the proposals in the review, so let us get on with it. We are already too late for Bury, Derby and Oldham. If further clubs go under or suffer

because of delays to the implementation of the review, responsibility will rest partly on the Government's shoulders. The Labour party is happy to work with the Government to find space for legislation sooner rather than later. The right result is already clear; we do not need extra time. For the future of our national game, let us see legislation in the Queen's Speech and action as quickly as possible.

Nigel Huddleston: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his comments. May I put on record my thanks and gratitude for the genuinely positive and constructive tone that we have had from him, from the Opposition DCMS team and from Members across the House?

There is a clear cross-party intent to move forward. I can say definitely to the hon. Gentleman that there is no intent to delay: we want to move forward as soon as possible. A White Paper is not an unusual step to take in bringing legislation to the House. It will also give others the opportunity to make additional comments as we move to the final stages of what is one of the most fundamental transformations in English football.

It is important that we get this right. It is incredibly complex: we will be bringing in incredible rigour and discipline, particularly financial discipline, for clubs, which has not happened before. If we were expected to bring in regulation tomorrow, it could cause considerable difficulty for clubs that may not currently be in a position to prove the level of discipline and rigour in their finances that we would seek in a new world with more financial regulation. We have to do it at the right time and give adequate notice. That being said, we want to move at speed, and the team at DDCMS are all working on many of the aspects that the hon. Gentleman raises.

On many of the hon. Gentleman's points, further details will be coming in the White Paper. In the next few weeks, we will also announce further details on the review of the women's game; the game has some similar issues but many different issues, so it is right that there is a separate review. We will continue to put pressure on the Premier League and others to move forward in the many areas that the hon. Gentleman identified that do not require regulation. For example, we expect many entities to move forward in the areas of financial distribution, fan engagement and heritage assets. Football entities can continue to move those matters forward, and I am sure that the whole House will continue to bring pressure on them to do so. I thank the hon. Gentleman for his genuinely constructive comments and welcome the overall support that we are hearing from the Opposition.

Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): I am grateful to Mr Speaker for his comments at the start of the statement. I appreciate that with Chorley in the play-offs, he has a deep interest in the future of football.

With great community clubs such as Buckhurst Hill and Epping Town in your constituency, Madam Deputy Speaker, I know that you share the concerns and thoughts of many colleagues. I will not test your patience; I will take just a minute or so, because I recognise that hon. Members have a lot to say and I know that I will be having a meeting with the Minister to go through some of the detail of the report.

Regardless of any result on the pitch over the weekend, today is a good day for football fans. There has long been concern about the regulation and governance of football clubs throughout the English football pyramid, much of which has come on the back of various crises that in some cases have seen the disintegration of clubs as a result of financial mismanagement. That led to the fan-led review of football, which I was privileged to chair.

I am enormously pleased that the Government have accepted, or support, all 10 strategic recommendations set out in the review, including the fundamental proposal to establish an independent regulator free from the vested and conflicted interests that currently govern the game. It is perfectly possible to celebrate the global success of English football while at the same time having deep concerns about the fragility of the wider foundations of the game. The implementation of better regulation, stronger governance and more involvement for fans will not threaten the success of our game, but will make it stronger than ever.

All that said, I am concerned about the timeframe for implementation, and—with your indulgence, Madam Deputy Speaker—seek clarity on a few points.

Will the Minister confirm that the White Paper will be published this side of the summer recess? "Summer" can mean a lot of things in Government parlance, including, quite often, what we, the public, think of as autumn. Will the Minister rule out the housing of the independent regulator in the FA? Can he clarify whether the owners' and directors' test will be split into two, as recommended in the review? Does he share my disappointment that there has been no progress in respect of discussions between the football authorities on redistribution and parachute payments? Will he outline his position on the transfer solidarity levy? Finally, the review was clear about the fact that fans should have a right of consent as part of the golden share on heritage items, but the Government's response was less clear in that regard. Will the Minister confirm that there will be a veto for fans on heritage matters?

There is much in today's announcement on which to congratulate the Government, and I pay particular tribute to the officials who have worked so hard on this response. Momentum is on the side of reform, but, like most football fans, I am always fearful of two things: one-nil score lines with time to play, and games that head into extra time. Given that both football and politics can be volatile and vulnerable to sudden change, I urge the Government to nail the win for millions of fans across the pyramid, and deliver the reforms as quickly as possible.

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for all her work, not just her work on the recent review but the passion for football that she has shown ever since she came into Parliament—and, indeed, before. I also thank her for acknowledging the hard work of the officials who, in many cases, have been working on this for a number of years.

My hon. Friend was right to draw attention to the complexities involved. I completely understand the potential frustration over the timing of implementation, but, as I said to the hon. Member for Manchester, Withington (Jeff Smith), this is a complex process. However, we will be producing a White Paper, and we will be outlining

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further details shortly. I note my hon. Friend's comments about the definition of "summer", and I will put the pressure on in order to bring back further information as soon as possible.

I think that in her report my hon. Friend left open the possibility of the FA's being a home for the regulator at some time in the future. We explicitly did not rule in or out any individual entity, but there will clearly be requirements in terms of the scope, responsibilities, duties and purpose of the regulator, and it is therefore highly likely that some entities will be eligible and others will not. I shall be able to comment on that in due course, in particular to the Select Committee. Many members of that Committee, and indeed many Members of the House, have expressly said that they would not like the FA to take on those responsibilities, although it will obviously continue to have other responsibilities.

My hon. Friend referred to financial redistributions. The Secretary of State and I had meetings with Rick Parry of the English Football League and Richard Masters of the Premier League just last week, when we reiterated the need for them to reach some agreement as a matter of urgency. As per my hon. Friend's recommendation, if they do not do so we will act, and we expect to see action before the White Paper is released in the summer. We are hoping to see movement, but if there is no movement, dealing with that will be another role for the regulator.

There will indeed be licensing conditions in these areas, including conditions relating to fan engagement and to heritage assets. The precise nature of those will be determined, and could vary depending on the league and the level in the club. We do not want to be too prescriptive at this point.

I look forward to engaging with my hon. Friend on many occasions in the coming weeks.

Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): I, too, pay tribute to the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch). I really do not understand what the Minister expects to find out from a White Paper that the fan-led review did not find out. What is it that he is seeking to eke out from whoever did not respond to or support the fan-led review? He says that finances are fragile. He has been in the room with the Premier League and the EFL together, as he has just said, so he knows that they are miles apart on the issue of parachute payments. They are distorting the football league and that needs to end. The Government need to make a decision about parachute payments and not keep kicking the can down the road and relying on an agreement between the Premier League and the football league.

Nigel Huddleston: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his passion for all things football, but I would not want to underestimate the complexity of what we are trying to do here. The need for a White Paper is not an unusual part of the parliamentary process. In fact, I suspect that if we had not proposed a White Paper, I would now be accused by the Opposition of not bringing one in. It is an important part of the process. We can announce the regulator and the scope of the regulator, but we then come to the complexities of its scale, where is it located, what its roles and responsibilities are and what the

sanctioning regime and appeals process should be. All those things still need to be thought out, and we have to ensure that we do it carefully because we have one chance to get this right.

Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con): I, too, pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) for a fantastic piece of work. I know that football fans across the country will be thrilled today. I am thinking about Leek Town, in the eighth tier of the pyramid, which will be very pleased to see the pyramid being strengthened by this work. I want to ask a question about the regulator. In my experience, regulators do not always deliver what Government Ministers want them to deliver. Given that this is an issue of finance, may I urge the Minister to look at successful financial regulation and perhaps base the regulator model on that?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my right hon. Friend for those comments; I know that she has deep expertise and interest in this area. She is absolutely right, and we will be looking at models as we develop the regulator role. We have seen the Financial Conduct Authority, for example, and its role with the integrity test. There are a lot of things out there that we will genuinely try to learn from, so that we do not have to start from scratch. We will leverage expertise—there is considerable expertise at DCMS and throughout Government on establishing regulators—but we will also learn the lessons of the past.

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP): I speak here perhaps less as a Scottish MP and more as probably the sole Glasgow East member of Fleetwood Town supporters club. I want to draw attention to pages five and six of the statement, in which the Minister talks about financial distribution through the pyramid. The fact that he has not given that power to the regulator is something that would alarm a lot of people, and would he agree that this is not so much a parachute payment as a trampoline payment?

Nigel Huddleston: As I outlined, and as the review recommends, we should let football try to find a solution wherever possible. If it cannot find a solution, there will be a backstop. That is what we are proposing.

Damian Green (Ashford) (Con): I congratulate the Minister, particularly on his wisdom in recognising that when faced with a series of suggestions from my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch), it is easier and quicker just to say yes straightaway. I am a fan of a team in the championship, Reading, that is delighted—and quite relieved—to be in the championship next season as well. What all fans of teams at every level want is a greater voice for fans, better management, better tests for people who take over clubs, and also to maintain the standards of the premier league as the genuinely world-class competition that it has become since it was created. Can my hon. Friend reassure me that at all levels of the game, including at the top, there will be benefits from the new system of governance?

Nigel Huddleston: My right hon. Friend makes some pertinent and wise points, including his first point. He is absolutely right that football is a British success story, and the premier league in particular is something we should all be proud of. It is incredibly successful around

the world and brings in a lot of money for the UK economy. Establishing greater stability and sustainability across the whole of the football pyramid is good for football overall, including the premier league. The premier league does distribute money, and we are grateful for that, but we would like to see it do a little bit more.

Chi Onwurah (Newcastle upon Tyne Central) (Lab): I have repeatedly raised with the Minister the impact on Newcastle United fans of the Premier League's arrogance and lack of accountability, so I welcome his recognition of the need for reform. Will he confirm whether this further delay is at the behest of the Premier League? Does he agree that it is unacceptable for the Premier League to stand in the way of football fans, and that it is particularly distasteful given its policy director's recent fine for partying while football fans, and indeed the rest of the country, were in lockdown?

Nigel Huddleston: I am afraid the hon. Lady is misinterpreting what I have outlined today. We are pursuing a process, and we have not announced delays; we have announced a route forward. A White Paper is a perfectly reasonable step that we have to take because these are complex issues. We will move forward on all these important areas.

Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): If football clubs were already trading within the rules of their competitions, as my hon. Friend knows, many of them would not get into difficulty. Will he confirm the key points of principle that the regulator will have the power to access real-time financial information from the clubs to see whether they are trading within the rules and that the owners and directors test will not only apply at the point of purchase? He has spoken of licensing conditions several times. Can he confirm that, from the outset, the regulator will be issuing licences that can be rescinded if the clubs do not comply?

Nigel Huddleston: I can confirm each of those points, particularly the last one. A licensing regime is exactly that: a person must abide by the conditions in order to get a licence. My hon. Friend's other points are similarly accurate, including on the principle of an owners and directors test. One problem is that there is an owners and directors test only when a club is sold. We will be looking at greater frequency, for the reasons he outlined.

Charlotte Nichols (Warrington North) (Lab): I am sure the Minister will join me in congratulating Warrington Rylands, who won promotion over the weekend as champions of northern premier league west, and in sending best wishes to Warrington Town, who are in the play-offs tomorrow for promotion from the northern premier league.

Both teams aspire to become league clubs, which would be absolutely huge for football in Warrington, but media reports suggest that the Government plan to leave the redistribution of wealth throughout the football pyramid to the football authorities, rather than implementing the review's recommendation for a solidarity transfer levy. Given that, after months, the Premier League and the EFL have not been able to agree on this recommendation, will the Minister personally intervene to secure a solution rather than waiting for action from a regulator that does not yet exist?

Nigel Huddleston: I join the hon. Lady in congratulating the Warrington teams—there is obviously something in the water up there.

I repeat that the Secretary of State and I have already had conversations with the Premier League and the EFL, and we have requested that they work together to try to find a solution on redistribution. If they do not come to a conclusion, we reserve the right for that to be part of the regulator's responsibilities. I make it clear that there will be changes to financial distribution. It is a matter of when and exactly how, but it will happen.

Siobhan Baillie (Stroud) (Con): I join the praise for my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) for her incredible work for football. As she says, this is a good day for football fans.

I also extend my congratulations to Forest Green Rovers, who were promoted to League One this weekend. There are some very happy local fans, and fan engagement has been crucial to getting to this point and to influencing the review's recommendations. Will football fans be able to comment further and be heard ahead of the legislation coming before the House?

Nigel Huddleston: I congratulate Forest Green Rovers, too. My hon. Friend makes the important point that we are all here because fans were at the heart of the review. I will continue to engage with both fans and clubs, which is one of the advantages of a White Paper. As we get closer to the final details just before legislation, there will be an opportunity for fans to comment, which is good.

Ian Mearns (Gateshead) (Lab): I also thank and congratulate the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch). I declare an interest as chair of the all-party parliamentary group for football supporters, the secretariat of which is provided by the Football Supporters Federation.

The review was published in November, and we welcome the announcement of an independent regulator, but the list of failures, points deductions and relegations grows. The English Football League's clubs are laden with debt and outstanding receipts on players' wages, and the FA is in hock to the Premier League and is paralysed by self-interest and sectional interests. Why the delay? The fans of many clubs want to know. When we say "act now", we mean: bring forward a Bill that can be discussed in Parliament in the next Session. The review included significant consultation, so why delay any further? Such a delay has the potential to allow more horses to bolt and again it might be too late to close stable doors. Let me add that Gateshead play away to Chorley next Monday, hoping to clinch the national league north title.

Nigel Huddleston: I fear we may be playing club bingo in the Chamber today, Madam Deputy Speaker. I assure the hon. Gentleman that the intention is to move forward as soon and as fast as possible, but I would not want to underplay the complexity of what we are doing or the scale of the changes we are proposing today—that requires that we get this right.

Chris Grayling (Epsom and Ewell) (Con): I join right hon. and hon. Members in congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford on doing a fantastic job and having a real influence in the

[Chris Grayling]

future direction of the game. I refer Members to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests, as a regular, but very frustrated this season, Manchester United supporter. However, my focus today is very much on the small non-league clubs and even the mini leagues in the areas such as the one I represent, which drive the football pyramid. Their role is crucial in encouraging young people to get involved in playing football and involved in the sport. As the Minister puts together his White Paper, may I ask him to make sure that he has that in mind? We need to protect small clubs and the role they play in their communities and in encouraging a new generation into sport.

Nigel Huddleston: My right hon. Friend is making some important points. Of course we do not forget the importance of the grassroots and the non-league games, and the Government are investing in the grassroots, with new facilities right across the country. He makes a point about the viability of the overall pyramid and therefore the trickle down, including through schemes such as the Football Foundation. That is vital, which is why financial sustainability and success at the top is expected to help the entire pyramid.

Jamie Stone (Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross) (LD): I am a Scot and a highlander, so those in the Chamber will not be surprised to learn that I support Ross County. Ross County very nearly won a Scottish cup final but we were pipped to the post by Dundee United. It was 15 May 2010 and I remain deeply traumatised by the result; I was there and I was greatly saddened. My point is this: from little acorns mighty oaks can grow. It was not always thus with Ross County, as I can remember them being thrashed by Rangers in the 1960s—

David Linden (Glasgow East) (SNP) And Airdrie!

Jamie Stone: That is quite enough from the hon. Gentleman seated behind me. I accept what the Minister is saying about the Government's good intention on this front, but I seek reassurance that the clubs in the lower divisions are being consulted to the maximum point they can be, because they are vital to this equation being solved.

Nigel Huddleston: Yes, I assure the hon. Gentleman about that. More than 20,000 people responded to the review, and 120 clubs were also consulted. I travel up and down the country to consult clubs on an ongoing basis, as indeed pretty much everybody in the Chamber does. That always feeds back; the fans' views really matter to us here. He is also alluding to the point that success at the top absolutely needs to trickle down. It is vital that that works and we want all levels of football to excel.

Jack Brereton (Stoke-on-Trent South) (Con): I very much welcome these announcements. Our local clubs in Stoke-on-Trent, both Stoke City and Port Vale, are generally very well run and do huge amounts for our communities across the city. Does my hon. Friend therefore agree that it is important that we see this good practice and the investment that goes into our communities

rolled out across all clubs, that clubs lead by example and that they take from those fantastic examples we see in Stoke-on-Trent?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend is right that football clubs play a pivotal role in our communities, and not only in terms of the sport—we saw during the pandemic the role that they played. I recently had the privilege of going to some EFL awards, where it was communicated to me that more than 4 million hours of volunteering have been provided by just those 72 football clubs in the past year. What an incredible contribution that is, and long may it continue.

Cat Smith (Lancaster and Fleetwood) (Lab): Lancashire is home to many great football clubs, but we often have great rivalries. Last week, I received a letter from Andy Higgins, the chairperson of Blackpool Supporters Trust, and the week before that I met Steve Curwood, the chief exec at Fleetwood Town football club. The one thing they agree on is that the financial pyramid is not working. With the Premier League and EFL in an absolute logjam, is the Minister perhaps naively optimistic in thinking that the football authorities will be able to resolve this issue internally?

Nigel Huddleston: I am definitely usually a “glass half full” rather than “glass half empty” person, which I think is a good way to go through life. I do not think I can be accused of being naively optimistic, but I do believe that the football authorities have a responsibility and an obligation to put their house in order and take action. If they do not, action will be taken against them.

Stephen Hammond (Wimbledon) (Con): AFC Wimbledon is a living example of a football club that has been rebuilt by fans and the community after its heritage was taken away. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) for all her work. In her contribution, she mentioned how the Government's definition of “summer” is sometimes moveable; the Government's definition of “engagement” is also sometimes moveable. Will the Minister be clear that when the White Paper comes out, there will be a condition to set out clearly what fans should expect from their engagement?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for his comments. He is right that engagement could mean different things to different people. That is not necessarily a bad thing, as long as we set a minimum level, and that will be the condition. We will look at licensing conditions, and fan engagement for, say, a top-end premier league club might be different from that for a club further down the pyramid. Indeed, expectations of engagement might also change. We will set some minimal conditions and, although one model may not fit all, there will definitely be changes.

Dan Carden (Liverpool, Walton) (Lab): May I say well done to the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch)? My hon. Friend the Member for Liverpool, West Derby (Ian Byrne) would have liked to be here—he has done a lot with fans and supporters—but he is at a Select Committee hearing.

For all of us who want to see fan engagement embedded in the game, there will be real concern about the Government's delay. Will the Minister reassure fans that in the time we are waiting for legislation, vested interests will not have Ministers' ears, and that we will see the implementation of all the recommendations in the fan-led review?

Nigel Huddleston: The very fact that we are making the announcements we are making today, which are fundamental to and transformative for English football, shows that vested interests have not had a huge say. The review was led by fans and what was in their best interests, and that will continue.

Jason McCartney (Colne Valley) (Con): I am a very happy Huddersfield Town season ticket holder as we get ready for the championship play-offs. I am also delighted as a Golcar United non-league season ticket holder, because the village was promoted from the north-west counties league division one this season. However, I am aware of the misery suffered by the fans of other clubs, such as Derby, Bury and, as we saw at the weekend, Oldham Athletic. I welcome the clear commitment to fairer funding among the leagues and to the introduction of an independent regulator, but will the Minister say how the review and the proposals will ensure that the fans of local clubs do not have to suffer again the poor governance that has put their clubs under threat and even seen them go out of existence?

Nigel Huddleston: My hon. Friend makes valid points. That is at the heart of what we are doing. The role of the regulator is to be there not in and of itself but for a purpose, which is to make sure that football is sustainable in the long run. Many elements, including financial regulation, governance, engagement with fans and the treatment of heritage assets, will be fundamental to the licensing condition, and there will, of course, be a new owners and directors test. All that together should ensure there is much less chance of clubs getting into difficulty, whether financial or related to their treatment of the fanbase. Our package should achieve the very things my hon. Friend is looking for.

Debbie Abrahams (Oldham East and Saddleworth) (Lab): I too pay tribute to my friend the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) for all the work that she has done. Unfortunately, as we have already heard, Oldham Athletic is the first founding member of the Premier League to drop out of the football league. It has hit many of the town's fans hard.

I share the concerns about the delay, but I also have a question to ask on behalf of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyne (Angela Rayner) and my hon. Friend the Member for Oldham West and Royton (Jim McMahon). Can the Minister be more specific about how long it will take to reverse the position of wealth sitting at the top of football and failing to be redistributed down to the lower leagues, and of allowing rogue owners to use clubs as their personal playthings?

Nigel Huddleston: I have a great deal of sympathy for Oldham fans. The hon. Lady makes some important points. Many of the proposals we have outlined should help to ensure that that kind of situation does not

happen in future. As I have said repeatedly today, what I am announcing is progress and how we are moving forward. I have to push back against the narrative of delay; this is about how we are moving forward.

Justin Tomlinson (North Swindon) (Con): I too pay tribute to my fellow Panini football sticker collector, my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch), for the fantastic work that she has done and for the fact that there is general consensus on the majority of the recommendations. We must not lose sight of the fact that the premier league is the most successful football league in the world, while the championship is the fourth-biggest league. If MPs are the answer, that fills me with trepidation. There is a reason why we are not all football managers and pundits. Does the Minister agree that the Premier League, the EFL and the FA need to read the room and crack on pretty quickly?

Nigel Huddleston: I agree with my hon. Friend, and we have sent that message. I am not sure I agree that there are no football pundits in this House, however; I think there are quite a few sitting just a few feet from me.

Kim Leadbeater (Batley and Spennings) (Lab): I am very happy Huddersfield Town fan today, following our latest victory, but I hope the Minister will join me in also congratulating Liversedge football club in my constituency, who were crowned league champions at the weekend. It is a fine example of a community club doing lots of good things in the constituency.

Having recently joined the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) on the pitch against the Afghan women's football team, may I say what a great team player she is, and praise her for her excellent report? I support the report's call for a new code for football club governance. Will the Minister ensure that such a code will apply to all clubs and include additional minimum requirements relating to directors, equality and diversity, fan engagement, welfare, and stewardship?

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Lady raises many points. I also had the pleasure of meeting the Afghan team the other day, and I am glad to hear her highlight the importance of clubs in our communities. Further details on the White Paper are coming. I am glad that she mentioned equality, diversity and inclusion, because they were part of the report, and we will look at ensuring that EDI plans are in place. More information is coming; look out for it in the White Paper.

Martin Vickers (Cleethorpes) (Con): It would be remiss of me not to mention the fact that Grimsby Town, the club I have supported for 60 years, play in Cleethorpes. We have talked a lot about different tiers, and the one thing I fear is that we might have too many tiers of regulation. Clearly, the FA and other bodies will play a part in regulating the sport, and the report talks about somebody ensuring that the regulator uses its powers proportionately, so who will regulate the regulator?

Nigel Huddleston: The points raised by my hon. Friend are exactly why we are doing the right thing by providing further details in the White Paper, so that we can see exactly what the regulator's remit and responsibilities will be. He also raises the important point that there

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other entities and bodies in football and we need to be clear where the roles and responsibilities lie. We have a pretty good picture of that now, and over the next few weeks and months I am sure it will become even clearer, hence the White Paper.

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): Bristol City are key to both the culture and the economy of south Bristol. I recently met the chief executive, who is keen on the work done by the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) and wants to see it progress. Rivalry in the city is intense, but will the Minister join me in supporting the work of Caz May and Lucy Ford, who are fans of Bristol Rovers and the founders of Her Game Too? May I press the Minister for details of the review of women's football? I hope that the work of Her Game Too, and all the women and girls involved in grassroots football, are included in that review.

Nigel Huddleston: I thank the hon. Lady. She is right that ensuring a proper review of women's football is of pivotal importance, and I know that has the support of the whole House. We will announce more information within the next few weeks. The scope will be different from the review of the men's game, because the issues are slightly different. Football finance is always there, but there are other things, particularly sponsorship visibility and so on, that are pivotally important. I ask her to be patient a little bit longer and we will provide more information in due course.

Mrs Pauline Latham (Mid Derbyshire) (Con): The proud and historic Derby County football club has had a torrid time over the past seven months. It has a named buyer now, but it is not out of the woods. I ask the Minister: is this the black and the white, and can he therefore guarantee that these proposals will ensure that no club will close in the future?

Nigel Huddleston: I have had many conversations with my hon. Friend about the situation at Derby County and I know how passionate she and several other colleagues are about the situation there. We are very confident that, with the new regime and the independent regulator looking particularly at financial regulation, the chances of clubs going into administration again and getting into that difficulty would be considerably reduced because there would be much closer scrutiny of the finances. As my hon. Friend the Member for Folkestone and Hythe (Damian Collins) mentioned earlier, ongoing, real-time scrutiny of the finances will be pivotal. However, circumstances can change and emergencies can happen both domestically and internationally. Can we guarantee that these measures will ensure that no club will ever go under? No, we cannot, but they will be massively impactful in significantly reducing the chances of that happening.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): Since the Glazer family became the owners of Manchester United, they have taken more than £1 billion out of the club, much of it to service debts they incurred buying the club in the first place, which they subsequently loaded on to the club. I do not think that kind of toxic business model has any place in football or any other

business, so I hope the Minister will be able to confirm that that kind of arrangement will be banned altogether under the new regulator.

Nigel Huddleston: As I have said, financial regulation, looking in detail at the finances and sustainability of clubs and at how they are spending their money, will be at the heart of the independent regulator's role.

Scott Benton (Blackpool South) (Con): The Minister recently visited Blackpool FC, a club that he will know has suffered more than most at the hands of an irresponsible owner. I am pleased to see the Government endorsing the key recommendations of the fan-led review, including the owners and directors test. However, he will know that financial circumstances, views and attitudes can change over time, including for the owners of clubs. Does he agree that the test should be applied periodically, rather than merely when a club is bought and sold?

Nigel Huddleston: I very much enjoyed visiting both my hon. Friend's constituency and the club. He is absolutely right. As was highlighted in the report, we need to ensure that the owners and directors test is not just static, happening when a club is sold, but is regularly reviewed, because as he outlined, circumstances change. We will look at that. I think the report suggested every three years, and that sounds sensible to me, but we will provide more information in the White Paper.

Alison McGovern (Wirral South) (Lab): The only thing better than working on this fan-led review of football with the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) is being on the football pitch with her. She has been brilliant, as I am sure we all agree.

I know you will be concerned, Madam Deputy Speaker, given historical injustices in the world of football, that women should not be made to wait a moment longer than necessary. Further to the answer given to my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth), will the Minister please explain why the chair and terms of reference for the women's football review have not been announced? Can he correct that situation now at the Dispatch Box and tell us who the chair will be and when we will have in our hands the terms of reference? Women who care about football in this country do not want to wait any longer.

Nigel Huddleston: I can assure the hon. Lady that women in sport is one of my top priorities. When I became Sports Minister, one of the first things I did was to set up a women in sport working group, which is making considerable progress, and I am very proud and very appreciative of all the people involved in it. She will have to be a little bit patient, as I cannot announce now, at the Dispatch Box, the chair and the scope, although she will understand that that information will be released very soon. However, that does not mean that this is not a priority; it absolutely is.

Huw Merriman (Bexhill and Battle) (Con): I refer to my entry in the register.

A few years ago I was lucky enough to secure an Adjournment debate, when my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) was in the Minister's position answering, and we talked about the success of the premier league—the 100,000 jobs that are directly held through it, the £7.6 billion it delivers to the

UK economy, and the £3.6 billion it delivers to the Exchequer. There is nothing of that nature in the Government's response. Can the Minister confirm that nothing in this response will harm and undermine the great export that is the premier league?

Nigel Huddleston: I thank my hon. Friend for that. In fact, I think I was PPS-ing that very debate, so I remember it well. He is absolutely right. As I have said many times at the Dispatch Box today, the premier league is an incredible British success story that we need to celebrate and applaud, and make sure that it continues to be successful. Nothing that we are proposing today should jeopardise that. We are asking for some changes. We have been asking for reform in football for a very long time. Unfortunately the reason we have had to intervene, and are doing so, is that the Premier League has signally failed to act at the speed that we needed. The Premier League has an obligation and a responsibility to continue to make changes, including with financial flows. However, I do not believe that anything we are announcing today would jeopardise what is an incredible success story, and the premier league will continue to thrive—I am very confident of that.

Mr Toby Perkins (Chesterfield) (Lab): Anyone who has spoken to directors and owners of either Chesterfield football club or Steveale Miners Welfare football club will be very much aware that while there may be monstrous profits in the premier league, at every level below that there is huge indebtedness, and football as a sport requires benefactors to be constantly writing another cheque. That model is broken. I fear that what we have heard today is that this is being kicked into the next Parliament. I suspect that the premier league clubs listening to this will be reassured that they still have quite a bit of time before they are going to have their feet held to the fire. Can the Minister assure us that before this Parliament is over, in 2024 or whenever that may be, we will actually see reform on the statute book, and this will not just rely on the manifestos of parties at the next election, because it should be dealt with during this Parliament?

Nigel Huddleston: Both the Secretary of State and I have said previously that the intention is to bring this in before the end of this Parliament. As I say, we are working at speed on it. The hon. Gentleman's point about indebtedness is an important one. Many clubs are currently in a pretty precarious financial state. The financial regulation that we will bring in will require much more stability and sustainability, and proof of that sustainability. That is precisely why saying, "Let's bring this in tomorrow", could end up having the absolute opposite impact of what we intend.

Sara Britcliffe (Hyndburn) (Con): I welcome the Government's response to the fan-led review undertaken by my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch). I thank her for recently visiting Accrington Stanley and its supporters, and, in particular, its fantastic chairman, Andy Holt, who people know is quite a vocal supporter of the fan-led review. There are concerns about the timing of this, as the Minister has set out, but while we are waiting for the White Paper, will he make sure that we can continue to have discussions on the redistribution of finances?

Nigel Huddleston: It would not be a debate in Parliament about football without mentioning Accrington Stanley, so I am glad that that bingo item has been ticked off. My hon. Friend is right. As I said, we are continuing to put pressure on the Premier League to continue this dialogue and these conversations because we would like to see movement before the White Paper is released.

Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab): I am proud that Luton Town in my constituency has been at the forefront of calls for fan-led reform, particularly through campaigns such as Fair Game. As a Lutonian, and like many other fans, I have everything crossed that we will not just be in the play-offs but in the premier league this season. The Minister mentioned exiting the game. Many have the experience of devoting their lives to football—often at the expense of a proper education or other opportunities—only for that footballing career to end abruptly or to never really get started. That can lead often to severe mental health issues and shocking life outcomes. Can the Minister give further clarity over the expected White Paper's plans to better protect the welfare of players exiting the game, in particular those leaving football academies at a young age?

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Lady will be aware that I fought Luton South in the 2010 election, and Luton South fought back, as they say. I still have a great passion for Luton, which has gone up and down the leagues over many years. She is making an important point that my hon. Friend the Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch) highlighted in her report and that I referenced in my statement. This is one of the areas that is primarily the responsibility of football to sort out, but we are keeping a very close eye on it. The welfare of players is paramount, and we have seen too many failures in the past.

Jonathan Gullis (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Con): In the heart of the mother town sits Port Vale FC, which is situated within Stoke-on-Trent North, Kidsgrove and Talke. This review is so important, because we had a former owner, Norman Smurthwaite, who was a complete disaster and almost brought down this fantastic asset. It is thanks to Kevin and Carol Shanahan, who came in and bought the club, that we are now sitting in fourth place, one point off the automatic promotion spots in league two. As Carol says, we are simply a championship club that happens to be in league two at this moment. What is important, and what Carol wanted me to reiterate, is that we surely should be looking at the TV rights. Rather than having the EFL and the Premier League competing against each other, we should get them to join up and have a 70:30 split.

Nigel Huddleston: It was a pleasure to visit my hon. Friend's constituency and the club. He is making an important point, and as I have said repeatedly, financial distribution is something we are looking at. We want and require the Premier League to work with others on this, and if it does not act, we will look at alternative measures.

Alex Sobel (Leeds North West) (Lab/Co-op): I would also like to thank our friend, the hon. Member for Chatham and Aylesford (Tracey Crouch), for such excellent work on the review. Players give their lives for football.

[Alex Sobel]

My constituent, the former captain of Leeds United, Brian Deane, was woefully let down by the footballing authorities. Will player welfare be central to the new regulator? We have areas, such as the PFA, where there have been recent failings. Will the regulator take on board such issues as whether agents are fit and proper and whether the people who financially advise players are proper to do their work? Those issues are of importance to players playing the game.

Nigel Huddleston: The hon. Member is raising a variety of points. Some of those are likely to be the responsibility of the regulator, but many, such as player welfare, will continue to be the responsibility of other institutions within football.

Jane Hunt (Loughborough) (Con): Football is integral to Loughborough, whether that is throughout the town clubs, among students and in our exemplary Leicester City, which has its training ground in my constituency. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) will be very happy about that, I am sure. Today is indeed a good day for football fans. Will football fans at all levels be able to comment further on the proposals before the legislation is introduced, and if so, how?

Nigel Huddleston: The view of fans is pivotal. It has been so far, and it will continue to be as we develop the proposals. We will find ways to make sure that fans continue to be engaged in the conversations and discussions, and we will be announcing more information with the White Paper.

Mick Whitley (Birkenhead) (Lab): I have spoken before about the importance of ensuring a genuinely fair and equitable distribution of wealth throughout English football. The fan-led review rightly suggests that the Premier League should be doing more to support lower league and grassroots football, so that clubs, such as Tranmere Rovers in my constituency, can continue to nurture the next generation of home-grown talent. While the report's recommendation of a solidarity transfer levy is welcome, more needs to be done. Can the Minister inform the House what additional steps the Government will be taking to guarantee that clubs like Tranmere, which are so often the beating heart of their communities, see more of the wealth flowing down from the top of the football pyramid?

Nigel Huddleston: This is a common appeal we have heard today. Financial distribution in football is not as it should be at the moment. We are appealing to the Premier League to do more. If it does not—if it cannot come to some agreement—we will look at what the responsibilities of the regulator may be to take further action.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I thank the Minister for his statement.

Points of Order

5.39 pm

Owen Thompson (Midlothian) (SNP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. On 28 March, the House considered and agreed a motion in my name:

“That this House believes that the current process for claiming War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation payments is not fit for purpose and urges the Government to launch an independent inquiry into the system's failings.”

Following the debate, I submitted a parliamentary question to the Minister last week to seek clarity on what steps the Government are taking to establish the agreed inquiry. This morning, I received a written answer from the Minister for Defence People and Veterans that stated:

“There are no plans for an inquiry into the process for War Pensions or Armed Forces Compensation payments.”

The answer goes on to claim that the process

“remains effective, fit for purpose, and functioning satisfactorily.”

If what we heard in the debate is anything to go by, however, the Government's definition of satisfactory is far removed from mine.

Paragraph 20.96 of “Erskine May” tells us that,

“Every question, if agreed to, becomes either an order or a resolution of the House, and is recorded as such in the Journal of the House.”

On that basis, may I seek clarity that the outcome of the debate on 28 March is indeed recorded as a resolution of the House and seek your guidance on how to see that resolution translated into action?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I am grateful to the hon. Member for giving me notice of his point of order. As he will know, I am not responsible for ministerial answers. Although he has said that the resolution is the opinion of the House, that was a non-binding resolution. Again, taking that a step further, I am also not responsible for how Ministers respond to non-binding motions of the House. However, the Treasury Bench and the Whips will have heard what he has to say and I am sure that they will feed back his concerns.

Tracey Crouch (Chatham and Aylesford) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. At the start of the statement of the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, I was able to pay tribute to Mr Speaker's team Chorley and their promotion efforts and likewise to the community clubs in the constituency of Madam Deputy Speaker, the right hon. Member for Epping Forest (Dame Eleanor Laing). Could you give me some advice about how I can get on to the record your support for the Doncaster Rovers supporters club? I know that you have met it and allayed its concerns and desires for reform in football.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. Lady very much for her point of order. I would also like to put on record how pleased I was to have discussions with her about points that have been made to me about Doncaster Rovers, not only from the directors but from the club's supporters. I am grateful to her for that point of order and for all the work that she has done in that area.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. Further to the point of order of the hon. Member for Midlothian (Owen Thompson), having participated in that debate on the armed forces compensation scheme, there was certainly an indication and a flavour of intent from the Minister to correspond and respond positively to what the hon. Gentleman said. My concern is that I conveyed the flavour and intent from the debate in *Hansard* to my constituents, who will now feel grieved that what was shown and discussed that night cannot now be delivered. What can I do to highlight that matter and ensure that my constituents know that when this House says something, it actually means it?

Madam Deputy Speaker: I thank the hon. Gentleman for the point of order. Again, I stress that the reality is that it was a non-binding motion, but he has put on record his concerns regarding the matter. If he went to the Table Office, I am sure that the Clerks could give him advice on other ways that he might be able to raise it, such as at the next appropriate oral questions or at the business statement. I am afraid that I cannot add much more to what was said previously.

Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill

Consideration of Lords message

[Relevant documents: Second Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, Part 3 (Public Order), HC 331; Fifth Special Report of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Legislative Scrutiny: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill, Part 3 (Public Order): Government Response to the Committee's Second Report, HC 724.]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Financial privilege is not engaged by any of the items in the Lords message relating to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill.

Clause 55

IMPOSING CONDITIONS ON PUBLIC PROCESSIONS

5.45 pm

The Minister for Crime and Policing (Kit Malthouse): I beg to move,

That this House insists on its disagreement with Lords in their Amendment 73, insists on its Amendment 73C to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement to that Amendment, insists on its Amendment 74A to Lords Amendment 74, disagrees with the Lords in their Amendment 74B to that Amendment in lieu, disagrees with the Lords in their consequential Amendments 74C, 74D, 74E, 74F and 74G, insists on its disagreement with the Lords in their Amendment 87, insists on its Amendments 87A, 87B, 87C, 87D, 87E, 87F and 87H to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement to that Amendment but proposes Amendment (a) in lieu of Lords Amendment 73 and additional Amendment (b) to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement with the Lords in their Amendment 87.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following Government motion:

That this House insists on its disagreement with the Lords in their Amendment 80, insists on its Amendments 80A, 80B, 80C, 80D, 80E, 80F and 80H to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement with that Amendment, disagrees with the Lords in their Amendment 80J instead of the words left out by that Amendment but proposes additional Amendment (a) to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement with the Lords in their Amendment 80.

Kit Malthouse: I rise to speak to the motions in the name of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary, including the associated amendments in lieu. We return yet again, I have to say with a smidgin of ennui and irritation, to the issue of police powers to attach conditions to protests. It is disappointing that the debate on these provisions continues to be characterised by misinformation about what the Bill actually does and irrationality.

I shall start with the issue of noise. As I said in round 2 of ping-pong, at the Opposition's behest, we have added provisions to the Bill that can be used to limit noise and disruptive protests outside schools and vaccination centres. I am therefore at a loss to understand why they would not agree to these provisions outside, say, a convent, a hospital, an animal sanctuary or, God forbid, a factory. What happened to the workers' rights?

It cannot be that a protest can inflict any amount of noise on those living or working in the vicinity for prolonged periods of time, day or night. I agree that it

[Kit Malthouse]

would not be necessary or proportionate, for example, to attach conditions relating to the generation of noise to a procession that will pass a particular location within a matter of hours, but the same cannot be said of an ongoing raucous protest, perhaps encamped in a residential area, which includes the banging of drums and the use of loudhailers. It is intolerable that local residents should have to endure that day and night, and it is right that in those circumstances, the police should have the power to act. I do not understand why those residents' rights are so lightly set aside by the Opposition. When the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) rises to address the motions, I hope she will answer that question.

I can, however, assure the hon. Members for North Antrim (Ian Paisley) and for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson)—they questioned me on this in the last round—that there are no new powers here to restrict what is said and, for that matter, sung. These provisions are simply about the harm caused by excessive noise; the content is irrelevant. Of course, the existing criminal law relating to hate or intimidatory speech will continue to apply.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I have a real concern about Lords amendment 80. I am not sure that my concern, or the concerns of my hon. Friends the Members for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson), and for North Antrim (Ian Paisley), have been dispelled. Can the Minister give me an assurance in this House today, on the record in *Hansard*, that open-air or other events will not be affected? The letter of the law does not give that protection; sadly—this has been done in this country already—officers have the power to arrest those preaching the word of God. I seek an assurance from the Minister that on no occasion and under no circumstances will the opportunity to preach the gospel in the streets of this kingdom be in any way thwarted, reduced or restricted.

Kit Malthouse: As I have already explained, what is said is irrelevant for the purposes of this legislation. The Bill merely covers the distress that may be caused by the volume or persistence of the noise. The existing criminal law already covers content. If the content—obviously, not in this case—is intimidating, somehow hateful or incites some kind of violence, there are already provisions against that kind of speech. The hon. Gentleman describes somebody simply preaching the gospel; if they are not causing alarm or distress through the level or persistence of the noise, I cannot see why that would be offensive to anybody, or that the police would use these powers.

I turn to the other provisions in clause 56, enabling the police to attach any condition to a public assembly where such conditions are necessary to prevent serious public disorder, serious damage to property, serious disruption to the life of the community or intimidation. I welcome the belated acceptance by the other place that existing powers in section 14 of the Public Order Act 1986 are insufficient, but I am afraid Lords amendment 87J is not up to the task. The police have told us that the distinction drawn in that Act between processions and assemblies is outdated, and it does not reflect current-day challenges of policing dynamic protests

that can morph from a procession to an assembly and back again. The current situation prompts all sorts of questions. For example, how slowly would a procession have to move before it becomes static? If protesters walk in a 200 metre circle, is that a procession or a static protest?

It will continue to be the case that any conditions must be proportionate, and necessary to prevent serious disorder and the other serious harms set out in the Bill. None of that, however, is to say that we have not listened to and reflected on the views expressed by the other place. In the last round, we raised the threshold for the exercise of noise-related powers by removing the “serious unease” trigger, and we have tabled an amendment in lieu that will place a duty on the Secretary of State to prepare and publish a report on the operation of the relevant provisions in clauses 55, 56 and 61 within two years of their commencement. In one of our earlier debates, my right hon. Friends the Members for Newark (Robert Jenrick), and for Hereford and South Herefordshire (Jesse Norman), stressed the need for a post-legislative review of those provisions, and the amendments would enshrine that in law.

We have reached a stage of the legislative process where the issue at stake is no longer simply the merits or otherwise of the measures that we are debating. A more fundamental issue is at stake: the primacy of this elected House in our constitutional arrangements. This House has already debated and expressly approved the noise-related provisions on no less than three occasions: on Report last July; on consideration of Lords amendments at the end of February; and again at the end of March. That is not to mention the separate votes on Second and Third Reading of the Bill. I hope and expect that hon. Members will endorse the provisions for a fourth time when we come to the Division. The other place, composed as it is of hereditary and appointed Members without any democratic mandate, has done its duty in asking this House to reconsider this issue. We have now done so and made our position abundantly clear. We should send the provisions back to the Lords again, with a clear and unequivocal message that they should now let them, and the Bill, proceed.

Sarah Jones (Croydon Central) (Lab): I am sorry that the Minister finds himself bored by the democratic process, but this is the process, and sadly he has to come to the Dispatch Box to engage in this debate. There is one—[*Interruption.*]

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. The hon. Lady is giving a speech. Carry on, Sarah Jones.

Sarah Jones: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I do not mind how noisy the Minister is; I do not want to curtail his right to be as noisy as he likes.

We are debating one topic: the right to protest and make noise. We have indeed debated it several times. Members from across the House have spoken passionately about why this issue matters, and why the Government have got this so wrong. One might think that, with crime up 14%, the arrest rate having halved since 2010, and prosecution rates at an all-time low, the Government might spend their time on the bread-and-butter issues of law and order, such as fighting criminals. Instead,

they seem intent on criminalising singing at peaceful protests. That suggests that the Government are tired, out of ideas and have no plan, and are searching round for anything eye-catching to distract from their years of failure.

The Lords responded to the Minister's defence of his policy by voting against it again. Lords amendments 73 and 87 remove the Government's proposed noise trigger, which would allow the police to put conditions on marches or one-person protests that are "too noisy". Labour agrees with the Lords, and we support Lords amendment 80, which removes clause 56 from the Bill altogether. As with most Government policies thought up on the hoof, there are many questions about how the proposed powers would work.

Kit Malthouse: This is a genuine question. For many years, I was a councillor in central London and a London Assembly member. I am conscious that central London is particularly targeted by protests, which happen pretty much every weekend and often every day of the week. Central London is characterised by a quite dense residential population. Where is the balance between the rights of those residents to the peaceful enjoyment of their homes, and the rights of protesters to protest throughout the night, which the hon. Lady seems intent on preserving? Will she please explain why residents do not deserve some kind of protection from noise?

Sarah Jones: I ask the Minister back: where is the evidence that residents have asked for this change in legislation? [*Interruption.*] I see no evidence that anybody has asked for this change in the law, not least the police—

Kit Malthouse: You should see my inbox.

Sarah Jones: My inbox—I do not know about the Minister's—is full of emails asking us to vote against the Government's provisions today. I have not had a single one asking me to vote in favour.

Beth Winter (Cynon Valley) (Lab): I may be able to enlighten the Minister as to why there is no need for the provisions on noise. The Minister for Social Justice in Wales, Jane Hutt, has been quoted as saying that the current legal framework already provides sufficient scope, and that

"this means there is no requirement or need to include a new, far more draconian measure".

We have sufficient laws in place, and there is no need for these provisions. The Bill rides roughshod over the devolution settlement.

Sarah Jones: My hon. Friend is right. I am proud to have campaigned with Jane Hutt. She knows what she is talking about, and she delivers results—something that this Government could learn from.

Recently published guidance on this bizarre change to the law gives us the helpful tip that

"a noisy protest outside an office with double glazing may not meet the threshold"

in the Bill. The guidance is seriously asking the police to base their consideration of whether a protest is too noisy on how many buildings around it have double-glazed windows. How on earth will the police know? Is it fair

to our police if the law is so peculiar that they could interpret it in a million different ways, and would stand accused of bias whatever they did? I urge Ministers to bear in mind the consequences of these provisions on the police officers trying to put them into practice.

Kit Malthouse: I am grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way, if only so that I can, hopefully, enliven our proceedings slightly. I am a bit confused; the hon. Member for Cynon Valley (Beth Winter) seemed to imply that the Minister in the Welsh Government says that there is plenty of legislation to deal with this problem. Is she therefore content for legislation to be used in Wales to control protest noise?

Sarah Jones: The point we are trying to make is that there is a balance to be struck between what is reasonable in protests and what is not. We believe that the right to protest is not an absolute right; there have to be provisions in place to ensure that protests are reasonable, and do not put out the public too much. These provisions on noise are almost impossible to interpret—they are really unclear—and the police and the public have not asked for them. There are existing rules to ensure that reasonable, peaceful protest can take place, and the Bill rides roughshod over those genuine rights.

Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab): My hon. Friend is making some good points, particularly around interpretation. In Wirral West, we had a successful campaign against underground coal gasification after the coalition Government granted a licence for drilling in the Dee estuary underneath Hilbre island. People were very concerned about that, and we had a mass demonstration on the beach. When people go to a demonstration, they do not know who else will be there. I am concerned that people will feel intimidated by this law, and will perhaps feel that they should not attend a protest that they want to go on because of concerns that they will not be in control of the noise volume.

Sarah Jones: That is an interesting point. Thank goodness for those protests and for our right to protest in that way. It is not fair and not right to force the police to make political decisions about how much is too much noise. Imagine a scenario where two sides of a public debate are protesting, with one group on a street where there is lots of double glazing and the other on a street where there are old houses and no double glazing. Are we really saying that the police, who might close one protest for being too noisy and not the other, would not find themselves in a difficult political situation, with criticism from the public?

6 pm

The Government often point to a report by Her Majesty's inspectorate of constabulary and fire and rescue services that argued that the police needed to balance better the rights of protesters with disruption to the wider public. It asked for a "modest reset of the scales".

However, Inspector Matt Parr, who wrote the report, gave evidence to the Joint Committee on Human Rights in which he said:

"Neither the police nor HMCIFRS called for a new trigger based on the noise generated by demonstrations".

He also said that he was not even asked by the Government to

“look specifically at whether noise should be included”

or assess whether the change was necessary. The Joint Committee on Human Rights said that there was “no evidence” of a gap in the law that needed to be filled and that there was already a

“range of powers to deal with noise that impacts on the rights and freedoms of others”.

Why on earth is the Home Secretary continuing to push for those powers when the police did not even ask for them?

As the Bill has progressed through Parliament, we have seen many and various attempts to justify the provisions on noisy protest that no one has asked for and no one wants. In Committee, the Minister of State, Home Department, the hon. Member for Louth and Horncastle (Victoria Atkins), said:

“The police will impose conditions on the use of noise only in the exceptional circumstances where noise causes unjustifiable disruption”.—[*Official Report, Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Public Bill Committee*, 8 June 2021; c. 397.]

The Government also added the caveat of the word “serious”, raising the bar for securing a conviction, and the Minister for Crime and Policing has said a number of times that the power may be used only in the most exceptional circumstances. However, since then, Ministers have taken away the “serious” caveat, so they have lowered the bar. If alarm or distress does not have to be serious, surely the powers may not be used only in such exceptional circumstances.

The Minister talked about Labour’s amendments on public space protection orders outside schools and vaccination centres as if they included noise. However, the word “noise” does not feature in any of them. Our proposal to offer councils fast-track powers to set up protection zones around schools and vaccine clinics is quite different from the Government’s sweeping powers on protest that could criminalise peaceful protesters singing in the street. The truth is, the police have a raft of powers that they can use. We do not need these new provisions, and the Government know it. That is why, in this round of ping-pong, they have tabled amendments to review the changes in two years’ time. However, Ministers are kidding themselves if they expect a review in two years to reassure us. I urge the Minister to scrap this cut-and-paste job of amendments, change the guidance that does not make sense and accept Labour’s sensible amendments.

If I were the Minister, I would not want to be known as the Minister who pushed through these provisions on protest. Is that the legacy that he wants? Think of the freedom songs of the civil rights movement or of the protesters singing the Ukrainian national anthem all over Europe and here on Whitehall. Protests, song and the sounds of protests give voice to the voiceless. Let protest annoy us. Let protest be loud. Let us accept that noisy protest can be uncomfortable.

The conditions in part 3 on noise are anti-democratic and we should all vote to reject them. It would be a great shame if Conservative Members voted to curtail the freedoms that so many before us fought for and which so many more are still fighting for around the world.

Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): I will not detain the House for long, because that is what the other Chamber is doing. The House has voted with huge majorities to put the legislation through, and actually the need for it is found in most of our constituency surgeries. [*Interruption.*] If the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) listens for five minutes, she might hear my argument. It is fine to disagree with me, but chuntering is probably not the answer.

One of the biggest things that upsets my constituents is noisy neighbours, whether the noise comes from music or hard floors upstairs. At my surgeries, people often ask, “How can we control this? Can the council make recordings?” The council works hard to try to address these disputes, which are small in scale but mean a lot to the individuals who are having their lives blighted by noise.

As a trade unionist, I am more than happy to have legal demonstrations. They are part and parcel of the process—[*Interruption.*] I was in the Fire Brigades Union when we were thrown out of the Labour party, so I have a bit of a track record here. However, we are talking about people having their lives blighted continually because of a right being exercised near their homes or offices day in, day out. To be fair, we are talking not about a demonstration on a beach but about one right outside where people live.

Sarah Jones: The right hon. Member brings a lot of experience to the House, and I listen to him carefully. I agree with him about noisy neighbours, which are a distressing part of my case load because we often struggle hard to do something about it. However, the Bill does not do anything on that; it is about protests. We need to be clear that those are two completely different things. There are rules on antisocial behaviour and neighbours, and local authorities and the police have powers to deal with that—sadly, often those cases do not get dealt with—but that is not what we are arguing about.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): Order. May I give a little reminder that interventions should be quite brief?

Sir Mike Penning: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker, you made my point exactly. With respect to the shadow Minister, they are different, and I agree that the Bill has nothing to do with noisy neighbours, but noisy demonstrations blight people’s lives in exactly the same way, and that is why the legislation is trying to do something about them.

We may disagree, and that is probably right and proper—this place is about debating and not just agreeing with each other all the time—but the principle must be that this House, with huge majorities, has voted for these measures. I respect many of the people on both sides of the other House—they bring huge amounts of experience—but they are not elected. They should listen to this House and consider the size of the majority. If it had been tiny, we could argue about the principle, but it was not, and the measures have been voted through. On that, I completely agree with the Minister, who is in the position where I used to be.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call the SNP spokesperson, Anne McLaughlin.

Anne McLaughlin (Glasgow North East) (SNP): Throughout the proceedings on this woefully drafted Bill, I have maintained that, although it is largely reserved to England and Wales, part 3 on protest will severely restrict anyone from Scotland, or indeed anyone across these islands, from exercising their fundamental and democratic right to protest. None of us can sit back and allow that to happen. What happens here in the coming days will outline this Government, so the Scottish National party will vote against the Government motions to disagree with the Lords, who have worked tirelessly to help restore some balance to the Bill. I am seriously concerned about what will happen when the Bill is forced through the Lobby, and I know that that worries some Conservative Back Benchers who have been lobbying Members of the other place to allow the Commons the opportunity to think again on protest measures. We are back here to consider part 3 on protest, and rightly so.

The protest measures in the Bill have been the headline grabbers—the clauses most briefed on, tweeted on, reported and debated—and, most importantly, they are the clauses that people are concerned about, because they are a threat to our long-held right to have our voices heard. My office also receives hundreds of emails on a daily basis asking me to stand up and act against the threat to those rights. People are worried not just because of this Bill in particular—although it is terrifying—but because of the context in which it is being pushed through this place.

This week, we will debate the Elections Bill, the Nationality and Borders Bill and the Judicial Review and Courts Bill, each carrying its own threat to our fundamental rights. People know how this works: they know that the Government have seemingly unfettered powers to make any law that they want. Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb put it best when she said:

“Because they have a huge majority...they can afford not to care about how the Bills are written or about their content.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords*, 31 March 2022; Vol. 820, c. 1707.]

The Bill is badly written. No well written legislation would require so many amendments—it borders on the ridiculous. When we are forced to create a database for amendments just to keep track, we know that fundamentally something has gone wrong at the front end. However, it is our job to amend, correct and stop badly drafted legislation and, whatever the Minister says, it is the second House’s job to have its say on that.

I will speak briefly on specific amendments, but I would like to make a general point: all the amendments under discussion clean up ambiguous and badly worded clauses that will, as the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones), said, only force the police into making quasi-political decisions on the spot. Former police chiefs and senior officers have warned against the

“political pressure the Bill will place on frontline officers.”

It has become apparent through these debates that it is not more legislation or laws that the police need or want.

Lords Amendment 73 would remove sections of the Bill that allow the police to intervene and limit processions based on the criterion of noise. We have heard a lot about that today. The Government have got this wrong—they simply have. They have tried to make assurances that powers to act on noise will be used only in the most extreme circumstances, but it is all just too vague. As the shadow Minister said, what kind of law would ask a

frontline police officer to assess the thickness of walls in an office or the kind of glazing in a building prior to intervening on a protest? Seriously! It is in the guidance, if Government Members opposite want to check it. Here is a quote from the guidance:

“A noisy protest outside an office with double glazing may not meet the threshold”.

It is not just the way a building is constructed that frontline officers might have to contend with, but the duration of the noise and the type of noise. The list goes on. This is ill-conceived and ill-defined. It will load pressure on to already pressurised police forces and simply will not work. And that is before we get to the crux of the matter: our right to protest is our democratic right. It is not for this Government or any successive Governments to take that away.

We continue to oppose the Government’s apparent concession to remove the term “serious unease” for the simple fact that it is nestled in badly drafted sections and has the unintentional—or possibly intentional—effect of lowering the threshold for police intervention. Removing the term would lower the threshold of “serious alarm or distress” to “alarm or distress”. My hon. Friend the Member for Cumbernauld, Kilsyth and Kirkintilloch East (Stuart C. McDonald) eloquently made that point in a previous debate, and I stand by his remarks.

We supported Lords amendment 80, to remove clause 56 on public assemblies, and we continue to support it. This is yet another clause rife with hidden dangers, attempting to replace public order legislation that is operating perfectly well. The Public Order Act was careful to delineate and differentiate the conditions that could be imposed on static demonstrations, as opposed to a march or a moving protest, and that was sensible. That reflected the relative ease by which a static demonstration can be policed.

Kit Malthouse: I understand the hon. Lady’s point, but I am afraid I disagree with it. In Scottish jurisprudence, Scotland has an advantage over England in that it has a well-expressed and commonly used offence of nuisance. Would she support the use of this legislation in controlling nuisance emanating from a protest?

Anne McLaughlin: So many of us have already answered that on so many occasions. There already exists legislation and the powers for the police to control demonstrations that are not peaceful and out of control, but we are not talking about that. The proposed legislation allows the police to make decisions according to very spurious guidance. The removal of the distinction regarding static demonstration could hand the police unfettered discretion to impose further conditions on static protests, such as the words and slogans that can be used on placards. That is ridiculous. Sometimes they are the best bits! I really wish I had the time to read out some of my favourite words and slogans that I have seen recently, but I do not think the Government would be too pleased about that.

Finally, I want to touch on Lords amendment 87, on one-person protests. The amendment removes the ability of the police to impose conditions on a one-person protest. That was rejected in the last round of ping-pong and the Lords have rightly asked for it to be reconsidered. I have twice now heard the Minister talk in derisory terms about the House of Lords because some of them are hereditary and none of them are elected. The SNP is

[*Anne McLaughlin*]

opposed to the House of Lords on that basis, but his party is not and it puts people in there all the time. If that is the system he supports, he cannot really complain when they do the job they are asked to do. Are we really going to see a law passed today that will allow the might of the state to bear down on a single, individual protester? It is ridiculous, disproportionate and nothing short of bullying. And be careful anyone who even stops to chat to a protester, because they could be snared by the clause, too. How many times have we all stopped to chat to the wonderful array of protesters outside this place, whether we agree with them or not? Well, Madam Deputy Speaker, doing so could soon see you committing a criminal offence.

We are not impressed with the Government's amendments to lay reports before the House with regard to changes to the Public Order Act. They are lip service posing as concessions. They are better than nothing, but they are not much better.

I understand that time is short, so I will finish with this: we support the Lords in their amendments and fundamentally disagree with the undemocratic way the Government are throwing their weight around. If the Government are intent on dissuading protest, they are intent on silencing voices. From the huffing and puffing coming from the Minister today it is clear he is no fan of democracy, so I am sure he will not mind if I tell him the Bill is undemocratic, unworkable and unfair.

6.15 pm

David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con): A noise annoys. That was a common reproach from my mother in my early days, and indeed to her grandchildren today. I think we all recognise, in the course of the debates we have had in this House, that there are occasions when noise is a part of the democratic process that helps the atmosphere and the challenge, and there are times when it becomes extremely disruptive to the democratic process and begins to get in the way. I rise to support the Minister and the Government on that point. I would like to set out briefly the particular reasons why I take that position.

Like the Minister and a number of colleagues across the House, I have spent a lot of time in local government. I am very aware that one of the most common complaints to local authorities is about disruption caused by noise. This element of the Bill deals with a very specific subset of noise where it is caused by protest, and I agree with what the Minister and the Government have said. It probably depends where in the country someone is and what their experience has been. Certainly for local authorities in places such as my area—I speak with experience of a local authority where Heathrow has occasioned many protests over the years—where relatively low levels of noise carry on 24 hours a day, sometimes for days on end, or where extremely loud noises are generated by the kind of portable amplification technology that has become available even to lone protestors, such things can cause enormous disruption.

That disruption is not just to residents who live in those places—I appreciate that for central London Members of Parliament it is certainly a very big factor—but to businesses. I have many constituents who either work or have business interests in central London. Hoteliers

may struggle to sell their hotel rooms in a location where there is constant disruption caused by noisy protest, which means that people cannot sleep and the normal business of an office is disrupted.

In my view, given the development of tactics used by some protests that aim specifically to make persistent noisy protests that do not cross the thresholds set out in existing legislation, it is right that we update the law. We have heard a lot that existing powers are available, in particular to local authorities, to address concerns about noise. I have heard that argument made at the Joint Committee on Human Rights, and we have heard it in a number of debates on a lot of different aspects of the Bill.

However, it seems clear to me that there are occasions when the role of this House is not simply to respond to what the police are asking for, but to recognise when constituents, businesses and residents have concerns and find that the powers available, for example to local authorities, are not sufficient to remedy the problems they are experiencing. It is then the duty of the House to consider how we increase the penalties and powers available, so that those problems can be properly addressed. For example, as the Bill contains provisions to deal with trespass that crosses a criminal threshold and powers to increase sentencing, in my view it is right that it also increases the powers of the police to deal with persistent and noisy protests.

For people experiencing disruption to their sleep, disruption to their family life and disruption to their business—disruption to normal lawful activity that these types of protest can cause—waiting for the processes available to a local authority is simply insufficient. By law, councils have to go through various processes to gather evidence, which takes a long time. It can be enormously difficult to identify the cause in a way that meets the legal test, whereas the police have powers to act, when an offence is being committed, to deal with those things and ensure that residents and businesses are no longer impacted inappropriately. For those reasons, although it is right that the Government have listened to what has been said in the other place, I think it is right that we push ahead with this.

The powers will be required for a relatively narrow subset of occasions. In my view, however, the disruption that is caused to businesses, my constituents' business activities and interests in central London, and many other people around the country—in places such as Heathrow, where persistent, long-running protests can cause this kind of disruption—demonstrates that there is a need for an improvement in the powers. I wholly support the Minister in defending them at the Dispatch Box.

Beth Winter: We truly are in a remarkable situation of political crisis for the Government, who seem determined to pursue an assault on the rule of law, democracy, the devolution settlement and human rights. In the week that the Government intend to prorogue the House, multiple Bills are coming before us, following repeated Government defeats in the Lords. The Government are seeking to pursue this assault on democracy just a few days after the Prime Minister was found to have broken the law.

Much of this legislation was not part of the Tory Government's election manifesto. The Government cannot therefore claim, in pursuing this legislation, that it

commands the support of the electorate. That is certainly the case regarding today's amendments. The mass of public opinion is better demonstrated by the joint coalition of non-governmental organisations opposing the Bill, which stretches from Amnesty International to 38 Degrees, End Violence Against Women and many, many more. The Lords have reflected that civil society concern. I welcome their decision to insist on their amendments to clauses 55 and 61.

My noble Friend Lord Coaker, the former Member of this House for Gedling, spoke plainly when the other place last considered the Bill. As he highlighted, the Government proposals make a bad Bill even worse by lowering the threshold from establishing policing powers in relation to

“serious unease, alarm or distress”

to simply “alarm” or “distress”, making shutdown of protest even more likely. He highlighted that the Government's fact sheet guidance for the clauses on “too noisy” protests make it clear that this is unworkable and, in reality, makes protest unpoliceable.

If the Government cannot clarify whether a protest would meet the noise threshold under this legislation because of double-glazing, they do not know what they are doing. Therefore, amid the confusion, we can only conclude that the Government are simply creating powers that can be exploited to shut down noisy protest and scrutiny of the Executive.

In referring to the earlier comments about the devolved settlement, I wish to share with the Minister—if he is not already aware of this—the fact that the Welsh Government have withheld legislative consent from the provisions of the Bill that come within their competence, including clauses that relate to the right to protest and noise nuisance. I have the legislative consent memorandum with me today, if he is interested in seeing it. The Welsh Minister for Social Justice, Jane Hutt, stated that the wish was to

“send a united message to the UK Government that this eradication of the fundamental right to have our voices heard cannot and will not be tolerated.”

The Government should and must respect the devolution settlement. The Welsh Government have withheld legislative consent from 17 Bills so far. This is absolutely unacceptable.

Colleagues on the Government side have said that the police want this legislation, but police constables in Wales have expressed significant reservations about the Bill in recent evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee. Carl Foulkes of North Wales Police said that police officers could choose not to enforce part of the Bill. Jeremy Vaughan of South Wales Police insisted that

“protest...by its very nature, needs to be disruptive”.

He insisted that “most” in the police would be “vociferous and protective” of the public's right to protest.

David Simmonds: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Beth Winter: No, I will not.

As with the Judicial Review and Courts Bill, the Elections Bill and the Nationality and Borders Bill, which we will discuss later this week, the Government are in chaos, thrashing around to restore order. The Government must accept the Lords amendments, although we would be in a far better position if they dropped the Bill completely.

Nadia Whittome (Nottingham East) (Lab): It was through protest that many of our fundamental rights were won, including the right to vote. Noise is an essential part of protest. What is the point of a demonstration if no one can hear its message? What is it if not a show of strength of feeling? Thousands of people gathered together will inevitably be loud. Make no mistake: the Bill is an assault on our right to protest and our ability to hold the powerful to account. What is to stop a corporation that is being protested against calling the police and claiming that the noise is causing significant disruption in order to shut down the demonstration?

The powers also give huge discretion to police officers. That will make the law on protests completely unpredictable. People will attend protests not knowing whether the noise that they are making is illegal and whether they will go home that evening and have dinner with their family or be thrown in the back of a police van. I have no faith that the police would show restraint with these new powers when other powers have been abused time and again.

In recent weeks Members across the House will have seen the heroic actions of anti-war protesters in Russia and Ukraine. If MPs truly support their right to protest and their ability to make noise, they should vote against these powers. Many Conservative Members also consider themselves great champions of freedom of speech, quick to condemn so-called cancel culture. If they truly believe in freedom of expression, they should vote against the powers.

I would also bet that the majority of Members in this Chamber will at some point have taken part in a protest that could have fallen foul of a noise trigger—thank goodness the Chamber is not subject to these anti-noise laws, because otherwise I expect that would be happening every Wednesday. I urge every Member here to think about those protests, the causes they were championing and the people they were with. If they feel that those protests were legitimate and that they should not have been arrested for making some noise, I urge them to extend the same right to others and to vote down these powers.

Kit Malthouse: Let me deal with the closing point from the hon. Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome) about Prime Minister's Question Time. She will recall that the Speaker spends quite a lot of his time semi-threatening Members of the House, saying that they should keep quiet so that the voices and rights of Members on both sides of the House can be respected. Control is exercised, as we all make our views known.

As we close this debate, I want to focus broadly on where we agree. We all agree that, in an ancient democracy such as ours, protest is intrinsic to, and a cornerstone of, our rights. The Government are resolute in defending the rights of freedom of speech and of assembly. We should all be able to take to the streets to express our views on the issues of the day. In doing so, it is inevitable that some will be offended, inconvenienced or put out, and we should all accept that as part of the debate.

However, I think we have all accepted, on both sides of the House, that even in a protest situation, controls can and should be mandated and that there is not an unqualified right. As both Opposition Front Benchers—the hon. Members for Croydon Central (Sarah Jones) and

[Kit Malthouse]

for Glasgow North East (Anne McLaughlin)—have accepted, in Scotland and Wales there is a legal basis for controlling all forms of protest, including noise. All that we are trying to do is give the police the power to do so in challenging and exceptional situations in England as well.

When one person is exercising a right that infringes on the rights of others, whether it involves the use of hate speech, running on to motorways, endangering lives or generating such a cacophony of noise that it causes alarm or distress, the law must be able to step in—as it does, perhaps for a tenant or resident in Croydon. I would be interested in the view of the hon. Member for Croydon Central on this: if the noise that the resident complained about from the neighbours was Bob Dylan protest songs all day and all night in furtherance of a protest in their home, should that just be allowed? [Interruption.] Well, exactly. The point is that we have to be able to qualify these rights and we have to give the police control in exceptional circumstances.

The time has come to say unequivocally to the House of Lords that enough is enough. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead (Sir Mike Penning) said, this elected House has made its views on the measures crystal clear four times. It is time for the other place to acknowledge that, accept the amendments that the Government have put forward in the spirit of accommodation and let the Bill pass.

Question put.

The House divided: Ayes 300, Noes 220.

Division No. 258]

[6.29 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel	Brereton, Jack
Afolami, Bim	Bridgen, Andrew
Afriyie, Adam	Brine, Steve
Aiken, Nickie	Bristow, Paul
Aldous, Peter	Britcliffe, Sara
Allan, Lucy	Browne, Anthony
Anderson, Lee	Bruce, Fiona
Anderson, Stuart	Buchan, Felicity
Andrew, rh Stuart	Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Ansell, Caroline	Burghart, Alex
Argar, Edward	Burns, rh Conor
Atherton, Sarah	Butler, Rob
Atkins, Victoria	Cairns, rh Alun
Bacon, Gareth	Carter, Andy
Badenoch, Kemi	Cartledge, James
Bailey, Shaun	Cash, Sir William
Baillie, Siobhan	Caulfield, Maria
Baker, Duncan	Chalk, Alex
Baldwin, Harriett	Chishti, Rehman
Barclay, rh Steve	Clark, rh Greg
Baron, Mr John	Clarke, rh Mr Simon
Baynes, Simon	Clarke, Theo
Bell, Aaron	Clarke-Smith, Brendan
Benton, Scott	Clarkson, Chris
Beresford, Sir Paul	Cleverly, rh James
Berry, rh Jake	Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Bhatti, Saqib	Coffey, rh Dr Thérèse
Blackman, Bob	Colburn, Elliot
Blunt, Crispin	Collins, Damian
Bone, Mr Peter	Costa, Alberto
Bottomley, Sir Peter	Courts, Robert
Bradley, rh Karen	Coutinho, Claire
Braverman, rh Suella	Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey

Crosbie, Virginia	Henry, Darren
Crouch, Tracey	Higginbotham, Antony
Davies, David T. C.	Hinds, rh Damian
Davies, Gareth	Hoare, Simon
Davies, Mims	Holden, Mr Richard
Davison, Dehenna	Hollinrake, Kevin
Dinenage, Dame Caroline	Hollobone, Mr Philip
Dines, Miss Sarah	Holmes, Paul
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan	Howell, Paul
Docherty, Leo	Huddleston, Nigel
Donelan, rh Michelle	Hudson, Dr Neil
Dorries, rh Ms Nadine	Hughes, Eddie
Double, Steve	Hunt, Jane
Dowden, rh Oliver	Hunt, rh Jeremy
Doyle-Price, Jackie	Hunt, Tom
Drax, Richard	Javid, rh Sajid
Drummond, Mrs Flick	Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Duguid, David	Jenkinson, Mark
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain	Jenkyns, Andrea
Dunne, rh Philip	Jenrick, rh Robert
Eastwood, Mark	Johnson, Dr Caroline
Edwards, Ruth	Johnston, David
Ellis, rh Michael	Jones, Andrew
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias	Jones, rh Mr David
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie	Jones, Fay
Evans, Dr Luke	Jones, Mr Marcus
Evennett, rh Sir David	Jupp, Simon
Everitt, Ben	Kawczynski, Daniel
Fabricant, Michael	Kearns, Alicia
Farris, Laura	Keegan, Gillian
Fell, Simon	Kruger, Danny
Firth, Anna	Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Fletcher, Katherine	Lamont, John
Fletcher, Nick	Largan, Robert
Ford, Vicky	Latham, Mrs Pauline
Foster, Kevin	Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
Fox, rh Dr Liam	Levy, Ian
Francois, rh Mr Mark	Lewer, Andrew
Frazer, rh Lucy	Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Freeman, George	Loder, Chris
Freer, Mike	Logan, Mark
French, Mr Louie	Longhi, Marco
Fuller, Richard	Lopez, Julia
Fysh, Mr Marcus	Lord, Mr Jonathan
Garnier, Mark	Loughton, Tim
Ghani, Ms Nusrat	Mackinlay, Craig
Gibb, rh Nick	Maclean, Rachel
Gideon, Jo	Mak, Alan
Glen, John	Malthouse, rh Kit
Goodwill, rh Sir Robert	Mangnall, Anthony
Gove, rh Michael	Marson, Julie
Graham, Richard	May, rh Mrs Theresa
Grant, Mrs Helen	Maynard, Paul
Grayling, rh Chris	McCartney, Jason
Green, Chris	McCartney, Karl
Green, rh Damian	McPartland, Stephen
Griffith, Andrew	Mercer, Johnny
Griffiths, Kate	Merriman, Huw
Grundy, James	Metcalfe, Stephen
Gullis, Jonathan	Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Hall, Luke	Milling, rh Amanda
Hammond, Stephen	Mills, Nigel
Hancock, rh Matt	Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Harper, rh Mr Mark	Moore, Damien
Harris, Rebecca	Moore, Robbie
Harrison, Trudy	Mordaunt, rh Penny
Hart, Sally-Ann	Morris, David
Hart, rh Simon	Morris, James
Heald, rh Sir Oliver	Morrissey, Joy
Heapey, James	Mortimer, Jill
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris	Morton, Wendy
Henderson, Gordon	Mullan, Dr Kieran

Mumby-Croft, Holly
Mundell, rh David
Murray, Mrs Sheryll
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Neill, Sir Robert
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Pincher, rh Christopher
Poulter, Dr Dan
Pow, Rebecca
Pritchard, rh Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Redwood, rh John
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richards, Nicola
Richardson, Angela
Roberts, Rob
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Seely, Bob
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Simmonds, David
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston

Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
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
Vickers, Martin
Vickers, Matt
Villiers, rh Theresa
Walker, Mr Robin
Wallace, rh Mr Ben
Wallis, Dr Jamie
Warman, Matt
Webb, Suzanne
Whately, Helen
Wheeler, Mrs Heather
Whittingdale, rh Mr John
Wiggin, Sir Bill
Wild, James
Williams, Craig
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
Wood, Mike
Wright, rh Jeremy
Young, Jacob
Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Scott Mann and
Gareth Johnson

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
Abrahams, Debbie
Ali, Rushanara
Amesbury, Mike
Anderson, Fleur
Ashworth, rh Jonathan
Baker, Mr Steve
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
Brown, Alan
Brown, Ms Lyn

Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
Bryant, Chris
Buck, Ms Karen
Burgon, Richard
Byrne, Ian
Cadbury, Ruth
Callaghan, Amy
Cameron, Dr Lisa
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Carden, Dan
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Chamberlain, Wendy
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Cherry, Joanna
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, rh Yvette
Cowan, Ronnie
Creasy, Stella
Cruddas, Jon
Cryer, John
Cummins, Judith

Cunningham, Alex
Daby, Janet
Davey, rh Ed
David, Wayne
Davies, Philip
Davies-Jones, Alex
Day, Martyn
Debonnaire, Thangam
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Docherty-Hughes, Martin
Dodds, Anneliese
Doogan, Dave
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duffield, Rosie
Eagle, Dame Angela
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
Fovargue, Yvonne
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Furniss, Gill
Gibson, Patricia
Gill, Preet Kaur
Grady, Patrick
Grant, Peter
Green, Kate
Green, Sarah
Greenwood, Lilian
Greenwood, Margaret
Griffith, Nia
Gwynne, Andrew
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
Hanna, Claire
Hardy, Emma
Harman, rh Ms Harriet
Harris, Carolyn
Hayes, Helen
Healey, rh John
Hendry, Drew
Hobhouse, Wera
Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
Hollern, Kate
Hopkins, Rachel
Hosie, rh Stewart
Howarth, rh Sir George
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hussain, Imran
Jardine, Christine
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Darren
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
Law, Chris
Leadbeater, Kim
Lewis, Clive
Linden, David
Long Bailey, Rebecca
Lucas, Caroline
Lynch, Holly
MacAskill, Kenny
MacNeil, Angus Brendan
Madders, Justin
Mahmood, Mr Khalid
Maskell, Rachael
Matheson, Christian
Mc Nally, John
McCarthy, Kerry
McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
McDonald, Stuart C.
McDonnell, rh John
McFadden, rh Mr Pat
McGovern, Alison
McKinnell, Catherine
McLaughlin, Anne
McMorrin, Anna
McVey, rh Esther
Mearns, Ian
Miliband, rh Edward
Mishra, Navendu
Monaghan, Carol
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
Oswald, Kirsten
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah (*Proxy vote cast
by Chris Elmore*)
Paisley, Ian
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Perkins, Mr Toby
Pollard, Luke
Qaisar, Ms Anum
Qureshi, Yasmin
Rayner, rh Angela
Reed, Steve
Rees, Christina
Reeves, Ellie
Reynolds, Jonathan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robinson, Gavin
Rodda, Matt
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shah, Naz
Shannon, Jim
Sharma, Mr Virendra

Sheerman, Mr Barry
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Smith, Alyn
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smyth, Karin
Sobel, Alex
Spellar, rh John
Stone, Jamie
Streeting, Wes
Stringer, Graham
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tarry, Sam
Thewliss, Alison
Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
Thompson, Owen
Thomson, Richard

Thornberry, rh Emily
Timms, rh Stephen
Twist, Liz
Vaz, rh Valerie
West, Catherine
Western, Matt
Whitehead, Dr Alan
Whitford, Dr Philippa
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, Hywel
Wilson, Munira
Winter, Beth
Wishart, Pete
Yasin, Mohammad
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:
Mary Glendon and
Gerald Jones

Question accordingly agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House insists on its disagreement with the Lords in their Amendment 73, insists on its Amendment 73C to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement to that Amendment, insists on its Amendment 74A to Lords Amendment 74, disagrees with the Lords in their Amendment 74B to that Amendment in lieu, disagrees with the Lords in their consequential Amendments 74C, 74D, 74E, 74F and 74G, insists on its disagreement with the Lords in their Amendment 87, insists on its Amendments 87A, 87B, 87C, 87D, 87E, 87F and 87H to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement to that Amendment but proposes Amendment (a) in lieu of Lords Amendment 73 and additional Amendment (b) to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement with the Lords in their Amendment 87.

Clause 56

IMPOSING CONDITIONS ON PUBLIC ASSEMBLIES

Motion made, and Question put,

That this House insists on its disagreement with the Lords in their Amendment 80, insists on its Amendments 80A, 80B, 80C, 80D, 80E, 80F and 80H to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement with that Amendment, disagrees with the Lords in their Amendment 80J instead of the words left out by that Amendment but proposes additional Amendment (a) to the words restored to the Bill by its disagreement with the Lords in their Amendment 80.—(Kit Malthouse.)

The House divided: Ayes 302, Noes 221.

Division No. 259]

[6.43 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Aldous, Peter
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan

Baker, Duncan
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
Bradley, rh Karen
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack

Bridgen, Andrew
Brine, Steve
Bristow, Paul
Britcliffe, Sara
Browne, Anthony
Bruce, Fiona
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
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
Costa, Alberto
Courts, Robert
Coutinho, Claire
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Crosbie, Virginia
Crouch, Tracey
Davies, David T. C.
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Mims
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, rh Michelle
Dorries, rh Ms Nadine
Double, Steve
Dowden, rh Oliver
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dunne, rh Philip
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Evans, Dr Luke
Evennett, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George

Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Ghani, Ms Nusrat
Gibb, rh Nick
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Graham, Richard
Grant, Mrs Helen
Grayling, rh Chris
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate
Grundy, James
Gullis, Jonathan
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heapey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Hollobone, Mr Philip
Holloway, Adam
Holmes, Paul
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, rh Jeremy
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyins, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Fay
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kawczynski, Daniel
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian
Krugger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew

Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Jason
 McCartney, Karl
 McPartland, Stephen
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Damien
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Mundell, rh David
 Murray, Mrs Sheryll
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Percy, Andrew
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Pow, Rebecca
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom
 Redwood, rh John
 Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Roberts, Rob
 Robertson, Mr Laurence

Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Simmonds, David
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sunderland, James
 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
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallace, rh Mr Ben
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warman, Matt
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Sir Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Scott Mann and
 Gareth Johnson**

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Abrahams, Debbie
 Ali, Rushanara
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur

Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Baker, Mr Steve
 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
 Brown, Alan
 Brown, Ms Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Byrne, Ian
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Callaghan, Amy
 Cameron, Dr Lisa
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cherry, Joanna
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, rh Yvette
 Cowan, Ronnie
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Day, Martyn
 Debonnaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Docherty-Hughes, Martin
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doogan, Dave
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 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
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gibson, Patricia
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Grady, Patrick
 Grant, Peter
 Green, Kate
 Green, Sarah

Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hendry, Drew
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hodge, rh Dame Margaret
 Hollern, Kate
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hosie, rh Stewart
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Darren
 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
 Law, Chris
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Lewis, Clive
 Linden, David
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 MacAskill, Kenny
 MacNeil, Angus Brendan
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 Mc Nally, John
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonagh, Siobhain
 McDonald, Stewart Malcolm
 McDonald, Stuart C.
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McLaughlin, Anne
 McMorris, Anna
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Monaghan, Carol
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Helen
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James

Nandy, Lisa	Siddiq, Tulip
Newlands, Gavin	Slaughter, Andy
Nichols, Charlotte	Smith, Alyn
Nicolson, John	Smith, Cat
Norris, Alex	Smith, Jeff
O'Hara, Brendan	Smyth, Karin
Olney, Sarah	Sobel, Alex
Onwurah, Chi	Spellar, rh John
Oppong-Asare, Abena	Stone, Jamie
Osamor, Kate	Streeting, Wes
Oswald, Kirsten	Stringer, Graham
Owatemi, Taiwo	Sultana, Zarah
Owen, Sarah (<i>Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore</i>)	Tami, rh Mark
Paisley, Ian	Tarry, Sam
Peacock, Stephanie	Thewliss, Alison
Pennycook, Matthew	Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
Perkins, Mr Toby	Thompson, Owen
Pollard, Luke	Thomson, Richard
Qaisar, Ms Anum	Thornberry, rh Emily
Qureshi, Yasmin	Timms, rh Stephen
Rayner, rh Angela	Twist, Liz
Reed, Steve	Vaz, rh Valerie
Rees, Christina	West, Catherine
Reeves, Ellie	Western, Matt
Reynolds, Jonathan	Whitehead, Dr Alan
Ribeiro-Addy, Bell	Whitford, Dr Philippa
Rimmer, Ms Marie	Whittome, Nadia
Robinson, Gavin	Williams, Hywel
Rodda, Matt	Wilson, Munira
Russell-Moyle, Lloyd	Winter, Beth
Saville Roberts, rh Liz	Wishart, Pete
Shah, Naz	Yasin, Mohammad
Shannon, Jim	Zeichner, Daniel
Sharma, Mr Virendra	Tellers for the Noes:
Sheerman, Mr Barry	Mary Glendon and Gerald Jones

Question accordingly agreed to.

Health and Care Bill

Consideration of Lords message

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I must draw the House's attention to the fact that financial privilege is engaged by Lords amendments 80, 80P and 80Q. If they are agreed to, I will cause the customary entry waiving Commons financial privilege to be entered in the *Journal*.

Clause 35

REPORT ON ASSESSING AND MEETING WORKFORCE NEEDS

6.56 pm

The Minister for Health (Edward Argar): I beg to move, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 29B in lieu.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the following:

Lords amendments 30B and 108B to words restored to the Bill, Government motion to disagree, and Government amendments (a) to (i) in lieu.

Lords amendment 48B in lieu, Government motion to disagree and Government amendment (a) in lieu.

Government motion to insist on disagreement with Lords amendment 80, insist on Commons amendments 80A to 80N in lieu, and disagree with Lords amendments 80P and 80Q.

Edward Argar: The Lords amendments before the House today relate to the NHS workforce, reconfigurations, modern slavery and the adult social care cap. In respect of amendments 30B and 108B on reconfigurations, I am grateful for the constructive debate on these issue across both Houses. This House has twice voted strongly in favour of the ability for the Secretary of State to call in reconfiguration proposals when needed, and it remains a key principle that decisions on how services are delivered should be subject to ministerial oversight. However, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and I have listened carefully to the debates throughout the Bill's passage, and as a result we have proposed a series of amendments to minimise bureaucracy and ensure transparency.

The first set of changes would mean that the NHS had to notify the Secretary of State only about those reconfiguration proposals that were deemed notifiable, which we will define through regulations. We intend to align that definition with the existing duty on NHS commissioners to consult local authorities where there is a substantial development of variation in the health service. We also propose to remove the requirement for commissioners and providers to inform Ministers of "circumstances that are likely to result in the need for the reconfiguration of NHS services".

Taken together, these changes will mean that the NHS will need to notify the Secretary of State only about proposals that are substantive and of great importance to people.

Secondly, we will give local authorities, NHS commissioners and anyone else the Secretary of State considers appropriate a right to make representations to the Secretary of State when he has called in a

proposal for reconsideration. We expect this to include any relevant provider. The Secretary of State will be required to publish a summary of the representations he receives, and we will set out in statutory guidance further detail on how local bodies, including providers, will be engaged.

Thirdly, transparency is vital to ensure that these powers are always used by Ministers in the clear interest of the people we all serve. We will therefore require the Secretary of State to provide the reasons for his decisions and directions when he makes them. Finally, we have heard throughout these debates that it is vital that decisions are made expeditiously and expediently in order to give certainty to local bodies so that reconfigurations can be made quickly to improve the quality of services received by patients. We are therefore introducing a requirement that, once a reconfiguration proposal has been called in, the Secretary of State must make any decisions within six months. We believe that this set of changes addresses the key concerns raised in this House and the other place, and I commend it to the House.

I turn to Lords amendment 48B, and the Government's amendment in lieu, on modern slavery. We share the strength of feeling expressed in both Houses on ensuring that the NHS is in no way inadvertently linked with modern slavery and human trafficking through its supply chain. That is why the Government brought forward an amendment in the first round of ping-pong to create a duty on the Secretary of State to undertake a thorough review of NHS supply chains. I am pleased to announce today that we are going further. The Government's amendment in lieu of Lords amendment 48B will require the Secretary of State to make regulations with a view to eradicating the use by the NHS in England of goods or services tainted by slavery or human trafficking. The regulations can set out steps the NHS should be taking to assess the level of risk associated with individual suppliers, and the basis on which the NHS should exclude them from a tendering process.

I particularly commend my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) for his consistent and vocal campaigning on this issue. I am delighted that he has confirmed his support for the amendment in lieu. I look forward to working further with him and his supporters to bring these measures forward.

7 pm

Ms Nusrat Ghani (Wealden) (Con): I congratulate the Minister and the Department on taking this extraordinary step. The public may believe that we already do not use slave-made goods, but unfortunately we do. It is remarkable that the Department has taken this step, and it is incredibly important that we look at Xinjiang in particular, where Sir Geoffrey Nice QC determined there has been a genocide, as there was in Bosnia. The sanctioned MPs and all our colleagues in the inter-parliamentary alliance on China will work with the Department to ensure we have no Uyghur slave-made products in our NHS.

Edward Argar: I paid tribute to my right hon. Friend the Member for Chingford and Woodford Green, but my hon. Friend the Member for Wealden (Ms Ghani) has also taken a keen interest in this issue. The Secretary of State and I will continue to work closely with

others across Government to ensure that our measures to eradicate modern slavery in NHS supply chains are effective and targeted, and reflect best practice.

On Lords amendment 29B, the Government are committed to improving workforce planning and are already taking the steps needed to ensure that we have record numbers of staff working in the NHS. In July 2021, the Department commissioned Health Education England to work with partners on reviewing the long-term strategic trends for the health and regulated social care workforce over the next 15 years. We anticipate the publication of that work in the coming weeks.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Will the Minister give way?

Edward Argar: Very briefly, as I am conscious that we have limited time.

Jim Shannon: If the right hon. Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) were to pursue the matter, my party and I would be minded to support him. Although I understand from the figures in the press today that there are significant numbers of new nurses coming into the NHS, there is still a large shortfall. Will the Minister confirm for *Hansard* in the Chamber today that every step is being taken to recruit the nurses needed to address the issue of workforce safety?

Edward Argar: The hon. Gentleman is right to highlight the work we are already doing, which I will address in a moment, and the number of nurses we have recruited. I believe we have now recruited 29,000 or so en route to our target of 50,000 more nurses by the end of this Parliament.

Sir Robert Neill (Bromley and Chislehurst) (Con): Will my hon. Friend give way?

Edward Argar: I will make a little progress, if I may—a few more paragraphs—as I am very conscious of allowing time for Back-Bench colleagues to speak.

Building on this work, we recently commissioned NHS England to develop a workforce strategy. We will set out the key conclusions of that work in due course. In addition, we have committed ourselves to merging Health Education England with NHS England to bring together responsibility for service, financial and workforce planning in one organisation. We will continue to grow and invest in the workforce. There are record numbers of staff, including nurses, working in the NHS.

Sir Robert Neill: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. He will know of my interest as chair of the all-party parliamentary group on stroke, and he will be aware of the particular concern of the Stroke Association and others about the number of qualified therapists to provide the therapy people need after a stroke. Will he commit himself to that being part of the workforce strategy and to moving swiftly? This is already a pressing problem for stroke survivors who are not getting the care they need.

Edward Argar: I reassure my hon. Friend that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State has made it clear that he wishes the whole health and care workforce landscape to be considered by Health Education England.

[Edward Argar]

The growth in our workforce comes on the back of our record investment in the NHS, which is helping to deliver our manifesto commitments, as I said to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), including our commitment to 50,000 more nurses by the end of the Parliament. The spending review settlement will also underpin funding for the biggest ever intake of undergraduate medical students and nurses.

Although I might not be able to say anything sufficient to fully convince my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt), I put on record my gratitude to him not only for the insight, expertise and knowledge he has brought to our debates on this issue but for the typical courtesy he has displayed throughout our interactions and conversations. I do not know what he will say in a moment, but I have tried to pre-empt him. I hope that he may be tempted to stick with it.

I hope that the House will recognise that the Government are already doing substantial work to improve workforce planning, and that placing a requirement such as Lords amendment 29B on the statute book is therefore unnecessary.

Kim Leadbeater (Batley and Spen) (Lab): Will the Minister give way?

Edward Argar: Very briefly, but I am sensitive to Madam Deputy Speaker's instruction to be brief.

Kim Leadbeater: I thank the Minister for giving way. More than 100 organisations, including the Royal College of General Practitioners and the British Medical Association, have expressed their support for Lords amendment 29B. Does he agree that the only way to ensure that we recruit and retain the talented staff that our NHS and social care sector desperately need is through a long-term workforce plan in consultation with the experts in the field, such as health and care employers, unions and integrated care boards?

Edward Argar: That is exactly what we are doing through the work commissioned by my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, which is why Lords amendment 29B is unnecessary.

Steve Brine (Winchester) (Con): Will the Minister give way?

Edward Argar: I fear that I cannot, but my hon. Friend may catch me during my winding-up speech. I want to make progress, as about 10 Back-Bench colleagues wish to speak.

Finally, on the adult social care cap, the Government have announced our plan for a sustainable social care system. It is fair, affordable and designed to end the pain of unpredictable care costs by capping the amount anyone needs to pay at £86,000. Without clause 140 there would be a fundamental unfairness: two people living in different parts of the country, contributing the same amount, would progress towards the cap at different rates based on differences in the amount their local authority is paying. We are committed to levelling up and must ensure that people in different parts of the country are benefiting to the same extent, and our provisions support this. Amendments 80A to 80N also

make crucial changes to support the operation of charging reform, as these changes were lost by the removal of clause 140 in the other place.

Lords amendments 80P and 80Q insert a regulation-making power to amend how

“costs accrued in meeting eligible needs”

is determined in section 15 of the Care Act 2014. However, if regulations were made using this power, they would result in anyone entering the care system under the age of 40 receiving free personal care up to that age. As local authority contributions would count towards the cap under these changes, a 35-year-old with average care costs would reach the cap and not have to pay anything towards the cost of their care, yet a person who enters care the day after their 40th birthday would need to contribute towards the £86,000 cap over their lifetime. We believe this is unfair. Our plan already includes a more generous means test that means more people will be eligible for state support towards the cost of care earlier, enabling them to keep more of their income.

The changes introduced in the other place also threaten the affordability of our reforms. Lords amendments 80, 80P and 80Q would clearly affect financial arrangements to be made by this House and, as such, have financial privilege. These new Lords amendments would cost the taxpayer more than £1 billion a year by 2027-28. Ultimately, this would mean we need to make the same level of savings elsewhere, making the system less generous for other users. I hope I have been able to provide some reassurance that we believe our approach is still the right one, and I ask the House to disagree with the other place's amendments.

Finally, I put on record my gratitude to my hon. Friend the Member for Aberconwy (Robin Millar) and the noble Baroness Morgan of Cotes for their constructive and positive engagement during the Bill's passage on ways to strengthen co-operation between the UK Government, the UK Statistics Authority, the Office for National Statistics and the devolved Administrations, and for their passion for strengthening the Union. I am pleased we are taking forward that work, albeit outside this Bill. I am stimulated by their important work.

We have sought throughout the passage of the Bill to be pragmatic and to listen to this House and the other place in either accepting their amendments or addressing them in lieu. I hope the House recognises that this approach continues to characterise our work, save where we sadly cannot agree with the other place in respect of its amendments on both the workforce and social care caps.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): The problem we have is that this debate has to finish at 7.55 pm. This means that, after the shadow Minister has spoken, I will have to impose a time limit to get in a lot of Back Benchers. The time limit will start at four minutes.

I call the shadow Minister, Karin Smyth.

Karin Smyth (Bristol South) (Lab): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. This Bill has been significantly improved. It delivers changes to the 2012 legalisation the NHS called for. Some other issues have been addressed by

ministerial assurances and many valuable new clauses have been added. I am pleased that much of what we argued for in the six weeks of the Bill Committee has finally been accepted. On two issues—the Secretary of State’s powers on reconfiguration, and procurement and modern slavery—the Lords have wrestled important concessions that we support. As a former senior NHS manager, I know that reconfiguration is necessary, important and often difficult; it is often wrongly associated purely with cuts and taking something away. We are interested in improving outcomes for people, and that sometimes requires difficult change. For two decades, a comprehensive process has existed, which includes local people, is informed by expert assessments and operates pretty well. Throughout Committee, and during numerous debates, I have heard no sound argument to change it, but the Government seemed hellbent on doing so, and it is only at the eleventh hour that they have finally agreed to some changes.

If I listened to the Minister correctly, he says that now the NHS will have to notify the Secretary of State when there is something notifiable. That is going to be as clear as mud for everybody, isn’t it? We look forward to the regulations. The point is that the Government’s initial plan inhibits improvement. If NHS managers and, in particular, clinical leaders know that the Secretary of State is hovering, they will be less likely to promote changes that may be clinically necessary but politically difficult. It appears now that the Secretary of State finally agrees and does not want this big pile on his desk, and although the amendment is far from perfect, it does enough for now. On the procurement issue, I commend the work of many people from across both these Houses and the excellent case that has been put forward. Labour has been pushing for measures such as these for many months, and I think the intentions of the Government appear to be aligned to a shared view of what is required.

However, there remain two substantial issues, workforce and the care cap, where I hope the Government, even at this late hour, will listen to reason. Many experts have spoken, and many ideas, alternatives and suggestions have been put forward, but we have had very little engagement from the Government. On these two matters, we speak for the stakeholders, experts and Members from all parties, who are united in opposing the Government’s proposals. Workforce planning is a huge issue in its own right, but it is also fundamental and cuts through everything we are talking about on health and social care. Chiefly, the problem is that unless we face up to the scale of the workforce challenge, the Government will not deliver the shorter waiting times that patients need. Until this Government break out of their straitjacket—unless somebody can make the Chancellor see reason—nothing is going to change for all our constituents. The Government should start today—otherwise patients will be left wondering why they are paying more and more in taxes but waiting longer for care.

Time precludes my repeating all the arguments. I could simply repeat what the Chair of the Select Committee said last time or I could offer the wise words of the previous chief executive of the NHS and more—who can add to the variety and strength of the evidence? The logic of this approach escapes me. Every MP knows that our family, friends and constituents are now in a cycle of long waits in pain and discomfort, with worry.

All that is asked for in this Lords amendment is a proper report that sets out the system to address the likely staffing requirements—that is so obviously necessary. If this amendment falls, we, as legislators, have failed. If the Secretary of State will not show leadership, NHS England must step up and produce its own requirements and projections. Additionally, the Local Government Association could commission work across the country, in every local authority, on the needs for social care and public health staff. I suggest that every MP asks their own integrated care system and local authority what workforce requirements and projections they have, and how credible these plans are. Unless we do that, how can anyone have confidence in the delivery for the people we are elected to represent?

Finally, we come to the proposed changes to the care cap calculations. Those were snuck in at the last moment and were not subject to any scrutiny in our six weeks in the Bill Committee. They have not been discussed in any detail at all. The proposals are a less generous version of what was in the Care Act 2014 and this is a massive step backwards. Once again, I could read out a ring binder full of analysis and evidence provided by the legion of stakeholders, none of it complimentary. We hear the repeated claim, “This solves the problem of social care. It is fixed.” It simply is not. Let us leave aside the deeply insulting attitude that the care and support of people in need, who could live better more fulfilled lives, is a “problem” to solve; we should be celebrating the fact that people can live better, for many years longer, with multiple conditions, with decent support and care. We all know that to be true.

The proposals the Government have put forward do not deliver any more care; they just change who pays for it. Money will go to those with assets, and the less you have, the more they will take. The proposals will have no real impact for years, but we all know that people need help now. They will not improve the quality of care by anything like what is needed and will not stop those 15-minute visits. The proposals do nothing to assist working-age adults who have a disability. They do not stabilise the collapsing market for care home place provision. They do not shorten any wait for care or reduce any waiting list. They will have no impact on improving access to care for hundreds of thousands of people currently excluded. They do not address the issues around a care workforce with many vacancies and poor terms and conditions. They do nothing to address the catastrophe of the past decade of cuts to local government. This is not a solution to social care. This ill-thought-out idea should not have been pasted into the Bill. Some more informed Conservative Members have also recognised the unfair impact on the poorest, especially those in parts of the north; levelling up this certainly is not.

7.15 pm

To respect the views of the countless stakeholders who oppose this measure, we have surely to try to find a way forward. Someone sensible in the Department of Health and Social Care has decided that changes of this impact and complexity should be subject to a proper pilot; there are to be “trailblazers”. We do not know much about them, but I believe we have assurances from Ministers in the other place that everything will be considered and the results will be made known. Will the Minister assure us that the evaluation of the trailblazers

will be published and the impact assessments updated so that this hugely important policy change can be properly considered by Parliament? What on earth will be lost by allowing the evidence to inform the policy? What we are voting on tonight is simply that:

“The regulations may not be made unless—

(a) the results of the Trailblazer pilot schemes have been evaluated, and the Secretary of State has laid that evaluation before Parliament, and

(b) the Secretary of State has completed a further general impact assessment covering distributional regional analysis”.

We all think we know what that looks like, but we would like to see the details.

In conclusion, my colleagues and I will be supporting the Lords amendments on workforce and the care cap. The time for politics is over; we just need common sense and the will to listen and look objectively at the evidence to find a way forward for the good of everyone.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call the Chair of the Select Committee, Jeremy Hunt.

Jeremy Hunt (South West Surrey) (Con): Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I rise to speak in support of Lords amendment 29B. Even though I believe the Government will reject it today and this may be the last time this House can debate it, I will try to make my comments with the customary courtesy that the Minister for Health attributed to me just now, with his customary courtesy. He said that this amendment was unnecessary, but I wish to ask the House: what precisely is unnecessary about an amendment that simply requires independent, regular estimates of the numbers of doctors and nurses we should be training? What could drive the Government to want to vote down such a harmless amendment, not once, not twice, but, including today, three times? I will tell the House why the Government are going to vote this amendment down. They will do so because they know that any such independent estimate would conclude that we need to be training more doctors and nurses. Why on earth would we not want to train more doctors and nurses, if we looked objectively at the challenges facing the NHS today? We last debated this on the day the Ockenden report was published in Parliament. That report talked about more than 200 babies’ lives that would probably have been saved with better care. The key recommendation in that report was for 2,000 more midwives and 500 more obstetricians, and that would not have been necessary had this amendment been in place. We can put this right.

I immensely respect the work done by the Minister for Health and the Secretary of State, and I am grateful for their engagement, but I say to them, from the bottom of my heart, that not training enough doctors and nurses is a false economy. It costs patients’ lives, it costs taxpayers’ money, it demoralises the workforce and it lets down the people who are waiting for their NHS operation. The Health Minister’s argument is that we will have 50,000 more nurses by the end of this Parliament and we are training more doctors than ever, but today’s report by the King’s Fund shows that that is a hollow claim, because even though we are on track for our 50,000 nurses, the number of vacancies is still not going down. In other words, more nurses does not mean enough nurses, and we can never know what enough is unless we are honest enough to ask ourselves the hard questions.

The lesson of Mid Staffs, Morecambe Bay, Southern Health and Telford is that the first step in dealing with poor care is to be honest about the issue. We now have in the NHS a workforce issue of enormous proportions, which is why Lords amendment 29 is supported by every NHS leader, every royal college, every health think-tank, every union and more than 100 NHS organisations in total. I am afraid that, by voting down a simple request for independent estimates of the number of doctors and nurses we should be training, the Government are actively choosing to sweep the problem under the carpet. I say to Ministers, who have listened to my arguments genuinely and in good faith, that NHS and care staff deserve better after two years of the pandemic, and the people waiting for their NHS operations deserve better, too.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Rosie Winterton): I call the SNP spokesperson.

Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): I will be brief, Madam Deputy Speaker.

Operational procurement is a devolved matter but, given our interest in trade policies, we welcome the progress on procurement to ensure that healthcare supply chains are not linked to modern slavery and human trafficking. We support UK Government amendment 48A in lieu of Lords amendment 48, and we also support Lords amendment 48B in lieu. It is perhaps worth reflecting on the fact that in Scotland half of all PPE is now produced locally and that the overall costs of pandemic procurement were a third less than those of the UK. Such measures can, then, be cost-effective and help to safeguard against global supply chain issues.

Matt Hancock (West Suffolk) (Con): I rise to support the compromise measure on reconfigurations and to ask the Government to take forward the work on UK-wide statistics with vigour and gusto.

First, on reconfigurations, it is right and reasonable that the largest organisation in the country, which is funded by taxpayers through the taxes that every single citizen pays, should be accountable to Ministers who are in turn accountable to this House. Although that principle has been accepted in the Bill across the board and in general terms, the other place has decided that it should not apply in the specific circumstances of reconfigurations. It is vital that when a reconfiguration happens, not only the clinical voices but the voice of the local community should be heard. The two need to go together. The best way to make happen any reconfiguration that is needed on clinical grounds is to engage the local community and get it onside. If we are to save lives through a reconfiguration, we can win the argument, but only if we engage and make the argument. In my experience, too often a reconfiguration was put on the table, perhaps for good clinical reasons but without enough local engagement, and in practice the process just ran into the sand.

I welcome the six-month delay—I hope the Secretary of State will work quicker than six months most of the time, but it is a good backstop; I welcome the de minimis threshold, because relatively small reconfigurations happen all the time; and I welcome the removal of some of the bureaucracy in the amendment. To my hon. Friend the Minister, who has done a magnificent job on the Bill right from the start, before it even came to this

House—I thank all his officials for their service—I say: let us take this compromise but say clearly to the other place, “Thus far and no further.” The principle of democratic responsibility for the NHS and for winning the argument with the public about its local design is at the heart of the Bill and it must stand.

In the final minute I have in which to speak, let me make a point about statistics. Those on the Treasury Bench have decided not to include in the Bill measures on the UK-wide measurement of health services and on the interoperability of data in the four nations of the UK, but I put on the record the importance—I hope the Minister reiterates this—of getting UK-wide measurements. In Wales, it was decided to discontinue the measurement of some aspects, especially in respect of A&E performance. A suspicion was raised—I am sure this could not possibly have been true—that those measurements were discontinued so that unfavourable comparisons with England could no longer be made. If that were true, it would be an outrage. I very much hope that it is not, but we should put it right anyway and measure NHS service delivery throughout the UK on the same basis, so that comparisons can be made, so that we can learn about and improve services across all four nations, and so that accountability can properly apply to the four different Governments who run the four parts of the one NHS, which operates across this United Kingdom.

Justin Madders (Ellesmere Port and Neston) (Lab): I rise to speak to the Lords amendment on workforce—probably for the dozenth time during the Bill’s passage. I make no apologies for repetition because some things are worth repeating and the importance of our workforce can never be understated. Everything comes back to workforce: the grandest plans, strategy documents, reorganisations, integrations and configurations will all count for very little if the fundamental cog in the machine and the glue that holds the whole thing together—the workforce—is not a central part of those plans. The consistent failure to invest in the workforce and to provide a plan for it so that it is able to meet demand over a sustained period is at the root of many of the challenges that the NHS faces today. We should correct that.

On Friday night, a constituent contacted me as he suspected he had dislocated his hip and had been told that his situation did not warrant an ambulance. Eventually, he managed to get to A&E, but in the end he went home without receiving treatment because it was so busy that people were standing outside the department. That is just one example, but there are countless others like it—the frustrated constituents who can never speak to their GP; the many people left in agony because waiting lists are at record levels; those whose teeth rot away because they cannot get dental treatment; and those who receive no help for their mental health issues because they do not reach the threshold for intervention. Every one of those examples arises because, to a greater or lesser extent—I would say to a greater extent most of the time—there simply are not enough staff to meet the demand.

There is a pattern of disconnection in respect of the action required to meet the Government’s ambitions, let alone getting the NHS to meet its constitutional targets. Unless workforce is addressed in a meaningful way as part of all the plans and strategies issued, the Government are just fooling themselves that their plans are credible

and deliverable. Even if the Government wish to fool themselves, they are not fooling anyone else. They are certainly not fooling us Members on the Opposition Benches or the 100 or so health and social care organisations that support what we are trying to achieve with the workforce amendment.

The most recent Department-commissioned NHS workforce strategy, the People Plan, did not include a forecast on staffing numbers. When asked about it, Baroness Harding, who authored the plan, said that the strategy did not include staff numbers not because “the Government disagreed with the numbers”

but

“because we could not get approval to publish the document with any forecasts in it.”—[*Official Report, House of Lords, 7 December 2021; Vol. 816, c. 1814.*]

Perhaps that means the Government do have figures but just do not want us to see them. If that is right, perhaps the Minister could let us in on the secret when he responds. If that is not right, will he tell us what other organisation with more than a million staff manages to operate successfully without accurate figures on workforce projection?

In addition to the obvious arguments about why we need accurate information on workforce requirements, it is important that we collect such information for existing staff, because they need hope that help is on the way. We need to show that those claps on a Thursday night were not an empty gesture and that there is a determination to do something about the persistent rota gaps that mean staff are both exhausted and demoralised. Just look at some of the challenges we face: 93,000 vacancies; a £6 billion annual spend on agency staff; staff working extra unpaid hours; and some 40% off with work-related stress at some point or other. With all those things conspiring together, it is little wonder that retention is an issue, so we need to give staff hope that we have an answer—that we have a plan. As the Select Committee report on workforce burnout said:

“The way that the NHS does workforce planning is at best opaque and at worst responsible for the unacceptable pressure on the current workforce which existed even before the pandemic.”

With so many challenges currently facing the NHS, why do we want to make it worse by refusing to accept the evidence before our eyes? It is no coincidence that NHS satisfaction ratings are reported to be at a 25-year low at the same time as record numbers of NHS staff say they would not recommend working at their own trust. Those issues are not disconnected in any way, which is why we need to support the workforce amendment.

7.30 pm

Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): I will speak briefly to Government amendment 48A, which is in lieu of amendment 48B. Essentially, it requires the health service to ensure that it does not use products made under forced or slave labour anywhere in the world. That is a big statement by the Health Department, and one that I think we all welcome—I have certainly campaigned on this issue for some time.

In the great sweep of this health legislation, on which there are agreements and disagreements across the board, that may not seem to be something that will directly

[*Sir Iain Duncan Smith*]

affect our lives, but in truth it will resonate beyond our shores. It is already resonating among the Uyghur, who have found themselves under distinct pressure, with husbands often separated from wives and families broken apart for forced labour thousands of miles away from their homes. This measure will speak to them; it is, in a way, a sign that Governments in the free world are taking up this real cause and recognising that it is intolerable for us to turn a blind eye and buy equipment, clothing and so on simply because it is cheaper and helps our cost balance. I do not believe that it will in the end; the trade-off between cost and the human rights of those who have suffered so much under the heel of those totalitarian states is an abysmal one.

Child labour is used in rare-earth mines; when we use those rare-earth materials for the manufacture of our computers, we turn a blind eye to it. When slave labour is used in the Xinjiang region to produce the cotton and the cloth for our personal protective equipment, making it quicker and easier to get, we turn a blind eye to it. It is not just done there; it is done in many countries around the world because it is easier and cheaper, and we tolerate it. I therefore welcome that my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State and the Ministers have tabled the amendment. It will speak volumes to those who are oppressed. It will say to them, “The free world has not forgotten you.” I am certain that in due course the rest of this Government will do the same, and other Governments will then follow suit. I congratulate us for making the right decision.

Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD): I will speak to the workforce amendment and the amendment on the social care cap.

The Lords have compromised on the workforce amendment—they have now asked for projections every three years instead of every two, and they no longer require independent verification of the projections—so it is deeply disappointing that the Government have not moved to meet them halfway, especially when outside the Government there is so much cross-party consensus that the amendment is badly needed. I know from my constituency of St Albans, as I am sure many Members know from theirs, that our NHS and care staff are burnt out. They are understaffed and overworked. Those people, who continue to turn up every single day, need to know that the cavalry is coming, and without this workforce amendment, they simply will not.

There have been worrying reports that NHS trusts have been silenced when they have tried to talk about the numbers of staff that they need to recruit, so will the Minister address this question in his response: if the Government will not produce workforce planning numbers, will they at least commit to not interfere with or silence any part of the NHS or care sector that decides that it wants to produce its own workforce projections? I look forward to hearing the Minister’s assurances on that point.

When it comes to the social care cap, Ministers have stated time and again that their changes would save the Treasury £900 million a year by 2027-28, but that saving comes at the expense of people with fewer assets and savings, including those who will have been paying five years of increased national insurance contributions,

which were put in place partly to fund these care reforms. The Government continue to say that that improves on the current situation, but they conveniently ignore that it is much worse than their original proposal. The social care cap provision does nothing to generate more care; it does nothing to give protections to unpaid carers, who are often on lower incomes but save the Government millions of pounds; and it does nothing to help the social care workforce. I know from my constituency that hospitality, the NHS and social care are all fighting for the same people, and nothing in the Bill will help to improve that situation.

Peter Aldous (Waveney) (Con): I am grateful to have a few minutes to say a few words on the cap on care costs and on workforce planning.

With regard to the care cap, it is important to congratulate the Government on tackling a problem—or attempting to defuse a ticking time bomb—that all their predecessors shied away from. However, there is concern that the proposals are a rushed tag-on to a Bill that was designed for a different purpose: the integration of health and social care and the setting up of integrated care systems. I accept that there is a clear correlation, but the legislation that addresses the problem of people being forced to sell their homes to pay for their care should have been considered and scrutinised separately and carefully, with the objective of putting in place a system that has political consensus and will stand the test of time. That is what the Dilnot proposals and the Care Act 2014 achieved, and they should be the foundation stone on which we build this new system.

My concerns are twofold. First, clause 140 is extremely unfair to those with limited assets and modest incomes. The changes may save the Government hundreds of millions of pounds, but they do so at the expense of those on low incomes and those who live in parts of the country where house values are lower, such as Lowestoft in my constituency. Secondly, there is a worry that working-age adults with disabilities will be unfairly penalised, hence the introduction by the other place of a provision to address it. I acknowledge the Government’s worries about the cost implication of that additional provision, but that iniquity needs to be addressed.

On workforce planning, there is a staffing crisis both in the NHS, where there are 110,000 full-time equivalent vacancies, and in social care, where there are another 100,000 vacancies, high staff turnover and very limited respite for unpaid and family carers. Those deficiencies cascade through the health and care system, creating bed-blocking in hospitals and impeding the efforts made to reduce waiting lists. There is an urgent need for strategic planning to address this crisis. There is concern that framework 15 is not working because of inadequacies in the collection of data, lack of assessment of workforce numbers, and unresponsiveness to societal shifts.

Since we last considered the issue last month, the other place has sought to address the Government’s concerns and, as we have heard, has made reasonable concessions. There is a crisis that must be addressed, and I hope that at this very late stage the Government will accept this reasonable amendment, so that we can get on with this much-needed work.

Margaret Greenwood (Wirral West) (Lab): Amendment 29B goes much further than the Bill’s current provisions on workforce reporting, which are

extremely weak. It would require the Government, at least once every three years, to lay a report before Parliament describing the system in place for assessing and meeting the workforce needs of health, social care, and public health services in England. What could be more reasonable? One has to wonder why the Government do not support amendment 29B. Surely any Government who were committed to running the NHS as a public service would see these provisions as crucial.

The Royal College of Physicians has pointed out that clause 35

“will not set out how many health and social care staff are needed to meet demand”

and has stated that, without long-term projections, which amendment 29B would provide, there is no way to assess how changes in workforce trends, such as retirements or working part time, will impact the delivery of healthcare. The Royal College of General Practitioners has spoken of unsustainable pressures driving GPs out of the workforce and threatening to destabilise general practice.

Just a few weeks ago, the Royal College of Nursing said that nursing staff are exhausted and that staff shortages are undermining their efforts to give safe and effective care—a sentiment reflected by a nurse I met on bank holiday Monday. That is hugely concerning. As the RCN has said, there is a clear evidence base showing that staffing levels have a direct impact on the safety and quality of patient care. When I met members of the RCN last year, they made clear to me the increased stress levels that nurses are experiencing as a result of staff shortages and the impact that is having on the care they so desperately want to deliver.

According to the Health Foundation:

“In the next 25 years, the number of people older than 85 will double to 2.6 million”

in England, so demand for social care is increasing and we need to know that there will be enough doctors, nurses and social care workers to meet people’s needs. The “Strength in Numbers” campaign, a coalition of more than 100 health and care organisations, says that we must put

“measures to adopt a sustainable long-term approach to workforce planning on a statutory footing.”

Without credible, up-to-date numbers, the system cannot plan.

I support Lords amendment 29B. I urge the Government to think about those NHS staff who are working so hard and are so stretched by the amount of stress they are under because they do not have enough colleagues around them, and to listen to the clinicians who are calling on the Government in this regard.

Dr Dan Poulter (Central Suffolk and North Ipswich) (Con): I draw the House’s attention to my declaration in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests as a practising NHS doctor. I welcome the Government’s concessions on modern slavery and procurement and on the reconfiguration of NHS services. However, I remain concerned about two issues: the care cap and independence in the staffing assessment process.

To touch briefly on the issue of the care cap, a number of years ago I took through this House the Care Act 2014, as a Minister in the coalition Government. We based that Act and the care cap on the Dilnot proposals. I continue to be concerned that the current

proposals deviate from the Dilnot proposals, in that those with lower or more moderate net assets will be asked to pay disproportionately more than those with greater assets. That is something I find very difficult to accept. It deviates from the principles of the 2014 Act and the Dilnot proposals, and I hope that even at this late hour the Government will reconsider their position on it.

I rise in particular to speak in support of Lords amendment 29B and the comments by my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt). It is undoubtedly the case that we cannot have safe staffing in the NHS if we do not have the right number of staff. We cannot meet the increasingly complex care needs of patients with not just one, two or three but sometimes four comorbid conditions if we do not have staff with the right skills and in the right numbers to meet those care needs.

We talk often of building new hospitals and of our programme of capital investment in hospitals, but unless we have the right numbers to staff those hospitals, we will not be able to deliver safe care. In every constituency represented in this Chamber, we recognise that there are staff shortages in the local NHS. We recognise particular challenges in the medical workforce among fully qualified GPs—over the past seven years the number of full-time equivalent GPs has fallen. We recognise challenges in the midwifery workforce, which were brought tragically to our attention by the Ockenden report, and we recognise challenges in areas such as intensive care and paediatrics and throughout the health service.

The problem with health workforce planning is that Governments see the NHS in electoral cycles, but workforce is much more complicated than that. From starting medical school to becoming a consultant it takes perhaps 15 years, and to become a fully qualified GP takes about 10 or 11 years. It is important that we have a genuine independence to the process of workforce planning. I have great faith in Health Education England and I am sure it will produce a good report and assessment, but unfortunately it will be doing so with one hand tied behind its back, because it must do so within the confines of the financial envelope in which it is working, and it lacks the genuine independence to say what the NHS really needs.

If we care about patients and about the future of the NHS and its needs, true independence in a report on workforce is required. That is in the best interests of patients, of the health and care workforce and of the future of our health service. I hope the Minister will reconsider.

7.45 pm

Matt Warman (Boston and Skegness) (Con): When I spoke on workforce issues on this Bill last time, I said I was prepared to support the Government’s position on the basis of what the Minister and the Secretary of State had said. The Whips do not need to worry too much, because that remains the case, but I feel a huge amount of sympathy for my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) and Lords amendment 29B. Fundamentally, if the Government are not prepared to accept what the House of Lords has proposed, they are making their relationship with NHS staff and those associated with the NHS somewhat more difficult.

[*Matt Warman*]

I ask the Minister to ensure that he doubles down on the commitment he made previously to engage relentlessly, publicly and as extensively as possible with that workforce. If the Government do not do that, there will never be that sense that the cavalry is coming over the hill.

When my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey was Secretary of State, we established a new medical school in Lincoln—a huge achievement of his, and one I continue to try to take as much credit for as possible. However, saying to doctors in my local constituency, who are working so hard at the Pilgrim Hospital in Boston and in Skegness, that we are recruiting more people locally who will be able to make a difference is a challenge, because they do not yet see it on the wards. Part of that, as has been said, is because it takes such a long time to train people and bring them to fruition.

Richard Graham (Gloucester) (Con): A number of us have been successfully lobbied by the Royal College of Nursing in our own constituencies, showing us the figures—a shortage of 250 nurses in our A&E at the hospital in Gloucester—and staff surveys showing that morale is not where it should be. Does he agree that those things are influencing why some of us are not happy with the Government's position?

Matt Warman: I agree that the Government need to continue to address that issue in the way I have described, through more extensive engagement to try to demonstrate some of what is happening.

That brings me to my second point—I will try to stick to the original time limit—which is that these issues are about trust. We need trust with the NHS workforce. As my right hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock) said, with reconfiguration it is very often the case, as it is in my constituency, that even though the data says we will save lives by moving a service from Boston to Lincoln or vice versa, we need to engage with local communities, because right now they simply do not believe that a service that is further away may yet save lives. That does not ring true, and often the data is not yet there.

I simply appeal to my hon. Friend the Minister to deliver on what he said at the Dispatch Box about engaging with the profession, because that is essential to try to improve the morale that the pandemic has damaged so much. I also appeal to him to ensure that local NHS organisations engage with local people, because only that will win public support for the reconfiguration that is so essential for our NHS both locally and nationally.

Edward Argar: With the leave of the House, I would like to thank right hon. and hon. Members who have spoken in this debate. I am grateful to the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth), and indeed to the hon. Member for Ellesmere Port and Neston (Justin Madders), with whom we spent many happy hours over many weeks in Bill Committee.

I also put on record my gratitude to the amazing Bill team in the Department, with whom it has been a pleasure and a privilege to work on this piece of legislation. They have done an amazing job.

I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for West Suffolk (Matt Hancock), under whose leadership we saw the genesis of this Bill, and whom it was a pleasure to work with and work for over a long period of time.

On reconfigurations, and on tackling modern slavery and supply chains, I hope and believe that these measures attract support across the House, and therefore will not reprise the case for them here.

In respect of workforce planning, I join my hon. Friend the Member for Boston and Skegness (Matt Warman) and many others who have spoken in highlighting our gratitude to the NHS workforce and our recognition of the pressures they have faced, particularly over the past two to two and a half years, but also more broadly. That is why we have not only put in place the measures I outlined to deliver an assessment through Health Education England of the needs of the workforce and the framework for growing it, but rather than waiting for that, already put in place measures to continue to significantly increase the workforce.

Steve Brine: Will the Minister give way?

Edward Argar: Yes—it is the only intervention I will take, but I promised my hon. Friend.

Steve Brine: When I visit the elective orthopaedics team at Royal Hampshire County Hospital in Winchester later this week, I suspect that they will not tell me that the workforce is not one of the things on their worry list, so it is regrettable that the Government cannot accept amendment 29B. They are obviously going to get their way and win the vote, but will the Minister and his team reflect on the argument that has been had between the two Houses over the past year and, in that spirit, take this issue forward? It is not going away, I need to have an answer for the team on Friday, and what I am hearing right now is not going to satisfy them.

Edward Argar: I hope I can reassure my hon. Friend that I always reflect carefully not just on what he says and what my right hon. Friend the Member for South West Surrey (Jeremy Hunt) says, but on what the other place, and other hon. and right hon. Members on either side of this House, say.

I hope I have provided the majority of colleagues with sufficient reassurance about the steps the Government are already taking and our commitment to ensuring that we have the right number of people working in the NHS, coupled with the increases in staffing that we have already delivered and continue to deliver. I hope that the House will again agree that the substantial work already being undertaken by the Government to improve workforce planning is leading to the improvements we all seek, and I therefore urge hon. Members to reject their lordships' amendment.

We also ask that amendments 80, 80P and 80Q are rejected and amendments 80A to 80N are accepted in lieu. The cap on care costs clause is key to this Government ending unpredictable care costs for everyone by introducing a universal £86,000 cap. That must stand part of the Bill, alongside the necessary further amendments 80A to 80N, and we encourage hon. Members to back us on this.

This Bill is an important step forward in evolving our health and care system to meet future needs, and it comes from a Government who are clear in both their record and their future plans in their support for our

NHS. I hope that the other place will heed the large majorities with which this House has already sent these measures back to it, and I hope that we will do so again this evening. We always listen to the other place, but we believe that this House has, on multiple occasions and hopefully again this evening, expressed a clear view of our position on these matters.

Question put. That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 29B in lieu.

The House divided: Ayes 278, Noes 182.

Division No. 260]

[7.53 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel
Afolami, Bim
Afriyie, Adam
Aiken, Nickie
Allan, Lucy
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart
Andrew, rh Stuart
Ansell, Caroline
Argar, Edward
Atherton, Sarah
Atkins, Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, Kemi
Bailey, Shaun
Baillie, Siobhan
Baker, Duncan
Baker, Mr Steve
Barclay, rh Steve
Baynes, Simon
Bell, Aaron
Benton, Scott
Beresford, Sir Paul
Berry, rh Jake
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blunt, Crispin
Bottomley, Sir Peter
Bradley, rh Karen
Braverman, rh Suella
Brereton, Jack
Bridgen, Andrew
Bristow, Paul
Browne, Anthony
Buchan, Felicity
Buckland, rh Sir Robert
Burghart, Alex
Burns, rh Conor
Butler, Rob
Cairns, rh Alun
Carter, Andy
Cartlidge, James
Cash, Sir William
Caulfield, Maria
Chalk, Alex
Chishti, Rehman
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
Costa, Alberto
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
Davison, Dehenna
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dines, Miss Sarah
Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
Docherty, Leo
Donelan, rh Michelle
Double, Steve
Doyle-Price, Jackie
Drax, Richard
Drummond, Mrs Flick
Duguid, David
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Eastwood, Mark
Edwards, Ruth
Ellis, rh Michael
Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
Evans, Dr Luke
Evenson, rh Sir David
Everitt, Ben
Fabricant, Michael
Farris, Laura
Fell, Simon
Firth, Anna
Fletcher, Katherine
Fletcher, Nick
Ford, Vicky
Foster, Kevin
Fox, rh Dr Liam
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Frazer, rh Lucy
Freeman, George
Freer, Mike
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Fysh, Mr Marcus
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Gibb, rh Nick
Gideon, Jo
Glen, John
Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
Gove, rh Michael
Grant, Mrs Helen
Green, Chris
Green, rh Damian
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Kate

Gullis, Jonathan
Hall, Luke
Hammond, Stephen
Hancock, rh Matt
Harper, rh Mr Mark
Harris, Rebecca
Harrison, Trudy
Hart, Sally-Ann
Hart, rh Simon
Heald, rh Sir Oliver
Heappey, James
Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
Henderson, Gordon
Henry, Darren
Higginbotham, Antony
Hinds, rh Damian
Hoare, Simon
Holden, Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Holloway, Adam
Holmes, Paul
Howell, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hughes, Eddie
Hunt, Jane
Hunt, Tom
Javid, rh Sajid
Jenkinson, Mark
Jenkyns, Andrea
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Johnston, David
Jones, Andrew
Jones, rh Mr David
Jones, Fay
Jones, Mr Marcus
Jupp, Simon
Kearns, Alicia
Keegan, Gillian
Kruger, Danny
Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
Lamont, John
Largan, Robert
Latham, Mrs Pauline
Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
Levy, Ian
Lewer, Andrew
Lewis, rh Dr Julian
Loder, Chris
Logan, Mark
Longhi, Marco
Lopez, Julia
Loughton, Tim
Mackinlay, Craig
Maclean, Rachel
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mangnall, Anthony
Marson, Julie
May, rh Mrs Theresa
Maynard, Paul
McCartney, Jason
McCartney, Karl
McPartland, Stephen
Mercer, Johnny
Merriman, Huw
Metcalfe, Stephen
Miller, rh Mrs Maria
Milling, rh Amanda
Mills, Nigel
Moore, Damien
Moore, Robbie
Mordaunt, rh Penny
Morris, David
Morris, James
Morrisey, Joy
Mortimer, Jill
Morton, Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mumby-Croft, Holly
Mundell, rh David
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Nici, Lia
Nokes, rh Caroline
O'Brien, Neil
Offord, Dr Matthew
Opperman, Guy
Parish, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Pawsey, Mark
Penning, rh Sir Mike
Penrose, John
Percy, Andrew
Philp, Chris
Pow, Rebecca
Prentis, Victoria
Pritchard, rh Mark
Pursglove, Tom
Quince, Will
Randall, Tom
Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
Richards, Nicola
Richardson, Angela
Robertson, Mr Laurence
Robinson, Mary
Rosindell, Andrew
Ross, Douglas
Rowley, Lee
Russell, Dean
Rutley, David
Sambrook, Gary
Saxby, Selaine
Scully, Paul
Selous, Andrew
Shapps, rh Grant
Simmonds, David
Smith, Greg
Smith, Henry
Smith, rh Julian
Smith, Royston
Solloway, Amanda
Spencer, Dr Ben
Spencer, rh Mark
Stafford, Alexander
Stephenson, Andrew
Stevenson, John
Stewart, Iain
Streeter, Sir Gary
Stride, rh Mel
Stuart, Graham
Sturdy, Julian
Sunderland, James
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Syms, Sir Robert
Throup, Maggie
Timpson, Edward
Tolhurst, Kelly
Tomlinson, Justin
Tomlinson, Michael
Tracey, Craig
Trott, Laura
Tugendhat, Tom
Vickers, Martin

Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warman, Matt
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Sir Bill

Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Scott Mann and
 Gareth Johnson**

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Aldous, Peter
 Ali, Rushanara
 Amesbury, Mike
 Anderson, Fleur
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brine, Steve
 Brown, Ms Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Byrne, Ian
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cooper, Daisy
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Philip
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Debonnaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne

Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Green, Kate
 Green, Sarah
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Hayes, Helen
 Healey, rh John
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Hunt, rh Jeremy
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 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
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat

McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMorrin, Anna
 McVey, rh Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Morgan, Helen
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Sarah (*Proxy vote cast
 by Chris Elmore*)
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina
 Reeves, Ellie
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robinson, Gavin

Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Winter, Beth
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

**Liz Twist and
 Taiwo Owatemi**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 29B in lieu disagreed to.

8.6 pm

More than one hour having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on the Lords message, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, 30 March).

The Deputy Speaker put forthwith the Questions necessary for the disposal of the business to be concluded at that time (Standing Order No. 83G).

Resolved,

That this House disagrees with Lords amendments 30B and 108B to the words restored to the Bill, and agrees to Government amendments (a) to (i) in lieu.—(*Edward Argar.*)

Resolved,

That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 48B in lieu and agrees Government amendment (a) in lieu.—(*Edward Argar.*)

Motion made, and Question put,

That this House insists on its disagreement with Lords amendment 80, insists on Commons amendments 80A to 80N in lieu, and disagrees with Lords amendments 80P and 80Q.—(*Edward Argar.*)

The House divided: Ayes 282, Noes 183.

Division No. 261]

[8.7 pm

AYES

Adams, rh Nigel	Allan, Lucy
Afolami, Bim	Anderson, Lee
Afriyie, Adam	Anderson, Stuart
Aiken, Nickie	Andrew, rh Stuart

Ansell, Caroline
 Argar, Edward
 Atherton, Sarah
 Atkins, Victoria
 Bacon, Gareth
 Badenoch, Kemi
 Bailey, Shaun
 Baillie, Siobhan
 Baker, Duncan
 Baker, Mr Steve
 Baldwin, Harriett
 Barclay, rh Steve
 Baron, Mr John
 Baynes, Simon
 Bell, Aaron
 Benton, Scott
 Beresford, Sir Paul
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Blunt, Crispin
 Bottomley, Sir Peter
 Bradley, rh Karen
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brereton, Jack
 Bridgen, Andrew
 Brine, Steve
 Bristow, Paul
 Browne, Anthony
 Buchan, Felicity
 Burghart, Alex
 Burns, rh Conor
 Butler, Rob
 Cairns, rh Alun
 Carter, Andy
 Cartledge, James
 Cash, Sir William
 Caulfield, Maria
 Chalk, Alex
 Chishti, Rehman
 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
 Costa, Alberto
 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
 Davison, Dehenna
 Dinenage, Dame Caroline
 Dines, Miss Sarah
 Djanogly, Mr Jonathan
 Docherty, Leo
 Donelan, rh Michelle
 Doyle-Price, Jackie
 Drax, Richard
 Drummond, Mrs Flick
 Duguid, David
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Dunne, rh Philip

Eastwood, Mark
 Edwards, Ruth
 Ellis, rh Michael
 Ellwood, rh Mr Tobias
 Elphicke, Mrs Natalie
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Evennett, rh Sir David
 Everitt, Ben
 Fabricant, Michael
 Farris, Laura
 Fell, Simon
 Firth, Anna
 Fletcher, Katherine
 Fletcher, Nick
 Ford, Vicky
 Foster, Kevin
 Fox, rh Dr Liam
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Frazer, rh Lucy
 Freeman, George
 Freer, Mike
 French, Mr Louie
 Fuller, Richard
 Fysh, Mr Marcus
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 Ghani, Ms Nusrat
 Gibb, rh Nick
 Gideon, Jo
 Glen, John
 Goodwill, rh Sir Robert
 Gove, rh Michael
 Graham, Richard
 Grant, Mrs Helen
 Grayling, rh Chris
 Green, Chris
 Green, rh Damian
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Kate
 Gullis, Jonathan
 Hall, Luke
 Hammond, Stephen
 Hancock, rh Matt
 Harper, rh Mr Mark
 Harris, Rebecca
 Harrison, Trudy
 Hart, Sally-Ann
 Hart, rh Simon
 Heald, rh Sir Oliver
 Heapey, James
 Heaton-Harris, rh Chris
 Henderson, Gordon
 Henry, Darren
 Higginbotham, Antony
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hoare, Simon
 Holden, Mr Richard
 Holloway, Adam
 Holmes, Paul
 Howell, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hughes, Eddie
 Hunt, Jane
 Hunt, Tom
 Javid, rh Sajid
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenkinson, Mark
 Jenkyns, Andrea
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Johnston, David

Jones, Andrew
 Jones, rh Mr David
 Jones, Fay
 Jones, Mr Marcus
 Jupp, Simon
 Kawczynski, Daniel
 Kearns, Alicia
 Keegan, Gillian
 Kruger, Danny
 Kwarteng, rh Kwasi
 Lamont, John
 Latham, Mrs Pauline
 Leadsom, rh Dame Andrea
 Levy, Ian
 Lewis, rh Dr Julian
 Loder, Chris
 Logan, Mark
 Longhi, Marco
 Lopez, Julia
 Lord, Mr Jonathan
 Loughton, Tim
 Mackinlay, Craig
 Maclean, Rachel
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Mangnall, Anthony
 Marson, Julie
 May, rh Mrs Theresa
 Maynard, Paul
 McCartney, Karl
 Mercer, Johnny
 Merriman, Huw
 Metcalfe, Stephen
 Miller, rh Mrs Maria
 Milling, rh Amanda
 Mills, Nigel
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Moore, Robbie
 Mordaunt, rh Penny
 Morris, Anne Marie
 Morris, David
 Morris, James
 Morrissey, Joy
 Mortimer, Jill
 Morton, Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mundell, rh David
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Neill, Sir Robert
 Nici, Lia
 Nokes, rh Caroline
 O'Brien, Neil
 Offord, Dr Matthew
 Opperman, Guy
 Parish, Neil
 Patel, rh Priti
 Pawsey, Mark
 Penning, rh Sir Mike
 Penrose, John
 Philp, Chris
 Pincher, rh Christopher
 Pow, Rebecca
 Prentis, Victoria
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Pursglove, Tom
 Quince, Will
 Randall, Tom

Rees-Mogg, rh Mr Jacob
 Richards, Nicola
 Richardson, Angela
 Robertson, Mr Laurence
 Robinson, Mary
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Ross, Douglas
 Rowley, Lee
 Russell, Dean
 Rutley, David
 Sambrook, Gary
 Saxby, Selaine
 Scully, Paul
 Seely, Bob
 Selous, Andrew
 Shapps, rh Grant
 Simmonds, David
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, Henry
 Smith, rh Julian
 Smith, Royston
 Solloway, Amanda
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Spencer, rh Mark
 Stafford, Alexander
 Stephenson, Andrew
 Stevenson, John
 Stewart, Iain
 Streeter, Sir Gary
 Stride, rh Mel
 Stuart, Graham
 Sunderland, James
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Syms, Sir Robert
 Throup, Maggie
 Timpson, Edward
 Tolhurst, Kelly
 Tomlinson, Justin
 Tomlinson, Michael
 Tracey, Craig
 Trott, Laura
 Tugendhat, Tom
 Vickers, Martin
 Vickers, Matt
 Villiers, rh Theresa
 Walker, Sir Charles
 Walker, Mr Robin
 Wallis, Dr Jamie
 Warman, Matt
 Watling, Giles
 Webb, Suzanne
 Whately, Helen
 Wheeler, Mrs Heather
 Whittingdale, rh Mr John
 Wiggin, Sir Bill
 Wild, James
 Williams, Craig
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wood, Mike
 Wright, rh Jeremy
 Young, Jacob
 Zahawi, rh Nadhim

Tellers for the Ayes:
Scott Mann and
Gareth Johnson

NOES

Abbott, rh Ms Diane
 Aldous, Peter

Ali, Rushanara
 Amesbury, Mike

Anderson, Fleur
 Ashworth, rh Jonathan
 Barker, Paula
 Beckett, rh Margaret
 Begum, Apsana
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Blake, Olivia
 Blomfield, Paul
 Bradshaw, rh Mr Ben
 Brennan, Kevin
 Brown, Ms Lyn
 Brown, rh Mr Nicholas
 Bryant, Chris
 Buck, Ms Karen
 Burgon, Richard
 Byrne, Ian
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Carden, Dan
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Chamberlain, Wendy
 Champion, Sarah
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Cooper, Daisy
 Creasy, Stella
 Cruddas, Jon
 Cryer, John
 Cummins, Judith
 Cunningham, Alex
 Daby, Janet
 Davey, rh Ed
 David, Wayne
 Davies, Philip
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 Debbonaire, Thangam
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dodds, Anneliese
 Doughty, Stephen
 Dowd, Peter
 Duffield, Rosie
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, Maria
 Edwards, Jonathan
 Efford, Clive
 Elmore, Chris
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Evans, Chris
 Farron, Tim
 Farry, Stephen
 Fovargue, Yvonne
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gill, Preet Kaur
 Glindon, Mary
 Green, Kate
 Green, Sarah
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Greenwood, Margaret
 Griffith, Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Mrs Paulette
 Hanna, Claire
 Hardy, Emma
 Harman, rh Ms Harriet
 Hayes, Helen
 Hendrick, Sir Mark
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Hollern, Kate
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Hollobone, Mr Philip
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Howarth, rh Sir George
 Huq, Dr Rupa
 Hussain, Imran
 Jardine, Christine
 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
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Lewer, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 Lucas, Caroline
 Lynch, Holly
 Madders, Justin
 Mahmood, Mr Khalid
 Maskell, Rachael
 Matheson, Christian
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCartney, Jason
 McDonnell, rh John
 McFadden, rh Mr Pat
 McGinn, Conor
 McGovern, Alison
 McKinnell, Catherine
 McMorris, Anna
 McVey, rh Esther
 Mearns, Ian
 Miliband, rh Edward
 Mishra, Navendu
 Morgan, Helen
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Mumby-Croft, Holly
 Murray, Ian
 Murray, James
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Olney, Sarah
 Onwurah, Chi
 Oppong-Asare, Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Owen, Sarah (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Percy, Andrew
 Perkins, Mr Toby
 Pollard, Luke
 Poulter, Dr Dan
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reed, Steve
 Rees, Christina

Reeves, Ellie
 Ribeiro-Addy, Bell
 Robinson, Gavin
 Rodda, Matt
 Russell-Moyle, Lloyd
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shah, Naz
 Shannon, Jim
 Sharma, Mr Virendra
 Sheerman, Mr Barry
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smyth, Karin
 Sobel, Alex
 Spellar, rh John
 Stone, Jamie
 Streeting, Wes
 Stringer, Graham
 Sturdy, Julian
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tarry, Sam
 Thornberry, rh Emily
 Timms, rh Stephen
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Webbe, Claudia
 West, Catherine
 Western, Matt
 Whitehead, Dr Alan
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, Hywel
 Wilson, Munira
 Winter, Beth
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Noes:

Liz Twist and
 Taiwo Owatemi

Question accordingly agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83H(2)). That a Committee be appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendment 29B and for insisting on disagreement to Lords amendment 80, for insisting on amendments 80A to 80N in lieu and for disagreeing to Lords amendments 80P and 80Q;

That Edward Argar, Michael Tomlinson, Saqib Bhatti, Gareth Davies, Karin Smyth, Chris Elmore and Martyn Day be members of the Committee;

That Edward Argar be the Chair of the Committee;

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—(*Miss Dines.*)

Question agreed to.

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

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE (TODAY)

Ordered,

That, at today's sitting, the Speaker shall put the Questions necessary to dispose of proceedings on—

(1) the motion in the name of the Prime Minister relating to the Chair of the United Kingdom Statistics Authority not later than one hour after the commencement of proceedings on that motion;

(2) the motion in the name of Secretary Nadhim Zahawi relating to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill (Carry-over) not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on that motion;

(3) the motion in the name of Secretary George Eustice relating to the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill (Carry-over) not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on that motion;

(4) the motion in the name of Secretary Grant Shapps relating to the High Speed Rail (Crewe-Manchester) Bill not later than one and a half hours after the commencement of proceedings on that motion; and such questions shall include the questions on any amendments selected by the Speaker which may then be moved; proceedings may continue, though opposed, after the moment of interruption; and Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply.—(*Mark Spencer.*)

United Kingdom Statistics Authority

[*Relevant documents: Eighth Report of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, Pre-appointment hearing: Chair of UK Statistics Authority, HC1162; Oral evidence taken before the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on 29 March 2022 on the pre-appointment hearing for the Chair of the UKSA, HC1162.*]

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That this House endorses the nomination of Sir Robert Chote for appointment as Chair of the United Kingdom Statistics Authority.—(*Mrs Wheeler.*)

8.20 pm

Rachel Hopkins (Luton South) (Lab): I want to begin by putting on record the Opposition's endorsement of Sir Robert Chote's appointment as chair of the UK Statistics Authority, and to echo the sentiment made by members of the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee in wishing him well in his new role. I look forward to observing his continued engagement with the Committee. It is appropriate that I mention that, since being appointed as a shadow Minister, I have yet to be discharged from PACAC, but I can assure the House that I have recused myself.

Nevertheless, there are points about the appointment process and the wider use of statistics by the Government, Secretaries of States and Ministers that I would like to raise with the Minister. The Committee's report on the appointment of Sir Robert directly states:

"Diversity data relating to the applicants for this role (gender, disability and ethnic background of applicants) was not provided to the Committee."

While I am aware that the Cabinet Office has attempted to justify this decision, I agree with the Committee that such a decision allows the inference that there was little diversity in the applicant pool for this role, but we just do not know. If the Government's words on diversity are to amount to more than simply hot air, they need to commit to delivering greater openness in future public appointment processes. It is the only way of measuring whether the Government are making inroads in creating a diverse public sector.

Accurate statistics that properly represent the whole population are crucial to effective policy making, but much of the data on which our public policy is based fails to represent marginalised communities accurately. Statistics such as census data provide a vital tool for public bodies to decide resource allocation and service planning decisions, so I hope the Minister will seek to address the chronic statistical under-reporting of minority communities such as the LGBTQ population, which continues to limit access to vital services given the inaccurate understanding of such communities.

I was pleased to hear Sir Robert's firm commitment to data transparency in PACAC's pre-appointment hearing. I know this is of particular concern due to Ministers' conduct during the pandemic. PACAC's data transparency and accountability report affirmed:

"Statistics quoted by Ministers have not always been underpinned by published data, which goes against the UKSA Code of Practice."

Access to data is essential in building public trust in Government decision making. If data is withheld, there is no way to verify the information. As Sir Robert rightly put it, the

"ministerial code says one should be 'mindful' of the code of practice. That seems weaker than it ideally would be."

All of us in this House must have accuracy and honesty at the heart of everything we do. A high degree of openness is key to ensuring the country is being governed with integrity. As we have seen recently with partygate and other infractions in No. 10 and the Conservative party, increasing the expectation placed on Ministers to provide accurate information informed by publicly available statistics has never been more important. I hope the Minister will heed Sir Robert's thoughtful comments on this during the pre-appointment hearing.

I just want to end my short remarks by reiterating my and the Opposition's support for the appointment of Sir Robert, and I look forward to his delivering on his agenda.

8.23 pm

Greg Clark (Tunbridge Wells) (Con): I should tell the House that I have known Sir Robert Chote as a friend for many years. Not just from that knowledge, but from an appreciation of his career in public service, I think the Government, as the hon. Member for Luton South (Rachel Hopkins) said, have made an excellent choice in his nomination.

As we saw during the pandemic, accurate, timely and relevant statistics are of crucial importance to public policy, and the Science and Technology Committee, which I chair, has depended on and drawn on them extensively. We are fortunate in this country to count on institutions such as the Office for National Statistics and the Office for Statistics Regulation, and individual statisticians who are world class. Throughout his distinguished career, especially as chair of the Office for Budget Responsibility, Robert Chote has also depended on the availability of good statistics and has shown himself to be a fearless guardian of their independence and rigour. He will make a fine chair of the UK Statistics Authority and will strengthen further the UK's already strong reputation in this vital field.

8.25 pm

Brendan O'Hara (Argyll and Bute) (SNP): On behalf of the Scottish National party, I too congratulate Sir Robert Chote on his appointment. There is absolutely no doubt that he is more than eminently qualified to take up the role of the chair of the UK Statistics Authority. He is highly respected, as we heard from the right hon. Member for Tunbridge Wells (Greg Clark), as chair of the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council in the last year and of course from his tenure as the chair of the Office for Budget Responsibility for the best part of—indeed, for a full—decade.

I do share the concerns expressed by the hon. Member for Luton South (Rachel Hopkins). She raised some very interesting points about diversity, and I share her support for Sir Robert's commitment to transparency, which is perhaps more vital now than ever before.

Finally, I pay tribute to the out-going chair, Sir David Norgrove, and thank him for his five years at the UK Statistics Authority. I put on record our best wishes to Sir Robert Chote and wish him every success for his time in office.

8.26 pm

The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Mrs Heather Wheeler): I am really disappointed that the hon. Member for Luton South (Rachel Hopkins) decided to take the time to make this a political issue, which it really is not. We want to welcome Sir Robert Chote to the new job, and thank the former chair, Sir David Norgrove. It is a superb promotion, the Committee found him completely acceptable and I just want to commend the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill (Carry-over)

Motion made, and Question proposed,

That—

if, at the conclusion of this Session of Parliament, proceedings on the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill have not been completed, they shall be resumed in the next Session; paragraphs (9) to (14) of Standing Order 80A shall have effect in relation to the Bill as if it had been ordered to be carried over to the next Session of Parliament in pursuance of a carry-over motion under paragraph (1) of that Standing Order, except that paragraph (13) shall have effect as if the period on the expiry of which proceedings on the Bill shall lapse is two years from the date of its first reading in this House.—(*Michelle Donelan.*)

8.27 pm

Matt Western (Warwick and Leamington) (Lab): What a palaver! This is less a carry-over motion and more of a carry on, if I may say so—“Carry On Regardless” being probably the most apt title. Let us call it a year: it is 358 days since the Bill was introduced to the House. Announced in the last Queen’s Speech, the Second Reading was debated nine months ago and the Public Bill Committee concluded its work over seven months ago. Since then, nothing—so is there a problem? The lack of urgency suggests it is really not that important after all. Certainly, the Secretary of State has not mentioned it once in the Chamber since his appointment five months ago, and the legislation would certainly have no effect on cancel culture, according to lawyers, media commentators and the sector itself.

The Government now want another year to resolve their own problem—a problem of their making—which is more time that could be better used to address the immediate and pressing issues faced by the great British public, such as the cost of living crisis, the prospect of 40% of UK households being in energy poverty by the autumn and an economy performing worse than any other G7 country when compared with pre-pandemic

levels. We will not vote against this motion, but the public will not forgive this out-of-touch Government, who fail to address their priorities.

8.28 pm

The Minister for Higher and Further Education (Michelle Donelan): Let me be crystal clear: the Government remain committed to delivering on our manifesto pledge by strengthening freedom of speech in higher education. We have not changed, and never will change, our position, because we recognise that free speech is the absolute cornerstone of democracy and a liberal society. Our universities should be centres of inquiry and intellectual debate, and places of new and independent thinking from which will grow the knowledge, learning and science that we need to tackle future global challenges. The reintroduction of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill reaffirms our manifesto commitment, yet the Opposition’s position can be described only as perplexing. First they said that if such legislation were needed they would support it, but then they changed their position to say that the issue does not exist and they will not support the Bill. Now their position has become even more confusing.

Once again, the Opposition find themselves entirely out of step with the British people on a matter of fundamental importance. Their unwillingness to acknowledge that this is an issue has shown their contempt for the views of ordinary people, and their unwillingness to support a democratic legislative solution without an alternative plan—something that was very clear throughout Committee—shows that, as always, their cynical party politicking comes ahead of common sense. Even now they try to deflect by a ruse to suggest that our commitment to this issue has waned. This Bill will ensure that lawful free speech is supported to its full extent.

Question put and agreed to.

ANIMAL WELFARE (KEPT ANIMALS) BILL: CARRY OVER

Ordered,

That—

if, at the conclusion of this Session of Parliament, proceedings on the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill have not been completed, they shall be resumed in the next Session; paragraphs (9) to (14) of Standing Order 80A shall have effect in relation to the Bill as if it had been ordered to be carried over to the next Session of Parliament in pursuance of a carry-over motion under paragraph (1) of that Standing Order, except that paragraph (13) shall have effect as if the period on the expiry of which proceedings on the Bill shall lapse is two years from the date of its first reading in this House.—(*Victoria Prentis.*)

High Speed Rail (Crewe - Manchester) Bill (Carry-over)

Motion made and question proposed

That the following provisions shall apply in respect of the High Speed Rail (Crewe – Manchester) Bill:

(1) Further proceedings on the Bill shall be suspended from the day on which this Session of Parliament ends until the next Session of Parliament.

(2) If a Bill is presented in the next Session in the same terms as the Bill when it was presented in this Session—

(a) the Bill so presented shall be ordered to be printed and shall be deemed to have been read the first time; and

(b) the Standing Orders and practice of the House applicable to the Bill, so far as complied with or dispensed with in this Session, shall be deemed to have been complied with or (as the case may be) dispensed with in the next Session.

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House.—(*Andrew Stephenson.*)

8.31 pm

Mr Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese (Slough) (Lab): The Labour party understands the need to carry over this Bill to the next Session of Parliament, and the narrow technical reasons for doing so. I therefore will not detain the House for long on a Bill that has yet even to have its Second Reading. Labour welcomes the much-needed extension of High Speed 2, and has long supported HS2 being built in full, as that will help to address the severe capacity constraints on our rail network, and improve connections between cities in the midlands and the north. Labour looks forward to making its arguments during the passage of the Bill through Parliament about value for money for UK taxpayers, and we will fight to ensure that working people across our country see the benefits from this project in jobs and opportunities. We cannot accept a situation where just one UK-based firm was shortlisted for £2.5 billion-worth of contracts for track and tunnel systems for HS2. We also know that the decision to scrap the eastern leg was a betrayal of promises made to communities, and will leave the north in the slow lane for decades to come. Promises made must be kept, and Labour will stand up for our communities and demand that the Government deliver the northern rail investment that they promised.

8.32 pm

Sir William Cash (Stone) (Con): The Minister knows well my continued opposition to HS2 so this is not unusual, but I have some specific points to make about the phase 2 Bill. It contains proposals for a totally unnecessary railhead and separate infrastructure maintenance base at Ashley, which will cause immense damage to the constituency of my right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Esther McVey), who is in her place today. She has discussed the merits of the objections to phase 2b of HS2 with my constituents who are injuriously affected. Those facilities, together with another proposed arrangement at the Crewe rolling stock depot, will, I believe, waste an estimated £475 million of taxpayers' money. With a further £171 million of savings to be made by the use of a Transport and Works Act order on phase 2, the Minister will know that I and parliamentary colleagues are calling for less than half the total of the £650 million saved to be directed towards the reopening of eight miles of the former North Staffordshire railway. Other colleagues come from the vicinity of Stoke-on-Trent and neighbouring constituencies.

Such a move has the potential to transform west-to-east rail connectivity across the north, which so many people are calling for, and provide a massive economic boost to north Staffordshire to achieve our levelling-up objectives. I therefore call on the Minister to amend the phase 2 Bill and remove the proposals for Ashley when it returns to the House. I greatly look forward to further discussions taking place between my constituents, the Minister's officials and appointed rail experts on how we can make required improvements to the phase 2a proposals as soon as possible.

8.34 pm

Andrew Gwynne (Denton and Reddish) (Lab): I rise not to detain the House for any undue period but to place on the record an issue hidden away in the Bill's detail that will severely affect my constituents' transport opportunities. I do not know whether the Minister is aware of it—I have raised it at Transport questions and believe that we have a meeting scheduled after the local elections to discuss it—but, as we are talking about carrying over the Bill, I want to place it on the record so that the Minister can understand the issue at stake affecting my constituency and, hopefully, it can be resolved before Second Reading. The proposals that I will put to him are not insurmountable, especially when we consider the scale of the High Speed 2 project from Crewe to Manchester and the public expenditure that that will involve.

The Minister will know that there will be a great deal of work outside Manchester Piccadilly station and in its surroundings. The construction work to bring the high-speed rail line into the new station at Piccadilly will massively disrupt the streets and the environment around the current station, and that has an implication for the Manchester Metrolink service from Manchester Piccadilly through my constituency to Ashton-under-Lyme. The line to Ashton—the only Metrolink line that goes through Manchester Piccadilly—will have to be severed for the period of the construction work around Piccadilly station, which will result in the line being mothballed—*[Interruption.]* I realise, Mr Deputy Speaker, that I am straying on to Second Reading territory, but I want to get the solution on the record before the Bill is read a Second time. That will involve the line being mothballed and a bus replacement service put in place, which is not acceptable to my constituents.

What we need is a depot building on Ashton Moss where the trams can be parked overnight and so that the tram service between Ashton and New Islington can be retained. That is a simple, constructive solution with the support of my right hon. Friend the Member for Ashton-under-Lyme (Angela Rayner) and my hon. Friend the Member for Manchester Central (Lucy Powell) which will keep the tram line running. I hope that the Minister will look favourably on that.

Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans): I was hugely generous there, Mr Gwynne.

Andrew Gwynne: Thank you.

8.37 pm

Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con): I rise to oppose the carry-over motion. This is a highly contentious Bill, particularly for my constituents in Tatton. While I know that you would not allow me to get into why I oppose

[*Esther McVey*]

the Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, there are reasons why it should not be carried over, and I need to put them on the record.

Much has changed since the Bill's genesis, and two things in particular. First, rail travel between cities has not returned to pre-covid levels or even close. That indicates even to those who agreed with the project in the first place that this expensive white elephant is no longer needed. Secondly, the cost of HS2 had continued to rise at an eye-watering rate, and that was before we saw the current huge rates of inflation, which will put it up further. Those are vital areas of contention where there has been a material change since the Bill started its passage, so it is vital that the House of Commons starts the process of the Bill afresh to see whether the project still commands its support.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Does the Minister wish to respond to those bits that related to the carry-over?

8.39 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Transport (Andrew Stephenson): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. May I first say that my hon. Friend the Member for Stone (Sir William Cash) continues to be true champion for his constituents? I look forward to visiting his constituency soon. My officials will continue to work with many local campaigners in his area to ensure we find the best possible way forward and the best possible solution for both taxpayers and local residents.

The hon. Member for Denton and Reddish (Andrew Gwynne) raises Metrolink. As he will, I am sure, recall, it is an issue I am well aware of because I worked in Droylsden for many years and the Metrolink ran outside my office. I look forward to again meeting him, and continuing to work with him and local campaigners to ensure we get the right solution as the Bill progresses.

My right hon. Friend the Member for Tatton (Esther McVey) raises many issues relating to the business case and cost of HS2. I am sure they will be debated heavily on Second Reading.

I welcome the continuing support for the Bill by the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Slough (Mr Dhesi). I will just say that, as he will know, 2,400 UK registered businesses have now won work on the HS2 programme, with over 22,000 people employed. This is a project delivering significant UK jobs.

The Bill is, of course, yet to have its Second Reading. As it is a hybrid Bill, there are procedures that need to be completed before that can happen. I look forward to

the debate on the scheme continuing properly at that juncture, but for now it should be carried over. The consultation on the Bill's environmental statement has just closed. The responses are being assessed by Parliament's independent assessor, who will provide a report ahead of the Second Reading debate. There is always a longer delay between the First Reading and Second Reading of hybrid Bills to allow that necessary procedure to be completed, but Second Reading is now anticipated for late June or early July.

Question put and agreed to.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

INCOME TAX

That the draft Major Sporting Events (Income Tax Exemption) (2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 17 January, be approved.—(*Miss Dines.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

INCOME TAX

That the draft Major Sporting Events (Income Tax Exemption) (UEFA Women's EURO 2022 Finals) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 17 January, be approved.—(*Miss Dines.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

INCOME TAX

That the draft Major Sporting Events (Income Tax Exemption) (Finalissima Football Match) Regulations 2022, which were laid before this House on 14 March, be approved.—(*Miss Dines.*)

Question agreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 118(6)),

PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

That the Judicial Pensions Regulations 2022 (SI, 2022, No. 319), dated 17 March 2022, a copy of which was laid before this House on 17 March, be approved.—(*Miss Dines.*)

Question agreed to.

Malnutrition and the NHS

Motion made, and Question proposed, That this House do now adjourn.—(Miss Dines.)

8.42 pm

Martyn Day (Linlithgow and East Falkirk) (SNP): Mr Deputy Speaker, you have no idea how pleased I am to be making this speech now, mainly because I originally thought it would be at 12.55 am. Having made the shortest speech of my political career earlier today, I now have the opportunity to perhaps make my longest. But I think I can do it in a normal measure and we can all get away home. I thank Mr Speaker for granting the debate and the Minister for attending.

Malnutrition is a word that often conjures up images of undernourished children in developing or war-torn countries; not surprising really, when we consider it is linked to 45% of deaths among under-fives worldwide. That the UK Government have reduced nutrition-specific international aid by 70% is certainly concerning. However, that is not the focus of what I will be discussing today. It is equally concerning that in the UK, the fifth-richest country in the world, malnutrition has tripled since 2010. However, although they are undoubtedly related, neither will I specifically be discussing food insecurity, nor the exponential rise in food poverty, which has been widely argued in this place to be a political choice. Instead, I want to take this opportunity to highlight the direct impact that malnutrition has on our NHS and to ask the Minister to consider some of the ways that the Government could potentially mitigate those negative impacts.

I am pleased to have secured this Adjournment debate for two main reasons. First, it is an opportunity to draw attention to the most recent survey of malnutrition and nutritional care in adults, which was carried out by the British Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition, otherwise known as BAPEN. It is relevant to point out that 83% of the individuals who took part in this survey were living in England. BAPEN hopes to include all four UK nations in future surveys, but I am referring to this one as I understand it is the most recently published. Using the malnutrition universal screening tool, the survey demonstrated that 40% of the participants were at medium or high risk of malnutrition, and that disease-related malnutrition at that time affected 1.3 million people over the age of 65. I will refer to further findings of the survey throughout this speech.

The second reason that I am happy to be able to raise the issue of malnutrition and the NHS specifically concerns the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances, which, for ease of reference, I will refer to as “the committee”. That scientific advisory committee is responsible for reviewing applications for substances that are specifically formulated by manufacturers to manage medical conditions. Malnutrition is one of these medical conditions and the substances that the committee reviews may be nutritional or dermatological products.

The committee plays a pivotal role in the NHS, as it is also responsible for advising the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care on the prescribing of borderline substances in NHS primary care. The committee’s advice covers two main areas: borderline substances policy; and the clinical and cost-effectiveness of borderline products.

Before I talk more about those areas, I will give a bit of background about malnutrition and its many implications for the NHS. Being malnourished does not simply mean being underweight; it can also affect overweight people and take many forms. For example, if someone does not consume enough energy and nutrients, perhaps because of social, economic or age-related factors, they become undernourished and consequently suffer from undernutrition. Undernutrition can affect all ages; it is indeed a “cradle to grave” scenario that the NHS was set up to provide healthcare for.

Then there is disease-related malnutrition, whereby a disease creates specific nutritional needs that result in an insufficient intake of energy and nutrients. Examples of disease-related malnutrition include some types of cancer or cardiovascular disease. There is also micronutrient-related malnutrition, which can be either a deficiency or an excess of important vitamins and minerals.

Being malnourished can lead to: poor growth and/or development in children; weaker immune systems and increased risk of infection, and indeed reinfection; muscle and bone weakness, or becoming more frail and likely to fall; poor wound healing; and slower recovery times. It is because of those common effects that, compared with the average well-nourished person, those who are malnourished are twice as likely to visit their GP, have three times the number of hospital admissions and, on average, stay in hospital for three days longer.

Malnutrition affects more than one in 20 people in the UK, which is a similar prevalence rate to well-known, treatable illnesses such as asthma. However, the rate increases to one in 10 people over the age of 65. It is also more prevalent in those with existing illnesses. Outside those two groups, malnutrition is disproportionately concentrated in lower-income regions and households, and undernutrition is more common in children from less well-off backgrounds.

Hon. Members can see how this mounts up to be a significant cost to the NHS that equates to around 15% of the total UK healthcare budget. That is quite a staggering figure. Additionally, those who are malnourished divert scarce healthcare resources unnecessarily, which brings me to the committee’s advice on the cost-effectiveness of borderline products.

Across the UK, the cost of malnutrition to the health service is currently estimated to be a staggering £23.5 billion. As the population ages, the costs of failing to put in place proper systems for the diagnosis and treatment of malnutrition are likely to rise. The cost of treating a malnourished patient is two to three times more than treating a non-malnourished patient. It has been calculated that treating a non-malnourished patient amounts to £2,155, whereas treating a malnourished patient comes to £7,408. That is reported to be driven largely by poorer outcomes leading to increased healthcare needs.

Reducing the prevalence of malnutrition would therefore be a significant way to get the best from our NHS in monetary terms and relieve pressure on the healthcare system and NHS staff. Most importantly, in human terms, it would improve patient outcomes. That point leads me on to the committee’s advice on borderline substances policy.

On 1 April 2016, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2016 to 2025 as the United Nations decade of action on nutrition. It stated:

[Martyn Day]

“The Decade is an unprecedented opportunity for addressing all forms of malnutrition.”

Led by the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the United Nations decade of action on nutrition calls for policy action across six key areas:

“creating sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets; providing social protection and nutrition-related education for all; aligning health systems to nutrition needs, and providing universal coverage of essential nutrition interventions; ensuring that trade and investment policies improve nutrition; building safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages; and strengthening and promoting nutrition governance and accountability, everywhere.”

We are now just three years away from the end of the decade of action on nutrition, yet the most recent survey of malnutrition and nutritional care in adults found that

“disease-related malnutrition continues to be prevalent.”

Indeed, although the findings were similar to those of BAPEN’s survey the previous year, the prevalence of disease-related malnutrition was found to be higher than in surveys carried out in the years before the decade of action on nutrition was declared. That suggests that instead of seizing the opportunity to address all forms of malnutrition, as the UN advocates, the UK has either avoided tackling the problem or failed in its efforts. It also raises the question of the role of the committee’s advice on borderline substances policy in addressing malnutrition.

Last year, the UK Government published an open consultation that outlined proposed changes to the committee’s policy on oral nutritional supplements, which are a key part of management strategies in the treatment and prevention of malnutrition—incidentally, it would be helpful if the Minister could clarify when the response to the consultation will be published. The changes proposed in the consultation have a considerable potential impact on clinical practice, but not necessarily a positive one.

In reference to the consultation, the British Specialist Nutrition Association concluded that oral nutritional supplements

“are a clinically and cost-effective way of managing disease-related malnutrition. As clinical experts in nutrition, dietitians should maintain their autonomy in being able to make the best decisions for their patients. The new ACBS consultation on ONS is at risk of limiting dietitian autonomy, impacting patient safety and care, and limiting the ability of industry to innovate.”

That point leads me on to some available ways to tackle malnutrition. I hope that the Minister will agree and will recognise them as opportunities to address malnutrition across the UK in the spirit of co-operation that is intended.

After leaving the EU, the Prime Minister asked some former Ministers to identify how the UK could take advantage of its new-found regulatory freedoms, so the Taskforce on Innovation, Growth and Regulatory Reform was convened. The taskforce reported its recommendations to the Prime Minister on 16 June last year. In relation to nutraceuticals and the consumer health sector, it stated:

“Our traditional silos of regulatory classification (food/medicine/diagnostic/device) are being challenged by the pace of bioscience and technological convergence of biological and digital platforms...science is starting to point the way to a new sector of

nutritional products with increasingly explicable and/or verifiable medicinal benefits, which needs to be reflected in our regulatory framework.”

The taskforce report included a headline proposal:

“Create a new regulatory framework for the fast-growing category of novel health enhancing foods and supplements”.

However, that proposal was rejected. I recently received a written parliamentary answer confirming that

“the United Kingdom already has in place the legislation and processes required for the regulation of such products. As such, there are no current plans to implement a new regulatory framework.”

Given the lack of progress on tackling the prevalence rate of malnutrition across the UK, I urge the Minister to revisit the proposal. I am mindful that it would also address one of the key areas that the United Nations decade of action on nutrition calls for:

“ensuring that trade and investment policies improve nutrition.”

Across the UK, one of the basic problems with malnutrition is that it is an underdiagnosed and therefore undertreated condition. For example, the one in 10 of over-65s who are at risk of, or suffering from, malnutrition in Scotland equates to about 103,000 people, but just a fraction of them are identified and offered support or products to treat their condition, and the same clearly applies throughout the rest of these islands.

Screening patients for malnutrition is not currently standard practice across the NHS. If a screening programme were introduced for people being admitted to hospital, patients on wards and those in a social care setting, it would allow for intervention to limit malnutrition in the most vulnerable patients. That simple measure would constitute a policy aligning with several of the key actions called for by the United Nations decade of action on nutrition. Identifying the problem at the earliest opportunity would allow treatment to reduce malnutrition and its associated problems.

Given the UK’s increasingly ageing population, I am sure the Minister will agree that it is important for more resources to be devoted to preventive care, which would reduce pressure on the healthcare system. Reducing malnutrition by improving diets, promoting campaigns to spot the signs of malnutrition and testing through GPs and in care homes could also play an important role in a preventive care model.

Another available way of addressing malnutrition is provided by the health and social care reforms that are currently taking place across the UK. Improving links in the healthcare system between hospital and community or social care is vital. What better opportunity could there be to showcase joined-up healthcare by not only better diagnosing malnutrition, but prescribing products that treat it and then monitoring a patient’s progress in their home, community or social care setting?

I have already mentioned that undernutrition is more common in children from less well-off backgrounds, and the World Health Organisation expands on that eloquently:

“Poverty amplifies the risk of, and risks from, malnutrition. People who are poor are more likely to be affected by different forms of malnutrition. Also, malnutrition increases health care costs, reduces productivity, and slows economic growth, which can perpetuate a cycle of poverty and ill-health.”

This resonates with the regional inequality that the UK Government’s levelling-up agenda aims to address by “giving everyone the opportunity to flourish. It means people everywhere living longer and more fulfilling lives and benefitting from sustained rises in living standards and well-being.”

Malnutrition does not give anyone the opportunity to flourish and live longer; in fact, the opposite is true. Should it not therefore be a key target for the agenda of the Office of Health Improvement and Disparities to tackle inequalities in health and care?

Concerns have been raised with me about the impact of delays by the committee on patient choice in respect of malnutrition treatment products and additional costs to the NHS. However, I was recently advised that the Department of Health and Social Care had

“made no assessment of the potential impact of application processing delays by the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances...on patient choice for malnutrition products and additional costs to the National Health Service.”

The British Specialist Nutrition Association has noted that

“Unlike most prescribed drugs, palatability and choice of ONS”

—oral nutritional supplement—

“products are critical in meeting different patient preferences and supporting patient compliance and, as such, dietitians require access to a wide range of different product styles, flavours and volumes.”

May I finally urge the Minister to prioritise the treatment of malnutrition and effective management strategies that include better support and facilitation of the medical nutrition sector?

8.59 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Maggie Throup): I congratulate the hon. Member for Linlithgow and East Falkirk (Martyn Day) on securing this important debate tonight. As he rightly said, we were expecting to be quite late, so it is good to be able to debate this matter while people might still be watching. I know that he has shown a keen interest in it, especially through his work on the Health and Social Care Committee.

Malnutrition is a common clinical health problem, affecting all ages and all health and care settings. However, it is also a complex issue and its root causes may be clinical, social or economic. I know from personal experience, and from the difficulties of those close to me, how critical it is for disease-related nutritional problems to be identified and treated early. I also appreciate how important it is for healthcare professionals to have a wide range of options available to meet each patient's unique needs. Supplements can provide a lifeline to those already struggling with debilitating illness. Whether it was the nutritional supplement drink provided to me by a practice nurse when I could not swallow due to chicken pox, those that my mother could drink when severe breathing problems made eating a serious struggle, or the yoghurt-type products that sustained my father after his stroke, these treatments were not just life-saving; they relieved the worry of hunger at some of the most difficult times in the lives of ourselves and our loved ones.

The hon. Member has highlighted the significant cost of malnutrition in the NHS, as cited in the British Association of Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition report. The report indicates that malnutrition costs to the health and care system in the UK are estimated to be over £23 billion each year, including £19.6 billion in England, with the majority of those costs—some £15.2 billion—being in NHS secondary care settings,

and around £4 billion in social care settings. It is therefore right that we hold the NHS and care services to the highest standards. It is essential that patients receive the right nutritional support to meet their needs.

We expect NHS services to be provided in line with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence best practice guidelines. NICE has published guidance on “Nutrition support for adults: oral nutrition support, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition”, which covers identifying and caring for adults who are malnourished or at risk of malnutrition in hospital, in their own home or in a care home. It offers advice on how oral, enteral tube feeding and parenteral nutrition support should be started, administered and stopped. It also aims to support healthcare professionals in identifying malnourished people and to help them to choose the most appropriate form of support. The Care Quality Commission also sets quality standards that the NHS and care settings must meet. Regulation 14 sets the quality standards for meeting nutritional and hydration needs. The standard requires that people must have their nutritional needs assessed, and food must be provided to meet those needs, including where people are prescribed nutritional supplements and/or parenteral nutrition.

We are implementing several initiatives to ensure that the highest nutritional standards are met. The Malnutrition Task Force—a partnership of Age UK, Apetito, BAPEN, Nutricia and the Royal Voluntary Service—has published a series of guides offering expert advice on the prevention of and early intervention in malnutrition in later life. These guides draw together principles of good practice to offer a framework developed to help those in a wide range of health and care settings to make the changes needed to counter malnutrition. This includes a guide for care homes on integrating good nutrition into daily practice.

We have published a comprehensive review of hospital food and are working to implement its recommendations. Every hospital has a responsibility to provide the highest level of care for its patients, and that includes the quality and nutritional value of the food that is served and eaten. Hospitals must comply with five mandatory food standards, including a requirement to screen patients for malnutrition and covering the nutrition and hydration needs of patients. The Government have invested in primary care networks to ensure that the NHS has the specialist staff it needs to provide in-depth assessments of patients' nutritional requirements. Through the primary care network direct enhanced service, primary care networks have recruited hundreds of additional health and wellbeing coaches and dietitians since March 2019.

The hon. Member raised concerns about medical nutrition for people who require clinical intervention to treat or address the risk of malnutrition. As he will be aware, foods for special medical purposes are developed to feed patients who are malnourished because of specific medical conditions that make it impossible or very difficult for a patient to satisfy their nutritional needs through the consumption of other foods. These products are developed in close co-operation with healthcare professionals and must be used under medical supervision.

We are working with stakeholders, including industry and the NHS, to update the processes and guidance of the Advisory Committee on Borderline Substances to support fairer, more accurate, more consistent and faster decisions. The ACBS works to assess malnutrition products

[Maggie Throup]

to ensure they are both clinically effective and cost-effective for the NHS. With the ACBS recommending a total of 209 products available through prescription for the management of malnutrition, the current system offers a wide choice to patients and clinicians.

The hon. Gentleman talked about the rise in the number of people diagnosed with malnutrition, the reasons for which are complex. It is likely to be partly due to improved screening and reporting and an ageing population. The issue was probably there before, but we are now identifying it more because of the NICE and CQC guidelines. The evidence also suggests that the rise in malnutrition is worse in older age groups.

The ACBS is independent of the Department of Health and Social Care and has not yet informed the Department of when it will present the outcome of its consultation. I commit to informing the hon. Gentleman as soon as we are informed. The ACBS is also responsible for advising on the prescription of borderline substances, including food for special medical purposes for use in NHS primary care. The ACBS has authorised 209 products listed on the drug tariff for the management of malnutrition, providing plenty of choice for patients.

The CQC standard on nutrition and hydration clearly sets out that people must have their nutritional needs assessed and that food must be provided to meet those

needs, including where people are prescribed nutritional supplements and/or parenteral nutrition. The NICE guideline on nutrition support for adults aims to assist healthcare professionals in identifying malnourished people and choosing the most appropriate form of support. If the NHS and care homes follow the CQC and NICE guidelines, they will help to reduce the number of people in this condition and help to reduce the cost to the NHS.

To address the many complex factors around malnutrition, we need effective strategies for managing malnutrition in health and care settings. The NICE and CQC guidelines and standards clearly set out the care pathways that should be in place to ensure that patients receive the best possible nutritional care. I also agree that, where patients require specialist clinical nutritional support, we must ensure they have access to the right treatments. We will continue to work with the medical nutrition sector to ensure that the most efficacious products are available in the NHS without undue delay.

I reassure the hon. Gentleman that my Department takes malnutrition extremely seriously, and it is an issue that we are determined to continue tackling.

Question put and agreed to.

9.8 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Monday 25 April 2022

[SIR GEORGE HOWARTH *in the Chair*]

Vehicle Tampering Offences

[Relevant document: Summary of public engagement by the Petitions Committee on vehicle tampering offences, reported to the House on 14 April 2022, HC 243.]

4.30 pm

Nick Fletcher (Don Valley) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petition 600954, relating to vehicle tampering offences.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir George. This petition was created by Gareth James, whom I had the pleasure of meeting last week. It is a response to proposed new offences that would cover any individual who tampers with a vehicle that is to be used on the road where the principal effect is

“to bypass, defeat, reduce the effectiveness of or render inoperative a system, part or component”.

I am grateful to be on the Petitions Committee; not always, but very often, it allows me to be made aware of aspects of our society that I might not always see. It allows me to meet the great British public, and to seek the right thing from the Government. This is one of those times. Doing the right thing for the right reasons is a principle I seek to live by, as an individual and as a Member of Parliament. This petition has force behind it, and it needs to be listened to.

I have spoken with many stakeholders during my time on the Petitions Committee, and one concern is that these new offences may affect cars that are used solely on the racetrack. That is a legitimate concern, as that would adversely affect motorsports throughout the country. I believe that is not the case, but I ask the Minister to clarify and confirm that point in her response.

That leads me to the issue of vehicles that will be affected—road-going vehicles that are altered just to be more individual, as well as those that are driven to a track in order to race and/or be shown. Earlier this month, I had the pleasure of going to Santa Pod Raceway and meeting stakeholders in the industry, including Dan Melrose, who spent his time showing me around the event, and Santa Pod’s chief executive officer, Keith Bartlett, plus members of the national street rod and street eliminator associations, to name just a few. They told me about not just the economic value of this industry to the country, but the education and joy that it brings to so many people, including many young people—I do remember being young.

The day I attended Santa Pod was apparently a quiet day, as the industry, like many, is still recovering from the covid pandemic—or so I was told. It did not seem very quiet to me. Thousands upon thousands of people were enjoying their day off, getting together and having fun at nobody else’s expense. Many were there closely examining the vehicles on show and comparing myriad improvements to their own vehicles. Every car was unique in its own way, the result of many pounds and

many hours spent perfecting it and making it exactly how its owner wanted it to be. It was literally a labour of love.

Like most things in life, we only ever see the end product; we do not see the hours spent in the freezing cold garage in a dimly lit area, taking a car to pieces and successfully putting it back together again. The engineers in this industry probably all started their journey in their garage at home, keeping busy and out of trouble, gaining skills for the future, not hurting anybody and doing what they love. More than anything else, that is what I want to protect; indeed, all of us in this House must protect the freedom to do what we enjoy that hurts nobody. The freedom to do something that causes no harm to others should never be proscribed. I agree that the Government have a duty to keep us safe, but they should do so only in a way that is carefully thought through. If the Government are not careful in this instance, they may just fail to do that.

Gareth, who started this petition, started working on cars in his late teens; a friend’s dad worked for Vauxhall, and they worked on cars together. Many of our engineers started with similar hobbies, which are of paramount importance if the UK is to continue to be the innovative country that it is. This is not a hobby like football or Formula 1 that appears to be pumped full of money at every opportunity; in fact, it is usually the lack of money that gets people started in the first place, fixing cars for themselves rather than taking them to a garage. We must be able to let this industry continue, as to let it fail would be a crying shame and cost us dearly over the coming years. It can never have been the Government’s intention, when drafting these proposals, to cause the demise of the motorsport and classic car industries.

I spoke recently to Motorsport UK, which informed me that the industry is worth £9 billion, with 4,500 companies actively involved and 87% exporting their products and services. It also informed me that the classic car industry supports 113,000 jobs. Those are huge numbers, but the industry understands that we cannot have cars on the road that have been altered to a poor standard and are not fit for purpose. However, it points out that many of the alterations improve the car’s safety, especially in the classic car market. It has asked the Government to look at excluding vehicles involved in motorsport and all classic vehicles. It would like a passport system, under which modifications could be done only by members of accredited organisations, and which would allow vehicles to drive to and from events on a limited number of days each year. That seems fairly sensible to me. Transporting a vehicle on the back of a heavy goods vehicle is expensive and hardly good for the environment.

There are still many people who enjoy improving their vehicles but do not want to race or show them, so joining an association would be a further cost, with what they might think has no benefit at all. I spoke to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders, which generally agrees with what the Government are trying to do, but it also understands the aftermarket industry’s value, so it believes that a blanket ban might not be the best way forward. We have to ask ourselves what can be done.

We need clarification of what is classed as tampering. Good tampering should not be made an offence. I am a believer in climate change and that we must act to mitigate its worst effects. I therefore start from the

[Nick Fletcher]

premise that tampering with any part of the system that can increase the original vehicle's emissions is wrong and should be discouraged. That may include the mapping of cars, which can dump fuel to create popping from the exhaust. If a system creates just a little more noise than first intended but does not break current noise regulations, that is fine, but we must have regard to climate change and look after our planet.

Then there are areas that are mainly cosmetic: wheels, spoilers, decals and so on. I see no harm in those, so I hope that that form of tampering continues to be allowed. It hurts nobody and there seems to be no reason why it should be proscribed. Then there are modifications that make the car safer for the track but do not affect any of the main mechanicals that keep the car on the road—items such as roll cages, seating, electrical cut-outs and fire extinguishers. Again, those should be allowed. They hurt nobody and there is no reason why they should be proscribed.

I understand that works on suspension, brakes and the main engine and gearbox ought to be carried out by a trained professional using good aftermarket parts. I know many will disagree with me, but the Government have a duty to keep all road users safe, and a braking system that is not installed correctly, for example, could cause serious harm. A way forward is to make sure that all vehicle manufacturers support the aftermarket industry with specifications for all parts that could be replaced or uprated at a later date so that there are no monopolies on servicing. If the Government insist on stopping tampering, perhaps a compromise could be that any altered vehicle is tested again after each major improvement. The SMMT thought that an extension of the individual vehicle approval scheme might also be a way forward, so I ask the Minister whether that could be explored further.

One final point is the fact that the concerns of the 30,000-plus independent workshops that support UK consumers' competitive choice and affordable mobility are not explicitly included in the proposals. The UK Alliance for the Freedom of Car Repair stated:

"Great care is needed to avoid discriminating against the aftermarket."

This is an extremely complex subject. I reiterate that I understand what the Government are trying to achieve, but I also understand the industry's concerns. A consultation has taken place, and I hope that the Government can now offer the clarification that the industry needs as the legislation moves forward.

I hope that the Government, the industry and the petitioners can see that I have tried to take a pragmatic approach to the subject, and I hope that I have understood the issues in the time I have had to learn what this industry means to so many. It has been wonderful to meet so many enthusiastic people and learn so much, and I thank them all for three things that they have allowed me to see—their obvious joy in what they do, their professionalism, and their understanding when speaking to a layman like me.

4.40 pm

James Sunderland (Bracknell) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir George. I commend my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Nick Fletcher)

for bringing the petition to the House. This is a really important debate, and it is important that I get my views on the record.

In 2021, the Department for Transport started a consultation on modernising vehicle standards and sought views

"on areas of vehicle standards regulation that are outdated, a barrier to innovation or not designed with new technologies and business models in mind."

Understandably, many people, including classic car enthusiasts who restore old vehicles, have raised concerns about that, hence the petition we are discussing today. There is also great concern that the Government's proposals could impact cars that have been adapted for racing in motorsport events. As chair of the all-party parliamentary group for motorsport, that is of great concern to me and those I represent here in Westminster.

There are some facts worth raising. In 2020—noting the pandemic—approximately 56,000 people participated in motorsport events across the UK. Today, there are 720 registered motorsport clubs in the UK and approximately 5,000 motorsport events are held across the UK annually. There are millions of car owners in the UK and millions of motorsport fans, aside from those who directly compete in and support these events.

What is the Government's position right now? The consultation proposes the creation of a number of new offences for

"tampering with a system, part or component of a vehicle intended or adapted to be used on a road."

The Government say that such measures would enable them

"to address existing gaps in legislation, ensuring cleaner and safer vehicles."

Of course, that is fine in principle. Reassuringly, the Minister assured the House last year that

"Department for Transport officials have been instructed to ensure that proposals do not prevent activities such as restoration, repairs or legitimate improvements to classic cars, or do any damage to the motor sports businesses involved in these activities."—*[Official Report, 4 November 2021; Vol. 702, c. 1047.]*

We heard earlier just how much money is involved and how many jobs and livelihoods are at stake; the sector is really important to the UK and to our economy.

We know that modified vehicles used on the roads are currently subject to the same MOT testing as any other road vehicles, and therefore adequate safeguards are in place to ensure that these vehicles are roadworthy. That includes emissions testing, which importantly ensures that modified cars do not breach emissions standards. However, my view is: if it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Alex Davies-Jones (Pontypridd) (Lab): I appreciate the points that the hon. Member is making, but part of the problem in my constituency of Pontypridd and Taff Ely is illegal modifications to cars done by boy racers, who are not motorsport professionals but drag race up and down our dual carriageways, with exhausts going off, sounding like shotguns, causing real antisocial behaviour and nuisance. Those exhausts are removed before the MOT and then put back on, so, sadly, they are missed. Does the hon. Member agree that more needs to be done to try to tackle that problem?

James Sunderland: It is really important that we do this in the right way. In my constituency of Bracknell, we have a problem with boy racers, noisy exhausts and

antisocial driving; that is a real issue in my part of the world as well. The devil is in the detail, and I will come on to what I think needs to be done to reconcile the two apparently opposing poles.

My point is that we need clarification from the Government of how these new rules would be implemented. What modifications are classed as legitimate? We should also be acutely aware that these rules must not impact in any way the legitimate classic car and motorsport sectors, which we have spoken about.

The Historic and Classic Vehicles Alliance recently found that the classic vehicles sector alone is worth £18.3 billion to the UK economy. The HCVA contends that cars belong to their owners and the owners have a right to repair them. We know that; it goes for all vehicles of all ages, classic and modern. The proposals may limit access to hardware and software required to maintain and repair these vehicles. Of course, the cars of today cannot become classics in the future if they are forced to rely on services from individual manufacturers that may be withdrawn.

The industry for maintaining historic vehicles and motorsport vehicles is large and globally renowned, employing highly skilled professionals—over 100,000 people, as we have heard. Much of that work, such as engine maintenance, alterations to exhaust systems and changes to engine control units, would cross over into the current definition of tampering. The proposed definition of tampering is far too broad and needs to be nailed down. It could include changing wheels and tyres, altering the body of a car, limiting access to period panels or enhancing safety. It might include lightening a car for period-correct performance or racing improvements. It might involve newer classic cars requiring changes to ECUs as fuel standards change. The definition is really broad. Ultimately, we need to ensure that new cars today that become classics in the future are still maintainable and serviceable.

So what? Having admired the problem for the last few minutes, what do we need to do, and what do I advise the Government? If the Department is determined to go ahead with this kind of anti-tamper legislation, we request, as a minimum, specific exemptions for historic and classic vehicles, as described. The legislation needs to include legal protections for owners of classic vehicles who make modifications to their cars, and for garages, engineers and those involved in the historic and classic industry who do likewise. We need to ensure that owners, engineers and the historic and classic industry have access to the tools they require in perpetuity to maintain roadworthy historic and classic vehicles. The legislation needs to include protections for classic vehicles that have been modified, so that they can still be sold, with protections for dealers, auctioneers, agents and all those involved in the sale of the cars. It must also include protections for individuals and firms who transport and deliver vehicles that have been modified.

To refer to an earlier question, how do we draw the distinction between legitimate activities and those activities that result in antisocial driving? I do not have the answer. I suspect that this may be a wicked problem where lines are difficult to define. Where is the boundary between the two poles that we have discussed? I do not know. It may be that the Department decides to drop these plans altogether. These are really difficult proposals, and they will upset many people—legitimate owners of cars who are proud of what they have in their garage.

Alternatively, it may be that the Department works with Motorsport UK, the Historic and Classic Vehicles Alliance, motor manufacturers, those with specialist expertise across the UK, and the all-party parliamentary group for motorsport, to ensure that we do not self-harm. I urge the Minister to make sure that we do not do ourselves real damage.

4.48 pm

Mr Steve Baker (Wycombe) (Con): I want to begin with a confession that, these days, is increasingly socially unacceptable: I enjoy driving. I enjoy riding a motorcycle. I love petrol engine vehicles. I have three reasons for being interested in this debate: a Yamaha MT-10, a KTM 950 Supermoto and a ratty old runabout Vauxhall Corsa that I would get rid of if I had the opportunity to drive properly. I would buy a decent car, but there is no point while I am an MP. A long time ago, before I became an MP, I put some effort into becoming a decent driver, although I would not like to make any particular claims about the quality of my driving, but I did put the effort in. I enjoy my driving and I love vehicles. I like to get in a car, such as a classic 911 Club Sport that I once drove, where I could actually feel what the tyres were doing on the road, because it had mechanical steering.

As we go forward in this life, there seems to be a systematic effort to ruin motoring—to make motorcycles and cars more boring and more of a black box. We now have endless cars with electric steering, and it is impossible to feel a thing that is going on on the road. Somehow, we are losing something about what it is to be a human being who takes responsibility and cares about their relationship with a vehicle. It is an old-fashioned and increasingly unpopular point of view, but I think there is joy to be found in driving a vehicle that does not have an anti-lock braking system or traction control and has carburettors not fuel injection, but has, as is the case with the KTM, very sharp brakes. It is a great joy and pleasure to be united with a vehicle and care about how it is working on the road.

That is why I object to the idea of anti-tampering legislation. It is not because I have a problem with safety. I used to be a professional air-worthiness engineer, so I like safety; I do not like hospital food. I want to be safe and for everybody to be safe. There is no going back if someone injures another person with a vehicle. That is why I want responsible motorists and motorcyclists—people who care about how they operate their vehicle and care about what kind of vehicle they are in. The problem with this so-called anti-tampering legislation is that it will increasingly turn vehicles into black boxes, where we do not have to care. Indeed, it will be so anodyne and boring to drive the thing, and the driver will be so disconnected from the mechanics and the experience, that they will be positively discouraged from caring about the vehicle because there is no point.

In contrast to my amazing KTM 950, with its absence of electronic devices, I recently hired a car in Norway—a Volkswagen ID4. It was a lovely car in many ways. It was all electric and had cruise control and a stupid speed limiter that knows where the car is and so starts to reduce the cruise control as it gets into town. The car steers itself. When I was positioning the car on the road, it decided that it did not want to be there and suddenly jerked the steering wheel in my hand. It cannot be

[Mr Steve Baker]

switched off permanently; every time I switched it off it was switched back on when I next got in the car. I would like to switch that nonsense off because I want to drive the car. I do not want the car deciding I should be two feet to the left on the road. I was once in a Tesla—with somebody else driving—that nearly put us in a hedge because it decided it wanted to be two feet to the left. The Volkswagen ID4 was not quite self-driving, but it is clear where we are going here—cars that decide how fast they go and where they are going to be on the road. I do not mind people having self-driving cars. I would not mind having a car that drove itself if it meant that I did not have to drive when it was boring—for example, when commuting to this place—but when I want to drive the car, I want to drive the car.

I am extremely concerned that this future involves a wide range of practical and philosophical problems. I do not want to trust a car to decide where it is. I remember doing 70 mph down the motorway in a Golf that had its lane assistance turned on. I went through a shadow of a tree and the car swerved because it decided it wanted to be in a different place. I was until recently a chartered aerospace engineer—I have just declined to renew my subscription—so I am not a technophobe; aeroplanes often fly themselves. However, I would like not to have to put up with the nonsense of the car deciding it wants to go at a different speed or be in a different place.

I have possibly laboured my point, but I want the Minister, who is listening carefully, to at least see one keen and passionate driver—sorry, guys—who wants to have personal responsibility as a free man. I will say it: I want to be a free man, personally in charge of what the vehicle does. I am offended by the name anti-tampering. I do not doubt that there are some irresponsible people who want to tamper with safety systems, but the point I am trying to put on the record is that even some safety systems can be dangerous—for example, when that Volkswagen Golf swerved across the road because it did not like the shadow on the dual carriageway.

We have talked about racing and custom vehicles. When it comes to minor modifications, I like to think that I do not modify my vehicles, but my MT10 has a different screen, hand guards, and luggage as well as a charging lead that I put on myself to ensure that it is trickle charged. It is modified; it has got a Scottolier on it, so I can commute without having to constantly lubricate the chain. Many of those accessories were fitted by the dealer because he would do it at no cost, but what if I had decided to fit them? Is that tampering? Surely not—all I have done is convert one kind of Yamaha MT10 into another. People like me are afraid that we are moving into this anodyne world where we cannot even change the screen on our BMW R1200GS—as I did. We do not want to have to check the rules to see whether we can. With great respect, I am not interested in the Minister's view about what size screen I should have on my motorcycle. I do not want to have to go and check the rules to see whether I can change it—I am now labouring the point.

As Conservatives, we should be wanting to live in a society of free and responsible individuals. We will not create or perpetuate a society of free and responsible individuals if we keep taking away from them, at every chance, the opportunity to exercise freedom responsibly

and to enjoy themselves while doing that, because we make life miserable if we say to people, “Before you can fit heated grips on your motorbike, you have to go and check whether you're allowed to.” It is too boring—it is too boring. We sit in here all the time, doing this technocratic nonsense and going up to the Committee Rooms to pass statutory instruments that most of us in this House do not even read. That is another bugbear of mine on which I have laboured another point. We are taking away people's freedoms by using statutory instruments that we do not even read and almost never speak to. This is not where we should be going as Conservatives; we should be letting people be free. If they want to have stupid self-driving cars that steer themselves when they should not, let them, but I want to switch that off, and if the manufacturer provided it to me and I was unable to switch it off, I would like to be able to change the software so that I could switch it off and drive the car myself. I rest my case.

4.56 pm

Mike Kane (Wythenshawe and Sale East) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir George. I congratulate Gareth James on securing 112,000—is that right?—signatures on the petition in order to get this debate. That is no mean feat in itself, so my congratulations go to him, and to the hon. Member for Don Valley (Nick Fletcher), who I think looks very young indeed; he should not disparage himself. In fact, I might check out after the debate what moisturiser he uses. I congratulate him on bringing the petition to us in Parliament today. My congratulations go also to the hon. Member for Bracknell (James Sunderland) on a very elegant speech. I thank him for all he does for the APPG for motorsport.

We then heard a passionate speech from the hon. Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker). I am a big fan of the hon. Member, as he knows. We are both big Cobden fans, for different reasons possibly, but I would never describe the hon. Member as being 2 feet to the left in any situation at all, and perhaps particularly in a car. He made a great defence. As somebody who cycled here today on a Brompton—Brompton is a proud British manufacturer—I may have some different views about how sometimes I am close passed and the possibility that my life may be prolonged by speed limiters. As I canvassed yesterday in a tight marginal seat between Labour and the Conservatives in Brooklands, Trafford, I was sickened by seeing exactly what my hon. Friend the Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) pointed out—adjusted cars doing 60 to 80 mph down a road with a 30-mph limit and with modified exhausts banging out. The antisocial behaviour that that brings to our estates is appalling. I remember the Secretary of State going on the record about how he does not like that type of thing, either.

Mr Steve Baker: I am extremely grateful to the hon. Gentleman for giving way and for his compliments. I was once very nearly run down in High Wycombe by somebody doing just what he has suggested: they were in a modified car and going far too fast in town. Such people need prosecuting. In the case raised by the hon. Gentleman, if they are doing 80 mph where there is a 30 mph limit, they should be going to prison. I am very clear about that. I just wanted to ensure that we all understood one another.

Mike Kane: I am grateful to the hon. Member. I love motorsport as well, and I love classic cars. There is nothing better than jumping up on my NorthRoad cycle—those bikes are produced in my constituency—cycling the 10 miles to Tatton Park, the Cheshire County Council and National Trust park, watching a traditional car show there and seeing the pride that people have in those cars. We do not want to see anything that would stop that.

James Sunderland: I commend the hon. Gentleman for his very eloquent and pragmatic speech; it is resonating with me. Does he agree that when it comes to the cars themselves, the issue is not necessarily the cars; it is the way in which they are driven? Therefore, what we need to do is to go after those who are driving irresponsibly, making noise, breaking the law and breaking the rules, rather than going after legitimate vehicle owners, who just want to look after their vehicles.

Mike Kane: We should not be going after legitimate car owners, who take great pride in their cars, but with 40 million vehicle licences on UK roads, this plague of antisocial behaviour with these modified cars is absolutely sickening. With tens of thousands of police cut in this country, and a decimation of community policing, we now cannot police these hooligans driving their cars in the way they do. There is a philosophical debate to be had, but something needs to be done. We need to be tough on these people who are plaguing our communities.

Last year, the Government consulted on modernising vehicle standards, specifically looking at new measures to tackle tampering with vehicles. This petition came about almost immediately, with 112,000 signatures, and it managed to unite motorcyclists, classic car owners and motor racing aficionados with one voice. Despite the DFT stating that it did not intend the proposals to prevent motorsport or people repairing classic cars or motorbikes, it is keen to ensure that no businesses engaged in those pursuits are negatively affected.

The proposals seem to be a broadly positive move from Government to tackle tampering, which we know has impacts on safety and the environment. Of course, we support ensuring that emission standards are met and cannot be worked around. However, we also know that some modifications can negatively affect the safety and health of the vehicle owner, its occupants, other road users and the wider population, and that some tampering activities that prevent a vehicle's emission system from operating correctly, such as the removal of the diesel particulate filter from a vehicle's exhaust, can significantly increase harmful pollutant emissions, and sometimes be used as a weapon as these hooligans pass cyclists and let out a load of smoke—gassing, I think it is known as.

However, we know that the motorsport community have concerns about restoration, repairs and legitimate improvements, and their voices must be heard. The Government have said that it is not their intention to target these legitimate improvements, yet there has been no detail about how they would ensure that that will not happen. We know the consultation ended in November 2021—over six months ago—and we have not heard since that time what the Government intend to do.

I have a few questions for the Minister. When will the consultation response be published? When will the Government think about bringing legislation forward?

Collectors and businesses in the aftermarket industry are being left in the dark, and we need to shed some light for them. Will changes apply retrospectively? What sort of alterations will be considered tampering? Will it just be ones that impact emissions and noise, or are wider proposals on the cards? How will they work with the motorsport and restoration industry? What steps are the Government taking to engage with stakeholders who have legitimate concerns over the changes? I would welcome answers from the Minister on this important debate.

5.3 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Trudy Harrison): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Sir George, in a debate on a subject for which I have a great deal of personal adoration. This is certainly not the first time I have debated it with my hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell (James Sunderland), who is co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group for motorsport. I pay particular thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Dartford (Gareth Johnson), who started the whole thing off but was unable to speak in today's debate and, most importantly, my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley (Nick Fletcher). I hope I can reassure hon. Members following what we have heard. I have been pleased to listen to the incredibly valuable and thorough contributions that have been made. It is a privilege to be closing the debate.

Of course, the UK has a very long and proud history of companies and individuals dedicated to the modification and improvement of vehicles, whether in motorsports, professional customisation or enthusiastic owners enjoying their hobby and improving their pride and joy. That was me when I was 18 and purchased my second car, moving up from a Ford Escort 1.3L to a Peugeot 309 GTI, complete with skirts and low-profile tyres. I was partial to a whale tail, but I did not go that far.

I was able to do that because my dad helped me. He was a great engineer and I am quite sure that he learned his craft by starting out with a push-bike, moving up to a BSA Bantam and transitioning through various vehicles to a 1972 Porsche 911T, moving, I believe, from left-hand to right-hand drive. I most definitely grew up with this and I understand that many engineers hone their craft in their garage or, when it comes to motorcycles, their living room.

I agree with a lot of what I have heard today, including on the importance of ensuring that we allow for that continued healthy aftermarket for vehicle modification, and that our plans do not negatively impact on our thriving motorsports. I pay tribute to the Wigton Motor Club in my own area—I was delighted to open its new facility at Moota—and to the Rotating Wheels car show in West Lakeland. I will be adjudicating at that vintage and classic car show again this summer.

The intention behind our proposals is to prevent tampering that can have serious consequences for health and the environment. We have, however, issued a clarification that we do not intend our proposals to prevent legitimate motorsport activities, restoration, repairs or legitimate improvements to vehicles such as classic cars and motorbikes. We also do not intend our proposals to impact negatively on businesses involved in such activities.

[Trudy Harrison]

The consultation received 7,891 responses—a large number. Their particular focus was on concerns that the proposals, as set out in the regulatory review, are too broad and would restrict any modification of vehicles, which would negatively impact on the motorsports industry, the restoration and customisation industry, classic car enthusiasts and motorcycles. We have yet to publish our response to the consultation—I will speak about that in a moment—but Members can absolutely be reassured that the proposals will not prevent all forms of vehicle modification. That is not the intention—it is certainly not my intention. We are carefully considering the scope of the policy, to ensure that it does not prevent legitimate alterations or modification, including repair work.

As the Minister with responsibility for the future of transport, my role is to ensure that we have a regulatory regime that is fit for the future and that will achieve our vision of a better, greener UK. To achieve that, we are conducting a series of regulatory reviews to consider how transport regulations need to change, to make journeys faster, safer, easier and more secure. However, I absolutely take the point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe (Mr Baker). I love driving. I have been driving for 28 years, and I hope to drive for the rest of my safe and capable life. I absolutely understand the desire to be in control of a motor vehicle.

Certain modifications, however, can negatively affect the safety and health of drivers or riders, passengers, other road users and the wider population. One such example is the modification or removal of part of the emissions system. As my hon. Friend the Member for Don Valley said, that can have significant consequences. If it is done because the vehicle's performance has failed—the system can fail to boost the vehicle's performance—it can be really serious. Removing a diesel particulate filter from a vehicle's exhaust can increase harmful pollutant emissions by up to 1,000 times.

The risks associated with air and noise pollution, including from modified exhausts, cannot be understated. In England alone, the annual social cost of urban road noise was estimated to be between £7 billion and £10 billion in 2010.

Mr Steve Baker: I am grateful to the Minister for mentioning road noise. I have annoyed fellow motorcyclists by telling them that they must have lawful end-cans and exhaust systems, because nothing prejudices people against motorcycling more than noisy motorcycles with illegal cans. The problem with noisy motorcycles today is not that the lawful equipment is too noisy, but that people break the law and the law is not enforced. I hope that my hon. Friend will not mind me saying that we have to enforce the law on some of these things, instead of constantly tightening up regulations and hoping that compliance will follow, because it does not. We must have reasonable regulations that people want to comply with. That is a very old principle.

Trudy Harrison: The Department is looking right now at understanding how we can better monitor the noise and make it easier for the transport police in particular to do so.

Alex Davies-Jones: That is an important point. As I have previously mentioned, my constituency has been blighted by vehicles with illegally modified exhausts speeding through our communities. Last summer, after discussions with South Wales police, it launched Operation Buena, and in just one night in Llantrisant, it issued 12 motorists with speeding fines and 10 with prohibition notices. That is completely unsustainable, and the police clearly need more resources to get on top of the matter. What conversations has the Minister had with her Home Office colleagues on giving them further resources to deal with the issue?

Trudy Harrison: I refer to my earlier comment on detection and how we use and improve sound-monitoring devices—noise cameras, as they are being called—to monitor those motorists who are, without a doubt, breaking the law. We recognise the health and environmental impacts of noise. They include the risk of heart attacks, strokes and dementia, and while air quality has improved since 2010, air pollution remains the top environmental risk to human health in the UK.

As vehicles increasingly become automated, new safety and security risks will be associated with making alterations to a vehicle's integral software and sensing technologies. Already, many new vehicles offer advanced driver-assistance systems—I recognise, however, that my hon. Friend the Member for Wycombe will choose not to use those—which partially automate some of the driving tasks.

With the advent of self-driving vehicles, which will allow the driver to hand over the driving task to the system, if desired, the problem becomes even more acute. These highly sophisticated systems will have taken years to develop. Even a minor modification could significantly affect an automated vehicle's operation and, if done badly, would have the potential to kill its occupants and other road users.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bracknell referred to the MOT test. The challenge is that we cannot rely on that alone. The MOT test is an important part of ensuring that vehicles on our roads are safe and roadworthy, but there are inevitably limitations to what can be assessed through a relatively simple static inspection of a vehicle. When it comes to automation and self-driving technologies, it becomes even more challenging for sufficient checks to be carried out to guard against dangerous or illegal modifications. I trust that Members can see that it is essential that we have the powers to respond to advances in vehicle construction and operation, to target and prevent dangerous and inappropriate tampering, which could put people's lives at risk.

James Sunderland: As we know, the devil is in the detail. When are we likely to see the Bill and the wording that will come with it?

Trudy Harrison: I will write to my hon. Friend with more specific details of the timeframe. I can certainly say that we will publish our response to the consultation this summer—it will be a matter of a few months, rather than having to wait any longer. In answer to another of his questions, the changes will not be retrospectively applied.¹

We have listened carefully to the concerns raised by the e-petition through our consultation on the subject. We recognise the importance of striking an appropriate

1. [Official Report, 10 May 2022, Vol. 714, c. 2MC.]

balance between allowing for legitimate modifications and ensuring that we have the powers to tackle those that are dangerous and inappropriate. We are absolutely not proposing that all modifications be prevented. We recognise that vehicle owners and businesses may have many legitimate reasons to modify a vehicle, and our intention is to ensure that we maintain a thriving aftermarket including motorsports, restoration, repairs and other legitimate improvements and alterations to vehicles.

We are considering all the responses received during the consultation. As I say, we will publish a consultation response, in which we will summarise those responses and set out our next steps, in the summer.

Over the past 60 years, cleaner, safer and more accessible transport has transformed people's lives for the better. The Government are committed to maximising the benefits and minimising the risks of new technological advances. The broad programme of work we have launched will help us to ensure that our regulatory framework is flexible and forward-looking so that we can foster innovation, safeguard the public and bring the most benefit to transport users and society, while recognising our rich cultural and industrial heritage in motor vehicles, which dates back to the late 1800s. It has been a pleasure to speak in this debate.

5.16 pm

Nick Fletcher: Thank you for chairing this debate, Sir George. I thank the Minister for her response, as well as everybody who has actively contributed today. It has been an extremely good debate. I thank the petitioner, Gareth, for starting the petition, as well as the 112,000 people who signed it and the 7,891 people who responded to the consultation.

From the Minister's response, it seems that the Government have actually listened to the petitioners. It is a win for the Petitions Committee and the petitioner, but also for the entire industry and all the people at home who love tampering with cars, as we have called it. It has been a great debate and I thank everyone who has been involved.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered e-petition 600954, relating to vehicle tampering offences.

5.17 pm

Sitting suspended.

Hunting

[DAVID MUNDELL *in the Chair*]

6 pm

David Mundell (in the Chair): I have been made aware that there are active appeal proceedings relating the subject of one of the e-petitions that will be debated, relating to convictions for being in charge of a dog dangerously out of control. Brief factual references to the existence of those proceedings are permissible in the debate, but Members should be mindful of the sub judice resolution and matters that are still before the courts.

Catherine McKinnell (Newcastle upon Tyne North) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered e-petitions 552017 and 584076, relating to hunting.

Unfortunately, my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea (Marsha De Cordova) is unable to attend the debate as planned, so I am moving the motion on behalf of the Petitions Committee to ensure that this important debate can take place. As I am not able to stay for the remainder of the debate, my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) has kindly agreed to cover some of the areas that my hon. Friend the Member for Battersea would have raised in her speech.

6.1 pm

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): Thank you, Mr Mundell, for being in the Chair for this important debate. I thank the Petitions Committee and its Chair for ensuring that this matter can be debated in the Chamber. I also thank the hundreds of my constituents in York Central who have signed the petitions before us. They are exceptional at demanding higher protections for animals, not least in respect of foxes savaged by hunts and hare coursing. I have long campaigned to uphold animal welfare standards, and today is no exception. I thank the League Against Cruel Sports and Keep The Ban for their tireless work in exposing this offensive pursuit.

The Hunting Act 2004 should have been the end. Back then, the Labour Government responded to the popular demand to end hunting with hounds. We acted to end this animal cruelty, but the bugles and beagles were not silenced for long. The hunts, of which there were nearly 300 in England and Wales, were not deterred by the penalty system, and it now appears that they were never intended to be. They were soon riding again, under the smokescreen of trail hunting, which was designed to put those investigating the hunts off their scent. The hunts never intended to stop; they said as much when the legislation passed.

The saboteurs and organisations such as the League Against Cruel Sports and Keep The Ban have exposed how terriermen were present at 78% of hunts. Those are the people who dig out foxes as they seek refuge. If the fox is not going to be killed, there is no need to dig it out. In 2020, evidence came to light from the leaked Hunting Office report and Masters of Foxhounds Association report of online Zoom webinars, exposing how hunts were making meticulous plans to use the 2004 Act to deflect from this bloodthirsty obsession.

I am glad that some landowners have responded, and I call on all landowners to institute a ban on their land. There has been only one prosecution for permitting a

[*Rachael Maskell*]

hunt on land that was known to be in breach of the law. While there are temporary suspensions, such as those by Forestry England and the National Trust, they must become bans. The Ministry of Defence has still issued licences. I call on the Minister to ensure that the Government come to one position on this issue. She must ensure that there is a consistent ban on any public land being used for hunts. I hope she will commit to that today in her response.

The 2004 Act has resulted in 448 prosecutions and 228 convictions for crimes involving hunting with dogs, and 47 prosecutions and 16 convictions for hare coursing. However, without a complete ban on hunting, foxes and hares will be targeted. Although Mr Hankinson, a director of the Masters of Foxhounds Association, was convicted last October after being found guilty of encouraging and assisting people to evade the ban on foxhunting, the deterrents are insufficient and the law continues to be broken. I also understand that on 6 July Mr Hankinson will be appealing the decision against him.

Sir Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): I thank the hon. Lady for giving way; she is my co-conspirator on bringing Great British Railways to York for its headquarters. Does she agree that it is possible—perfectly possible—and reasonable to hunt within the law, using trail hunting, and that therefore, although we condemn a situation in which the law has been broken, it is possible to carry out this activity within the law and indeed the legislation allows for that?

Rachael Maskell: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for bringing that point forward. I would have said yes in 2004, but trust has been betrayed, which is an issue I will come on to later. Therefore, I would have to say today that the answer is no.

I was speaking about the judgment regarding Mr Hankinson. I appreciate that this matter could be sub judice, but I just want to draw Members' attention today to what Deputy Chief Magistrate Tan Ikram said when he was outlining his conclusions in the initial court case last autumn:

"I am sure that the defendant through his words was giving advice on how to illegally hunt with dogs. In my judgement he was clearly encouraging the mirage of trail laying to act as cover for illegal hunting."

For that, Mr Hankinson received a fine of £1,000, along with having to make a contribution of £2,500 in legal costs.

As we have seen in other areas of law, penalties for breaches are insufficient for those who are part of the elite. During the cub-hunting autumn season alone, there were 115 reported incidents and 2019-20 saw a total of 485 reports of incidents. These incidents are not rare; they are occurring on an industrial scale.

The Countryside Alliance blames bad law, but the reality is that whether we like the law or not and whether it is good or bad, we have to have to obey it. That message is resounding in the public square at present. Lawbreakers cannot hide behind excuses but must face a penalty, although it is evident that the penalty is too soft, as they continuously and deliberately break the law, for all the weaknesses that may be within it.

Hunts have betrayed the trust placed in them to stay within the spirit and letter of the law and stay away from foxes, so the law must change and a complete ban on trail hunting must ensue. There must be no exemptions, no loopholes and no excuses. The hunts have only themselves to blame for this, having tried to bend and stretch the law.

Sir Robert Goodwill: The hon. Lady is being very generous in giving way again. Does she agree that if she had her way, then—given that foxhounds do not make good family pets—thousands of foxhounds up and down the country would have to be destroyed humanely, because the hunts could not afford to keep them if they did not have their participation in the trail hunting?

Rachael Maskell: I hear what the right hon. Gentleman is saying and, as I said previously, we are in this situation because trust has been betrayed. I do not accept that those hounds have to be put down. However, we have to move forward. We are now at the point where people have deliberately obfuscated the law and I think the time has come when we cannot tolerate people—quite frankly—laughing at this place, which has really tried to improve the situation and move forward by giving that scope and flexibility for trail hunting. However, as we see time and again, trail hunting turns into real hunting and therefore I cannot agree with the right hon. Gentleman.

With 85% of the population believing that all forms of hunting foxes should be illegal, Parliament cannot stand by when the loopholes in the legislation are being exploited to perpetrate wildlife crime. The Hunting Act 2004 needs amending and those who stand in its way must be brought to account. If Natural Resources Wales has introduced a ban on its land, there is no excuse for the Minister. She needs to ensure that she is leading, not waiting for the hunt lobby to craft more reasons for delay, dither and indecision.

However, this is about not just foxes, but hares. The League Against Cruel Sports found that in 2019-20, there were 102 reports of suspected illegal interference with badger setts, animal worrying—an issue that has been debated of late in Parliament—and even pet interference. The second petition before us today concerns Mini the cat, who was literally hounded to death—chased and killed in a quiet residential area. Poor Mini was mauled outside her home, but the penalty under the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 was just £1,600. After the kill, the hunt tried to hide their cruelty by slinging little Mini over a fence, but they were caught. This very day, John Sampson, the person responsible for the death of Mini, has had his guilty conviction upheld in the courts in Truro. The nation has taken Mini to their hearts, and are demanding Mini's law—the public and animal safety Bill—as there has to be a simpler course to justice. Sadly, Mini was not a one-off: on average, another Mini is taken by hunts every fortnight.

People are also endangered. Banning hunts from residential and other public areas is necessary, which is why I believe a blanket ban by Government will increase the consistency of protection. Currently, the Dogs Act 1871 is relied on, but proof needs to come to light that the hounds were out of control, which is no easy thing to evidence. As we bring forward legislation, we need to ensure it is easy to apply, and to provide the necessary evidence. We are coming to the end of this parliamentary Session, after which a new one will begin. Banning trail

hunting and hunting on public land and in residential areas would show a commitment to animal wellbeing and protect those most majestic of all animals, foxes. A simple and small amendment to the Hunting Act 2004 is all that is required. We stand ready to bring in this ban and end this barbarism once and for all.

David Mundell (in the Chair): As the hon. Lady set out, the appeal that I referenced at the beginning of this debate has been concluded, and therefore that case is no longer sub judice for the purpose of the debate. I call Sir Bill Wiggin.

6.12 pm

Sir Bill Wiggin (North Herefordshire) (Con): Thank you, Mr Mundell. I say gently to the hon. Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell), who I know has a very kind heart, that if she got what she wanted, anywhere between 9,000 and 18,000 hounds would be put down. I hope she will reconsider her thoughts on that basis.

I remember when the Hunting Act 2004 was passed, which banned intentional hunting of mammals with dogs. I was a teller, and I was in the Chamber when Tony Banks decided to amend Alun Michael's Bill, which would have licensed hunting. Banks wanted a total ban, and the Secretary of State climbed along the Back Benches to where he was sitting, which was right in the middle of the Chamber. On seeing this, Nicholas Soames called on the Speaker to protect the hon. Gentleman. Banks replied that he could look after himself. As a result, he pressed his amendment, and we got the ban on intentional hunting. That was the conclusion of hundreds of hours of debate, amendments and emotion, and we ended up with an Act that the Government promised not to revisit. Despite not hunting myself, I would like the opportunity to repeal that Act. However, I accept that the Government have promised not to touch it in this Parliament.

Trail hunting or drag hunting is where an artificial scent is laid down for hounds to follow. It is usually a rag dipped in scent, often aniseed, and it is an entirely legal alternative to hunting. It is overwhelmingly practised in this way throughout the country. There are, as I think the hon. Member for York Central mentioned, 300 packs of hounds in this country, some of which are in my constituency. With the owner's permission, they follow a drag or trail over land and feed their hounds on fallen livestock—calves that are born dead or cows that die—which is a tremendous help to farmers, who face bills for the removal of their fallen stock at a time when margins are tight.

The debate encompasses two separate petitions. The first calls on Forestry England to stop granting licences for fox and hare hunts. Over the most recent hunting season, it is reported that Forestry England granted 34 licences for trail hunts. The tsunami of lawbreaking that the petition suggests does not appear to have taken place. The petition states:

“Despite hunting wild mammals with dogs being illegal, two of the licensed/previously licensed trail hunts have been associated with convictions under the Hunting and Animal Welfare Acts.”

Being “associated with” seems a bit thin. However, there is another issue with that assertion: no fox and hare hunts are licensed by Forestry England. The only hunting that is licensed is trail hunting. Furthermore, no licensed hunt has ever been convicted of a Hunting

Act offence while operating on Forestry England's land. The premise of the petition is therefore misleading. Good people have been encouraged to sign something that is deliberately designed to mislead them.

The petition harks back to the awful, bigoted, hate-filled nature of the debate on hunting, which always comes back to class war. It may be triggered by people feeling that they are being looked down on by people sitting on horses—I do not know. It is constantly fed with inflammatory stories that are designed to upset kind-hearted, generous animal owners so that they fund nasty and sinister groups.

Forestry England is a public body with the freedom to decide what activity takes place on its land. It can rightly suspend or stop events if illegal activity takes place, meaning that decisions are left in the hands of those who can decide the correct course of action on a case-by-case basis, instead of political activists. Once again, we see pressure being brought to bear or bullying. In reality, it is just another attack on rural people.

The second petition relates to Mini's law. This is a very sad case. Last year, a domestic cat named Mini was killed by dogs in a residential area. Even the most malicious campaigner is not claiming that that was deliberate. It was an accident—deeply regrettable, but an accident. The petition states that such an incident is reported once every two weeks, as the hon. Member for York Central mentioned. However, the anti-hunting group Keep The Ban, which is endorsed by the League Against Cruel Sports, suggests that in 2019, there were actually 29 incidents—not one every two weeks. Once again, good people are being misled in order to feed prejudices and anger, which is bad for everyone.

Happily, there are 12 million domestic cats in this country. Some 27% of households own one. Cats Matter, a feline campaign group, estimates that, sadly, 230,000 cats are killed each year by car alone, as are hundreds of thousands of foxes—not to mention the cats killed each year by dogs. On the premise of the petition, should we also ban cars and dogs? Of course not. There must be balance when addressing this emotive topic but, sadly, that is rarely the case.

The lobby groups and saboteurs that feed off the subject would have people believe that every hunt and every pack of hounds are lawbreakers. That is wrong. As with any lawful activity, it is possible to break the law. Offences that do take place are prosecuted accordingly. The possibility of lawbreaking is not used as a reason to prohibit other lawful activities. Therefore petitions such as these need to be rejected.

Each year, thousands of people attend Boxing day meets such as the one in Ledbury. It is a tradition that has been going on longer than records show. However, last Christmas, the local town council came under pressure to try to ban the meeting in the centre of town. Thankfully, a vociferous majority came out in defence of the meet.

Hunting is about liberty and livelihood for rural people. It is a chance to meet and enjoy traditions passed down through generations. The class warriors are out of date. They choose to mislead and spin. What better proof is there that they are wrong? We must continue to support the rule of law and not be bullied by those who find the truth inconvenient.

6.20 pm

Ruth Jones (Newport West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Mundell. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North (Catherine McKinnell), who is no longer in her place, and my hon. Friend the Member for York Central (Rachael Maskell) for opening the debate and raising some important points. The hon. Member for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin) made some interesting points. It is good that we keep talking as communication is really important in understanding where everyone is coming from.

We are here today because e-petition 552017 received more than 104,000 signatures from local people across the UK, and e-petition 584076 received more than 101,000. That is a lot of people committed to animal welfare, doing the right thing and maintaining and enhancing the protections in law for cruelty against animals. I do not plan to keep colleagues in the Chamber longer than necessary; I am sure that with votes coming up, nobody else wants to stay too long either. However, I want to ensure that a couple of points are on the record.

Members will know that e-petition 552017 asks Her Majesty's Government to stop Forestry England issuing licences for trail hunting. Forestry England is a public body and in 2019-20 it issued 34 licences for trail hunting. Since 2020, licences have been suspended pending the outcome of criminal proceedings. E-petition 584076 seeks greater protection for pets and animals from hunts, following the mauling to death of Mini the cat. That mauling involved huntsman John Sampson, who was found guilty in December. The petition follows a campaign involving the likes of Action Against Foxhunting and I pay tribute to the campaigners for their tenacity, care and compassion.

Colleagues will know that despite the Hunting Act 2004, foxhunting has continued in England and Wales under the guise of trail hunting. That fact was recently exposed by the conviction of Mark Hankinson, now a former director of the Masters of Foxhounds Association, for intentionally encouraging or assisting others to break the Hunting Act 2004, in the case of *R v. Hankinson*. Despite its exposure as a cover for illegal hunting, the Ministry of Defence still licenses trail hunting on its own land, with at least 259 days of hunting licensed during the 2021-22 hunting season. We all know that those hunts regularly cause havoc in the countryside, terrorising wild animals, pets—as we have already heard—and people as well as disrupting infrastructure such as railway lines and major roads.

The simple fact is that hunting with dogs has continued despite the ban, with weaknesses in the Hunting Act 2004 abused by those claiming to conduct trail hunting or exempt hunting. The Hunting Act was one of Labour's greatest achievements, and we will continue to stand by it every day. Indeed, we went on to live those values by attempting to improve and amend the Agriculture Bill, but we were not able to persuade Conservative Members to vote with us. Enough is enough. The Hunting Act 2004 must be strengthened and trail hunting must be banned on Government and all publicly owned or managed land. For many years now, Labour, through successive shadow Environment Secretaries, and animal welfare campaigners, such as the League Against Cruel Sports, have said that trailing is a smokescreen designed to disguise the hunt's true activity. We need to call that out.

I am grateful to the league for its work, and its helpful briefing ahead of the debate. It made clear that during the last full hunting season for which data is available, it received 485 reports of suspected illegal hunting relating to 110 different hunts in England, Scotland and Wales. In addition, during the 2021 cub hunting season, which is euphemistically described as the autumn hunting, the league received 115 reports of suspected illegal cub hunting. The league acknowledges, as I do, that those figures are reliant on eyewitness reports, so we can fairly assume that they are just the tip of the iceberg. Like many in the Opposition, I am concerned by the lack of transparency and how rules that apply to all are being played by a few as they seek to work their way around the law.

We need action and we need this Government to stand up and be counted. We need to stop public land being used by those seeking to play around with the rules. Despite the exposure of trail hunting as a smokescreen for illegal hunting, the Government have continued to allow and license trail hunting on Government land—particularly land owned by the Ministry of Defence. In a written question about the impact of trail hunting on MOD land, the Defence Secretary went as far as to defend trail hunting as a legal activity. Trail hunting is currently suspended on Forestry England land, which is one thing, but that is not enough. Forestry England, as the Minister knows, is a public body that reports to her Department. It is England's largest land manager and looks after 1,500 of the nation's woods and forests.

Since news of the Hunting Office's leaked webinar emerged in 2020, Forestry England has suspended trail hunting licences but has yet to ban trail hunting permanently. What discussions has the Minister had with the leadership at Forestry England about the issue? I pay tribute to the National Trust, Natural Resources Wales, the Malvern Hills Trust, and Cheshire West and Chester Council, which are among those that have seen through the hunt's smokescreen and have permanently banned it from their land. Could the Minister, if possible, touch on what discussions she has had with her ministerial colleagues on the matter?

In the 17 years since the Hunting Act 2004 came into force under a progressive Labour Government, many in the hunting community have been determined to circumvent the Act, and since 2010 they have largely succeeded. Trail hunting was invented in 2005 as a means of exploiting loopholes and enforcement challenges. Recent criminal proceedings have demonstrated how trail hunting has been used as a cover for illegal hunting. However, the Government have repeatedly talked down the prospect of addressing the gap in legislation. A United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime report in August 2021 recommended that the UK Government review the Hunting Act and its exemptions to improve the ability of police to enforce the Act. Her Majesty's Government have yet to respond to that recommendation, so can the Minister let me know when she will launch the review? I would be happy jointly with the Minister to sponsor a booking in Portcullis House for a launch, which would be great. Some cross-party consensus would be a fantastic thing.

A 2021 green paper from Act Now For Animals, a coalition of 50 animal welfare charities, recommended that the Government end trail hunting on their land and strengthen the Hunting Act 2004. It recommended removing exemptions in section 1 that are being exploited

and introducing the possibility of custodial sentences for breaches of the Act. I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle upon Tyne North, hon. Members who have spoken and those who signed the two petitions. Labour will continue pushing for strong observance of the law and proper and effective animal welfare policies, and will keep holding this Government to account.

6.27 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow): It is a pleasure to have you in the Chair, Mr Mundell, and I want to thank hon. Friends and Members. There is only a small crowd in the Chamber, but we have had some quite feisty views and some friendly but opposing views. I thank those involved from the Petitions Committee as well.

Today's debate relates to two petitions that have been signed by enough people to secure a debate. The issue is obviously an important one for us to discuss. I will start with the Hunting Act 2004. The Act makes it an offence to hunt a wild animal with dogs, except when it is carried out in accordance with the exemptions in the Act, and it completely bans hare coursing. Hare coursing has been mentioned a few times, but all hon. Members will know that we are also making a sensible and well-supported amendment to the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill that will genuinely help as regards any hare coursing. That is a positive step—I digress slightly, but it is important to note that.

The penalty for illegal hunting is an unlimited fine, and the Government take all wildlife crime extremely seriously. Enforcement of the Hunting Act is an operational matter for the police. Between 2005 and 2019, 887 individuals were prosecuted under the Act, of whom 514 individuals were found guilty, so, in its present form, the Act is fit for purpose and is being enforced. As we have heard, this Government made a manifesto commitment that they would make no changes to the Hunting Act in this Parliament. Trail hunting is a legal recreational activity following a pre-laid trail, and we heard a good description from my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin) about how it operates. It should not involve pursuing live quarry—*[Interruption.]*

David Mundell (in the Chair): Order. I interrupt the Minister because there is a vote in the main Chamber. I will suspend proceedings for up to 15 minutes. If hon. Members are back earlier than that, we will recommence earlier.

6.30 pm

Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.

6.52 pm

On resuming—

Rebecca Pow: I will pick up where I left off, rather than going right back to the beginning of my speech. I had just got on to what trail hunting is and was explaining that it is a legal recreational activity, following a pre-laid trail. As it should not involve pursuing live quarry, it is not specifically covered by the Hunting Act.

We recognise that it is possible that dogs used for trail hunting may occasionally pick up and follow the scent of live foxes during a trail hunt. If that occurs, it is the responsibility of the hunt staff to control their hounds—and, if necessary, stop the hounds—as soon as they are made aware that the hounds are no longer following the trail that has been laid. I think it was clearly stated by Members on both sides of the Chamber that there are over 300 hunts in this country, and many of them are involved in the completely legal recreational activity of trail hunting.

Rachael Maskell: I am grateful to the Minister for giving way. I just wonder if she could explain why, if there is not an intention to bait a fox in trail hunting, as she said, there are terriermen who join those hunts and use their tools to dig out foxes?

Rebecca Pow: I thank the hon. Lady for that intervention, but I will just reiterate what I said: there are parameters for what trail hunting is; it is a legal recreational activity, and it must be carried out in the right way. The data that we have received suggests that it is being carried out in the right way; where it is not, it obviously needs to be cracked down on. That is not the Government's job; it is the job of the police.

Issuing a licence or giving permission for trail hunting is an operational matter for the landowner; the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs does not play a role. Although it is called licensing, it is really an arrangement with the landowner and the hunt; the landowner comes to their own arrangement as to whether they want the hunt to proceed over their land. Different public sector landowners take different approaches to managing their land. That said, of course, other DEFRA Ministers and I continue to engage with interested parties through meetings and correspondence, and we obviously listen to everybody's views and discuss matters of concern.

The first petition mentioned today relates to the Forestry Commission in England. Trail hunting in the nation's forests was suspended by Forestry England following a police investigation leading to the conviction of a former director of the Masters of Foxhounds Association. It remains suspended until the Forestry England board takes a decision on its future, which is for that board to do.

Sir Robert Goodwill: Does the Minister agree that it is rather ironic that the Labour party campaigned against the privatisation of the Forestry Commission because it wanted public access to its land, and now it is saying that people should not have access to that land to carry out a perfectly legal activity?

Rebecca Pow: I thank my right hon. Friend for that comment. As ever, he is on the ball with his comments, as he was on the point about the 18,000 hounds that might have to be put down if the activity of hunting did not proceed.

I also want to touch on the comments made by my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire, who spoke as a true countryman with a great deal of experience and knowledge. I think he said that he does not himself hunt—nor do I—but the expertise he brings to the table and his knowledge of rural affairs are very important when we are talking about these issues. I just wanted to put that on the record.

Rachael Maskell: In my contribution, I posed the question of why Forestry England has imposed this temporary ban but the MOD has not. There appears to be inconsistency across the public estate as to whether hunts have access, and I wondered whether the Minister could clear up that matter.

Rebecca Pow: I do not think it is a matter of me clearing it up. It is within the gift of these organisations to decide whether or not they want to come to arrangements with hunts, and Forestry England has obviously suspended this activity—as have a number of other organisations, such as the National Trust and the Malvern Hills Trust—and will be looking into it. Quite a range of people have decided to take that action.

I will now turn to the second petition we are considering today, which relates to the distressing incident in Cornwall concerning Mini, a rescue cat of 14 years. I am an owner of two cats, and I do not know how I would survive without them, so I can understand how awfully upsetting and emotional this incident was.

The Government are committed to the highest standards of animal welfare, and clearly many people in this country support the direction we are taking on animal welfare. We published our action plan for animal welfare in May 2021, which lays out the breadth of animal and conservation reforms—both legislative and non-legislative—that the Government are taking forward to ensure high standards of welfare for all animals, whether farm animals, pets or wild animals.

The passing of the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021 delivered on the Government's manifesto commitment to introduce tougher penalties for animal cruelty. The Act's new maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine will apply to animal cruelty offences, including causing unnecessary suffering, and is a significant step forward in improving animal welfare. The Act has received overwhelming support. Indeed, I worked on these issues as a Back Bencher, and many Members present have been working on them for many years, so I am really proud that they have now come through in our manifesto commitment and in legislation.

I fully understand the upset and anger felt by Mini's owners at this awful incident. I understand that the hounds involved in the incident were being exercised—we have hounds going through our village regularly on exactly the same kind of outing, to give them exercise—and were not hunting at the time. There are already several pieces of legislation that can be used to prevent such incidents and to protect the public and companion animals from dogs. The Dangerous Dogs Act 1991 makes it an offence to allow any dog to be dangerously out of control in any place; there is the possibility of unlimited fines, or even imprisonment, for offences under that Act. In addition, the Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 includes community protection notices to enable the police and local authorities to tackle irresponsible dog ownership. Local authorities also have powers to make public space protection orders under the 2014 Act to exclude dogs from certain areas or insist that they are kept on leads.

Rachael Maskell: I want to draw attention to today's ruling, because it is a landmark one: I understand that this is the first time a conviction has happened under the Dangerous Dogs Act where a dog has attacked

another animal. Does the Minister agree that it is important for the breadth of the Act to be brought into full force when such instances as the taking of Mini's little life occur?

Rebecca Pow: The hon. Lady makes a valid point. Yes, today—we are allowed to speak about it now, Mr Mundell, are we not?—the appeal was refused. Judge Simon Carr said:

“It is a fact specific decision we are quite sure these dogs were dangerously out of control and in these circumstances the appeal against conviction is refused.”

That is very strong, as the hon. Lady said, and rightly so. I believe that the legislation has been used in the right way.

One other question was asked by the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones), which I think was about the potential review. In 2018, DEFRA was looking at the Hunting Act, but that was shelved. We now have a manifesto commitment not to amend the Act, which she is well aware of. We will not change our mind about that. A powerful statement about that was made by my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire.

Sir Robert Goodwill: No one has mentioned in the debate the important economic impact that legal hunting has in rural communities. The farriers, the horse breeders, the people who service the horse boxes—a whole variety of people—rely on legal hunting for their incomes and livelihoods. If we were to ban trail hunting more widely, people would be put out of work as a direct result.

Rebecca Pow: I thank my right hon. Friend for that. We should not forget it. I used to be an environment correspondent down in the west country, and I was there during the full throes of all the debates about hunting. I did not know that much about the economic impacts when I started, but I certainly learned a great deal, particularly in places such as Exmoor, where there are not many other places to gain income. There is tourism, of course, but hunting has a big impact on tourism, with people having their horses in stabling, and all the catering, accommodation and everything else it brings. That is a valid point. It has to be operated. Legally, we have put in requirements for the safe operation of trail hunting and so forth. Carried out in the right way, hunting is still valuable to the rural economy. Similarly, a good point was made about the fact that the fallen stock from agriculture goes to the hounds. If that were not so, that would create a problem. There are so many possible knock-on effects.

I realise that there are strong views on every side—I thank all hon. Friends and hon. Members for their input, and I thank those who signed the petition—but there is a clear consensus that the ban on hunting with dogs must remain, and this Government have committed to not amending the Hunting Act. Forestry England has responded to breaches of its trail hunting permissions and, as I said, all trail hunting on its land is currently suspended. It is very much an operational matter for Forestry England to decide how it wants to proceed. It will do so shortly, at one of its meetings.

As I hope I have demonstrated, protection for members of the public and their companion animals is already covered by several appropriate pieces of legislation,

including on dangerous dogs. Another interesting point was made: as I said, I have two cats and we have hounds exercising through our village, but one of my previous cats was killed by a car. My hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire raised the issue of the other awful incidents that can wipe out some of our pets.

I hope that I have made it clear that we have appropriate legislation to cover incidents in which dogs act dangerously. Those found guilty under such Acts are subject to the full force of the law, and rightly so.

David Mundell (in the Chair): As the Member who moved the motion cannot be present, that will conclude the debate.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered e-petitions 552017 and 584076, relating to hunting.

7.4 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Monday 25 April 2022

DIGITAL, CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

Football Governance

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 recommendations made by the Independent Fan Led Review of Football Governance.

The Government's response focuses on responding to the review's 10 strategic recommendations. We accept or support all of the 10 strategic recommendations in our response, which sets out the Government's planned reform of football. The sum total of our plans amount to significant reform with an independent regulator focused on financial sustainability, and a strengthened approach to ownership of football clubs and their governance.

The Government build on the case for reform set out in the review. We believe that there are two key problems in English football. First, there is significant risk of financial failure among clubs, and secondly, the cultural heritage of English football is at risk of harm. We have identified that these two problems have three root causes: the structure and dynamics of the market create incentives for financial overreach, inadequate corporate governance often affords unchecked decision-making power, and the existing regulation is ineffective. Without reform these financial failures will persist, and the economic and social costs would be substantial. Therefore, the Government believe that there is a need to intervene in football to secure the future of the game.

The issues highlighted in the review are complex and our reforms need detailed and considered analysis to ensure the sustainability of the sector long term. As a result, we have committed to publishing a White Paper in the summer which will set out further details on the implementation of reform.

In response to the strategic recommendations, the Government response sets out a vision for the reform of English football:

An independent regulator for football will be established. The response sets out the proposed objective, scope and powers of the regulator, and that it would oversee a licensing regime of the top five leagues.

The regulator will have a focus on financial regulation. The financial regulation regime will take a holistic approach, bringing together the Owners' and Directors' test, corporate governance and equality, and diversity and inclusion as part of one regime.

The current Owners' and Directors' tests do not go far enough in assessing suitability for ownership of clubs. The response sets out that the tests should be strengthened by enhancing due diligence to check source of funds and the strength of business and financial plans, and that an integrity-style test will be introduced. The forthcoming White Paper will provide further details on how the enhanced tests will work, and what will be in scope of the integrity test.

We believe that football needs a new approach to corporate governance, proposing a new model to be designed and overseen by the regulator. Football also needs to take further action on diversity and inclusion through their own plans for action. Further consideration will be given to ensure the model is proportionate and appropriate for football.

We agree with the review that supporters should be properly consulted by clubs, but we propose to share details in the White Paper on a more flexible approach to supporter engagement by making a minimum level of fan engagement a condition of the regulator licence. We have also committed to share details in the White Paper on the regulator implementing a licence condition which requires clubs to have a mechanism for fans to consent to changes to key items of club heritage.

On financial distributions in the football pyramid, we agree that more could be done by the Premier League to enhance financial flows through the wider football pyramid, and ideally this would be through a football-led solution. We have committed to revisit whether backstop powers are needed for the regulator to implement a new distribution agreement, if a solution is not found before the White Paper.

We agree with the review on the importance of football clubs to local communities, and set out that the position on "existing provisions"—which applies to football stadiums—in the national planning policy framework will be retained in the revised NPPF, in conjunction with Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities colleagues.

Finally, in response to the review's recommendations regarding alcohol and football, we are committing to review the Sporting Events (Control of Alcohol etc.) Act 1985, in conjunction with Home Office colleagues.

The Government are fully committed to reforming football governance to enable a long-term, sustainable future for the game. Accepting or supporting all the strategic recommendations in the review is the next step to doing exactly this, and will represent a wholesale change in the way football is governed in England.

We recognise the scale of change that is required, and the impact that our proposals will have within football and more broadly. That is why we are setting a strategic direction in reforming football for the better, but taking some time to consider the details of exactly how we will enact these changes. We will set out even more information on the precise implementation of our reforms in a White Paper which we will publish this summer, and are committing to implementing the reforms as soon as possible.

[HCWS781]

FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

Room to Run Guarantee

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs (Vicky Ford): It is normal practice, when a Government Department proposes to undertake a contingent liability in excess of £300,000 for which there is no specific statutory authority, for the Minister concerned to present a departmental minute to Parliament giving particulars of the liability

created and explaining the circumstances; and to refrain from incurring the liability until 14 parliamentary sitting days after the issue of the statement, except in cases of special urgency.

I have today laid a departmental minute outlining details of a new liability, the Room to Run Guarantee, which FCDO plans to undertake in order to guarantee a US\$1.6 billion—£1.23 billion at the current exchange rate—portfolio of African Development Bank loans.

The African Development Bank (AfDB) is Africa's premier regional financial institution. It is a well respected multilateral development bank which lends to 50 countries and the private sector within Africa. The UK is a long-term AfDB shareholder.

The UK is creating this new liability for two reasons. First, to meet a clear climate financing need. Africa has large and growing financing needs for clean and green development. It is estimated that \$3 trillion is needed to implement Africa's climate strategies over the next 10 years. Secondly, to support the AfDB. The economic impact of the pandemic has constrained AfDB's capacity to lend to member countries. This guarantee would allow the AfDB to continue to prudently increase its lending capacity at an important time.

The liability is expected to last for up to 15 years. FCDO would only pay official development assistance if a default occurs and if first loss cover provided by the African Trade Insurance Agency (ATI) is exhausted. The departmental minute sets this out in detail.

HM Treasury has approved the proposal. If, during the period of 14 parliamentary sitting days beginning on the date on which this minute was laid before Parliament, a Member signifies an objection by giving notice of a parliamentary question or by otherwise raising the matter in Parliament, final approval to proceed with incurring the liability will be withheld pending an examination of the objection.

[HCWS779]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Trade Update

The Secretary of State for International Trade (Anne-Marie Trevelyan): On Thursday 21 April, I met His Excellency, Vadym Prystaiko, Ukraine's Ambassador to the United Kingdom, where we reached an agreement in principle that the UK will liberalise all tariffs on imports of Ukrainian origin under the UK-Ukraine political, free trade and strategic partnership agreement. This follows the commitment made by the Prime Minister in Kyiv that the UK would step up our economic support. This agreement in principle is in direct response to a request from the Government of Ukraine and is part of the UK's commitment to their economic stability. Both countries are now completing the necessary processes to rapidly bring this into force.

The UK Government offered this policy on a non-reciprocal basis, with no expectation or ask of the Ukrainian Government in return. However, the Government of Ukraine has confirmed that their preference is to match our approach and they will fully liberalise their tariffs under the FTA with the UK, in order to maximise the economic benefit for Ukraine and to help secure their economic future.

Key details include:

Liberalising all tariffs under the Free Trade Agreement to zero on all goods originating from Ukraine which will provide economic support in their hour of need.

Our analysis shows that the average tariff on imports from Ukraine not already fully liberalised is currently around 22%. Removing these tariffs provides broad and deep support for the people of Ukraine.

In the unlikely event of a surge of Ukrainian imports into the UK market, I have put in place a broad safeguard mechanism to protect domestic industry.

These changes will be for an initial period of 12 months but include a simple process to agree an extension with Ukraine.

The Government will shortly lay a statutory instrument to amend our domestic legislation accordingly.

This approach is leading the world in how we support Ukraine, and I will encourage trade ministers in other countries to follow our direction. With that in mind, I will soon convene Trade Ministers from the G20 and other nations to continue the international effort to put pressure on Putin and support Ukraine.

On Thursday 21 April, we announced that the UK will bolster its sanctions against Russia by expanding the list of products facing import bans and increasing tariffs. With these new measures, the UK will be imposing import tariffs and bans on over £1 billion-worth of Russian goods. The new sanctions will include import bans on silver and high-end products from Russia including caviar, and tariff increases of 35 percentage points on a range of products from Russia and Belarus, including diamonds and rubber. These new measures follow on from the tariff increases imposed on goods from Russia and Belarus on 25 March, and a ban on the import of many iron and steel products from Russia on 14 April. Legislation will be laid in due course to implement these measures. We encourage all importers that use Russian imports to source alternative supplies. As with all sanctions, these measures will be kept under review.

Today, we also announce additional sanctions to continue putting pressure on Putin's regime. These sanctions include expanding our existing strong export prohibitions and closing loopholes to ensure that the UK is not selling Russia products and technology which could be used to repress the heroic people of Ukraine.

As I made clear to Ambassador Prystaiko, the UK will do everything in its power to support Ukraine's fight against Putin's brutal and unprovoked invasion and ensure its long-term security and prosperity. We stand unwaveringly with Ukraine in this ongoing fight and will tirelessly work to ensure Ukraine survives and thrives as a free and sovereign nation.

[HCWS782]

WORK AND PENSIONS

Completing the Move to Universal Credit by 2024

The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (Dr Thérèse Coffey): In 2012, Parliament voted to end legacy benefits and replace them with a single modern benefit system, universal credit. The UC system stood up to the challenges of the pandemic and ensured that support was provided for a significant number of new claimants with varying needs across the country. As the rest of Government and society returns to business as usual, it is appropriate to resume the process to complete the move to UC by 2024.

There are around 2.6 million households receiving legacy benefits and tax credits who need to move across to UC. The natural migration process, where claimants experience a change in circumstances and consequently move to UC, has largely continued throughout the last two years. The voluntary migration process has also been available throughout. We are taking steps to increase people's awareness of the fact that they could be better off financially if they were receiving universal credit, including through the publication of our document "Completing the Move to Universal Credit" today on www.gov.uk. I will place copies in the Libraries of both Houses.

In that document, we set out our analysis which estimates that 1.4 million (55%) of those on legacy benefits or tax credits would receive a higher entitlement on UC than on legacy benefits and would benefit from moving voluntarily, rather than waiting for a managed migration. This is particularly the case for tax credit claimants, with our analysis estimating that around two thirds of them would benefit. That is why we have included information on UC in this year's renewal forms for current tax credit recipients. It is important for current recipients to satisfy themselves that they would be better off on UC using independent benefit calculators before moving voluntarily, as once the claim is made recipients cannot revert to tax credits or legacy benefits, nor receive any transitional protection payments. More information is included in the document.

For those claimants who do not choose to move and have not migrated naturally, we will manage their migration to UC. Parliament committed to providing transitional financial protection to those who are moved on to UC through the managed migration process. While many households will be better off financially on UC, for those with a lower calculated award in UC than in their legacy benefits, transitional protection will be provided for eligible households. This means they will see no difference in their entitlement at the point they are moved to UC, provided there is no change in their circumstances during the migration process.

Before the pandemic, the Department had started testing processes for managed migration in a pilot based in Harrogate. In 2020, the pilot was stopped to handle the significant increase in new claims for UC resulting from the pandemic. During this pilot there was proactive engagement with 80 people, 38 of whom were moved

to UC. Thirty-five claimants were better off and only three people required transitional protection. The remainder of moves were not completed before the pilot was stopped. This pilot only involved claimants that the Department had an existing relationship with. No claimants on working tax credits were approached directly to commence a move to UC.

The pilot provided valuable insights. First, while claimants will likely look for support from organisations they already know, such as a local authority, we are no longer assuming that all engagement needs to be managed by that organisation. Secondly, claimants can and will move autonomously, but some may need more support, particularly on digital access. The pandemic reinforced the importance of claimants being able to manage their own claims online and the strength of this system. Thirdly, claimants can successfully choose a date for their claim, factoring in other income and expenditure points during the month. Finally, the pilot allowed the Department to understand the processes and tools required to complete a managed move, such as those needed to calculate transitional protection.

As I have said to the House previously, we are not resuming the Harrogate pilot. We have learned from that experience and our wider experience over the last two years. As we complete the move to UC, I am absolutely committed to making this a responsible and safe transition. Next month, we will be starting a multi-site approach across the country with a small number of claimants—approximately 500 initially—being brought into the mandatory migration process. We will continue to develop our processes and systems to scale the migration process and complete by 2024.

We are resuming under existing regulations, although I intend to bring forward to Parliament amendments to the UC transitional provisions regulations, following their consideration by the Social Security Advisory Committee.

Universal credit is a dynamic welfare system fit for the 21st century. As part of our levelling-up agenda to support the British public, we will continue to help people into work and to progress in work, taking advantage of the recent reduction in the taper rate and boost to work allowances.

[HCWS780]

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