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**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PARLIAMENTARY**  
**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**Friday 25 November 2022**

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# House of Commons

*Friday 25 November 2022*

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

## PRAYERS

*The Chairman of Ways and Means took the Chair as Deputy Speaker (Standing Order No. 3).*

**Peter Gibson** (Darlington) (Con): I beg to move, That the House sit in private.

*Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 163) and negatived.*

## Electricity and Gas Transmission (Compensation) Bill

*Second Reading.*

9.35 am

**Dr Liam Fox** (North Somerset) (Con): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

Electricity transmission is something on which we all depend and, simultaneously, tend to take for granted. The upgrading of the network is necessary to ensure that we improve the efficiency and resilience of our system. It will enable us to improve our energy security by bringing in new capacity, such as in the nuclear field, and our renewable capacity by increasing the use of elements such as offshore wind. On that much, all hon. Members will agree.

At the same time, farmers, homeowners, local communities and individuals should expect to have their rights and interests protected while that programme unfolds, and to be treated fairly and equitably when disputes arise. It is the failure of those elements that necessitates today's Bill. In the UK, National Grid owns and operates our electricity and natural gas transmission networks. It is one of the largest investor-owned utility companies in the world: in the United States, as well as operating transmission networks, the company produces and supplies electricity and gas, and provides both to customers in New York and Massachusetts.

Let me be clear to the shareholders of National Grid that it is the intransigence, abrasiveness and downright disrespect of elements of the company's management that has led me to introduce the Bill, on behalf of not only my constituents who are currently affected but those of many other representatives in this House who will be affected in future. Where disputes arise between one of the world's most powerful companies and our constituents, it is essential that we have a means of resolving them in a way that is clear, affordable, fair and enforceable.

I believe that the Government share those objectives, so the Bill, as with the Down Syndrome Act 2022 that I introduced last year, has been kept deliberately simple at this stage to enable us to reach agreement on the specific mechanisms that can be incorporated at later stages as the Bill progresses through Parliament. It is true that a range of dispute resolution mechanisms exist, but it is clear from experience that they are not capable of dealing in an acceptable way with disputes that arise. If they were, there would be no need for the Bill.

**Mr Gagan Mohindra** (South West Hertfordshire) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend on his impassioned speech. Does he agree that we in this place should always encourage people to do the right thing, as the Bill hopefully will? I am concerned that it sounds, from his introduction, as though that company is not doing the right thing.

**Dr Fox:** I am not questioning whether the company wishes to do the right thing, but in practice it has not behaved in a way that is acceptable to me as a representative of the people of North Somerset. I therefore suggest that we need new mechanisms to ensure that what I regard as genuinely fair practice is enforceable. That is one of the problems with the current system. I shall now illustrate the generic case with some specific examples from the experiences of my constituents.

For those who are unfamiliar with the background, in preparation for the Hinkley C nuclear power station coming online, the Hinkley connection project is a new high-voltage electricity connection between Bridgwater and Seabank, near Avonmouth. The new connection will be 57 km long, consisting of 48.5 km of overhead lines and 8.5 km of underground cables, mainly through the Mendip hills area of outstanding natural beauty. The existing 132 kV power lines will be replaced, as they will be across the country, by new 400 kV overhead lines using very much larger T-pylons, with the removal of most of the existing pylon system, which we are used to seeing in our towns and countryside.

It is not my intention in the Bill to argue the pros and cons of the new pylon system, controversial though that it is, or to argue for the relative merits of pylons or undergrounding of new cables. My intention is to ensure that where the interests of our constituents are materially affected they are given due protection. A number of my constituents in North Somerset have been battling with National Grid for over 10 years now to try to protect their homes and livelihoods.

My first constituent's circumstance has resulted in the value of their property being materially impacted by the project, which is perhaps an unavoidable consequence of this type of infrastructure upgrade. My second constituent is a farmer whose livelihood is being destroyed by the same scheme. In both cases, National Grid seems to believe that it has no responsibility to take due regard of the emotional, social or economic consequences facing my constituents, whose only redress is therefore through the courts at the Upper Tribunal. In the case of my first constituent, who was forced to pursue that route, that ended up costing them a staggering £200,000 in legal fees.

In that first case, the family bought their home in January 2008, with the intention of knocking down the old house and building a new one. They carried out all possible searches from a conveyancing perspective, as the project was their magnum opus that was going to use their life savings and ultimately provide their pension in years to come. The Hinkley scheme never showed up on any searches undertaken and, by its own admission, National Grid accepted that the Hinkley connection project would not have been visible in any searches undertaken at that point in time.

Once the project was formerly announced in 2010, my constituent made representations at every possible hearing, to both National Grid and the inspectorate,

[Dr Fox]

asking factual questions around pylon location and impact. For years, no one was able or willing to provide any specific answers or assurances on whether and to what degree the project would have a material impact on the value of their house. As hon. Members can appreciate, that caused, and is still causing, an unimaginable amount of stress for the family. The feeling of being effectively powerless in a stand-off with one of the world's most powerful multinationals has left them with a level of fear and anxiety that I leave the House to imagine.

The detail of the scheme was to put two 132 kV lines under their drive, which includes their garage come office, and a 400 kV T-pylon close enough to the property that, were it to fall, would fall right to the edge of the house itself. That is in addition to building an access road that now abuts their property. Where once there were only fields and sheep, there will now be a massive new pylon outside their home.

Additionally, they have been served with restrictions around permitted development rights of their property and National Grid and supplying parties have been granted access rights to their property, which would allow them to break down their gate or knock down their garage and office in order to carry out any necessary reparations to the undergrounded line. Perhaps those are necessary rights, but they have a detrimental effect on the sale price of the property.

Although my constituents were constantly engaged with National Grid, all conversations were completely ineffectual as National Grid did not have to listen or provide any answers to their questions because it was able to point to the development consent order—the DCO—that seemingly gave it carte blanche to do what it wanted. Unlike other large infrastructure schemes such as High Speed 2 or Crossrail, no discretionary compensation scheme was established for the project, so National Grid has simply focused on what it has been legally allowed to do, with little regard for the impact on individuals' existing properties, and irrespective of the personal or financial impact. Hon. Members may want to think about that in respect of future potential cases. Consequently, the only route left open for my constituent to protect their home and life savings was to pursue a blight claim through the Upper Tribunal—which for reasons that are readily apparent they did not want to do.

Given the rarity of statutory blight claims, my constituents recognised the enormous risk in undertaking such an action, and they did not take it lightly. However, since they had no other avenues to pursue, they were compelled to do something to avoid financial ruin. To be clear, all they were trying to protect was their right to sell their house at a fair market value at a time of their choosing. I would like to think that hon. Members on both sides of the House would regard that as a basic right.

The odds are stacked against individuals in such cases. Even the small win that my constituent made in the judgment—the recognition that there would be a 5% diminution in the value of their property—was pointless, because National Grid will no longer accept and pay compensation as it says that the rights that it now requires over the property have changed. A constant

moving of the goalposts as well as a refusal to accept responsibility for its actions—or decisions that go against it—have been constant features in National Grid's behaviour. Its response is all too typically to challenge individuals to take it to the Upper Tribunal, with a potentially huge new tranche of expense.

**Jerome Mayhew (Broadland) (Con):** As the country moves to decarbonise and away from fossil fuels, a conservative estimate is that the requirement for electricity will double—it may triple—in the next 20 to 30 years, and an inevitable consequence is that we will need many more pylon routes. Does my right hon. Friend agree that this is therefore a particularly opportune Bill and that it is important for hon. Members who perhaps do not think it applies to them yet?

**Dr Fox:** I am extremely grateful to my hon. Friend for making that point so clearly. At the moment, it is a relatively small geographical problem that affects a relatively small number of us, but it is going to be a much bigger problem in the future, affecting many more constituencies across the country. As so often happens, we are able today to anticipate a problem and do something about it. What I hope will not happen—all too often it does—is that we try to kick it into the long grass. It is far better that we find a solution to the problem now that is fair, reasonable, enforceable and equitable and bring that forward with Government action. We otherwise face long fights on behalf of our constituents in the House and potentially through the legal system. The current system of forcing constituents to the Upper Tribunal is neither fair nor affordable, and access to justice is not possible where one side can use its financial and therefore legal might in effect to intimidate those who stand in their way. That is exactly the point that my hon. Friend was making.

My second constituent is a local North Somerset farmer who has some of his land adjacent to my first constituent. His family have been farming in the area for generations. As with so many of our farmers, they love and care for their land and the local environment, and they focus on farming in an environmentally friendly and regenerative manner. The preservation of soil is key to the whole business model. As a consequence of the scheme and the flagrant disregard for that preservation, his land has been ruined for generations to come. Haul roads have been constructed over peat bogs, and they have caused material drainage issues. National Grid has consistently refused to agree a workable drainage strategy. This will impact future yields and render it less productive and less valuable as farmable land, not just for a couple of years but for generations. What is worse is that a compensation scheme agreed with National Grid's land agent at the start of the scheme has now been reneged on, as National Grid is now questioning the formula agreed by its own land agent. When my constituent challenged that approach, he was faced with a bullying and abrasive response, and is constantly told that he could pursue the matter through the courts, which, quite obviously, he is not in a position to do.

In addition, as a consequence of the company's inadequate and seemingly ignorant and ill-thought-out approach towards the resettling of badgers, setts have been blocked off. That forced badgers on to his land

and infected his herd—something he told the company could happen, but it chose not to listen. As someone who had never had a single case of TB on his farm for 30 years, he was forced to cull 110 cattle out of a herd of 350. Seventy of those were in calf, so not only did he lose a huge proportion of his stock but his stock has been massively affected for the next three years. In turn, that has cost him tens of thousands of pounds. And that is without taking on board the suffering farmers endure when they witness the suffering and slaughter of their own animals.

A third case involves another farmer across whose land an access road was driven. Promises were made to return the land to its previous condition, which was, incidentally, part of the best quality farming land in the area. When I visited the farm recently, I was horrified at the condition of the fields. Building debris was so widely scattered that it would be impossible to utilise a range of farming vehicles without undue damage. Yet again, the response from National Grid, or at least its local agents, was that it had done what was required of it and that if my constituent was not satisfied it would see them in court—a very regular chorus being developed in this particular song.

A fourth case involved an elderly constituent who has a single piece of land, which is her chief financial asset. This has effectively been taken out of use for the next seven years by National Grid perfectly legally as part of the access programme for the installation of the new pylons and underground cables. Again, there has been a callous disregard for the fact that this effectively renders her biggest source of potential income inaccessible. Here again, the response has been that if she is not happy, she can pursue the matter through the courts. The disregard for individual interests and natural justice appals me.

Members across the House will be able to see from these relatively simple examples a clear pattern of behaviour developing. Some might say that from the point of view of National Grid shareholders, the approach is not irrational, as they will be able to proceed with their electricity transmission project at minimal discretionary financial cost. The rest of us, however, will surely believe that we have to put in place measures to fulfil the four tests I set out earlier, giving our constituents a system of dispute resolution that is clear, affordable, fair and enforceable.

I am grateful to Ministers for the discussions that we have had thus far on the subject and their understanding that there is a clear problem that needs to be addressed. The current dispute resolution mechanisms are not adequate. That cannot be allowed to stand as the solution to the problem. A range of options is available which I hope we can continue to explore as we move towards the Committee stage and subsequent stages of the Bill. I have noticed in recent weeks a growing awareness from Members representing constituencies across the country who recognise that this will become a problem for them if we do not find adequate solutions now.

As I said at the beginning, we all understand the need for an effective, efficient and resilient electricity transmission system, but it cannot be built at the expense of our constituents and the natural justice to which they are undoubtedly entitled. We cannot allow large multinationals

to bully those who have legitimate interests and grievances, and to use their financial, and therefore legal, might to crush resistance underfoot.

Today, my North Somerset constituents are, largely, the most affected, but many more constituencies will be affected in the future. We in this House have a duty to protect, in any situation, those who are weak from the excesses of those who are stronger, and to ensure that decency, social responsibility, rights of property owners and environmental protection are given their proper place. Last year, in the passing the Down Syndrome Act 2022, this House showed that it understood that it could unite for the common good. I ask colleagues to do the same today.

9.55 am

**Sir Bill Wiggin** (North Herefordshire) (Con): My right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) has proposed a mechanism to ensure fairer treatment for those whose rights or land are subject to acquisition. I declare my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests: I have a wayleave on my little farm, and I receive money for that. It is not a great deal, but it is important to announce that, so that no one hears what I will say without knowing that.

My right hon. Friend's Bill relates to projects that concern electricity and gas transmission. In the south of my constituency is the National Grid high-pressure gas pipeline, which runs underneath, or near to, Upton Bishop, where I live. Such projects are of vital national importance, and I would not wish them to be hampered by long, drawn-out negotiations between stakeholders. The time that the High Speed 2 rail link has taken to progress and its expense demonstrate the need for speed and efficiency when proceeding with publicly beneficial projects, but those who face vast inconvenience and an emotional impact as a result need to be treated as fairly as possible, and with the utmost consideration.

I was horrified to read in an article in *Farmers Weekly* that months, and even years, can pass without landowners seeing a penny of compensation when their land and access rights are subject to acquisition. It stated that, in some cases, people have been left waiting for up to 10 years for payment once a compulsory purchase order has been served.

Without a mechanism that is separate from the negotiations surrounding a purchase of land, landowners are forced to take disputes to the Upper Tribunal lands chamber. If they lose their case, they may be forced to pay the legal costs of the acquiring body. The main thrust of what my right hon. Friend said is that it is a David and Goliath-type contest that is deeply unfair to the David part—that is, the landowner. In complex cases, when business viability is called into question, that can amount to tens, or even hundreds, of thousands of pounds. That makes the legal route both expensive and risky, as my right hon. Friend pointed out. It is not fair that landowners who, through no fault of their own, are separated from their land or rights are dragged through a demoralising legal process. In many cases, they cannot even afford that, especially given that the outcome of legal proceedings are not certain, and the landowner may still feel aggrieved about the loss of his land in the first place.

[Sir Bill Wiggin]

Farmers are disproportionately affected by the projects that are addressed by the Bill. Agriculture accounts for 63% of land use in England, so farmers are, of course, most affected by gas and electricity supply lines. A farmer's land, however, is also his greatest asset, and it is very difficult to quantify the cost of disruption that an infrastructure project may cause. The basic principle of compulsory purchase compensation is that the person affected should be returned to the position that they were in before the acquisition took place. For farmers, that is often not what happens. The separate components of compensation payments do not adequately address the injuries that farmers may face.

For example, not only do the huge 400kW pylons that are required to transmit electricity take up about 60 square meters during construction, but their placement reduces crop yields for years to come. In some cases, pylons are obstacles for farmers driving combine harvesters or other farm machinery. When builders put transmission lines in place, they may cause damage to crops or leave gates open, leading to animals escaping. My local paper, the *Hereford Times*, reports that at least one agricultural accident involving overhead lines, posing a threat to life for farmers and livestock, is reported nationwide every day. A one-off severance payment does not take those effects into account, as they are difficult to quantify.

The current system benefits only the acquirer of the land or rights. National Farmers Union rural surveyor Louise Staples has claimed:

“Acquirers have too much power. There should be a greater understanding that the purchase affects people's homes, livelihoods and family history.”

I hope that any system proposed by the Secretary of State looks more favourably on farmers than the current system of negotiation, in which there is a huge imbalance of power.

Part of the south Wales gas pipeline, which transports high-pressure gas from Gloucestershire to Pembrokeshire—actually from Pembrokeshire to Gloucestershire, I suspect—runs through my constituency. Herefordshire is one of the main entry points to Wales, as the Wye valley is more suitable for infrastructure projects than the Cambrian mountains. For the same reason, the percentage of land used for agriculture in Herefordshire is far above the national average, so Herefordshire's population density is very low—the fourth lowest of any county in England. That creates issues with gas and electricity provision, with a need for electricity cables that are not as high-voltage but are none the less disruptive, as they cover large distances between substations.

A 132 kV overhead cable runs from Herefordshire to Worcester, through the south of my constituency. Hon. Members will be familiar with overhead cables of that kind, as they are frequently held up by ugly steel lattice pylons, which can look very similar to 400 kV pylons. The network distributor, Western Power, published a document last year suggesting that the existing 66 kV lines are ageing and may be replaced by 132 kV lines. Of course that is welcome, because it is important that we maintain our electricity lines and that they be up to standard, but I am concerned that those whose livelihood will be affected by the works will not be compensated fairly.

**Dr Fox:** Does my hon. Friend agree that there is something strange in how there are built-in compensation mechanisms for projects such as HS2 and Crossrail, which tend to affect more urban populations, but there is little protection, if any, for projects such as those he describes, which affect more rural locations?

**Sir Bill Wiggin:** That is the reason I am here today: the system is skewed to disadvantage rural populations, who carry quite a lot of the burden of energy distribution. What we are looking for is fairness.

I praise the work that Western Power does in my constituency to supply homes with the energy that they need. I listened to my right hon. Friend's speech about National Grid; I could not feel more differently about Western Power, a fantastic company that goes the extra mile for my constituents every time. I hope it is listening to this effusive praise, because I really love these guys—they are fantastic. However, the principle behind our debate is the need for compensation. Although Western Power has been fair in its dealings with me, I agree with my right hon. Friend that those who are subject to acquisitions of rights or land deserve fair compensation.

10.4 am

**Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con):** It is a pleasure to be called to speak in this debate. May I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) on introducing the Bill. We recently co-operated on what became the Down Syndrome Act 2022. He has again found an area where there is a need to support people through better legislation.

Representing a mostly rural constituency, I am aware of the need for ensuring a robust and resilient distribution network for our utilities. We are in that period of the year when strong winds and driving rain can threaten infrastructure, and thousands of miles of cable criss-cross the constituencies of everyone here today. The weather makes it more difficult to repair damage, so I thank the people who put a lot of hard work into mending our infrastructure. I appreciate the speed with which they are usually able to make repairs.

Given the challenges, naturally, the utilities will want to develop the infrastructure and build more resilient networks. There are also areas where development requires greater capacity. I am aware of one mooted development in Hampshire that is threatened by the lack of national grid and feeder capacity on the lower voltage lines. We cannot have development that is not backed by infrastructure at all times. However, it has to happen on a fair basis, and respect the communities and people whose lives could be temporarily or permanently disrupted by this work. There are also private companies trying to get into the market with their own speculative projects that give rise to applications for development and compulsory purchase.

I have a particular concern about wider issues of utility provision and the disruption that it can cause, which I think the Bill can help with. I am thinking of water. In Hampshire there are proposals to lay a pipeline across the county. A new reservoir is being built in my constituency to the north of Havant. Since that application was granted, there is a new proposal for a development consent order so that a pipeline can be built from that

reservoir to the Otterbourne water treatment works in the constituency of my hon. Friend the Member for Winchester (Steve Brine).

Southern Water is already sending letters to residents warning them that their land may be needed. I have been contacted by distressed constituents who are worried that they will be presented with compensation that does not represent the damage that the loss of the land will do to their business—as my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset said, that is particularly the case for farmers of animals. I was quite distressed to hear what my right hon. Friend said about the farmers. One of my constituents has some very valuable llamas and has no idea where she will put them. I hope that it will be possible to arrive at a pipeline route that interferes as little as possible with such constituents. There is some way to go before the route is finalised and the DCO begins.

If the Bill proceeds, I hope that it will be possible to have an amendment that considers water. It need not add to the complexity of the Bill or of the operation of the compensation mechanism. The movement of water is massively infrastructure-heavy. The work required is every bit as intrusive as that for gas pipelines and electricity pylons. I hope that Ministers will not only listen to pleas from my right hon. Friend for action on electricity and gas, but keep in mind water companies. We must have the infrastructure that we need for secure, modern utility provision, but things have to be done fairly. People who have to give up part of their land must be compensated fairly for the loss, and for any ongoing impact.

10.7 am

**Selaine Saxby** (North Devon) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) on introducing the Bill. The transmission of electricity is at the heart of our energy security in the UK. Energy sources are an essential part of our move towards net zero, which is crucial if we are to limit the effects of climate change and insulate ourselves against shocks to the global energy market.

The south-west is a natural powerhouse, but the lack of efficient connections in the grid limits how much energy can be moved around the system. I have farmers in North Devon who have been working to install solar panels on their dairies, only to be prevented from connecting them because the national grid does not have enough capacity locally. Farmers who are working hard to provide the British public with high-quality British produce are being prevented from accessing more sustainable and secure forms of energy. That is contrary to what should be happening. Instead of putting in place barriers to the development of the national grid, we need to work on a strategy to increase capacity, while fully recognising the needs of landowners and people near to where that capacity may be installed.

The Celtic sea offers a fantastic opportunity to develop a significant amount of renewable energy for the UK. However, installing pylons should not be our default for increasing grid capacity. Undersea cables have been proven to work, with offshore wind sites and now with floating offshore wind. Residents along coasts in the UK have demonstrated their preference for a strategic offshore grid in place of pylon schemes. The effects of

pylons on environmentally significant areas and areas of outstanding natural beauty are a concern, as they can damage the landscape and people's access to the countryside—that is in addition to what we have seen in the horrific cases detailed by my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset. In North Devon, we are fortunate to have the UK's oldest biosphere reserve, and to damage our biodiversity, outstanding landscapes or scientifically significant areas, such as Braunton Burrows, because of the lack of a strategy on how to upgrade our grid capacity effectively would be unforgivable. If we are considering a strategic offshore grid, we must ensure that it is installed sensitively.

We have made great strides towards a net zero future, but it is crucial that we do not unnecessarily disturb stored carbon. The ban on peat use in domestic gardening products recognises the benefits of keeping stored carbon in the peat, alongside the unique habitat that is provided to a diversity of species. As peat is the stored carbon of animals that died in wetlands millennia ago, carbon in our seabeds is stored from the marine lifecycle; phytoplankton photosynthesise and take carbon out of the atmosphere, and, through the lifecycle of the sea, it is ultimately stored in the seabed.

Storing carbon is one of the key pillars of reducing the effects of climate change. When we have incidents such as the recent methane gas leaks from the Nord Stream pipeline, which are estimated to release as much gas as one and a half days of global methane emissions, we need to ensure that we do not unnecessarily contribute to releasing stored fossil fuels. I would like budgets for installing an offshore strategic grid to include blue carbon when assessing how and where these cables could be installed, and I would like us to minimise blue carbon disruption through the use of cable corridors. There is much to celebrate as we develop an energy grid for the 21st century and beyond, but I very much hope that strategies and legislation will take into account our precious nature and landscapes, alongside increasing the capacity and efficiencies of our grid.

10.11 am

**Aaron Bell** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friends the Members for North Devon (Selaine Saxby) and for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin), and my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox). There seems to be a theme; perhaps what we are debating only affects people in the north of their counties. Representing north Staffordshire, as I do in Newcastle-under-Lyme, it may be appropriate that I am speaking as well. It is always a pleasure to be here on a Friday doing important work on Bills such as this one. I pay tribute to everybody who is here doing so, particularly the hon. Member for Newport West (Ruth Jones). Instead of listening to me, she could be watching Gareth Bale—I wish Wales well and I am sure she is not following the game on her phone. [*Laughter.*]

I pay tribute to the Bill's promoter, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset, not only for what he is doing today, but for what he did with the Down Syndrome Act 2022. He referred to it today, as have colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Meon Valley (Mrs Drummond). I noticed the other day that he won campaigner of the year at *The Spectator* awards, which goes to show that the legislation will

[*Aaron Bell*]

really make a difference to the lives of many people with Down's syndrome and their families throughout the country. That is what these sitting Fridays are all about. If he could tell me how to win the ballot—he has been lucky twice in a row—that would be greatly appreciated.

My right hon. Friend is right to say that we need to upgrade our grid. As we move to decarbonise our sources of heat and electricity, more will be delivered through electricity, because heat pumps and transport—electric cars and so on—will put an increasing demand on the grid. The Government consultation on land rights and consents for electricity network infrastructure, which was held in August and September, summarised the scale and pace of change to electricity networks that is anticipated; peak electricity demand is expected to go from 58 GW in 2020 to between 130 GW and 190 GW in 2050 to meet both our net zero targets and, increasingly in the light of Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine, our energy security targets. The report went on to say:

“Over the next decade and beyond, this means an unprecedented build of new electricity network infrastructure and reinforcement, especially of the existing distribution network where between 200,000-600,000 km of additional distribution network cabling could be required by 2050.”

My right hon. Friend is at the sharp end of that, with his constituency near Hinkley Point C. That is because these big new developments will put a lot of demand on the capacity to get that electricity out and across the country more widely, as we on the Science and Technology Committee have heard in our current investigation into nuclear. We are generating a huge amount of electricity in one place in Hinkley, as we will be in Sizewell following the Chancellor's welcome announcement last week that we are going ahead with that.

My right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset is right to champion his constituents. Although I have not had the cases he has had, I am sure the criticism of National Grid is warranted, because we see this kind of thing all too often. I do not have the data, and one thing I noted when preparing for this debate is that we do not have good data about how often such consents are sought in our constituencies. Perhaps the Government could look to get Members of Parliament more information about how much of a problem this is in our areas.

The constituency represent is not nearly as rural as those of the Members who have spoken before me, but the principles remain the same—solid, Conservative principles of justice, fairness and people's property rights. As my right hon. Friend said in his opening speech, sometimes it feels as if the odds are stacked against individuals. As my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire said, the principles that ought to apply with compensation—putting people in the same position as they would otherwise have been in—often do not seem to be observed. That is why Bills such as this, which create independent means for people to seek redress and compensation at an appropriate level, are so important.

That does not make me a member of an anti-growth coalition, or anything like that. If we want infrastructure in this country—if we want to build things for the overall betterment of our national population and build national infrastructure—we need to be more constructive and work with people affected. My hon. Friend the

Member for North Herefordshire said that HS2 was better than what we have here, but in truth HS2 has caused no end of trouble as it carves its way through the countryside, and, indeed, through Staffordshire.

People have to fight so hard even to get back to the position they were in. We perhaps need to offer them more than 100%, as France does. In France, they make sure that affected people are not only made whole, but get some compensation and acknowledgement of the disruption that is caused when their land is concreted over or they have to sell their house subject to compulsory purchase. In this country, we do not work with the grain enough when it comes to housing or infrastructure.

I welcome the Bill, which is all about ensuring that we treat our constituents fairly. My right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset has been an undoubted champion for his constituents in this Bill and in the speech he made today. As he said, this will flow to other people. My hon. Friend the Member for Meon Valley said that this could usefully be extended to other utilities, not just water but perhaps broadband—sometimes the disruption that that causes is quite substantial. I look forward to further progress on the Bill, and to what more can be done in Committee. I welcome the fact that the Government will work with my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset in pursuing this important piece of legislation, and I hope that it goes through its further stages in this place and the other place.

10.17 am

**Peter Gibson** (Darlington) (Con): I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) on bringing forward this Bill, and for his incredible luck in the private Members' ballot in two consecutive parliamentary sessions. I know only too well what a privilege it is to guide a Bill through its legislative journey to the statute book. As has been mentioned, my right hon. Friend's Down Syndrome Act was a hugely important piece of legislation. I am pleased to see that in his Bill for this Session, he is taking the opportunity to raise another important issue that impacts his constituents.

Following the declaration of interest by my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin) in respect of his wayleave agreement, I will mention that I was once lucky enough to receive a one-off payment from National Grid for a cable that crossed the end of my garden.

An unprecedented level of new power generation is planned over the next decade to meet the demand for electricity, and to meet our CO2 reduction targets. The national grid must therefore have sufficient capacity. As the cost of transmitting electricity ultimately passes to customers, it is important for National Grid to find the best way of connecting new sources of power generation consistent with its duty to maintain an efficient, co-ordinated and economical system of electricity transmission.

The national grid is a nationally significant piece of infrastructure, and as such, I know National Grid will seek to obtain from the outset, by negotiation, permanent land rights for all new electricity transmission assets. That is consistent with National Grid's approach for new underground electricity cables and gas transmission pipelines, where permanent land rights are also sought and obtained. Once National Grid has identified a final



route alignment for proposed new electricity transmission assets, it will seek to enter into an agreement to grant an easement with owners and tenants of the land across and within which the new electricity transmission assets may be constructed.

The agreement enables National Grid to take entry on to the land, with notice and following the grant of the development consent order, to construct the new electricity transmission assets. The agreements also provide for changes in the final route alignment within a specified corridor as a consequence of public consultation, and during construction as a consequence of engineering requirements, surveys, and other routing factors. Once construction is completed, the agreements permit National Grid to call for an easement in respect of the new, as-built electricity transmission assets.

The payment schedule for new electricity transmission assets sets out the amounts that will be paid for an easement. In return for a signed agreement to grant an easement, National Grid will pay 50% of the easement consideration to the landowner. On entry for construction, a further 25% of the easement consideration is paid, and the final 25% will be paid if and when the easement is completed by National Grid. National Grid also offers incentive payments for the early return of signed agreements. Those incentives are set out in the payment schedule for new electricity transmission assets. They are available only during an 18-week period after a notified date, once agreements are issued by National Grid to landowners for their approval and signature.

After the agreement has been signed, up to either completion of the easement or expiry of the agreement itself, landowners, tenants and occupiers are restricted from doing anything that would adversely affect National Grid's ability to take and benefit from the easement should it need to do so. If landowners transfer their interest in the affected land, they must oblige the incoming owners to enter into a new agreement with National Grid on exactly the same terms.

Where National Grid is unable to obtain a voluntary agreement from a third party following the grant of a development consent order for new electricity transmission assets, it will seek to acquire the relevant land, or land rights over the land, through the compulsory acquisition powers granted to it through the development consent order. A copy of the order and a compulsory acquisition notice will be served by National Grid on the relevant third party and the notice will be posted on, or near to, the relevant land. Compensation will then be calculated and, if due, payable to the relevant third party in accordance with the relevant provisions of the land compensation legislation.

**Dr Fox:** There is a dispute system in place, but where cases go to the Upper Tribunal, high legal costs are paid by not only our constituents but National Grid—costs that, as my hon. Friend has said, are ultimately passed on to electricity payers. Would it not therefore be in the interests of all parties to have a clear, efficient and affordable dispute resolution system, rather than cases going to the Upper Tribunal and ultimately costing those of us who pay our electricity bills, as with this system?

**Peter Gibson:** I am grateful for that intervention. My right hon. Friend makes an important point. My right hon. Friend's Bill is born out of issues that his constituents have faced whereby they have been unable to get fair

compensation for distributions to their property or business in cases where land will be, or has been, subject to the acquisition of rights or land, through compulsion or by agreement, for the purposes of electricity and gas transmission.

This is an important issue and I completely agree with my right hon. Friend that we need to see improvement in this area. The Bill seeks to establish an independent mechanism to determine claims for compensation in cases such as the ones that have been outlined, where people or businesses feel that they have been unfairly treated.

I know that the Minister will have listened closely to all of the contributions from Members across the House, and I look forward to hearing her response on the various points raised. I know, too, that my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset will be seeking members for his Bill Committee in due course, and I happily put my name forward.

10.23 am

**James Daly (Bury North) (Con):** It is an honour to speak in this debate. I was one of the sponsors of the Down Syndrome Act 2022, which was introduced by my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox), and it was an honour to be part of that groundbreaking piece of legislation. I have learned more about how this Parliament works from him than from many other people here, and I thank him for that. I agree completely with everything that colleagues have said about this, but I have a few comments about development consent orders and how the principles behind the Bill can perhaps be developed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell)—a good friend of mine—made an important point about how the principles may affect construction and other areas. We are talking about development consent orders for nationally significant projects, which generally involve constructions of a certain size—48,000 square metres, I think. In my constituency, we are seeing a proliferation of 5G masts, and the construction of one, in Greenmount, was proposed for unregistered land. The mast itself would have been in a residential area and would have been bigger than the surrounding houses. If the planning application had been granted, there were no means for local people to claim compensation, or at least no means to challenge the application other than through the planning process.

For significant infrastructure projects—be they those that my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme mentioned, 5G masts or all sorts of other things—we must consider independent mechanisms that allow members of the public a way to claim compensation. Quite clearly, in the context that I am describing, a huge 5G mast suddenly towering over somebody's house will have a huge impact on them.

**Sir Mike Penning (Hemel Hempstead) (Con):** The 5G mast issue my hon. Friend is talking about is happening across our constituencies. They have presumed consent in most cases. Is he bidding to join the Bill Committee and table an amendment to include 5G masts?

**James Daly:** As my right hon. Friend knows, I am open to anything, so I will certainly give that due consideration.

[James Daly]

For infrastructure projects that are not related to residential use and have a negative impact on people's everyday lives, their property and its value, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) has included in his Bill an important general principle that we can look at further. We need to find ways to ensure that constituents who are impacted by the actions of commercial bodies have the means by which to challenge and claim compensation. I wholeheartedly support the Bill, and I am very much open to all suggestions being put forward.

10.27 am

**Jonathan Reynolds** (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op): I begin by congratulating the right hon. Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) on his success in the ballot and on bringing his Bill to the House today. He can perhaps now be described as a private Member's Bill specialist, and the skill in that is to pick issues that allow the House to come to some sort of agreement and for which people want private Members' Bills. I listened intently to what he had to say and—I will be honest with him—I have some concerns about his Bill, but I can tell him that I have amended my own speech in response to some of his points, so I genuinely listened to the case he put forward.

The right hon. Member gave a detailed account of how these matters have affected his constituents. He was right to say that the proposals are of national significance. That is because the debate comes at a time when this country faces several converging emergencies: the energy bills crisis is impacting deeply on millions of families and businesses across the country, the energy security crisis has been exposed by Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine and, of course, on the climate crisis, the UN tells us that we are on course for 2.8° C of catastrophic global warming.

Those crises all call for a sprint to renewable and nuclear energy. That is why the Labour party has set out our plans to make Britain a clean-energy superpower by 2030. I think we all agree that that is also the best way to keep energy bills low, tackle the climate emergency and create good jobs for the future. Achieving that mission is not just about building more kit—more nuclear plants, wind turbines or solar panels—but about establishing storage capacity to manage peaks in energy demand, new ways of balancing the grid and, most of all, very comprehensive improvements to our electricity infrastructure to expand the grid to new sources of energy. That is why the Bill is particularly relevant and important.

My understanding from listening to the right hon. Member is that, fundamentally, he wants to create an independent process whereby compensation can be determined for landowners whose land is required for the transmission of electricity or gas. I assume he intends that compensation to involve increasing the price currently paid for the land above the agricultural value that is commonly applied when such land is acquired through a compulsory purchase order. He made an excellent speech, and the way in which he articulated the specific cases of his constituents was very powerful—particularly when he pointed out that

local property searches had not revealed the Hinkley infrastructure, which would impose a considerable burden on people.

I cannot say to the right hon. Member that I am fully convinced that what we need is new legislation to do this better. Expanding the transmission of electricity and gas is vital for the future health of our economy, not just as the bedrock of our clean energy future. In my role I have the privilege of meeting representatives of a range of companies every day, and they all tell me that one thing that holds them back from investing in the UK and growing their business is the time that it takes to secure the necessary expansions of the grid network. A few weeks ago, representatives of a company in Newcastle told me that it had been offered a grid connection by 2040.

**Sir Mike Penning:** It is generous of the shadow Minister to give way again. I have been sitting here quietly listening to the debate, and I share some of his concerns about more regulation delaying the infrastructure projects, but I think that this proposal could actually speed them up, because in many cases it would remove the need for stuff to go to a tribunal. I do not think that the Bill is designed to delay—far from it—although I am sure that if I am speaking out of turn, my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) will tell me so. I think that this could be the fairer mechanism to speed these projects up, rather their being subjected to a long tribunal process with the massive delays that all of us, as constituency Members, have experienced.

While I accept the point that the shadow Minister is making about his scepticism—a point from which I started—I fully support the Bill, and I think that, in the end, he will support it as well.

**Jonathan Reynolds:** I am grateful for the right hon. Gentleman's intervention, because if it were clear that this was the way in which to resolve issues and speed the process up, that, for me, would be the deal-breaker. In the 12 years for which I have been in Parliament—I think the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me for saying this—I have often heard Conservative colleagues express strong opposition to housing developments, energy infrastructure, HS2 and other rail projects. It is important for us to get to the crux of the matter, which is whether this is about resolving things more quickly for people or whether it would delay the system further. If we are to meet the ambitions that Members on both sides of the House have held dear, we will all have to recognise the problems that are involved.

**Dr Fox:** I may be able to help the hon. Gentleman. The purpose of drafting the Bill in this way—without specific legal recommendations, and asking the Government to come up with a solution to the problem—is not to encumber us with further legislation but to open the way for the Government, for example, to introduce, under previous legislation, mechanisms that would enable disputes to be resolved more quickly. Let me say, for the avoidance of doubt, that the way to kill a private Member's Bill is to include too many specific measures on Second Reading. Requiring the Government to come forward with a solution offers us options that will not necessarily impose on our constituents legislative burdens that are enforceable only through the courts.

**Jonathan Reynolds:** I did say that the right hon. Member was a private Member's Bill specialist, and I think he has just given us all a little insight into how to handle these matters. I hope that once more detail is available, we will see an analysis of the way in which any changes in the process would affect our projections in respect of the future financial viability of grid expansion projects and key elements of national infrastructure.

I recognise the arguments advanced by many Members about how various issues involving infrastructure and other such matters have affected them and their constituents, and I hope I have been candid in expressing our concerns about how those might be overcome in future. I close my remarks by addressing some of the broader points this raises. If we are to deliver a clean and secure power system, we need the Government to address some of these issues, as there will clearly be major impediments if they are not addressed. We face considerable issues in providing business with stability and confidence to invest in this country. Members will be aware that we currently have the lowest level of business investment in the G7, so it is essential that we resolve such matters.

We need more clarity, leadership and direction from the Government. We do not need a Prime Minister who has to be dragged to COP27, an Environment Secretary who opposes solar energy or, frankly, a windfall tax that gives enormous, untargeted tax breaks for fossil fuel investment. Taking these matters seriously, and taking seriously the concerns that Members have articulated today, is essential, because achieving this is not just about new electricity or gas generation but about planning reform, new contracts for difference and the regulatory environment. The Bill sheds light on how we can bring local people on that journey.

Making sure these concerns are addressed is essential. Although the right hon. Member for North Somerset has done a tremendous job of moving the Bill's Second Reading today, this debate is worthy of mainstream parliamentary time and requires a comprehensive approach from the Government, which is currently lacking.

If I could make one plea to the Minister, it would be to ask her to bring back the Energy Bill urgently. We will need some of the tools in that Bill if we are serious about cutting bills, creating jobs, growing our economy and providing energy security. Whether it is these matters about transmission or the other tools we need, we simply do not have the legislative foundations in place to meet the Government's ambitions or the British people's expectations.

10.36 am

**The Minister for Industry and Investment Security (Ms Nusrat Ghani):** I thank my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox) for raising awareness of this important issue and for his serious, measured and thoughtful contribution, as have been so many contributions from both sides of the House. He is, indeed, a private Member's Bill specialist and, in my experience, it is best not to go against what he wants to achieve with his Bills. Hopefully I can satisfy him today.

I thank my hon. Friends the Members for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew), for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin), for Meon Valley (Mrs Drummond), for North Devon (Selaine Saxby), for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell), for Darlington (Peter Gibson), for Southend West

(Anna Firth), for Bury North (James Daly) and for South West Hertfordshire (Mr Mohindra), and my right hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead (Sir Mike Penning), for their thoughtful contributions. If I have time, I will go through each of their questions.

The Government have a clear long-term plan to accelerate our transition away from expensive fossil fuels and to meet our net zero targets. The electricity network is fundamental to this transition, and it needs to be transformed at an unprecedented scale and pace to allow the system to accommodate new renewable and low-carbon generation. The network also needs to accommodate an expected doubling in overall electricity demand by 2050, as we electrify sectors including transport, heat and industry. My right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset identifies a clear problem that needs to be addressed.

To give colleagues an idea of the scale of the challenge we face in this country, the onshore electricity network had more than 20,000 km of high-voltage transmission cables and approximately 800,000 km of low-voltage distribution lines in 2021, which is enough to stretch around the world 20 times. By 2050, we will need between 1 million and 1.5 million km of distribution network cabling.

As more renewable generation joins the network, its physical capacity to transport electricity can be exceeded if new network infrastructure is not ready in time. National Grid, the electricity system operator, has to monitor and sometimes curtail generation to ensure it does not overload the network. Building new network infrastructure reduces these constraints and, therefore, the cost of managing them by enabling electricity to move more efficiently from where it is generated to areas of high demand.

However, it currently takes between 11 and 13 years to build or reinforce new onshore transmission network infrastructure, from initial planning to final completion and commissioning. Consequently, the system operator estimates that constraint costs funding via consumer bills could increase by £1 billion per year in 2022 to £4 billion per year in 2030. That explains why the electricity network is such a critical enabler of our net zero, affordability and energy security objectives and why the Government aim to dramatically accelerate these build timelines.

My right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset mentioned the meetings he has had with the energy Minister, which I believe have been incredibly productive, and they will continue. He is right that we must bring people with us as we ramp up delivery of this critical infrastructure. He raised the important issue of determining claims for compensation in cases where land has been subject to the acquisition of rights or land either through compulsion or by agreement for the purposes of building electricity and gas transmission network infrastructure. I have highlighted the importance of network infrastructure for our climate and energy security ambitions. However, we recognise the concerns raised by my right hon. Friend. An unprecedented expansion of our electricity network is required, but the Government agree that this new network infrastructure must be built in a way that protects the rights of landowners and communities. If landowners are not happy with their settlements, there must be an avenue for redress.

[*Ms Nusrat Ghani*]

I agree that the upper tribunal can be expensive for claimants who lose a case. While the vast majority of cases between the network operator and the landowner end in amicable agreement, disputes do arise. That is where the alternative dispute resolution that already exists and is in use can play a valuable role. It can provide a quicker, cheaper, more flexible route of resolving a dispute. The upper tribunal encourages the use of alternative dispute resolution before a case is referred to it. Indeed, failure by a party to pursue alternative dispute resolution without good reason can have cost implications in tribunal proceedings—for example, limiting the ability of a party to recover costs or potentially leading to an adverse cost order being made against the refusing party.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy published a call for evidence earlier this year seeking views on whether the current land rights and consenting processes for electricity network infrastructure are fit to accommodate the rapid, transformative change that will be required in the coming decades. Our call for evidence closed on 15 September, and increasing the use of alternative dispute resolution was mentioned by many respondents. The evidence suggests that the issue here is about both raising awareness of existing alternative dispute resolution and increasing its use where relevant.

We wish to see a clear, cheap, quick and enforceable solution, in line with what I understand to be my right hon. Friend's objectives. We agree that there should be a quicker, affordable alternative to the upper tribunal readily available for landowners, and I thank my right hon. Friend for raising these issues for us to consider. As alternative dispute resolution mechanisms are already in use, we want to ensure that any legislative approach avoids prescribing a specific mechanism that duplicates existing options, creating unnecessary bureaucracy and costs for bill payers or taxpayers. In addition, different situations will suit different types of dispute resolution—for example, mediation, evaluation or arbitration. Prescribing a one-size-fits-all approach would likely increase costs and timescales for certain types of dispute.

In summary, I hope Members will agree that alternative dispute resolution should be encouraged. The Government are prepared to work with my right hon. Friend to develop the best solution to this issue, and we look forward to working with him in Committee.

As I have a few minutes, I will try to address some of the points raised by Members. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington raised the issue of land rights, the rights of landowners and how legal costs can constrain constituents in bringing their cases forward. Hopefully, through this private Member's Bill, we can try to resolve that. My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme talked about the luck it takes to win the ballot. I am not sure what is involved there, but he raised an important point about infrastructure, distribution, network cabling and compensation. We hope that, by taking the Bill forward, those issues can be addressed.

My hon. Friend the Member for Bury North talked about the mechanisms to allow constituents to access compensation. We have discussed how important it is to make people aware of where this compensation is available.

He also mentioned 5G. That sits with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, but he will no doubt get a response on that.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Devon talked about stored carbon in peat and seabed. As she is an expert on these issues, I am nervous to touch on what she already knows, but we will work with colleagues to understand their issues with regard to water infrastructure, and we encourage discussions on this matter. I will ensure that meetings take place with my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State, so that she can continue to represent her constituents on that issue. My hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire, who is a farmer not just a landowner, talked about compensation and access rights. Of course, he raised the grassroots perspective; we are all here to represent our constituents—the David against the Goliath—when we are dealing with big energy and infrastructure companies. He said that 63% of land is used by farmers, so it will be incredibly important to ensure that the new process puts in place arbitration, compensation and communication.

I assure my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset that we agree that he is right. We need to make sure that we have appropriate processes for compensation, and that any compulsion agreements are in line with the laws that are already established and in place. We want to make sure that the process is clear, affordable and fair. I recommit that the Government are prepared and will work with him to develop the best solution to the issue. We look forward to working with him in Committee and I hope that he is pleased with the outcome of the debate.

10.45 am

**Dr Fox:** With the leave of the House, I thank my hon. Friends the Member for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin), for Meon Valley (Mrs Drummond), for North Devon (Selaine Saxby), for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell), for Darlington (Peter Gibson) and for Bury North (James Daly) for being ahead of the curve in recognising the problems that may be coming to their constituents at some point in the future and that now is the time to deal with the problem.

I also thank the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Stalybridge and Hyde (Jonathan Reynolds), for his broadly supportive approach and, especially, my hon. Friend the Minister for recognising that we have taken a consensual approach in the formation and writing of the Bill to give the Government maximum flexibility to meet the anxieties that have been expressed in the debate. I am afraid that I cannot give my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme any advice on how it is possible to come top of the ballot for two consecutive years. Had I such a mechanism, I assure him that having won every lottery available, I would be hardly likely to be here on a Friday morning.

I hope that the House will recognise that I am unlikely ever to be categorised as a class warrior in this place, and I recognise that we need to have development and renewal of the infrastructure in our country if we are to become the competitive, green, efficient and energy-independent nation that we all want to see. This debate is not about those things, however. It is about natural justice. Where disputes arise, powerful multinationals cannot be the judge and jury of the compensation that our constituents may or may not get in a dispute.

The current system that my hon. Friend the Minister described is not good enough. It is not working adequately, so we need a different system that is, as I set out, clear, so that people unequivocally know what their rights are; fair, so there is a balance between the public good and individual interest; affordable, because it cannot be right for the powerful to use their financial and therefore legal might to bully others into submission; and, above all, enforceable, because, as we discussed at length during the passage of the Down Syndrome Act 2022, there is no point having rights in this country if they are not enforceable. We have today identified a problem that exists and is likely to become more widespread if we do nothing about it. We can act now to deal with an injustice and put it right. Ultimately, what else are we in Parliament for?

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time; to stand committed to a Public Bill Committee (Standing Order No. 63).*

## Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill

### *Second Reading*

10.49 am

**Henry Smith** (Crawley) (Con): I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

The Bill aims to ban the importation of endangered species body parts into Great Britain—to be more precise, those listed on the convention on international trade in endangered species, or CITES, in annexes A and B, whether from species in the northern hemisphere, such as polar bears, or species in the southern hemisphere, such as elephants. The territorial extent of this Bill is Great Britain, so let us be clear: this legislation, obviously, does not tell other countries what to do.

Seven years ago, Cecil the lion was infamously shot dead by an American trophy hunter in Zimbabwe. Sadly, British trophy hunters are among the world's most active killers of endangered species. In recent years, British trophy hunters have imported thousands of body parts as macabre souvenirs back into the UK. According to CITES, the most popular trophies brought back from Africa into the UK are those of elephants, hippos, leopards, zebras and lions. The African forest elephant has recently been declared critically endangered by the IUCN—the International Union for Conservation of Nature, and the African savannah elephant is also declared endangered; their combined population is estimated to be approximately 400,000. At the beginning of the 19th century, there were as many as 20 million elephants in Africa. Trophy hunters now shoot so many elephants that, when we add the numbers that are poached, more elephants are killed each year than are born. Moreover, trophy hunters are shooting the biggest elephants with the biggest tusks. That is leading to artificial selection: only smaller-tusked elephants are surviving and passing on their genes. There are now many more small-tusked and tuskless adult elephants, which will find it harder to find water under dry riverbeds at times of drought, which are occurring more frequently.

The hippopotamus, which is second on the British trophy hunters' list, is classed by the IUCN as vulnerable to extinction, as are zebras and leopards. Leopards are believed to have suffered a dramatic decline since the 1960s, with numbers falling from 700,000 to only 50,000 animals today, according to estimates. The situation for lions is even more alarming. The population in 1970 was estimated to be 200,000, but researchers now tell us there could be as few as 10,000 to 15,000—perhaps 20,000 in the wild at best—and there are official warnings that lions may become extinct in the wild by 2050.

**Sir Mike Penning** (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): This is such an important subject, and my hon. Friend is right to highlight at the start of his speech that this is about us in this country banning imports, rather than about telling other countries what they should do. Is he aware that because there is such a shortage of lions in the wild now that captive lions are being bred and released into enclosures for the trophy hunters to shoot them?

**Henry Smith:** My right hon. Friend raises an important and alarming point; the so-called “canned” shooting of lions and other majestic animals bred solely to be shot

[Henry Smith]

by trophy hunters in an enclosure is a particularly sickening aspect of this, which this country should have no part in whatsoever.

**Sir Bill Wiggin** (North Herefordshire) (Con): Will my hon. Friend explain to the House why the Government are issuing import licences for those CITES-listed creatures?

**Henry Smith:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his intervention. I think that illustrates the need for the Bill, which would send a clear message that, in this country—a sovereign nation—we should choose not to accept the importation of body parts of endangered species.

The impact of trophy hunting on lions has been well documented. The scientist who led the International Union for Conservation of Nature's red list study on lions states that trophy hunting is linked to "declining numbers of lions" throughout its range. An Oxford University team looking at the impact of trophy hunting said that its research found trophy hunting had the "single most significant effect" on lion populations.

The problem of trophy hunting is twofold, both for elephants and lions. As a US congressional report put it,

"Trophy hunting removes a significant number of animals from...rapidly declining populations",

and also, the best genes are no longer being passed on to future generations at a time when wildlife faces new challenges. That makes the risk of extinction much greater. Trophy animals tend to be the most evolutionarily fit and possess the high-quality genes that a population of animals needs to adapt quickly to a changing environment. Trophy hunting can push otherwise resilient populations to extinction when the environment changes. Scientists say that lions have suffered a loss of 15% in their gene pool over the last century. The killing of just 5% of remaining pride male lions could be enough to push the whole species past the point of no return.

**Sarah Owen** (Luton North) (Lab): The hon. Member is making an incredibly powerful speech, and a powerful case on the big five. As we have heard, the Bill is so important, but does he agree that it is perhaps time to move beyond the big five, and that we need assurances from the Minister that all endangered species will be protected under the Bill?

**Henry Smith:** I am grateful to the hon. Lady's support for the Bill and for her intervention. The Bill, when passed, would make it impossible for people to import trophy hunting body parts into Great Britain from all species listed in CITES annexes A and B, which is almost 7,000 different species, and there would be an ability under secondary legislation for the Secretary of State to add species as and when they became endangered. I am grateful to her for highlighting that important point.

We know that stopping trophy hunting can lead to significant recoveries of wildlife. When trophy hunting of lions was temporarily banned in Zambia and Zimbabwe, their numbers almost doubled in the space of a few years. Botswana banned the trophy hunting of elephants

many years ago, and it now has one third of all Africa's elephants—more than twice as many as any other African nation.

Kenya, which banned trophy hunting in the 1970s, is today an African conservation success story, in contrast to what is happening in other parts of Africa. In recent years, Kenya's lion population has risen by a quarter. While black rhino numbers have fallen by 35% in the rest of Africa, in Kenya, they have gone up a fifth. Numbers of white rhinos are falling throughout Africa except in Kenya, where they have grown by 64% since 2017. Elephant numbers have doubled in Kenya, and the country has virtually all of Africa's remaining big tusker elephants.

It is not just in Africa that the impacts of trophy hunting have been seen and recorded. According to the US Congressional Research Service, trophy hunting has been responsible for population declines in the cougar in North America, and hunters caused the extinction of the wild Arabian oryx as recently as 1972.

**Jane Stevenson** (Wolverhampton North East) (Con): Many of my constituents have contacted me about this important Bill, and I thank my hon. Friend for the work he is doing. When we hear about an animal becoming extinct, it raises so much sadness in so many people. Will he join me in paying tribute to Lorraine and Chris Platt of the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation? I know they have done much to support him and many other hon. Friends on animal welfare issues.

**Henry Smith:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for her support. I declare an interest as a patron of the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation, and I certainly pay tribute to Chris and Lorraine Platt for all their remarkable work over many years to highlight the cause of animal welfare. I am personally grateful to them, and I know many right hon. and hon. Friends are also grateful for the support they have provided.

Trophy hunting is believed to be responsible for the extinction of the wild scimitar-horned oryx just a few decades ago and the near extinction of the dorcas gazelle, the Nubian bustard, the dama gazelle and the addax. Trophy hunting is more than just a contributor to a conservation crisis; I would argue that it is cruel and immoral.

Numerous studies indicate that over half the animals shot by trophy hunters do not die instant deaths but instead have slow and painful deaths. Moreover, the killing of living, sentient creatures solely for sport, selfies or souvenirs surely does not belong in the modern era. That is certainly the view of the overwhelming majority of the British public, 86% of whom say they want a ban on trophy hunting as soon as possible. Just 2% of people say that they wish the practice to continue.

I am pleased to say that the idea of banning trophy imports has enjoyed widespread support across the House, and across society as a whole. Just three years ago, I was proud to stand for election on a manifesto pledge to ban the importation of hunting trophies.

**Mr Clive Betts** (Sheffield South East) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman says there is cross-party support for the measure; certainly, there is widespread support for it in my constituency. I had a concerning email the other day from an all-party parliamentary group, which said that

the World Wildlife Fund was against the measure, because it thought that trophy hunters encouraged economic activity in areas where trophy hunting takes place, and that the Bill would go against that. Will the Gentleman comment on that, and try to rebut what was said in that email?

**Henry Smith:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and his support. Let us be clear that the WWF in the UK, Europe and the United States is very much against trophy hunting and the importation of body parts by trophy hunters. Some organisations in some parts of southern Africa masquerade as conservation charities, but even a cursory look shows that it is often the gun lobby, particularly the American gun lobby, that funds them. We must have no naivety about the forces behind those who seek to maintain trophy hunting.

No fewer than 44,000 organisations, experts and individuals, including representatives of African communities, took part in the Government's public consultation on these proposals; it was one of the most comprehensive such consultations ever conducted. Of those, 86% agreed that measures to end imports of trophies should be introduced.

Further to the point made by the hon. Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts), in Africa, for example, trophy hunting is an alien and unpopular concept that is not indigenous; it was introduced by European settlers. It now damages the reputation and the natural heritage of proud southern African nations. A 2019 study of attitudes towards trophy hunting among local communities in Africa found that the dominant attitude was of resentment towards what was viewed as the neo-colonial character of trophy hunting, in that it privileges the access of western elites to Africa's wild resources. Most recently, in August this year, an Ipsos poll found that only 16% of people in South Africa supported trophy hunting, and that 74% wanted the Government to focus on nature tourism and photo safaris instead.

**Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): The hon. Gentleman is making an excellent speech, and I wholeheartedly support his Bill. I have had a number of pieces of correspondence from constituents supporting this work, and I am grateful to him for taking it forward. Does he agree that what he says about southern Africa is particularly important given the state visit this week of the President of South Africa, and the very strong and supportive links between our two countries?

**Henry Smith:** I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his intervention and his support. Yes, it was good to see the President of South Africa on a state visit to the United Kingdom earlier this week. Clearly, the majority of public opinion in his country wants southern Africa to celebrate, protect and grow its natural heritage, and benefit from photo safari tourism, which provides so much more economic opportunity for the people of southern Africa. Studies show that photo safaris generate many more jobs for African people in rural communities, and generate significantly greater revenues for conservation.

To repeat, the Bill is not about what happens in Africa. The Bill is about UK import policy. It is about what we, as a sovereign nation, choose to allow through our borders. It is a Bill about Britain making a concrete contribution to tackling the global conservation crisis.

A British ban on imports of hunting trophies would help to save thousands of animals that are threatened with extinction. It would make a strong statement to the international community that we must act decisively to conserve our living planet.

To conclude, in the words of Ian Khama, the former President of Botswana who, during his term of office, ended trophy hunting in his country,

"With the decline of wildlife worldwide, and many species approaching extinction, all caused by man, how can there be justification in trophy hunting?"

Now, almost a quarter of a century into the 21st century, I could not agree more. Today, we can and must act.

11.7 am

**Margaret Ferrier** (Rutherglen and Hamilton West) (Ind): I congratulate the hon. Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) on bringing forward his private Member's Bill today. I remember how exciting it was to have my name drawn in the ballot last year. Well done to him for getting this far. The Bill addresses an incredibly important issue that he has championed for some time. It has my full support and, I hope, the support of many colleagues from across the Opposition Benches.

I would also like to thank others for their work in this field, and for their determination to keep the subject high on the agenda, and in all MPs' inboxes: the right hon. Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale), the chair of the all-party parliamentary group on banning trophy hunting, for whom I have a lot of respect; Eduardo Goncalves, the secretariat for the all-party group; Dr Adam Cruise; Dr Jane Goodall; Peter Egan; Ranulph Fiennes; Charles Dance; and many other individuals and organisations. The campaign has garnered the support of public figures such as Sir David Attenborough, Michael Caine, David Jason, Joanna Lumley and Simon Pegg, to name just a very small selection.

As we often hear when we come to this Chamber to debate animal welfare legislation, the UK is a nation of animal lovers. I have received numerous emails in recent weeks from constituents requesting my support for the Bill, which is why I am here. Of course, it already had my support. The fact that the Bill still has such prominent and vocal support from the general public, at a time when so many people are focusing on more immediate concerns in the face of the cost of living crisis, shows the great depth of feeling. Public opinion shows clearly that the UK does not support trophy hunting and will not accept the exchange of trophies on British soil. As I stand here today, many more majestic wild animals will be shot by trophy hunters across Africa and around the world. Trophy hunters shoot an animal approximately every three minutes. I hope to speak for about 12 minutes today from start to finish, so four animals will have been killed in that time.

The animals hunted include giraffes; elephants; zebras, one of which is killed on the African continent every 15 minutes; hippopotamus; leopards; lions, whose extinction in the wild could be irreversible if just 5% of the male population are shot; cheetahs; black rhinoceros; polar bears, which are already facing extinction as a result of the challenges posed by climate change; black bears, which are native to North America and popular with British hunters; lechwe antelopes; Nile crocodiles; caracals; and, perhaps most disturbingly, primates, which

[Margaret Ferrier]

have distinctly similar DNA profiles to those of human beings. Trophy hunters are on course to kill 170 million animals this century—more than two and a half times the current human population of the United Kingdom.

Earlier this year, I had the pleasure of meeting former President Khama of Botswana, whom the hon. Member for Crawley mentioned. During his decade in office, President Khama recognised the urgency of the issue. In 2014, he had the courage to initiate a ban on elephant hunting in his country. His vision to focus on photographic tourism as a way to boost his country's economy led to huge benefits for conservation in Botswana. Although the exact number of elephants in the region is hard to determine because of their nomadic roaming, it is clear that the policy had a stabilising effect on the elephant population and their numbers grew.

Sadly, shortly after President Masisi took office, President Khama's ban was overturned and the practice of trophy hunting was reinstated, citing growing human-elephant conflict. Understandably, environmentalists have a growing anxiety that lifting the ban is simply a precursor to an attempt to legalise the ivory trade in Botswana. Legalisation of that grotesque trade would have catastrophic consequences for the African elephant population.

The decision to lift the hunting ban was certainly a political one. It does nothing for the conservation of wildlife—quite the opposite. According to Humane Society International:

“In Zambia and Tanzania, 40% and 72%, respectively, of trophy hunting areas were abandoned once wildlife populations were depleted and hunting was no longer profitable.”

The ban may be an issue that divides locals, but there is real concern about the impact on tourism of removing the ban. Tourism is the country's highest source of foreign income after diamond mining. Many tourists were drawn to Botswana as a direct result of the ban, because they liked the fact that trophy hunters were not welcome there. Photo safaris are not just beneficial because they are non-threatening to the lives of animals; economically, they are much more beneficial than trophy hunting, both for conservation and for local communities.

This year, I also had the privilege of meeting the inspirational South African author and award-winning wildlife investigative journalist, Dr Adam Cruise. Dr Cruise specialises in animal and environmental ethics and has spent time interviewing trophy hunters to try to understand why they do it and what the appeal is. Some of the interviewees say that it is a reaffirmation of their masculinity. Recalling what they did on the hunts, they have cried at the memories. It is not hard to imagine why. How many of us could kill a wild animal and not feel the pain of that action?

Advocates for hunting tell us that it is sport—that they are going and shooting animals for leisure or for fun. It certainly is not fun for the innocent animals, who may suffer for hours on end because the hunter has failed in their attempt to shoot to kill and has only maimed their target. It is not fun for the animals who suffer dying a slow and painful death for no other reason than that the hunter wanted to have fun. It is not fun for the hunters who cry at their recollection of the hunt. It is not fun for the hunters who cannot even bring themselves to do the killing. Unbelievably, some trophy hunters pay others money to do the shooting part for them. What is even the point?

Who is this sport fun for? What do these trophies—these chopped up animal parts—really represent? Hunters take the time to wipe away the murdered animals' blood to present a sanitised version of their kill for the ubiquitous selfie. That is barbaric. It is not the action of the civilised world that we profess to live in.

I want to touch on why we need to look more closely at this issue at home. It is not just about the trophies that end up circulating here in the UK. As we have heard, British hunters are among the top trophy hunters. It is very much an issue for us here at home, even if much of the hunting happens overseas. Trophy hunting package holidays abroad are advertised to hunters here in the UK. Safari Club International runs points-based award schemes for hunters. It offers a diamond hunter achievement award for hunters who kill animals from 125 or more different species. I will speak in more detail later about the hugely problematic lobbying that SCI has undertaken against today's Bill.

British hunters have brought hunting trophies from at least 70 different sites' protected species back to the UK. The CITES treaty already forbids and restricts trade in trophies for endangered species, but a legal loophole means that they are treated as personal effects, and are therefore outwith the remit of the treaty. Opponents to a trophy import ban, such as SCI, will accuse the legislation of harking back to colonialism and accuse the UK of trying to tell the rest of the world what to do, without the authority to do so. It is ironic that trophy hunting is a relic from the colonial era. In the 19th century, British hunters in Africa were responsible for the extinction of the quagga, a zebra-like animal in Africa. In the 20th century, the Arabian oryx and the scimitar-horned oryx were both hunted to extinction in the world.

SCI was recently exposed for funding a £1 million disinformation campaign that targeted colleagues across this House to block a ban on hunting trophies. It is how the SCI funded that campaign that really puts a bad taste in my mouth. Earlier this year, SCI reportedly auctioned a polar bear hunt to fund its campaign. Looking closer at the funding streams, there are significant donations from the American gun lobby, for obvious reasons.

SCI is not the only group to disseminate misleading information to try to block these measures. It is always interesting what we find when we follow the money. Let us look at the Sustainable Use and Livelihoods Specialist Group. Much like SCI did, SULi had a group of experts arguing that hunting is good for conservation. One of SULi's funders is the Russian Club of Mountain Hunters—I am sure hon. Members all know where this is going. One member of the Russian Club of Mountain Hunters is Sergey Yastrzhembsky, a former personal spokesperson for Putin. He is one of only two sponsors of the club to achieve gold level, indicating the large financial contribution that he has made to the efforts to save the cruel sport.

I do not want to hear any arguments from SCI or organisations like it. Let us not be fooled by its untruths that auctioning off a hunt is about conservation. To get that argument on my desk proves that it is not. I implore every colleague who may be less familiar with the subject matter to take the time to educate themselves on it, and I encourage any constituents listening from home to do the same.



I reiterate my full support for the hon. Member for Crawley in his quest to get this Bill through the House and the other place and, ultimately, to gain Royal Assent. I am delighted that the Minister is in her place and supporting this vital legislation. The time has come. The British public want this abhorrent practice of shooting defenceless animals for sport gone. They want the importing of bodies and body parts into their country to be banned. Only 2% of people in the UK oppose such measures. There are very few causes that can claim to have so little opposition.

Not one of us who believes in the merits of the Bill will give up until the day that all defenceless animals are protected from the despicable practices of trophy hunting. We cannot afford to lose any more of our animal species to extinction. We should know better by now. Let us all be on the right side of history. Let us in the UK lead the way and show the international community the positive impact that a ban on trophy imports could have.

11.19 am

**Sir Roger Gale** (North Thanet) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier); I reciprocate her kind remarks and endorse her comments about Chris and Lorraine Platt, Eduardo Gonçalves, Lynn Santer in Australia and many others who have espoused this cause. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) on promoting this Bill, which chimes completely with the Government's manifesto commitment to bring an end to imports from trophy hunting. It is a very good thing that it has Government support.

I will be brief. I find myself in the slightly peculiar situation of having to talk hypothetically, but were any Member on these Benches to seek to talk out the Bill, they would deserve all the public opprobrium that they received.

Let me address a couple of myths. It is a myth propagated by Safari Club International and its acolytes and subsidiaries that the proceeds of trophy hunting in some way play a part in conservation. They do not. The large sums of money—this is big business—goes into the pockets of corrupt people. Very little, if any, of the funds find their way into the pockets of the ordinary people of Africa, or indeed of any other country. We are talking about gratification of the most revolting kind, which I would compare with paedophilia. If someone is rich enough, they can go anywhere in the world and buy anything they want, and this is just another form of vile gratification.

As my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley said, the Bill does not seek to ban trophy hunting, because we have no power to do that. That is a matter for others to decide. We have to decide what it is appropriate to allow into the United Kingdom as the product of trophy hunting. That is all the Bill does.

We might hear arguments about the fact that herds of elephants in some parts of Africa are out of control, rampaging through villages, eating crops and killing babies. Elephants have to be managed in Africa, largely because man has destroyed their predators and their natural habitat. However, it would be a perverse argument, would it not, for anybody in the Chamber to suggest

that there is some kind of equivalent between game management, properly conducted, and the vile so-called sport of trophy hunting?

In conclusion, I will cite again the instance of Ian Seretse Khama, who, as the President of Botswana, introduced a ban on trophy hunting. As a result, over a 10-year period, the wildlife population grew, conservation was enhanced, the net worth to his country of photo tourism expanded, and it was a win-win. After the fall of that Administration, the new President of Botswana reversed the ban—in the interests of what? Far be it from me to suggest that there is a strong relationship between the President of Botswana and Safari Club International, but that suggestion has been made. We now find a decline. The equation is absolutely straightforward.

Finally, I challenge anybody in this Chamber to seek to justify the unjustifiable by saying that there is any rhyme or reason for what has become known, revoltingly, as “canned” hunting. We are talking about the breeding in captivity of wild, magnificent animals purely for the purpose of being shot so that their body parts can be displayed on somebody's floor or wall. That is what this Bill is seeking to prevent in the United Kingdom. The Bill has my full support.

11.25 am

**Alex Davies-Jones** (Pontypridd) (Lab): It is always a pleasure to follow the right hon. Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale), for whom I have a great amount of respect. I wholeheartedly agree with every word he just said. It is also a huge privilege to speak in support of this vital Bill. Many colleagues have referred to the fact that it has been a long time coming.

Let us be clear: killing animals for sport or killing animals to display their heads, horns, antlers, hides or any other part of their body is cruel and barbaric. It is utterly unjustifiable and should have no place in our society. What is worse, as we all know, is that this so-called “trophy hunting” is often used as cover for illegal poaching, as traffickers have historically been able to pass off illegal wildlife products as legal ones. This abhorrent practice is pushing endangered wildlife even closer to extinction and brings unnecessary suffering to innocent animals. This cannot and should not be allowed to continue.

This simple piece of legislation is well-supported by Members from across the House and people across the country. It is frustrating that it has taken so long for us to get to this point, but I want to place on record my thanks to the hon. Member for Crawley (Henry Smith), who, along with my right hon. Friend the Member for Warley (John Spellar), the shadow Minister and the Minister, has been a vocal campaigner in supporting this legislation for some time. Thanks to all their determination and commitment we are able to finally see some progress on this issue today.

One issue that I fear may have slowed down the movement to tackle trophy hunting and the import of these products is that it can often be, incorrectly, seen as an “international” rather than a “domestic” issue. However, as research by the International Fund for Animal Welfare found, we are talking about at least 1.7 million animal trophies being traded over the previous decade. That is a colossal number, and we absolutely must pay attention.

[Alex Davies-Jones]

I appreciate that the Government have a busy legislative timetable on their hands, and colleagues will know that I have made clear my concerns about the potential for important Bills, some even related to my shadow ministerial brief, to time-out in this Parliament. The same can be said for the Government's commitment to banning trophy hunting too. There really is no need for delay; we have only to consider the Government's response to their own 2019 consultation if further evidence for action is required. When the response to the consultation was published, the Government announced they would ban the import of hunting trophies from almost 7,000 endangered, threatened and near-threatened species. At the time, the then Environment Secretary described their plans as one of the toughest bans in the world, which would go "beyond our manifesto commitment" to ban trophies from endangered species.

Sadly, we know that trophy hunting is a popular practice with a few wealthy game hunters. Banning this barbaric practice can only be a positive step forward, and this Government have a unique opportunity to lead the way for other jurisdictions across the globe to follow suit. This Bill has my full support and I look forward to seeing it progress to ensure a proper end to this cruel and unnecessary practice—it must finally be outlawed.

11.28 am

**Sir Mike Penning** (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): I will not delay the House for long, as lots of colleagues want to get in and this Bill needs to be on the statute book, so we need to get it into Committee. As we have heard, this was a manifesto commitment of ours at the last election, as it was for the two main Opposition parties. I do not believe that any political party has opposed it.

For me, this is not just about speaking out on behalf of my constituents, many of whom have written to me; I had the honour and privilege to serve in Her Majesty's armed forces in parts of the world where this used to take place—I am referring to Kenya. Kenya and that part of the world suffers enough from poaching, and we have heard about the number of species that are endangered, a lot of them because of poaching. This is greatly adding to that risk. I can remember being a young soldier and being lucky enough to go off at the weekend to the Ark, which is in the Aberdare park in Kenya, a most beautiful place to go. As a young soldier, there were lots of places I wanted to go; I never thought that I would want to go to a safari park, but I was truly amazed by what I saw. People wanted to go and have a piece of nature they could take home through photography, not with its head missing or after it had been shot.

The word "hunter" is used, but many of the animals are caged and then released; they are purely bred for someone to shoot them. That is so brave, isn't it? I am a pretty good shot; I served many years in the armed forces and I shot at Bisley. Is it brave to have someone breed and release something, and then shoot it from just a few feet away? We have heard why some of those animals suffer for so long after they have been shot. Are the "hunters" all bad shots? Not necessarily—some animals are being shot in places where they will not die straight away, simply because people do not want to damage the head, which will be used as a trophy later on. The animal suffers and suffers.

With wildlife under so much pressure, and with the scourge of poaching, why can this House not do what we are entitled to do? I do not mean to tell another country what to do. We can absolutely praise other countries when they are doing the right thing. I should perhaps declare an interest here as the father of a marine biologist daughter; she will be watching me today ensuring I am talking about crocodiles and other things—saltwater crocodiles, in particular.

This is a moral issue for us. It is a moral issue for the countries that are allowing it, and the argument that this is bringing money into those countries is absolutely false. The WWF has been on the record about that; the hon. Member for Sheffield South East (Mr Betts) said earlier that the WWF did not support this Bill. That is fundamentally wrong. Anyone who has read the pamphlet that has been sent around today will see that there are definitive quotes in there. It is a lie to say it is creating a safe haven for the animals and protecting those species. They are being driven to the point of extinction in so many different ways.

My hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith), who has done brilliantly well by bringing the Bill forward, alluded to elephants. Elephants have an amazing ability to remember things and hand them down from generation to generation, particularly when it comes to water. I was with a military unit in Kenya, and we were trying to find a suitable water source. We were on exercise, like the British military do, and a herd of elephants decided that they were going to come to the wadi, where we thought there was no water at all. They came right through the middle of the camp—it was quite interesting, to say the least. Because of the memory of the matriarch in that herd, they knew that there was water a few feet down. There had not been water in that wadi for years.

If we destroy, or allow to be destroyed, that innate ability to survive, by not passing this Bill we are just as bad as that man or woman who is shooting those animals. We are as bad as them. They are cowards, and we will be cowards if we do not pass this Bill today.

11.33 am

**Nickie Aiken** (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): I welcome the Bill and thank my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) for bringing this important piece of legislation forward. I welcome the tabling of the Bill as it allows this place to debate the often difficult reality surrounding conservation.

I personally find hunting distasteful. I am appalled whenever I see, usually on social media, a hunter smiling gleefully next to their defenceless prey. I am at a loss, to be honest, as to why anyone would find enjoyment or even pleasure from shooting magnificent animals.

**Sir Mike Penning:** I apologise to the House, because I probably spoke for too long. These people are not hunters; we are being generous by calling them hunters, yet in this House we continue to call them that. Hunting an animal that cannot get away is not hunting.

**Nickie Aiken:** My right hon. Friend makes a salient point. Shooting magnificent animals such as rhinos, elephants and lions, and calling it "sport", is abhorrent.

Naturally, I welcome the Bill and see it as an opportunity to bring about healthy debate on how we can best conserve endangered species while supporting the communities that are directly impacted. There is no question that we must do all we can to protect endangered species and improved biodiversity. I am proud of the work that this Government are doing to protect the environment. The nature recovery Green Paper that DEFRA delivered earlier this year, for example, sets out the Government's ambitions to restore nature and halt the decline in species abundance by 2030.

There is little debate about the fact that one of the primary reasons why we have seen vast reductions in the numbers of animals in the wild—be they lions, elephants, zebras or even polar bears—is human action, including the destruction of natural habitats to make way for farmland, the pollution of vital water sources, actions leading to climate change and, of course, hunting. To reverse that trend permanently, we need to work to make wildlife and conservation worthwhile for all stakeholders.

Currently, there is no incentive for communities impacted by wildlife to accept the natural world that surrounds them. I stress that it is wrong to suggest that trophy hunting is a problem solely in Africa. We must be careful not to be seen as hypocritical, or even neo-colonial, when discussing our views on how foreign countries handle their wildlife. All around the world, there are examples of the environment and wildlife being sacrificed—be it the deforestation of the Amazon, the exploitation of waterways in Europe, or even the mass removal of hedgerows in the United Kingdom in the decades after world war two, which I am glad to see is being slowly reversed by this Government—because Governments have not provided incentives for local people to work with nature.

We must therefore encourage the Government, who are fortunate enough to possess incredible swathes of nature, to work with and demonstrate to local communities that living near majestic wild animals need not adversely impact on their ability provide for their families. If that is done correctly, communities that embrace their animal neighbours can flourish without compromising nature.

I understand that this is an incredibly emotional subject. As I said earlier, I abhor the thought of hunting for trophies. It is equally important that we take a pragmatic and evidence-led approach to the issue, driven by the data, experience and knowledge of those on the ground. The leading cause of the population decline in a range of animals across the world is not the regulated hunting that we are discussing, but illegal hunting, which is commonly referred to as “poaching”.

I was interested to learn from Save the Rhino International that between 2012 and 2017, an average of 83 white rhinos and 3 black rhinos were hunted each year. In the same period, an average of nearly 1,100 rhinos were poached each year. That means that, during that period, only 7% of rhinos were killed by legal hunters—I acknowledge the view of my right hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead (Sir Mike Penning) on the term “legal hunters”—while the other 93% were cruelly killed by poachers for their own gain, without care for the conservation and protection of the area.

**Sir Roger Gale:** Does my hon. Friend recognise that under the regime of Seretse Khama in Botswana, poaching was effectively eliminated because of the robust attitude he took towards it, and that in countries where trophy hunting is now permitted, a blind eye is effectively turned to poaching as well?

**Nickie Aiken:** As ever, my right hon. Friend makes good points, which I will absolutely take on board.

**Sir Bill Wiggin:** But he is wrong. Will my hon. Friend give way?

**Nickie Aiken:** I will.

**Sir Bill Wiggin:** Unfortunately for my hon. and right hon. Friends, Save the Rhino International gave the statistic that, after South Africa allowed the hunting of rhinos, the population went from 1,800 in 1968 to 18,000 in 2018, with black rhinos going from 3,500 in 2004 to 5,500 in 2018. The point made by my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) is absolutely right.

**Nickie Aiken:** The point I am trying to make is that I abhor hunting for trophies. I see no reason why anyone would want to bring trophies back to this country. In this debate, we have to talk about conservation and what will play well with local communities that rely on trophy hunting, and we have to support them to move away from their reliance on trophy hunting.

In South Africa and Namibia where, according to Save the Rhino International, rhino hunting is legal, there are now strict rotas and less than 1% of rhinos are allowed to be hunted, which ensures the activity does not threaten the longevity of the species. In Namibia, the Government have directed efforts to create a programme of community-focused hunting, which involves local people in protecting and caring for wildlife.

**Aaron Bell (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con):** My hon. Friend is right to focus on what is happening in those countries. As my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) said, it is not for us to tell other people what to do. Our acceptance of trophy hunting has clearly changed dramatically over time. It is now clear, from both polling and Government consultation, that the British public expect us to pass this Bill because of the instinctive revulsion we all feel when we see pictures of so-called hunters over the dead bodies of these majestic animals. We need to pass the Bill, not to tell other people what to do but to show leadership on a different way.

**Nickie Aiken:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. The case I am trying to make is that we must persuade people that trophy hunting is not a sport. At the same time, we must remember that local communities rely on this business—I use that term very lightly. Through smart conservation, we have to support people living on this in places like South Africa.

Again, by marrying animal conservation to the prosperity of local communities, we can make a lasting, positive change. I doubt many in this place would argue against the importance of smart conservation to mitigating any lost income for local communities that so dearly need the income they currently receive from hunting. When we discuss these issues, we must realise that the people most affected by this trade are the local people.

[*Nickie Aiken*]

Members on both sides of the House are right to highlight the often barbaric activity of hunting wild animals, and I hope today's debate and the Bill itself highlight the need for wider discussions on smart conservation, so that we can mitigate any lost income for local communities that currently rely on hunting. The Bill has helped to raise awareness of trophy hunting, and I welcome its progress.

11.43 am

**Ruth Jones** (Newport West) (Lab): It is a pleasure to follow the hon. Member for Cities of London and Westminster (*Nickie Aiken*).

Today is a strange day—sitting Fridays are always strange—but it is good to be with colleagues to contribute to this important debate. I thank the hon. Member for Crawley (*Henry Smith*) on behalf of Opposition Members. I pay tribute to him for his tenacity in getting the *Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill* to Second Reading. I assure him that he has the Opposition's support.

Like many of my constituents in Newport West, and thousands of others across the country, I am disgusted by the cruel, damaging and outdated practice of trophy hunting. Tens of thousands of animals are killed each year, purely for fun, so that people can take photos, then cut off a body part and bring it home as a souvenir. Trophy hunters seek out the largest, strongest and rarest animals for bragging rights, as the hon. Gentleman said.

Since trophy hunting rose to prominence in the days of empire and colonialism, there have been catastrophic declines in populations of some of the world's most magnificent animals, including elephants, lions, rhinos and giraffes. Let us not forget the appalling practice, which was mentioned earlier, of canned hunting, where wild animals are bred in captivity specifically to be hunted and shot in a small, fenced area, so that any idiot could kill them. Our United Kingdom has a right to decide what can legally be brought into the country. The overwhelming majority of the British public support a ban on the import of hunting trophies, so today we are here to ensure that British involvement in this grotesque industry comes to an end once and for all.

As we have heard clearly today, this is not a party political issue. A commitment to ban the import of hunting trophies appeared in both the Labour and Conservative party manifestos in 2019, in addition to being included in numerous Queen's Speeches and the 2021 Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs action plan for animal welfare. It is now time to deliver on those commitments and support legislation to ensure that the import and export of hunting trophies from endangered and threatened species is banned once and for all. We can easily lead the world in animal welfare, if we want it hard enough, and I look forward to working with the Minister and all relevant parties to ensure that we get this done.

11.46 am

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Rebecca Pow)**: I begin by thanking the hon. Member for Crawley (*Henry*

*Smith*), who I would describe as a friend on these matters. Many hon. Members know how passionate he is about animal welfare and conservation. In fact, he painted a clear picture of what we are talking about today. At times, it was extremely distressing, but that helps to bring us to the crux of the issue. I thank him for his sustained work, and all others who have worked on the Bill. I also thank all other hon. Friends and hon. Members on both sides of the House, including those who have made interventions; I know that many hon. Members have strong views on the issue.

In particular, I thank the hon. Member for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (*Margaret Ferrier*), the Scottish National party Member, who gave some strong examples, and the hon. Member for Pontypridd (*Alex Davies-Jones*). I also thank my right hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (*Sir Roger Gale*), who always speaks powerfully on such subjects, for his meaningful words, which highlighted that Great Britain leads the way on conservation issues. Similarly, my right hon. Friend the Member for Hemel Hempstead (*Sir Mike Penning*) spoke with such knowledge about his years as a young soldier working in Africa and seeing many of the creatures we are talking about in the flesh. All those right hon. and hon. Members made valuable contributions.

Many people outside the House have eagerly awaited this legislation, not least the campaigners who have worked tirelessly on the subject. I am pleased to confirm that the Government are supporting the Bill and that we are determined to fulfil our manifesto commitment to ban the imports of trophies from endangered animals. We have committed to working internationally on endangered species in our 25-year plan to protect and improve international biodiversity, and this Bill demonstrates that we mean business.

Following our call for evidence, more than 85% of the 44,000 responses were in favour of further action, so we know that the British people feel very strongly about this issue, as we have heard. People are concerned about the potentially negative impact that imports from trophy hunting might have on conservation and communities abroad; I will touch more on that in a second. We have seen shocking cases in the headlines that have drawn attention to the ways trophy hunting around the world can affect some of the world's most iconic species. I share all those concerns, as do many hon. Members.

I will touch particularly on the comments of my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (*Nickie Aiken*), because she highlighted, as others have, the importance of involving communities where many of these precious animals live. The UK is committed to practical and meaningful support of conservation around the world and developing sustainable livelihoods based on wildlife, which I think is what she was getting at. I think she called it smart conservation, which is an excellent term. It is so important that we are really aware of what is happening to the communities where we work. I will probably be hammered by my officials for mentioning poaching, but she did so, and it is a very valid point. That is why the official development assistance money that we invest in countries is so critical to develop projects so that communities and people can have a further living.

I have visited Sarara in north Kenya, where *Jeremy Bastard* and family have a great project that is moving people away from poaching and on to conservation and

elephants. They have set up an amazing elephant sanctuary. That proves that when we get the approach right, the communities can earn a living and the animals can survive and thrive, which is what I think what we would all like. We are spending a further £100 million on our biodiverse landscapes fund and £30 million on action against the illegal wildlife trade, so we are demonstrating as a nation that we are formulating the right approach.

While imports of hunting trophies to the UK are few in number, I do understand why people are concerned and want further action. About a million animal and plant species are threatened with extinction—many in decades, and in our lifetime—and the abundance, diversity and connectivity of species is declining faster than at any time in human history. That includes species that we all know and love that are targeted for trophies, such as elephants, lions and polar bears. There is a wide-ranging debate about trophy hunting, how it fits into the bigger picture and how best we secure a sustainable future for endangered species as well as those indigenous people whom I mentioned. The UK is committed to working with nature-rich countries to protect and restore their nature in those ways through our ODA funding.

Let us get to why the ban is needed. The Bill will ban the import of hunting trophies for specific species. Our aim is to ensure that our imports are not piling impossible pressures on to species that are already at risk. For those species, an import ban without exemptions will be most effective. It will provide clarity and address concerns about the possible negative impacts on the conservation of endangered and threatened species. I know that the species in the scope of the Bill—which will be included—is a fundamental issue for hon. Members. In the Bill, we will ban the import of trophies from species listed in annexes A and B of the wildlife trade regulations. Those annexes implement CITES—the convention on international trade in endangered species—and are broadly equivalent to appendix 1 and 2 of that convention. They cover a great number of species threatened by international trade, including big cats, all bears, all primates, hippos, rhinos and elephants.

The Bill includes in clause 2 a power to add—or remove—species from the scope of the ban. That is an important power to ensure that the ban remains comprehensive and can achieve the aims that I set out. Last year, we committed to cover species assessed as near-threatened or worse on the IUCN red list and ensure a comprehensive approach to ban all imports of trophies from species of conservation concern. I understand the importance of a comprehensive ban, and we will take action to list those additional species of conservation concern.

As the Bill sets out, Parliament will have the opportunity to scrutinise the list before it becomes law. The Government intend to table an instrument that covers those species of concern that we know are targeted for trophies, such as the African buffalo and reindeer. That would mean that this ban would cover all the big five animals, other trophy-hunted species and many thousands more, making it among the strongest of its kind in the world.

In closing, I would like to thank Members on both sides of the House, and particularly my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley, for their contributions to this measured debate, and I am grateful for the support of the Labour party and all other parties. We are putting at the heart of this legislation not ourselves, but the world's

other rich and beautiful species. It behoves us to do all we can to protect them, and to ensure that there are no more extinctions on our watch. I am delighted to support the Bill.

11.55 am

**Sir Bill Wiggin** (North Herefordshire) (Con): I am pleased to follow my hon. Friend the Minister. I wish she had explained why, under the current legislation, these animal parts were allowed to be imported in the first place, because a licence is required to bring them in; the legislation is already in place.

I recognise that this is an emotionally weighted subject. I have had plenty of emails from well-meaning people with kind hearts who want to defend and protect animals from being hunted; we have heard that from Members this morning. To them, it seems an unfair and unnecessary contest that we can do without. Sadly, it is not quite as simple as they hope, and that is why this legislation is not as necessary as has been made out.

The fundamental problem for wildlife is people, and as we reach 8 billion people, I hope that is a fact on which we can agree. Keeping wildlife habitats safe and protected from people is far more complicated and more important. We need a pragmatic approach to this divisive issue. We use land ownership and money to manage habitats. We have seen land disputes, and wildlife competing with domestic crops and livestock, sadly, to the detriment of the wildlife.

We need to appreciate what it is like to live with large and dangerous or endangered species. We cannot expect people in rural Africa to have the same views on this subject as the voters in, say, Crawley. That is why telling Africans—however we choose to cushion the message—how to manage their wildlife is fundamentally wrong, post-colonial and possibly racist, and I cannot stand by and allow this to go uncriticised.

In fairness to my hon. Friends, my unhappiness with the racist elements in this message are not a reflection on their views or the views of any colleagues, but we must stand up to racism in whatever form it takes. Before anyone emails me about trophy hunting, they should consider that it is this racist issue that is the real problem for me. Racism is illegal, and I accept that they may disagree with me, but while we are on the subject of legality, we must be clear about the distinction between illegal and legal hunting. There is a great deal of misinformation, but where hunting programmes are well-regulated and legal, only carefully selected animals are hunted. Rather than diminishing endangered species, these programmes instead protect habitat and work to support conservation.

Here in the UK, we do not have to co-exist with big or dangerous animals, such as those that African people have to contend with. Before we condemn other countries for their wildlife management, we ought first to consider what the people who live there actually think. I was sent a survey by the Humane Society that claimed that polling in South Africa showed that people were against hunting, and I have heard colleagues mention that. It did not mention the wording of the questions, but I noticed that there was no data on what people thought about allowing the UK to determine South African wildlife policy. Contrary to what was stated in the email I got from Jane Goodall, I have had no contact with any

[*Sir Bill Wiggin*]

Americans or Russians. By and large, I have had contact with African community leaders and conservationists who do not support the UK Bill to ban UK imports of hunting trophies.

**Sir Roger Gale:** Will my hon. Friend indicate whether he took the trouble to research whether a number of his African contacts had direct contact and relationships with Safari Club International?

**Sir Bill Wiggin:** I do not really care whether the people who have put their names to the emails have had contact with Safari Club International. They have written to me, and Safari Club International has not. When my constituents write to me, I do not find out who they have been in contact with; I deal with their emails. I will read one to my right hon. Friend in a moment, because I think it will be quite helpful. [*Interruption.*] My right hon. Friend intervened on me, and I am trying to respond to his intervention. If he does not want to know, he probably should not have intervened. When people write to me, I take on board their words, not who they may have been in contact with, and I think it would be peculiar for there to be some sort of sinister agenda behind every email. Let me help my right hon. Friend with this one.

“My name is Maxi Louis, and I’m the Director of the Namibian Association of Community Based Natural Resource Management Support Organisations...With the second reading of the Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill coming up this Friday, I wanted to reach out to emphasise the importance of what happens with this Bill. People like myself who work on the front lines of this issue in communities that look after wildlife know the importance of licensed and regulated hunting to sustainable conservation.

While the Bill would regulate UK activity in regard to international hunting, African people would be directly impacted. Our voices are loud and clear demanding the UK adopt an evidence-led solution: a ‘smart ban’ on the importation of trophies from unlicensed, unregulated hunting.

There is overwhelming evidence from international academics and conservationists that a smart ban would underpin the funding model for local conservation projects and local economies. A total ban would take away important benefits from communities I work with. Please see below my signature for a graphic with key facts on the issue.”

Here are some of those key facts:

“53,400 jobs in Eastern and Southern Africa are supported by trophy hunting”

—my right hon. Friend may not care whether that is true or not, but I suspect that the 53,400 people concerned do—and

“60% of all cash fees received by Namibian conservancies came from licensed hunting... 100% of game fees go to local communities in Namibia”.

In Tanzania the figure is 55%, and in Zambia it is 50%.

These are the people who are writing to me. Their links to Safari Club International may or may not be there, but those figures are very verifiable, and I am sure my right hon. Friend will check them. I think it is important for us to listen to the people whom we will affect, rather than saying that we do not care about what they say, the reason being that wildlife conservation is vital to their economies. They rightly argue that it is not for us in the west to decide how they should manage their wildlife, and that is why I cannot endorse this Bill.

It would remove financial incentives for habitat and wildlife protection in these countries, threaten African people’s livelihoods, and interfere with the decision making of African democratic Governments.

The President of South Africa was here on Tuesday, and I was delighted to hear him speak in the Royal Gallery. He never mentioned that he was hoping that we would remove the licensing regime for South African trophies. He did talk about sustainability and the future of the planet, but I do not think he was aware of this Bill. He is very important, given that he has a game farm and achieved a record price for his buffalo, which were being bred for the size of their horns, as that is what a trophy requires. Yes, this is the President of South Africa, who was here this week—the President of the G20 country responsible for the largest big game and trophy hunting sector. Its President has a game farm called Phala Phala. Members can see why I have real doubts about the validity of the claim that most Africans want us to introduce the Bill. These are supposed to be South Africans with votes, and I am sure that they are more than capable of deciding how they want to manage their wildlife without our intervention.

There is a key distinction between licensed hunting that contributes to conservation initiatives and illegal poaching of wildlife. We have repeatedly seen—and have heard this morning about—the evocative image of Cecil the lion, which is used by those advocating a ban on trophy hunting as a mascot to stir up support for their campaigns. What was not acknowledged today, and what they always fail to acknowledge, is that the hunters involved, Walter Palmer and Theo Bronkhorst, were taken to court for illegally killing Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe in 2015. Campaigns to ban trophy hunting have repeatedly extrapolated from that emotive case to all hunting, in order to fuel emotions.

While a briefing by the International Union for Conservation of Nature—I suspect that my right hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale) expects that that is something to do with America—from 2016 condones illegal hunting, it maintains that,

“legal, well regulated trophy hunting programmes can—and do—play an important role in delivering benefits for both wildlife conservation and for the livelihoods and wellbeing of indigenous and local communities”.

By introducing the Bill, we would be undermining support for licensed hunters who operate professionally and contribute to conservation efforts in Africa. That would result in a great deal more poachers, who disregard the law and cruelly kill animals for their illegal trade. In its open letter to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in 2009, the World Wildlife Fund recognised the value of limited, managed hunting of black rhinos in Namibia, stating that it can

“strongly contribute to the enhancement of the survival of the species”.

In Namibia, hunting is permitted between February and November, under tight regulation.

While proponents of the ban argue that elephants are endangered—obviously, we all care about that—Namibia alone claimed to have more than 24,000 elephants in March this year. That is the most it has had in over 100 years. According to Africa Geographic, elephant numbers in Namibia

“already exceed what many would consider desirable for the available habitats”.

That is clearly a welcome endorsement of post-colonial wildlife management by Africans, for Africans, in Africa, but it also poses a threat to other rare and vulnerable species, not to mention human lives. In 2013, 5,000 problem-causing animal incidents were reported in Namibia, some of which resulted in the loss of human life. To prevent lethal encounters with humans, the Namibian Government argued for round-ups of elephants to help to control numbers and fund their conservation efforts.

When big game hunting was banned in Botswana, local farmers lived in fear, due to the rapidly increasing population of elephants, for not just their crops and livelihoods but their lives. Prior to the lifting of the ban, elephants were so populous in Botswana that 36 people were killed by them in 2018, with many more suffering injuries. In 2019, Botswana reversed its ban on hunting, recognising its important role for conservation purposes. Botswana is not alone: Pohamba Shifeta, Namibia's Environment and Tourism Minister, also remarked that foreigners curtailing prize hunting would be "the end of conservation" in Namibia.

South Africa boasts 90% of the world's population of the southern white rhino, yet it permits hunting, whereas in Kenya, where hunting is banned, white rhino numbers fell significantly due to poaching, to the point that it had to buy its white rhinos from South Africa. That surely demonstrates the necessity of supporting those countries in promoting the conservation of wildlife.

People supporting the ban are rightly concerned about the killing of endangered species. That is why CITES is so important, and why we need to strengthen it, rather than overrule it with the proposed ban. By supporting the wildlife management industry economically, we ensure better regulation of hunting, and more training for professional hunters and trackers to ensure safety. As recognised by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, instead of banning trophy hunting, we should encourage better regulation of hunting—known as a smart ban—and support responsible national agencies to improve on-the-ground management.

Professor Keith Somerville, a fellow of the Zoological Society of London who specialises in conservation in Africa, has highlighted that hunting safari operators police their shooting areas in order to prevent poaching. For example, in Botswana the hunting ban led to an increase in the number of poachers because of the soaring population of elephants and the lack of game reserve patrols. Instead of channelling our efforts into eradicating trophy hunting, we should instead support better regulation of big game hunting to help reduce poaching, which is a cruel, anti-conservationist practice.

The biggest threat to wildlife in Africa is the human incursion it faces, which will only get worse with an ever-increasing human population. In order to incentivise local communities to protect animal habitats, they need to be rewarded for their efforts. When wildlife has a value, people treat it better. It may be easy for campaigners to raise emotional stories of animals being cruelly killed to justify the Bill, but in using compelling and upsetting stories of humans brutally killing animals to campaign for the ban on hunting, they fail to recognise the importance of the industry for the human livelihoods and the wellbeing of the people who live in those countries.

By introducing the Bill, we are fighting for an issue that will have virtually no impact on our daily lives. While it may make us feel virtuous to introduce a ban on trophy hunting imports in the UK, in doing so we

will be undermining a vital source of income for African people. No matter what people feel, they are sending out a message that white people, like me, know better and care less about black people in Africa, who are more successful at wildlife management than white people were when we ruled those countries.

In their open letter to DEFRA in 2020, African stakeholders argued that a UK ban on the trophies of animals hunted in Africa would have

"devastating consequences for conservation and livelihoods."

In their letter they pleaded that we uphold their

"basic human right to sustainably use the natural resources on which our communities' livelihoods depend".

They continued

"without markets for high-value low-impact hunting, we will not be able to sustain conservation or feed our children."

Not only would a ban on imports of trophies to the UK have devastating effects on the livelihoods of individuals in Africa, it would also have financial repercussions for the wider economies in these countries. Hunting has grown to be one of the most important industries in Namibia in terms of GDP and rural uplift contribution. Africa Geographic estimates that 40 million Namibian dollars is generated per year across 79 conservancies in Namibia.

Hon. Members may say that there are alternative sources of income for African communities, but it is worth considering the viability of the proposed alternatives. If there were to be a total ban on hunting in these countries, local people would likely use the land for farming instead. Ironically, that would result in far fewer wild animals, as they would be viewed as a threat to livelihoods rather than an asset.

As we have heard today, some UK conservationists have proposed that photographic tourism might be used to support local economies in place of hunting, but in some areas photo tourism is just not viable and the only source of revenue is hunting. The former chief executive of the WWF in South Africa, Dr John Hanks, acknowledges that certain areas are better suited to photographic safaris than to hunting, but he argues that in areas where wildlife is more sporadic and the landscape more mundane, hunting may be the only profitable use of the land.

Danene van der Westhuyzen, a professional hunter who grew up in Namibia, highlighted that big game tourism attracts far fewer people but much higher profits, estimating that one trophy hunter brings the same revenue into Namibia as 2,000 tourists. Indeed, one hunter might pay as much as £45,000 to shoot just one animal. Therefore, so many more tourists would be required to visit those areas to produce equivalent profits. That makes eco-tourism far less environmentally friendly than big game tourism, because a larger number of people visiting game reserves has an impact on local flora and fauna and disrupts habitats for wildlife. There are those who suggest that agriculture would be a much better use of the land than hunting, but in certain areas hunting is a far better land use option than domestic livestock and crops, because it protects biodiversity and incentivises local people to protect these large animals. Ironically, banning hunting and instead endorsing the use of the land for farming would mean that there were fewer wild animals, because they are a threat.

[*Sir Bill Wiggin*]

Finally, let me come to the issue that we should not be deciding on. African people manage the conservation of wildlife that is some 6,000 miles away from us here in the UK. A ban on trophy imports as a means of banning hunting seems to me to be colonialist behaviour. Animal rights lobbies are lobbying hard to see this Bill pass, but Botswana's President Mokgweetsi Masisi—the current President, not one from the past—has asked why western conservationists should be intervening. The President of Botswana is asking why we are deciding what happens to their elephants. Many African people have rightly taken offence at western conservationists' attempting to puppeteer their wildlife management despite it having no bearing on our daily lives here in the UK. In an open letter to Ricky Gervais, Joanna Lumley, Peter Egan, Ed Sheeran, Dame Judi Dench and Piers Morgan in 2020, more than 50 African community leaders urged British celebrities to stop exerting their influence to jeopardise wildlife conservation efforts. They stated:

“Imposing worldviews and value systems from far away places, amplified through your powerful, influential voices, results in disastrous policies that undermine our rights and conservation success.”

The Ban Trophy Hunting website uses anecdotes from 300 years ago to convince readers that hunting is some kind of colonialist sport, and yet African stakeholders in their open letter to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs likened the behaviour of these western conservationists to that of European colonists, who removed the rights of local people to manage their own land and animals. They highlighted that post-independence Governments have restored their rights to sustainably manage their wildlife by providing socio-economic incentives for doing so. An estimated 50% to 90% of these economic incentives derive from regulated, sustainable and humane hunting, which has resulted in wildlife population and habitat expansion.

On the surface, this Bill may appear to change only our import laws here in the UK, but it is no secret that, ultimately, a vote for this Bill is a vote to instruct African democratic Governments on how to behave. That is why I cannot endorse it. It should not be up to us to stop hunting in these countries. It should be for their own Governments to manage their wildlife and conservation, because we are not affected; they are the ones who will be affected. Of course no one wants to encourage illegal hunting, but by withdrawing our support for legal and well-regulated hunting in these countries, we are, in effect, removing the financial incentives that encourage African people to protect their local wildlife and habitats. That is why I support the current licensing system for CITES-listed species to protect vulnerable species and regulate imports to the UK.

I wish the Minister had used her comments to explain why she was not using that licensing regime to stop the imports of the various trophies that people object to, because that is what it is there for. If people use the CITES website on the gov.uk system, they will find it is extremely helpful. If they type in the type of animal they want to ask about, it will tell them that they need a licence. It lists animals in their taxonomic order, by their Latin names and by their English names. It is an extremely good website. I am fairly faint in my praise

for Government websites generally, but this one is good. People can tell if they are allowed to bring species in or not; if not, they must have a licence. All the animals that the Bill will protect are already licensed imports.

I stood on a manifesto to protect our borders, and we have the legislation in place to do so. The Bill gilds the lily. It is extra, it is not necessary and it is deeply wrong, because it is up to African people to decide how they manage their rich natural resources, which are in their backyard, not ours.

12.20 pm

**Henry Smith:** With the leave of the House, I rise to thank Members across the House for their speeches and their support: my right hon. Friends the Members for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale) and for Hemel Hempstead (Sir Mike Penning), my hon. Friends the Members for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) and for Wolverhampton North East (Jane Stevenson), and the hon. Members for Rutherglen and Hamilton West (Margaret Ferrier), for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) and for Newport West (Ruth Jones). We may disagree on the matter, but I respect the contribution of my hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin).

I thank the team at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Lorraine Platt of the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation. I also thank Eduardo Gonçalves for his work on this area.

**Dean Russell (Watford) (Con):** I thank my hon. Friend for his brilliant work in promoting the Bill. Does he agree that although we talk about trophy hunting, these are not trophies? They are a physical representation of the fragile ego of the people who do cruelty to animals. By banning trophy hunting imports, we are not affecting what countries are doing to support themselves; all we are saying is that we do not want these representations of fragile egos imported into our wonderful country.

**Henry Smith:** I am grateful for my hon. Friend's support, and I endorse every word. I ask the House to give the Bill a Second Reading so that it can go into Committee.

12.22 pm

**Mrs Flick Drummond (Meon Valley) (Con):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) on promoting the Bill, which I wholeheartedly support.

I am fortunate to be the Member of Parliament for Marwell Zoo, which is a leader not only in caring for animals in the UK, but in conservation work around the world. Marwell is emerging from the challenges of the pandemic after being closed and restricted for so long, like so many centres of its kind. It is a wonderful place, both as a tourist attraction and as a centre of excellence in wildlife conservation, and I have sought the expert views of its chief executive James Cretney in preparing my speech.

Many issues that we debate in this House, and on which we legislate, capture huge attention from the public, but that is especially true of animal welfare. We are a nation of animal lovers. Issues relating to animal welfare make up a huge proportion of the correspondence that I receive as an MP, and I am sure that other Members have similar experiences. Over the years, I have received many hundreds of emails from constituents



about trophy hunting. They have often been sent in response to lobby group campaigns focusing on specific incidents such as the shooting of Cecil the lion in 2015 or occasional cases in which a hunter kills a large number of animals in one go.

We have to look beyond emotions, however, and consider how a ban on trophy hunting imports would engage with nature, society and economics in some very poor areas of the world. This is not about any debates in the UK or about how we manage stocks or overpopulations of particular species in our own country. We must also be clear that there are occasions on which it is necessary to control an animal population where natural predation has broken down, in most cases because a predator has been hunted or driven from the environment by man. However, it is clear that when it comes to trophy hunting, there are problems that we must address.

I have a personal interest, through the work of my father in Yemen and Oman in the 1960s. While he was based in the region with the Trucial Oman Scouts, he became involved in the effort to record and save the Arabian oryx. This beautiful animal was once common across the middle east from Sinai to Iraq and on the Arabian peninsula. It is thought that there was likely an encounter with an Arabian oryx some time in the past by a European traveller which gave rise to the legend of the unicorn, although the oryx actually has two straight horns, not one. Gradually, the oryx was hunted to extinction across the wider middle east. Until the early 1960s, it remained only in the Rub' al Khali—the empty quarter—across the boundaries of Yemen, Oman and Saudi Arabia. Even then, it was not certain that any living animals remained. However, a programme was put together to rescue remaining animals and establish a breeding programme at Phoenix zoo in the USA.

The Arabian oryx was prized as a trophy for its fine horns and, even as the programme was beginning its work in 1961, the herd of the oryx in the empty quarter was subject to a major hunting expedition. Hunters from Qatar and the Emirates killed off many of them for trophies. Had the programme not been successful in locating and taking some oryx to safety, it would have been extinct immediately. This was the modern effort to save a species from extinction and I am pleased that my father, with his colleagues, had a role in getting it under way.

In the laxer circumstances of the mid-1970s, the Arabian oryx was eventually trophy-hunted to extinction in the wild. Were it not for the success of the breeding programme in zoos, it would have gone the same way as the dodo. I am pleased that it has been possible, since the 1980s, to reintroduce the oryx to a number of locations in the middle east. There are now populations in Oman, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Jordan and Israel, but it is still classed as vulnerable. The Arabian oryx would fall under the scope of the Bill, being an annex A species within CITES. It is just one example covering one of the many species that are in danger. We tend to think of elephants and lions as being most at risk, but there is a huge range of animals hunted for trophies around the world that deserve protection.

Opponents of the kind of Bill we are looking at today make a case that trophy hunting benefits states that are less wealthy than the UK and warn of unintended consequences, as we have just heard from the previous speaker. This is something I have been looking at in the

lead-up to Second Reading. I wanted to be sure, in looking at the Bill, that the end of trophy hunting, which, sadly, the Bill alone cannot lead to, would not destabilise fragile economies and ecosystems in the developing world. The evidence is convincing that it will not have those negative effects.

Trophy hunting can lead to destabilised social organisation in species such as lions, where males are killed preferentially by trophy hunters. This disorganisation has led to increased female and cub mortality, and an accelerated population decline. If an excessive number of male lions are killed, their families are killed indirectly too. The entire reproductive capacity of the species is harmed. Zimbabwe, whose lion population is being destabilised in the way I have just described, has been a source of more than a quarter of trophy-hunted imports to the UK over the last 20 years.

Trophy hunting as a benefit to the local economy is only of doubtful value. The function of trophy-hunting estates is similar to other high-end tourist resorts with a range of facilities and leisure for tourists. The profits from those resorts do not stay with the local population, who are mostly a source of cheap labour. They end up in the bank accounts of tour and resort operators who are mostly not based in the target country. The description of cheap labour can nearly always be applied to the specialist trackers or traditional hunters who are recruited to do the hard work of trophy hunting, which is to locate the prey. The hunter then just has to point and shoot, and pose for their pictures. The description of this kind of hunting as some kind of sport involving big game is greatly exaggerated.

Even in the top hunting destinations for tourists, the trade makes a tiny contribution to GDP. Nowhere does it account for more than half of 1% of GDP. In Zimbabwe, where we have seen the traders doing major damage, it accounts for 0.3% of GDP. The argument that it would be economically damaging to have to replace hunting tourism with conventional wildlife tourism hardly seems viable. In some cases, trophy hunting areas are, in fact, just large fenced enclosures, and it is on these that the argument for a managed, captive-bred population can best be made. However, these enclosures sit within the wider landscape, and their fencing and infrastructure negatively affect wildlife around the boundaries, disturbing the natural habitat for the wild population and leading to its decline.

Another feature of fenced enclosure hunting is the introduction of species attractive to trophy hunters that are not native to the area. Inevitably, some of those animals escape into the wild where they begin to destabilise the wider ecosystem. Their habitats in the resorts can damage the ecosystem and undermine the claim that the resorts are a managed but natural environment.

Poaching is legally separate, but it is undoubtedly given some cover by the activities of hunters and the market for trophy goods. Much poaching takes place using forged permits and an assumption that the possession of hunting equipment in an area is legal.

For a long time, the British Government's view was that managed hunting of wild animals is acceptable, both in the canned format where animals are hunted within fenced enclosures and elsewhere where animals roam free but are supposedly under wider management

[Mrs Flick Drummond]

by local agencies. I welcomed it when our Government looked again at the evidence in 2019 and began the consultation process that helped to lead to this Bill.

This Government are the greenest and most animal and environmentally friendly Government that the UK has ever had. The UK was always a leader in pressing for higher standards in the environment and animal welfare during our time in the EU, against concerted opposition from some other members. Now we have left the EU and introduced our landmark Environment Act 2021 and Agriculture Act 2020, we have a secure legislative base at home. Our leadership of international environment and ecological negotiations allows this Parliament and our Government to have great authority to others around the world. We must use that soft power.

I hope the Government will assist and support this Bill—I am pleased to hear that the Minister has already agreed to that—and will maintain their efforts around the world to help suppress poaching. The reality for many species is that no level of commercial hunting by man is sustainable.

12.31 pm

**Simon Fell** (Barrow and Furness) (Con): I am very surprised to be called so early in this debate. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) on being selected in the ballot and on choosing such an important subject.

By banning hunting trophies, we can send a strong message to the rest of the world that the UK does not tolerate the killing of iconic species such as rhinos, lions and elephants by a very small minority for recreation alone. Like many others in this place, I have been inundated by emails and letters from constituents who care very deeply about this issue. I will read a section of an email from Danielle from Barrow, which sums up what many people have said:

“All animals have unique personalities, but to hunters, they’re merely target practice—things to kill, decapitate, and display on a wall. Wild animals just want to be left in peace, but trophy hunters—lacking empathy, compassion, and respect for these living, feeling beings—get a sick thrill out of taking their lives. They’re willing to pay thousands of pounds to travel the world just to kill. Their victims are often trapped in a fenced compound or private game reserve, or lured with bait from the safety of national park into the awaiting shooter’s path. Some who facilitate this blood sport track down animals for a fee. It isn’t uncommon for them to encounter sleeping animals, who may be shot at extremely close range...”

The UK could deter hunters from killing animals abroad by banning imports of hunting trophies, thereby preventing people from bringing their sick souvenirs home.”

Danielle is just one of many who have reached out to me—and I am sure people across the House—on this issue.

Members have already mentioned the polling. In March this year, polling showed overwhelming support for the policy of banning hunting trophy-hunting imports. I think around 60% of the public agreed that the UK Government should bring a ban forward. Indeed, among Conservative-leaning voters, that was 92%. I am always wary about following polls because I think that we should listen to the arguments on both sides and make our own minds up, but it is clear that the public are ahead of us on this one. There is real merit to listening to their sensible and sage opinions.

Between 2004 and 2014, British hunters brought 2,500 legal hunting trophies into the UK, including body parts of some of the most endangered species such as elephants and rhinos. Despite wild lion populations being decimated to a mere 20,000 individuals, thousands of lions have been targeted and killed since the death of Cecil, which we all remember, in 2015. Similarly, what was a population of 20 million African elephants has been reduced to just 400,000, with only 50 big tusker elephants left on earth at all.

Trophy hunting directly contributes to the decline in threatened and endangered species populations while failing to provide the conservation benefits that the trophy hunting industry claims. To attain the most impressive trophy, hunters typically target animals with the most accentuated traits. That has a disproportionate impact on the genetic and social integrity of their family group and wider populations.

Contrary to the belief that funding from hunts directly supports conservation efforts for the target animal species, evidence from the US House Committee on Natural Resources found multiple examples of funds being diverted or completely dismissed from conservation purposes in Zimbabwe, Tanzania, South Africa and Namibia.

South Africa holds 366 large-scale captive breeding facilities where big cats are being bred and exploited for commercial purposes. The investigative organisation, FOUR PAWS, found that indigenous species such as lions, cheetahs and leopards, in addition to non-native species such as tigers and jaguars, are being kept in substandard conditions and used for touristic gain through abusive experiences such as cub petting and canned hunting.

Lions are the largest population of big cat species in the industry, with three times as many lions in captivity as there are wild in South Africa. Due to their tame nature, gained through hand rearing and becoming habituated predators, the release of captive-bred lions into the wild is impossible. As they reach two years of age, many lions are used for canned hunting; they are released into a small, fenced area only to be shot and killed for a trophy. The dead lions and their parts that are not sold as trophies often enter the traditional medicine market across Asia, where the animals are more valuable dead than alive. By allowing the UK to import hunting trophies, we are indirectly supporting that heinous industry.

As has been mentioned, every party in this place, I think, has a commitment to ban the import of hunting trophies. It has been included in numerous Queen’s Speeches and in the 2021 DEFRA action plan for animal welfare. It is time to deliver on that commitment.

It is my daughter’s birthday today. Peg turned seven years old—[HON. MEMBERS: “Hear, hear!”] Thank you; I am sure that she appreciates all your support. Fatherhood very much changes our view of the world—she is my first. I am sure that all of us who have children recognise the stage that they go through when, once they hit about three years old, they start to ask “Why?” about everything, relentlessly. As Peg was my first child, whenever she asked “Why?” I tried to answer the question. It makes you see the world very differently. I did not really think much about hunting issues, such as fox hunting or the wider animal welfare concerns that we are discussing. However, when trying to justify them to a three-year-old and say why the world operates in that way, it makes

you think again. Frankly, I cannot justify this. I cannot see why we allow these barbaric practices to continue and why we allow trophies to be imported into our country.

Animals should not be managed to be hunted, with the excuse of them continuing to exist as the argument. We should sustain habitats, enable biodiversity, and create environments where they can thrive, rather than ones in which they are not effectively wild any more, unable to fend for themselves without humans or are in a waiting room for a hunter to bag an easy shot so they have something to go above the mantelpiece. The Bill is the right and moral thing for us to do. I am very glad to support my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley on this excellent Bill.

12.37 pm

**Holly Mumby-Croft** (Scunthorpe) (Con): It is a real pleasure to speak in support of this excellent Bill from my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith). Many constituents have contacted me with very strong feelings on this issue and I am here to represent their views, as I always seek to do.

I have never been comfortable with the idea of killing an animal simply for a souvenir. I am told that trophy hunters perhaps feel a thrill when they hunt an animal. Perhaps it is just about the opportunity to take something home that they can use for a piece of furniture or to display there. I do not know what is in the mind of a person who chooses to do this—that is a matter for them—but it is absolutely right that we have this discussion today.

The animals most coveted by trophy hunters include lions, hippos, rhinos, elephants and zebras. Their populations have all declined over recent generations while trophy imports to major economies, including ours, have increased. Our import numbers pale in comparison to the US, the EU and China, but we have played our part in facilitating that trade. Indeed, the number of trophies coming into Britain has risen about tenfold since the 1980s. That is in part because of the international agreement on which the wildlife trade is regulated, known as the convention on international trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora.

Although CITES restricts the trade of listed endangered species, trophies are considered to be personal and household effects that warrant an exemption. As a result, a number of countries across the world have a trophy hunting tourism industry for foreign visitors. Wealthy hunters from across the world travel to those countries, hunt their animal of choice and then bring that animal's remains back home. We have heard the arguments about the positive monetary benefits that this business model may produce, but I hope we can also recognise the perverse incentives that there are around the industry.

My constituents have raised many problems and concerns. First, trophy hunters naturally opt for animals with desirable features, as we have heard from many hon. and right hon. Members from across the House. They ultimately want the elephant with the biggest tusks, the lion with the widest mane or the tiger with the sharpest, whitest teeth. In doing so, the industry is picking off the members of the species that are most likely to survive and reproduce in the wild. I am told

that African lions are now less genetically diverse than they were 100 years ago. The average tusk size of African elephants has halved since the mid-19th century. If the strongest members of a species are targeted, the best genes are removed from their populations.

Secondly, South African landowners have adopted a business model of breeding lions in captivity, known as canned hunting. The practice is a much cheaper way of organising a hunt than a wild pursuit, meaning more people can hunt a vulnerable species as a trophy. Canned hunting excludes lions from the wild and serves no conservation purpose. With lion numbers plummeting over the past 20 years, and the global exports of canned lion trophies going up, we have to ask ourselves whether our country wants its hands in this.

I am conscious that I represent an area of the UK; it is not my place to tell South African landowners what their business model should be. However, I do think it is right that we control our part in it, and control the ability of those hunters to bring the product of that hunt back into our country. That is where our approach should lie, and I think it absolutely right that the Bill does that. The United States' decision to suspend imports of lion trophies in 2016 helped to bring down the number of lions held in canned hunting facilities.

Finally, we must ask if the industry itself is doing enough to offset the results of the practice and to improve conservation efforts. For example, Safari Club International's diamond award requires hunters to shoot at least 80 different species, including all of the big five African mammals. Its cats of the world award requires hunters to kill at least four types of wild cats. I find that quite distasteful, and many of my constituents feel exactly the same way.

Further losses of vulnerable and endangered species would have disastrous effects for our environment, not only ecologically but for the economies in which those practices take place. I hope we can send a very strong message to the world today that bringing into the UK parts of animals that have been hunted in this way is not something that is acceptable to the British public.

12.43 pm

**Ben Everitt** (Milton Keynes North) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Scunthorpe (Holly Mumby-Croft)—sunny Scunny. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) for his brilliant work on this much-needed Bill, and on the broader issue of animal welfare. The UK is playing a leading role in standing up for animal welfare around the world.

Through the action plan for animal welfare, the Government have introduced—and continue to introduce—a series of vital reforms in areas such as animal sentience, farm animal welfare and international advocacy. Last year, the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Bill became law, which saw the introduction of some of the strictest sanctions in Europe for animal cruelty offences. The Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill aims to fortify protections for pets, livestock and kept wild animals. Through that legislation, the Conservative party is delivering on our 2019 manifesto commitments, and I look forward to its return to the House when parliamentary time allows.

[Ben Everitt]

On the central issue of hunting trophies, I am sure that many hon. Members have seen images on social media of hunters standing over slain lions or elephants. These are appalling acts of needless violence that are having a damaging effect on global conservation efforts. It is high time that the UK played its part in cracking down on that practice.

The report by the APPG on banning trophy hunting is damning and eye-opening. In it, we hear about the extensive operation behind trophy hunting, where online forums advertise so-called trophy hunting holidays. It is not my kind of holiday—nor one that would be enjoyed by any hon. Members. The hunting industry is seemingly driven by organisations offering prestigious prizes for shooting a certain number of species. Perhaps, when hunters cannot bring back their trophies to the UK, the motivation for travelling across the world to kill endangered animals will be far less powerful.

**John Spellar** (Warley) (Lab): The hon. Member rightly mentions the organisations that are operating. It appears that many supposedly grassroots organisations, particularly in Africa, are actually driven by the fanatical United States gun lobby. Should we not say to people who fall for that—interestingly enough, that is not many members of the British hunting community—that they need to distinguish between grassroots and astroturf?

**Ben Everitt:** The right hon. Gentleman is absolutely right and makes his point well. We in this House are limited as to what we can control through the scope of the Bill, but this is what we can do to make a difference. I am sure that the National Rifle Association will be poring over *Hansard* and reading his comments with trepidation.

The practice of killing endangered animals for the purpose of hunting trophies is abhorrent and immoral, and many of my constituents in Milton Keynes North feel the same. We in this House have the power to do our bit to tackle this despicable practice by introducing one of the toughest bans in the world on the import of hunting trophies through the Bill.

This strict import ban will have a twofold impact. First, we will make huge strides towards putting a stranglehold on this damaging practice. Secondly, by cutting off the ability of hunters to bring back their hunts, we will support the conservation of thousands of endangered species. In Kenya, for example, where trophy hunting is banned, the populations of lions, rhinos and elephants are rising fastest. As highlighted in the APPG's report, animal populations have benefited hugely from trophy hunting bans in Botswana and Zambia.

It is clear that there is a strong mandate for a ban on trophy hunting imports. Hon. Members on both sides of the House want to see those imports banned, and public opinion, as we have heard many times, reflects that strongly. The Bill is about more than just a ban on trophy hunting imports; it is about dealing a significant blow to the industry and organisations that thrive and profit from trophy hunting. That is an important cause that I hope the House will support.

12.48 pm

**Dean Russell** (Watford) (Con): I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) for the incredible work that he has done to introduce the

Bill. I remember that a few years ago, before I was an MP, I was invited to an event organised by Nic Careem in this place to watch the film “Born Free” with Virginia McKenna. In that, we saw the role that conservation played in society many decades ago, the majestic nature of lions and other animals in the wild, and the contribution that they make to our world, not just in their economic value but in their value to our society and the world at large—to nature itself.

We are in a world where we need to be more mindful of the planet, and we talk often in this place about climate crises, but what is the climate there for and what is the world there for? It is for us all to live on it, and that includes our animals too. I have never had the luxury of visiting Africa, but we can see from afar, and people can see when they go there, not only the role that these predators play in the ecosystems of their local environment and in nature itself but their pure elegance and amazingness. So the idea that somebody would want to go that land, a foreign land for many of these trophy hunters, to stalk out an animal invisibly and in a cowardly way, in the bushes, or from afar with a long lens—or perhaps we could be talking about an animal trapped in a cage—and kill it simply in order to put its skin or head, as happened in the past, as a trophy on their wall, shelf or floor is cowardly, vile and utterly unnecessary. As I mentioned, we talk about “trophies”, but these are not trophies. At the extreme, this is done purely for fragile egos to prove somehow that they are stronger than a lion or more powerful than an elephant; they are killing these beautiful creatures for a trophy—really? Do we want to allow over many decades, and continue to allow in the case of some in this Chamber, although I have great respect for all on these Benches, people to bring trophies of that vile act back to this country? That just seems morally wrong and utterly abhorrent.

For hundreds of years, we saw these trophies and we saw animals killed or captured so that people could bring them to this country, perhaps for education or perhaps because of a misunderstanding of the role they play, but the world has changed dramatically in the past decades. Instead of shooting an animal with a rifle, people can now shoot it with a camera and they have the opportunity to bring their brilliance in life to the world, not in death to one household or perhaps one building. This is about understanding what role we play in society and the message we send from this country around the world about what is right and what is wrong. I completely understand that we need to make sure that things are sustainable for individuals in communities, and that they have the power to have economic input and pursue their livelihoods. But the idea that people, especially from western countries, go over there, kill their animals and take them back as dead body parts to their own homes as trophies, while not helping those villagers and those countries, and not helping those people in a sustainable way, just does not sit right with me. That is why this Bill is so important.

Ultimately, this Bill prohibits bringing hunting trophies to this country. It enables us to put that position in law, to stop people being able to take advantage of this practice, not just when they go out there and kill these animals themselves; it stops them encouraging others to kill animals on their behalf, in order to bring those so-called “trophies” back to this country. There is a positive bit that is so important in this Bill and it

reminds me of a private Member's Bill I spoke on a few weeks ago. That Bill was about shark finning, an awful, abhorrent act where fishermen will cut off the fins of sharks, leaving them just to nosedive, with no ability to save themselves, and drown in the deep. When I spoke in that Bill recently, it was an opportunity to change the way this country views animals, and it was about body parts and not just the full animal. That is also one of the powerful parts of this Bill: it is about hunting trophies, meaning

“the body of an animal, or a readily recognisable part or derivative of an animal”.

I commend the Bill to the House and my hon. Friend for the work that he has done, because the Bill, which has support from across the House, will make a huge difference to conservation and to the moral standing of this country. It sends a signal around the world that when things are wrong, we will stand up even for those who do not have a vote, such as animals.

12.54 pm

**Laura Farris** (Newbury) (Con): Many people will find it quite extraordinary that we even need to have this debate, extraordinary to think that there is a market for bringing home the body parts of animals, and extraordinary that in certain quarters of the country, this is still considered a sport, desirable, or something to be proud of. I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) for introducing debate on the Bill, which has been widely supported across the House and, of course, aligns with our manifesto commitment. It is moving to be able to support him and, I hope, get the Bill over the line.

I have two points. First—this dovetails with what my hon. Friend said about the environmental aspect of the issue—it is shocking to think that the elephant population has depleted significantly in the last 50 years, that elephants with larger tusks are targeted, and to hear of the evolutionary impact that has had. He described the way that elephants with smaller tusks are less able to adapt to their natural habitats, with ongoing consequences. The population of lions in the wild has collapsed by 93% in the last 50 years—just a bit over the course of my lifetime. Climate change is affecting these habitats anyway. If we are serious about the preservation of wildlife, and particularly endangered species, that is a pernicious element that we need to do something about. I respect the fact that the Bill does not deal with trophy hunting per se, but it does say something about who we are as a society and what we think about it.

Secondly, the way that the British public view hunting has changed since foxhunting was abolished. A lot of people have strong views on that. Trophy hunting is not just about animal hunting, but about viewing animals as chattels and their body parts as a show of status or virility. The right hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar), who is no longer in his place, made the point that in some ways trophy hunting is an adjunct to those who are most committed to the National Rifle Association and the second amendment of the United States, and like so many slightly odd American habits, it has found its way here and is being replicated here, in certain quarters.

My hon. Friend the Member for North Herefordshire (Sir Bill Wiggin) characterised criticism of trophy hunting as somehow racist or patronising to certain communities.

I do not recognise that characterisation; it is not a true one, and I regret that he is not in his place to hear me say that. In certain parts of Africa, where there is a demand to use wildlife in a certain way, sometimes poverty is such that a market will grow up. If the market encourages protecting certain areas of landscape, as is very much the case in the Maasai Mara, the local community will complement that. We should not say that there is local collusion, or a natural appetite for trophy hunting. I have never seen that in Africa at all.

Finally, it is really important to say that the Bill is the latest addition to a package of animal welfare actions that the Government have taken. Sometimes a piece of legislation on its own does not tell a particularly powerful story, but when we consider the Bill together with the Animal Welfare (Sentencing) Act 2021, the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act 2022 from last Session—a really important Act about whether animals are sentient beings—and the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, which is beginning its passage through Parliament, we see that parliamentarians across the House have been looking carefully at animal welfare. Animal welfare will be in a completely different position by the time this Parliament ends. Many of our constituents would feel that that was important, and that it fairly reflects their attitudes, values and view of animals.

There are lots of other issues I could mention, including the mandatory microchipping of dogs and banning the use of battery cages for laying hens. We have taken a different look at domestic and farmed animals, and we should feel proud of that. I am very supportive of this Bill, and it is an honour to speak on it this afternoon. I look forward to seeing it pass its Second Reading shortly.

1 pm

**Anna Firth** (Southend West) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) on bringing this important issue to the House. Like many others, I have been written to by people from across my constituency who feel really strongly about this issue and want the Government to take action on it. It is a pleasure for me to be here to represent their views, because I agree with them.

Elephants, lions, rhinos, leopards and polar bears have two things in common: they all face the threat of extinction, and they are the target of trophy hunters around the world. As my hon. Friend and others have pointed out, we were all rightly outraged by the killing of Cecil the lion in Zimbabwe seven years ago, but the sad reality is that there are thousands of Cecils every single year. Like many others, I am sickened and disgusted when I see pictures on social media of trophy hunters grinning beside magnificent creatures that deserve to live in their natural habitat without fear of being hunted as a commercial sport by people who exploit them.

One of the most abhorrent practices is the so-called canned lion hunts. These wonderful creatures are bred and grow up in confined reserves, not in their natural habitat, in order to be shot by a trophy hunter. They have no chance at all of escape. It is shocking that, according to the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, there are more than 300 of these lion factory farms in existence, run by trophy hunting “holiday firms”. After these lions have been artificially exterminated for pleasure, their bones are often used to make lion wine and lion

[*Anna Firth*]

cake. As long as we fail to prevent these imports, the UK implicitly condones the actions of these sick individuals. I have no doubt that future generations will look back at this moment in horror, and they will draw a comparison between canned lion hunting, medieval practices such as bear-baiting, and the animal-baiting contests prevalent in ancient Rome.

Our global wildlife has declined by 60% over the last half-century. That is the backdrop to this, and that is why we must take a stand against those who seek to destroy wildlife. We can and must assert the UK's leading role as a champion for the protection of wildlife. The trophy hunting industry would have us believe the myth that trophy hunting is important for conservation, but too often, that is nothing more than a smokescreen to rationalise the killing of endangered animals for pleasure. These arguments are outdated, tired excuses, and we must not opt for the so-called smart ban, which would limit the ending of trophy hunting imports to those obtained from canned hunts.

The evidence also suggests that the benefit to local communities, often touted as a justification for trophy hunting, is overstated. On average, local communities receive only 3% of revenue from trophy hunting, while the industry generates a mere 0.3% of total tourism revenue in the African countries that allow it. Those figures are minuscule compared with the advantages of preserving wildlife across the world.

In fact, many African communities are strongly against the practice. A recent poll showed that 70% of South African citizens believe their country would be a more attractive tourist destination if they ended trophy hunting. Kenya banned trophy hunting in 1977, and we should, by adopting the trade policy in the Bill and other such policies, support others that follow in its footsteps.

Several colleagues, including my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley, recently had the pleasure of hosting the former President of Botswana, Ian Khama, in this House. In a video sent ahead of today's debate, Mr Khama said:

"a significant contributor to this fast-diminishing jewel of nature is the slaughter of many species purely for enjoyment and the pleasure of inflicting death on our planet's wonderful creatures."

Earlier this year, I attended a reception held by the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation in memory of its late patron, the MP whose constituency I am now proud to represent: Sir David Amess. He was particularly passionate about this campaign, and it would be remiss of us not to acknowledge his years of work to see the Bill become a reality. It was Sir David who, time and again, championed an end to trophy-hunting imports, and I would like us to remember all he did to support these measures.

I also thank the all-party parliamentary group on banning trophy hunting, spearheaded by my right hon. Friend the Member for North Thanet (Sir Roger Gale), who is in his place. He has also worked tirelessly to end trophy-hunting imports.

Ending trophy hunting imports is supported by MPs from every party in this House, as is demonstrated by the passionate speeches from Members on both sides of the House today. Indeed, this vile trade truly unites an ever-divided politics, and it unites the British people.

When the Government consulted on this policy in 2019, they received more than 44,000 responses, showing clear support for tighter restrictions from constituents and conservation groups. As we have heard, 86% of the UK public would like the Bill to become law. Interestingly, that view is even more strongly shared by Conservative voters, 92% of whom support ending the UK's association with the trophy-hunting trade. As their representatives in Parliament, we must listen.

The UK will not be the first country to take a stand against trophy hunting; France and Australia both banned the import of lion-hunting trophies in 2015. The Netherlands banned trophy-hunting imports of more than 200 species in 2016. We can and should follow their example.

Let us be clear that there is no place for this practice in a civilised society. We must endeavour to eradicate our role in this trade. It began in the 19th century, as a new recreation under the British empire. We must consign it to being a relic of the past. Let us ensure that the UK is on the right side of history by saying no to trophy-hunting imports.

1.8 pm

**Peter Gibson** (Darlington) (Con): I am grateful to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for calling me to speak for the second time today.

I praise my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) for using his private Member's Bill slot for this hugely important legislation. Of course, all Conservative Members stood on a manifesto to introduce an ivory ban and a ban on the import of hunting trophies from endangered animals.

I am sure all Members on both sides of the House will, like me, have been inundated with correspondence from constituents asking them to support this Bill. For the avoidance of doubt, I make it clear that I wholeheartedly support this Bill. The illegal wildlife trade is a criminal industry worth more than £17 billion worldwide each year, threatening both wildlife and people. The UK Government have been at the forefront of international efforts to protect endangered animals and plants through the illegal wildlife trade challenge, but we can always go further and do more, which is what this Bill does.

The Netherlands currently bans trophies from approximately 200 species; Belgium will shortly implement an identical ban; France and Australia ban imports of lion trophies; and the US bans imports of certain endangered species, such as cheetahs and polar bears. By taking action through the Bill, we will demonstrate to the world our continued commitment to tackling such practices, and send a strong message to others.

The Bill has been welcomed by the Conservative Animal Welfare Foundation, which said:

"By banning hunting trophies, we can send a strong message to the rest of the world that the UK does not tolerate the killing of iconic species such as rhinos, lions, and elephants by a minority of individuals for recreation."

Four Paws UK, a member of the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting coalition, said:

"It is crucial that this Bill passes through Parliament... unamended".

I agree. The Bill will introduce one of the world's strongest bans on trophy hunting imports, leading the way in the protection of endangered animals. There is no need to delay any further—we must get the ban into statute as quickly as possible.

Since the 1980s, an estimated 25,000 slaughtered animals have been brought into the UK. The most popular animals shot by British trophy hunters include African elephants, hippopotamuses, black bears, leopards, zebras, lions and baboons. In recent years, British hunters have even brought home the heads, bodies and skins of polar bears, rhinos, cheetahs, giraffes, monkeys, seals, otters and wildcats. I appreciate that in the light of figures in the United States, where no fewer than 126,000 animal trophies are legally imported each year, the steps we take today will only scratch the surface. But I know that a majority of people will find it hard to sympathise with someone who pays tens or even hundreds of thousands of dollars, with everything prepared for them in advance, to shoot an animal at close range—often incompetently, so it suffers unnecessarily—and await the delivery of the prepared trophy. By banning the import of trophies, we deprive the hunter of their prize.

The Bill has widespread support among the public and experts. More than 100 of Britain's best-known public figures, including Dame Shirley Bassey, Michael Caine, Brian Cox, Alex Ferguson, Tim Henman, Aled Jones, Michael Parkinson, Cliff Richard, Angela Rippon, Delia Smith, Rod Stewart, Chris Tarrant and Jonny Wilkinson, have signed a letter expressing their support for the ban. At the end of 2019, the Government launched a consultation on trophy hunting in which a huge 86% of respondents called for a ban. Clearly, the public want this ban.

The Bill is an excellent and overdue piece of legislation. Like the ban brought in by the Ivory Act 2018, our hunting trophy imports ban would be one of the strongest in the world, further complementing the strong actions that we have already taken to tackle the illegal wildlife trade. I wish my hon. Friend every success as he continues to guide the Bill through its legislative journey. I hope to see it reach the statute book as soon as possible, and—to repeat the offer I made earlier to my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox)—I would be more than happy to serve on the Bill Committee.

1.13 pm

**Selaine Saxby** (North Devon) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) and congratulate him on his important private Member's Bill. It is a privilege to speak today. I thank him and the APPG for their ongoing campaigning on this important issue.

The UK is a world leader in nature conservation. As part of that reputation, we should ban the import of hunting trophies to stop the draw for the industry. Ninety-eight per cent. of the British public support the ban, and I thank the many North Devon residents who have written to me sharing their support for the Bill. Despite such high levels of opposition to trophy hunting, the top female hunter in the world is British, as is the runner-up in the men's category. Between them, they are estimated to have killed more than 800 animals.

Since 1970, wildlife numbers have fallen by 69%, and the number of trophies entering the UK has risen tenfold since 1980. Historically, this form of hunting would have taken weeks and months, but over recent decades, as travel has become quicker, people have been able to reach previously inaccessible or prohibitively difficult-to-reach locations in less than 24 hours.

We have already lost some of our world's species. Why should this exploitative hobby be allowed to take any more? In my lifetime, we have seen the extinction of

the western black rhinoceros, notable and attractive to hunters for its double horn. A species that lived for 7 million to 8 million years, its population declined by 96% between 1970 and 1976 before it was declared officially extinct in 2011.

Alongside the complete destruction of species, trophy hunting has the effect of changing the genetics and features of species. Scientists estimate that lions have lost 15% of their gene pool over the last century and there is evidence that they are becoming more vulnerable to diseases. Similarly, elephants are showing the effects of being targeted for traits such as tusk size and weight. The average weight of trophy tusks was approximately 210 lbs in 1970 but by 1990 it had fallen to 180 lbs. There are now tuskless elephants, and the numbers are rising. However, this is notably not the case in areas where trophy hunting is banned, such as South Africa's Kruger national park.

The industry also claims that targeting males and the ban by some countries on hunting females have a negligible effect on population. While it is true that in many species males play a limited role in the rearing of young, removing males from the area simply draws in others that then kill any young that are not their own, removing a generation and narrowing the gene pool.

The industry falsely claims that a ban such as the one proposed by the Bill is a colonial action, where rich westerners are forcing their views on local people. In fact, the opposite is true. Only 16% of South Africans are in favour of trophy hunting. A study that covered multiple African countries found that:

"The dominant pattern was resentment towards what was viewed as the neo-colonial character of trophy hunting, in the way it privileges Western elites in accessing Africa's wildlife resources."

Trophy hunters pay vast sums for exclusive access to a country's resources, excluding and exploiting communities in need of long-term support and development. For pleasure and selfies, they kill the very animals that local people are not allowed to hunt for food.

A variety of projects across the mountainous region covering Rwanda, Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo have had great success over the decades. They have faced a number of issues that have been raised today, such as inclusive conservation across three different countries. In 2018, the mountain gorilla moved from "critically endangered" to "endangered", a small success that was partly achieved by bringing the local community into conservation processes. Unlike private hunting reserves, which push local people from their land and where little of the vast sums paid by hunters go back to the community, these projects put the local community at the heart of their work.

Project leaders realised that they were still struggling with poaching as local subsistence farmers tried to earn money, so they started bringing local people into the reserve. That would otherwise have been unaffordable for many, as it would have cost up to \$1500 a day. Being able to interact with the gorillas has significantly shifted attitudes, and the projects bring farmers into the successful tourism industry, offering training and long-term development.

Although conservation is about so much more than the monetary value of an animal, it is important to recognise that local communities need opportunities to

[Selaine Saxby]

develop their local economies. As the MP for a rural community, I know how important it is to recognise the value of natural capital. Fortunately, the pure monetary value of an animal is significantly higher over its lifetime as a draw for photographic safaris than it is if the animal is bred for hunting. The trophy fee for shooting a lion is around £20,000, but the same lion can instead generate £1.5 million in revenues from photo safaris.

A key element of the appeal of exotic game hunting is the collection of trophies. If hunters are prevented from bringing the highly desirable trophies back home to show off, that significant incentive is removed. Such people are not on adventures: they are killing animals and contributing to the destruction of our natural world. I support the Bill, and I support the ban and the ending of this horrific industry.

1.18 pm

**Aaron Bell** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): I will speak briefly, because I know we have more Bills to get through today.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Crawley (Henry Smith) for bringing forward the Bill and the Government for their support for it. It delivers our manifesto commitment, and I know there is commitment to it from across the House. As hon. Members have said, this is fundamentally a moral issue, and we all feel abhorrence when we see pictures of trophy hunting.

If I have a criticism of my hon. Friend's Bill—this is not meant entirely seriously—it is about the title. We all know that a lot of the animals are killed not in hunts, but by traps that have been set up or sometimes by being drugged. I do not see them as trophies either. However, as he said, the body parts of endangered species are being brought into the country and we need to stop that. The UK must take a leading role in doing that through cross-party work. Pretty much everything that needs to be said has been said. The Bill is a big step forward and I welcome it.

1.19 pm

**Henry Smith:** With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, let me express further sincere thanks for the support of my hon. Friends the Members for Meon Valley (Mrs Drummond), for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell), for Scunthorpe (Holly Mumby-Croft) and for Milton Keynes North (Ben Everitt), the right hon. Member for Warley (John Spellar), my hon. Friends the Members for Watford (Dean Russell), for Newbury (Laura Farris), for Darlington (Peter Gibson), for North Devon (Selaine Saxby), and for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell), and my hon. Friend the Member for Southend West (Anna Firth), who paid tribute to Sir David Amess, our late colleague.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill accordingly read a Second time; to stand committed to a Public Bill Committee (Standing Order No. 63).*

**Madam Deputy Speaker (Dame Eleanor Laing):** Order. We are moving between Bills, and it is really not nice of people who were present for the last Bill to remain and chat rather than giving the hon. Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew) a fair wind. If you are leaving, please leave!

## Carbon Emissions (Buildings) Bill

*Second Reading*

1.21 pm

**Jerome Mayhew:** I beg to move, That the Bill be now read a Second time.

This Bill creates a mechanism to boost United Kingdom construction while driving down our greenhouse gas emissions, which is key to delivering UK growth in a manner aligned with the country's net zero targets. The proposal has come from the industry, which supports the Bill wholeheartedly. The industry is working to reduce these carbon emissions voluntarily, but it needs the Government to take the lead and accelerate the work that it has started.

The Bill tackles an area of greenhouse gases called embodied carbon. Every year, our buildings and construction are responsible for the emission of more than 150 million tonnes of greenhouse gases, fully a quarter of our country's total carbon footprint. Two thirds of those emissions are due to the lighting of buildings, their power and their water—the heating and cooling—and bear the tag “operational carbon”, and the Government have taken bold steps to reduce them as part of the net zero strategy. The building regulations, under part L, effectively address the reduction of operational carbon. As a direct consequence of the regulations and, importantly, the decarbonisation of the electricity supply, it is anticipated that by 2035 the emissions related to the services side—the operational carbon side—of buildings and construction will have fallen to an almost negligible level.

That is fantastic news, and the Government deserve our praise for gripping the issue and creating a plan, enforcing it through regulation and then implementing it with the very significant reductions in operational carbon that we are already seeing; but what about the other third of building emissions? Where do those remaining emissions come from, and what plan do we have to deal with them?

That other third comes from our use of construction materials: their production, transportation and installation on our construction sites; their maintenance, refurbishment and replacement during a building's life; and ultimately their demolition and removal at the end of the building's life. That is 50 million tonnes of carbon emissions each year, which are called embodied carbon. Let me put that amount into perspective: it is greater than the emissions of all the United Kingdom's aviation and shipping industries combined.

Let us think about how much effort we put into the control and planned reduction of those emissions. We have the sustainable aviation fuels plan, we have jet zero, and we have plans for corridors for emission-free shipping based on ammonia and hydrogen. We take all those plans very seriously, but what are the Government doing, and what are we doing as a nation, to deal with embodied carbon from construction? With 50 million tonnes of embodied carbon emissions a year, we might expect that the Government would already have plans to direct a reduction in line with our legally binding net zero targets.

The truth is that embodied carbon remains completely unregulated, and it shows from the data. Operating carbon emissions are dropping rapidly because of part L



and the decarbonisation of our electricity supply, but the data on embodied carbon shows no current trend towards any reduction at all. In 1995, there were 43 million tonnes of greenhouse gas-equivalent emissions; by 2018, emission levels, far from reducing, had crept up to 49 million tonnes and were approaching 50 million.

The Environmental Audit Committee, on which I sit, reported on the issue in May. Its report, which I commend to the House, concludes that

“the single most significant policy the Government could introduce is a mandatory requirement”

to assess embodied carbon in buildings. Not only do we not regulate the reduction of embodied carbon, but we currently have no idea how much a construction or design will emit, because we do not require business constructors to calculate that amount.

To be fair to the Government, their net zero strategy sets out an intention to

“support action in the construction sector by improving reporting on embodied carbon in buildings and infrastructure with a view to exploring a maximum level for new builds in the future.”

In a similar vein, the Government’s construction playbook calls for carbon assessments on all public projects. However, it provides no details as to how that should take place or what an appropriate carbon emissions level is. With every school, hospital and road we build, a different approach is therefore taken to calculating overall carbon. That is hopelessly inefficient for the industry, and it costs the taxpayer more.

As is so often the case, the real world is moving at a faster pace than the Government. Major design firms that employ tens of thousands of staff are making voluntary commitments to calculate the carbon emissions due to their designs. Construction industry bodies such as the Royal Institute of British Architects have set out voluntary embodied carbon emissions targets. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors has defined a methodology for calculating embodied carbon, but its ambition is hampered by a lack of regulation.

Voluntary industry targets remain just that. Every project that businesses work on has different reporting requirements and different carbon targets, costing them time and money. Regulation is needed to speed up the processes by identifying an agreed methodology and spreading acceptable practice throughout the sector, not just among the market leaders but in the long tail that any sector has, to bring everyone up to a minimum level of best practice.

Today, nearly 200 of the country’s leading developers, clients, contractors, architects, engineers and institutions have written statements of support calling for the regulation of embodied carbon. The Royal Institute of British Architects calls on the Government

“to introduce regulations that stipulate consistent assessment and reporting of whole life carbon, including setting specific targets for embodied carbon.”

NatWest, one of the leading investors in the sector, highlights the role of regulation as

“one of the key mechanisms that drive sustainable behaviour and action amongst investors, tenants, developers and home owners.”

The UK’s largest active asset manager, abrdn—it is spelled rather strangely—believes that

“the requirements to report whole life carbon, and set informed limits on embodied carbon, would help the real estate sector to decarbonise.”

Barratt Developments, one of the big four providers of homes in the residential sector, says:

“We have been calculating the embodied carbon of our homes for over ten years now... We are also developing requirements for our supply chains to support this process”.

Similar sentiments come from corporate leaders such as Landsec, British Land, Lendlease, Willmott Dixon, Sir Robert McAlpine, Laing O’Rourke, Morgan Sindall and ISG—I could go on. Industry bodies, such as the Construction Industry Council, the Chartered Institute of Building, Timber Development UK, importantly, the Concrete Centre, and, equally importantly, the Steel Construction Institute, also support that approach. Industry already has the tools necessary to respond to the Bill; regulation would simply unlock the final door to enable existing mechanisms to run smoothly.

What are other countries in Europe doing? France, Sweden and the Netherlands already have embodied carbon regulation in force, and the Netherlands, the market leader, has had its in force since 2012. Finland, Denmark and Norway are in the process of introducing it, and the European Commission is considering proposals to roll it out across the whole of the EU. So, why are we not?

Despite the Government recognising that they need to act, and despite the industry agreeing and setting out a widely supported solution, the Government seem to be beset by hesitation. Their response to the Environmental Audit Committee stated that they intend to consult, and undertake “parallel stakeholder engagement”, some time in 2023, on what its approach to embodied carbon should be. That was to a report published in May 2022. When the cost of inaction is 50 million tonnes of carbon emissions per year, where is the dynamism of Government? Where is their sense of urgency?

My Bill would enable the Government to catch up on the issue, directly amending the building regulations. It will require the reporting of carbon on significant building work, both new projects and refurbishments, from 2023 in the large-building, non-domestic sector, and by 2025 for housing in developments of more than 10 dwellings. It will then move to introduce limits on the embodied carbon emitted through construction from 2027—something that can be ratcheted down over time, in line with our net zero targets.

That strategy, of “report first, limit later”, follows the precedents set elsewhere in Europe, and makes the transition towards zero-carbon construction easier while sending a clear signal that legislated limits are coming. Similarly, to assist small and medium-sized enterprises, the Bill introduces those requirements only for major projects—those greater than 1,000 square metres of useful internal area or responsible for the construction of 10 new dwellings.

A clear policy signal on the direction of travel is what the industry needs to accelerate its development and the large-scale use, and more efficient use, of lower-carbon products. Just as how the policy statement that vehicles will not be sold with an internal combustion engine post 2030 has transformed the car manufacturing market, the construction industry needs that kind of market signal to invest in lower-carbon alternatives and take the next step to the wider adoption of what are currently niche products. By sending a clear policy signal from Government to industry, we will enable the sector to grow ahead of time. We must signal the road map to the

[Jerome Mayhew]

end of high-carbon construction in the United Kingdom to enable the building industry to take the needed steps towards zero-emission construction.

Is it really too soon to move, as the Government suggest? In their response to the EAC report, the Government identified three workstreams before they want to take a decision. First, they want to continue understanding the actions that industry is already taking and the impact. Secondly, they are watching the outcomes of the Greater London Authority's planning policy requirement "with interest" and, thirdly, they are "looking at international policy examples."

I have already demonstrated that my Bill is the outcome of industry consensus and that it follows the "report first, limit later" approach adopted internationally. So the only additional consideration is an assessment of the use of the planning policy by the Greater London Authority in its London plan to require measurement of embodied carbon as part of the planning process, yet even here there is a consensus that regulation via the building regulations is the right approach.

During the Environmental Audit Committee evidence session, the principal strategic planner for the GLA's London plan was asked in terms what role building regulations could play. Her answer was explicit. She said:

"We would agree...it is something that the Government should regulate. We think it should be part of building regulations".

Even the GLA, whose planning policy approach the Government apparently see as a potential alternative to the use of building regulations, agrees that building regulations are the right way to go. There are of course very sound practical reasons for that. Detailed decisions on materials will not have been made at the date of a planning application, so only vague estimates of carbon intensity and emissions could be used at that stage. It is at the point of construction that meaningful figures can be generated, which is where planning control comes in. In any event, we do not expect planning officers to assess the properties of, for example, rooftop insulation as part of a planning application. That kind of technical assessment is the job of building control and the same applies in respect of embodied carbon.

When the Government say that they want to consult on their approach on measurement and reduction of embodied carbon, we may be beginning to wonder who else is there that they are intending to consult. The sooner we start this process, the sooner we can reduce our emission of 50 million tonnes of carbon every year. My Bill will reduce the construction industry's carbon footprint, while sending certainty to UK industry that investing in decarbonisation is economically sound. It will bring economic growth and it will save the taxpayer money by standardising the decarbonisation process. The Government have great ambition to decarbonise. We all support it, and they should be commended for their ambition and for the many actions they have already taken in this field. The construction industry has the appetite, tools and skills to match that ambition. We have here a tremendous opportunity to make a significant impact on the UK's carbon emissions and ensure that the UK remains a global leader by regulating embodied carbon in construction. I commend this Bill to the House.

1.37 pm

**Peter Gibson** (Darlington) (Con): It is pleasure to be called to speak for a third time today, Madam Deputy Speaker. I wish to begin by congratulating my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew) on introducing his Bill. As I have said many times on a Friday, I know only too well what a privilege it is to come out in the ballot and have the opportunity to guide a piece of legislation through Parliament. I had that pleasure in the previous Session and although I know it can be a frustrating process, it is also a hugely rewarding one, and I thank him for using this opportunity to raise this important issue.

The Bill would amend the Building Regulations 2010 to place new requirements related to embodied carbon on:

- (a) the erection of any building,
- (b) the extension of any building, and
- (c) the carrying out of any work to or in connection with any building or extension".

"Embodied carbon" is the sum of carbon dioxide or green gas emission released during the life cycle of a product or service. For buildings, that could include extraction, manufacturing, transporting, installing, maintaining and disposing of construction materials and products. I know that work has been undertaken to develop a global approach to embodied carbon. In June 2021, a coalition of Governments and organisations, led by the UK and India, launched the industrial deep decarbonisation initiative. The IDDI aims to develop shared approaches to embodied emissions reporting and definitions for green steel and cement to drive public and private procurement. These working groups will deliver guidelines, comparison mechanisms and digital tool solutions agreed by member Governments no later than 2024.

The Government continue to take forward work to mitigate carbon emissions through measuring and reducing the embodied and operational carbon of the buildings and infrastructure they fund, and within the construction supply chain. I welcomed that when the net zero strategy was published in October 2021, it stated:

"Government aims to support action in the construction sector by improving reporting on embodied carbon in buildings and infrastructure with a view to exploring a maximum level for new builds in the future."

It is hugely important that we continue this work. Will the Minister tell us what progress her Department is making on this?

In my hon. Friend's Bill, embodied carbon is defined as

"the total greenhouse emissions and removals associated with materials and construction processes throughout the whole life cycle of an asset".

Whole-life carbon is defined as

"the sum total of all asset related greenhouse gas emissions and removals, both operational and embodied, over the life cycle of an asset including its disposal".

Under the measures in my hon. Friend's Bill, the Secretary of State will be required to approve the methodology, means of expression, reporting platform and tools for carrying out whole-life carbon assessments of building work. Where a new building or multi-building development with a total useful floor area of over 1,000 square metres is erected or where building work

takes place in any such building, the whole-life carbon emissions of the works will need to be calculated and reported. The day before the work starts at the latest, the local authority will need notice of the CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, a list of specifications to which the building work is to be undertaken, and a reference to the location on the reporting platform where the whole-life carbon emissions for the building work have been reported.

Within five days of completing the work, the person carrying out the work must update the local authority on those measures following construction. The local authority will authorise their approval and that the conditions have been met by way of a certificate. I understand that the Bill will also require the Secretary of State to approve target CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent upfront embodied carbon emission rates, which would set requirements for the building work.

I am very concerned about carbon emissions from our homes, but we cannot be concerned with new builds only. Only a few months ago I led a Westminster Hall debate on energy efficiency of homes in the north, where 26% of carbon emissions come from our homes. If we are to tackle climate change and meet net zero, we have to do something about that 26% in addition to all the other things that we are doing.

In the north, we have a higher percentage of older properties than the rest of the country. Twenty four per cent. of all homes in the north were built before 1919 and 41% were built before 1944. Despite all the housebuilding going on around the country, the UK's housing stock as a whole is generally older than in the rest of Europe. Older homes are largely beautiful, characterful homes that provide us with the backdrop to constituencies such as mine, but they cause serious issues when it comes to energy efficiency and carbon emissions. Decarbonising homes and making them more energy efficient has the potential to offer parts of the long-term solution to fuel poverty, insulating homes better and reducing the reliance on fossil fuels to heat homes. Less money spent on wasted energy is less money spent. It is a win-win for our homes, their residents and the environment.

I praise the work that the Government have done so far to tackle this issue. The heat and buildings strategy was published in October 2021. The social housing decarbonisation fund has awarded £179 million and the local authority delivery scheme is helping to improve energy efficiency. I also welcomed the Chancellor's announcement in the autumn statement of a new ambition that, by 2030, the UK will have reduced energy consumption from buildings and industry by 15%, as well as the continuation of the £6.6 billion of energy efficiency funding promised in this Parliament, and the promise of a further £6 billion from 2025, which would amount to a doubling of current annual investment, with the formation of a new energy efficiency taskforce to help to direct the new funding.

Some progress on decarbonisation and retrofitting is under way, but we still have a long way to go. We need to tackle the huge costs currently associated with making our homes more energy efficient. We cannot achieve decarbonisation while it remains financially unviable for homeowners, private landlords and housing associations to pay for the work. Will the Minister therefore outline

what more can be done to decarbonise our existing housing stock as well as ensuring new housing is energy efficient?

Back to the construction of new builds, which is the focus of the Bill. The Government plan to publish a future homes standard and future buildings standard in 2025. They will set new standards for how new homes and buildings should be constructed. The future buildings standard will ensure that new buildings are zero carbon-ready, with high energy efficiency and low carbon heat. As a first step towards implementation, I understand that the Government introduced an interim uplift to energy efficiency standards in June 2022 so that new non-domestic dwellings will be expected to produce 27% fewer carbon dioxide emissions. Will the Minister outline what progress has been made towards that?

Timber has the lowest embodied carbon of any mainstream building material. I also know that the net zero strategy states that the Government recognise the potential to reduce embodied carbon through material substitution where appropriate. The strategy commits the Government to work with stakeholders, including the Green Construction Board, the Construction Leadership Council, the Home Builders Federation and the Federation of Master Builders to develop a policy road map to increase the use of timber in construction in England. Naturally, with timber construction, we must also take into account considerations on fire safety and structural matters, but, as the Government have already said, there are key opportunities for the safe growth of timber use in low-rise buildings using traditional and certain modern methods of constructions, and in a wide range of commercial and non-residential settings. We should take advantage of those opportunities. I welcome the Government's commitment to take a number of steps outlined in the net zero strategy to increase the use of timber construction. The steps include financial support to develop innovative timber products—the woods into management forestry innovation fund and the timber in construction innovation fund—and working with Homes England and delivery partners to explore ways to increase timber use in the delivery of housing programmes.

In conclusion, this is a very interesting Bill. We must keep to our target of reaching net zero by 2050, and I fully agree that we must do more to ensure that the construction of new buildings results in as low a level of carbon emissions as possible. I strongly encourage my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland to continue to push the Government on this issue and to continue to have discussions on this issue, because what the Bill proposes is definitely worthy of strong consideration.

1.48 pm

**Aaron Bell** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Peter Gibson). Like him, I will speak for the third time today. I hope I will be able to speak at slightly greater length than on the previous Bill, but I am very glad we have got to this Bill from my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew). He is not only a doughty champion for the people of Broadland, as we have seen in this place but a consistent champion for the environment in everything he has done. That is what the Bill is doing today. It demonstrates that the Conservative party is on the side of the people

[Aaron Bell]

who want to make net zero a reality and who want to decarbonise our buildings. The Bill is concerned mostly with commercial buildings because of their size, but we also want to decarbonise our homes. We had some of the same discussions earlier, when debating the Electricity and Gas Transmission (Compensation) Bill presented by my right hon. Friend the Member for North Somerset (Dr Fox), on the low carbon future we need to work towards. Decarbonising is absolutely vital for the future.

In that context, I would like to draw attention to some local data. I am pleased that, from 2010 to the start of this decade, total emissions from the building sector in my local area of Newcastle-under-Lyme have fallen by 42%, which is almost exactly in line with the national average. In the commercial sector, they have been reduced by 56%, from 77,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2010 to 34,000 tonnes in 2020. In the public sector, they have been reduced by 46%, from 28,500 tonnes in 2010 to 15,500 in 2020. As my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland said in his opening remarks, however, embodied carbon is completely unregulated, and that is what the Bill seeks to address and what we are discussing in the debate. His concept of whole-life carbon and the clauses to address that in the Bill are vital. There is no sense in our measuring just what happens on an ongoing basis; that is a bit like looking at a deficit without looking at the debt. If we are incurring a huge debt through concrete or anything else when we build something, we need to take that into account.

My advice to the Government is that, on principle, we should consider applying that more broadly when we think about decarbonisation, because it is a valid criticism of the Government that, although we have been the most successful country in the G20 at reducing our carbon emissions, we are offshoring them. We need to think about that and, therefore, about whether we are doing the right thing by the environment when we do not give permission for a coal mine in this country or for offshore oil and gas. It might be the right thing by our numbers, but the Bill makes the point that we cannot look at one number in isolation—we need to look at the whole ecosystem and life cycle, as my hon. Friend talked about.

My hon. Friend is right to focus on embodied carbon, which is the sum of carbon dioxide and greenhouse gas emissions released during the whole life cycle of a product or service. That is not just the manufacturing part, which is dealt with here. It is the extraction, transportation, installation, maintenance and, ultimately, disposal, because all buildings have a life cycle and most will not last forever—happily, we are in one that has lasted longer than most.

My hon. Friend is right to look at the whole life cycle and he is right that the industry would benefit from the greater efficiency and reduced operating costs that the transparency that he seeks through his Bill would introduce. The reduction in the 33 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent each year that arises from materials that are currently wasted would definitely benefit society as a whole. The construction sector is the biggest producer of waste in England and accounts for about two thirds of the country's total.

If I may get on my hobby horse, that waste ends up in sites such as Walleys Quarry in my constituency, which is notorious for the local stink that is caused by construction

and demolition materials that end up in landfill. I know that is not just my experience. We need to reduce the total amount of waste and one way to do that is to have the transparency that the Bill seeks to introduce. That is also, of course, what young people want; I was rather touched when my hon. Friend the Member for Barrow and Furness (Simon Fell) talked about his daughter's birthday today. We have to look at what young people want for the future and make sure that we in this place are building—literally, in this case—a better, brighter, net zero future where we do not have to worry about carbon dioxide emissions or the warming of the planet.

My hon. Friend the Member for Broadland talked about what the Government need to do, and I am looking forward to hearing what the Minister has to say; I welcome her to the Dispatch Box for the first time. He mentioned that the Government have workstreams that they want to look at and he posed a rhetorical question about how much more consultation there needs to be. We often find in this place that there is always time for more consultation and there are always more opinions that can be sought, but he is right that the time for action is drawing near upon us. I am persuaded by his arguments, which is why I am glad that he has brought the Bill to the House.

My hon. Friend's fundamental point that we have to consider the whole life of something—its building and life cycle—is a sound principle that we ought to take into account in all our decisions. Too often, we are guided by statistics, as we sometimes see in other sectors as well, such as immigration, and we are drawn to a headline number that we want to minimise or maximise. Actually, the route to good government is to think about things in the round, as a whole and in the long term. That is what the Bill seeks to do, which is why I hope that it makes progress and the Government engage with what he is trying to do.

1.53 pm

**Holly Mumby-Croft** (Scunthorpe) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell). I wholeheartedly agree with his points about offshoring; he is absolutely spot on as always. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Peter Gibson) has made three cracking speeches today and scored a hat-trick of his own.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew) for bringing forward the Bill; he knows that he has my full support, although I gently point out that we in Scunthorpe are not overly worried about the precedents set in Europe. It is right that we have a discussion about the wider impact of buildings on our carbon output, beyond their day-to-day energy consumption.

As the long title of the Bill highlights, a building does not just emit carbon when it is operational, but from the moment an architect is asked to design it to the day it is demolished. The Bill sets out two ways to advance our national mission to reduce emissions, and I want to ask some questions about the proposals in the hope that it will be helpful to my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland.

First, the Bill mandates the reporting of the whole-life carbon emissions of a building. Whole-life carbon assessments help us to put a numerical value on the

impact of a development. It is also a statistic on which developers can compete with each other, hopefully driving down emissions across the sector. However, I am keen to understand how that requirement will fit in with existing criteria for buildings—something that hon. Members have raised this afternoon.

The national planning policy framework already sets out that new developments should help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions through their location, orientation and design, in line with the emissions obligations in the Climate Change Act 2008. Using those guidelines, local planning authorities then put forward a local plan, against which planning applications must be considered. Indeed, my excellent local council—probably the best council, in fact—North Lincolnshire Council, released its local plan this month, and it contained standards that encourage developers to reduce whole-life carbon emissions. The plan states that all developments should maximise the reuse or recycling of materials in new construction, and make the best possible use of existing building infrastructure. According to the plan, that should be done by minimising the use of non-renewable and unsustainable finite resources, during both construction and use. Hypothetically, if every council was as good as mine, and every planning proposal in the country was tested against standards like those, developers would already need to show that they are minimising carbon emissions through their building materials.

Mandatory reporting should only be introduced if there is a strong case for saying that local planning authorities do not put enough weight on whole-life emissions when considering applications. In short, it is important that we justify our introducing the Bill.

**Jerome Mayhew:** There are many ways to skin a cat; that is the nub of my hon. Friend's speech. However, the logical time for a detailed assessment of the whole-life carbon of a building and its construction materials is when those materials have been finalised. That is not typically at the planning stage. Yes, there will be an outline of the building, but the detailed decisions on what materials will be used are not yet made. As a result, and as happens in the Greater London Authority—its planning policy takes a similar approach—guesstimates are made of the whole-life carbon impact. Later, when building control is involved, we can get accurate calculations.

**Holly Mumby-Croft:** My hon. Friend makes a really good point, but I think he would agree with me that the ethos behind what councils such as mine are doing is exactly in line with what he aims to achieve through the Bill. To reiterate, it is important that we justify clearly why this Bill is needed, because it will cost time and money, and it is an extra hoop that we will be asking businesses and individuals to jump through.

The Bill also rightly acknowledges that the Secretary of State would need to approve a national methodology for whole-life carbon assessments. Right now, public works projects and programmes are required to have a whole-life assessment as part of the tendering requirement, but contracting authorities are encouraged to create their own specific guidelines on how that is presented, or, as my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland mentioned, to use the guidelines released by the Greater London Authority.

If we are to ultimately pass that requirement on to private developments, the top-down direction on the appropriate methodology needs to be addressed. We need to ensure that we do a decent job of that. The industry is generally familiar with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors whole-life carbon assessment, but the availability of other guidance risks creating inconsistency.

I know that the Government have plans to hold a consultation in 2023 on how best to mainstream the measurement of embodied carbon, and I would be keen to know whether my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland has explored the options available. He is an expert on this subject and could make a really valuable input to that. As he said, other countries in Europe have begun legislating for whole-life carbon assessments, and I hope that those will prove an inspiration, and will help us not to fall into any pitfalls that other countries have fallen into.

The Bill may lead to limits on embodied carbon, including carbon emitted in the acquisition, assembly, maintenance and end-of-life disposal of building materials. I know the Government are considering that, as stated in their response to the Environmental Audit Committee's report on costing carbon in construction. If we created embodied carbon limits, we would have to consider a number of factors. First, the limits would need to be relative to not just the purpose of the building, which is obvious, but the size of the development.

However, if larger developments can reduce emissions through economies of scale but smaller ones cannot do that as easily, there may be perverse outcomes for the property market. This legislation would also favour larger developers who have the capacity to better absorb emissions reduction costs. It is important to be wary of how this could affect small and medium-sized enterprises in the industry, given that we aim to increase our housing supply.

I am curious about how the Bill would address the impact of location choice on emissions. For example, should a residential or commercial property receive relief from the embodied carbon limits if the choice is made to locate it on a public transport network—for example, near to a railway or bus station? Large employers may prevent hundreds of car journeys a day if they set up shop on an easily accessible site. To take that a step further, could we find ourselves using plans for a railway station, bus route or metro in our constituency as a lever during the planning process and the calculation of those emissions?

My hon. Friend the Member for Broadland will not be surprised to hear that I also have questions regarding the steel industry. Members understand that steel is a carbon-intensive product to make. The future of the steel industry will inevitably at some point be around decarbonisation, finding greener ways to make steel and mitigating the impact of production, but while that process takes place, the adoption of embodied carbon limits on development may affect demand for steel if they do not appropriately recognise steel's value of recyclability.

Steel is one of our most sustainable materials due to its immense durability and the capacity to reuse it—it is almost endlessly recyclable and can be repurposed. Any definition of embodied carbon has to appropriately weight that value against the carbon emitted during the

[*Holly Mumby-Croft*]

production, and has to consider the lifespan and quality of the materials that we are able to produce in this country. As my hon. Friend will know, we make the finest steel in the world.

**Jerome Mayhew:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for giving way a second time. On the question of steel, she is absolutely right. If enacted, the Bill would be a great opportunity for British steel. As she will know, about 50% of all steel used for construction in this country is imported. Given the additional carbon emissions that result from the transportation of a very heavy and bulky product, British Steel and steel producers in her constituency—

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Order. Could the hon. Gentleman please face the microphones when he speaks?

**Jerome Mayhew:** British Steel and other steel producers, including the one in my hon. Friend's constituency, already have plans in place to reduce the carbon intensity of their products before 2035 and 2055 by as much as 80% by reusing scrap metal instead of exporting it abroad for reuse. Does she agree that the Bill gives impetus to this developing new sector in the steel industry, rather than restraining it?

**Holly Mumby-Croft:** I agree that we need to be extremely careful about the transportation of materials—my hon. Friend is absolutely right—but therein lies a challenge. To work through the restrictions in the Bill, we would need a level of confidence when we imported materials, be they steel or anything else. We would need confidence about how much carbon has gone into the steel; trust in the people who made it; and to know how far it has come, where the fuel for the ship has come from and how the steel in the ship was built. He is right that there are opportunities for steel, but if he is seeking to persuade me solely on the terms that he mentioned, he has not quite managed to do so.

That brings me to my next point: we need to discuss whether we have that level of assurance. Inevitably, many of the products that go into the buildings of the future will come from abroad, and we need to understand that. As always, companies in this country will play by the rules, but my hon. Friend knows that that is not always the case across the world.

Concrete is another sector that could face problems, if sustainability advantages are not weighted properly. I have a fantastic firm in my constituency, Techrete, which I am very proud of. It has contributed to a number of buildings across the country and the world. There have been 600 projects in the past 37 years, and I will draw your attention to a small number that you may have seen, Mr Deputy Speaker, because they are all quite close to where we are. The projects include King's Cross station, the Olympic village and The Broadway on Victoria Street—if you walk out of here and look to your right, Mr Deputy Speaker, before you get to M&S, you will see that building. They also include Victoria Square, the Heathrow Express tunnel—we probably made the steel for the rails in that tunnel as well, and if we did, it will be the finest steel in the world—Wembley

Park and University College London Hospital. On the South Bank, on the other side of the river, there are some buildings that we made, and there is also the Tottenham Hotspur stadium, Westfield shopping centre, the Imperial War Museum, St Bartholomew's Hospital, the V&A and the lettering at Arsenal.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Let us hear from the Minister now; there will be opportunities later for other Members to come in.

2.6 pm

**The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (Dehenna Davison):** I start by putting on record my sincere condolences to Wales for their loss today, and I wish England the best of luck for their match against the USA later. We will all be very much cheering them on.

I sincerely thank my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew) for introducing the Bill, and for his incredible efforts to raise awareness of embedded carbon in construction. He is a fantastic champion for all things environmental, and has been right from the point of his election; protecting the local environment was part of his election plan, and he has been a great champion for the measures that we are discussing through his work on the Environmental Audit Committee.

**Jonathan Reynolds (Stalybridge and Hyde) (Lab/Co-op):** Given the schedule that we are on today, our time would be best used by allowing the Minister to reply in full, but I congratulate the hon. Member for Broadland (Jerome Mayhew) on his Bill. We support it. I agree with his proposition that industry would welcome further regulation in this area, and I wish him well in his endeavours in this field.

**Dehenna Davison:** I completely echo the shadow Minister's sentiments.

As hon. Members will know, the Government considered closely the Environmental Audit Committee's report, "Building to net zero: costing carbon in construction", and its recommendations. In our response, we were pleased to set out details of our work in this area, including our plan to consult next year on our approach to measuring and reducing embodied carbon. As we made clear in that response, reducing embodied carbon in construction is critical to meeting our net zero target. I think that all of us across the House can agree on that, but we disagree with my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland about the exact mechanisms and timings for achieving that. That is why, I am sorry to say, the Government cannot support the Bill today. It is not because we disagree with the Bill's aims, but because ambitious work is already well under way in this area. Passing the Bill ahead of that work would risk adverse effects on our housing supply, on small and medium-sized enterprises and, given the reach of our construction industry and supply chains, on other sectors of the economy.

That said, although we are not supporting this Bill, I am incredibly grateful for my hon. Friend's enthusiasm, and for keeping this topic at the forefront of our minds. The Under-Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, my hon. Friend the Member for

North East Derbyshire (Lee Rowley), who is responsible for local government and building safety, and officials in my Department are keen to work collaboratively on this vital agenda with my hon. Friend. I know that the Minister is happy to meet my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland to talk through the detail of his work.

On embodied carbon and the work being undertaken, my hon. Friend has already outlined the process for calculating whole-life carbon, so I will not go into that in too much detail, but we do know that the focus until now has been on reductions in operational carbon. As that process happens and we reduce the amount of operational carbon in construction, embodied carbon emissions will start accounting for more of a building's whole-life carbon emissions. He is therefore absolutely right that we must act with the construction industry to address the issue now. Equally, we cannot be naive about the scale of the challenge ahead of us.

Reducing embodied carbon is exceptionally difficult across the built environment—not just in buildings—which is why the Government have been planning ahead to tackle those emissions head-on. The industrial decarbonisation strategy and the transport decarbonisation plan, for example, set out how large sectors of the economy will decarbonise, and the England trees action plan looks to increase the production of timber, which can be used to replace higher-carbon materials in construction when safe to do so. As those policies take effect and industries that supply construction decarbonise, we expect that in turn the embodied carbon emissions of buildings will fall.

We recognise that those efforts alone will not be enough. As pointed out by both the Climate Change Committee and the Environmental Audit Committee, our choice of materials and how we design and construct buildings will also need to change dramatically.

**Ben Everitt:** I hope the Minister agrees that we are already taking steps in that direction, and that the future homes standard and the future buildings standard will be a great leap forward in how we set standards for new buildings to be constructed and ensure that new buildings are zero carbon-ready and efficient.

**Dehenna Davison:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend, who I know is incredibly passionate about construction, building and all things planning and will continue to help champion the agenda in the coming months and years.

I think many in industry would agree that, as hon. Members across the House have highlighted, one of the biggest challenges in tackling embodied carbon right now is a lack of data, because consideration of embodied carbon is relatively new compared with operational carbon for both industry and Government. Without enough information at product and building level, industry cannot make decisions about design and construction, and the Government cannot establish the right benchmarks or targets, either.

**Jerome Mayhew:** It is generous of the Minister to give way. Given that data is what the Government need, does she not agree that the format of the Bill, which is to report now—deliver data—and decide later, in 2027,

serves the purpose of providing the data that the Government need so they can make an informed decision as part of the Bill?

**Dehenna Davison:** I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his contribution. I know that was the intent of the design of the Bill—we have discussed that before today. The important thing to note is that we will be consulting not just on how we reduce embodied carbon but on how specifically we go about gathering that data, because that data collection will be so important in ensuring that we can decarbonise embodied carbon. I hope he will appreciate that that is one of the reasons why we are keen to consult before we take any further action.

I want to quickly highlight some of the contributions made by hon. Members across the House. My hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Peter Gibson) raised some fantastic points about broader decarbonisation and asked some questions about decarbonisation within existing housing stock. I know that we are pressed for time, so I will write to him with some further details on that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell) was absolutely right to highlight that the Government are on the side of those who want to decarbonise. For all the rhetoric, this Conservative Government's action on decarbonisation has been exemplary, and some of the small examples highlighted by hon. Members during this short debate have really shown that. I note that he mentioned the ever-famous “Stop the Stink” campaign, about which he is so passionate, and it would be remiss of me not to mention his incredible campaigning on that.

Finally, my hon. Friend the Member for Scunthorpe (Holly Mumby-Croft) talked about the planning framework as being incredibly important on the decarbonisation agenda. She is absolutely right, and I congratulate her and North Lincolnshire Council on their brilliant progress on that. It would be remiss of me not to thank her for her stellar work in championing the British steel industry and, in particular, the steelworks in Scunthorpe in her own constituency, on which she has been and is an incredibly passionate campaigner.

I will conclude, in the hope that others may make a brief contribution, and in the hope that my short speech has explained some of the system's complexity and why the Government cannot support the Bill today, even though we empathise with the sentiments and ambition underpinning it. We are concerned that passing such legislation now could bounce the industry into making changes for which it is not fully prepared. In the current context, at a time when the SMEs that depend on this industry are struggling and facing a hard time, the industry may not be able to afford these changes. We do not want to run the risk of negatively affecting the industry and the market in ways that we do not intend, which is why consulting seems like the most practical and sensible solution.

I reiterate my thanks to my hon. Friend the Member for Broadland for all his dedicated work in introducing this Bill. Again, I make it crystal clear that the Government's opposition to the Bill is in no way a dismissal of the seriousness of the issue or of our commitment to tackling it. Officials in my Department are working with many of the supporters of this Bill to carry on the essential work of measuring and reducing embodied carbon in construction.

[Dehenna Davison]

Together, I believe we can adopt the right approach that lets industry and markets properly prepare for change, while not letting up in our fight to tackle carbon emissions, to win the race to net zero and to build the cleaner, greener homes and buildings this country needs.

2.16 pm

**Ben Everitt** (Milton Keynes North) (Con): It is a pleasure to follow the Minister. This is the first time I have spoken in a debate with her at the Dispatch Box.

I am sure the whole House agrees that the need to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions is of critical importance. In 2019, I was proud to stand on a manifesto that committed to reaching net zero by 2050. I strongly believe in the need to invest in green energy and infrastructure while finding new and innovative ways to cut carbon emissions.

The Government's 10-point plan to bring about a green industrial revolution is a critical part of the plan to decarbonise our economy. Part of this plan involves carbon capture, usage and storage, and I welcome the Government's £200 million investment to become a global leader in this new technology. Moreover, the Government's net zero strategy has set the UK on a path towards lowering our reliance on fossil fuels. We are investing in green energy, helping businesses transition to green energy and, most importantly, helping to secure our energy security long into the future. With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, this is now vital.

More locally, in my beautiful Milton Keynes North constituency, we are proud of our decarbonisation efforts, particularly in transport. Over the past year, Milton Keynes City Council has received more than £800,000

of Government funding to install public electric vehicle charging points. I am especially proud that Milton Keynes is one of the best places to drive an electric car, but there is more work to be done.

We need to explore all avenues for reducing carbon emissions as we take this country forward. As of now, buildings are responsible for approximately 30% of our national emissions, so this is an area in which we can make great strides. However, I welcome the fact that the Government have already made an important commitment to reduce emissions from public sector buildings by 75% by 2037.

We need to find more ways to ensure that our infrastructure is fit for the future. As we embark on levelling up the country, we need to ensure that the buildings we construct allow us to achieve the ambitious targets we have set ourselves. This Bill rightly addresses the issue of embodied carbon—the emissions produced by a building's materials. As of now, the UK's built environment contributes a quarter of our total greenhouse gas emissions, and that raises important questions about how we construct our buildings. I welcome the intention of this Bill. By establishing limits on embodied carbon emissions in building construction, we are taking steps towards a more sustainable construction sector.

Research has shown that among common building materials, timber has the lowest embodied carbon, as my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Peter Gibson) pointed out. Where appropriate, using more timber in building construction is certainly an option, but it needs to be part of a well-rounded approach. That way, we can make positive strides towards a low-carbon economy.

*Ordered,* That the debate be now adjourned.—(Rebecca Harris.)

*Debate to be resumed on Friday 9 December.*



## **Fertility Treatment (Employment Rights) Bill**

### *Second Reading*

2.20 pm

**Nickie Aiken** (Cities of London and Westminster) (Con): I beg to move, That the Bill be read a Second time.

Fertility treatment affects hundreds of thousands of people from all ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds—infertility does not discriminate. Treatment is emotionally draining, costly, risky and a very long process. Someone might go through multiple cycles before conceiving, and they will quite often fail to conceive at all.

According to the latest figures from the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority—the UK fertility regulator—it takes on average three cycles of in vitro fertilisation to achieve success. Cycles can be unpredictable, and women have to deal with the symptoms, the risk of complications and the daily practicalities, such as self-injecting with hormones. Undergoing fertility treatment is difficult at the best of times, but doing so while juggling a job is particularly tough.

Unlike for pregnancy, maternity and paternity, there is no legislation to compel employers to give time off work for fertility treatment or even initial consultation. Women are, of course, protected from pregnancy-related unfair treatment and discrimination throughout the protected period. In the case of fertility treatments, however, the protected period begins only at implantation stage, not before. In practice, there is little recourse to legal, medical, practical and emotional support for men and women undergoing fertility treatment.

That leaves people vulnerable to unfavourable treatment or dismissal during the early stages of treatment, and without legal recourse. I hope that my Bill will address that significant gap in the law.

**Aaron Bell** (Newcastle-under-Lyme) (Con): I congratulate my hon. Friend on her Bill, which is in the best traditions of private Members' Bills, because although the matter does not affect that many of our constituents, for those whom it does affect, it does so quite profoundly. I realise that we do not have much time today—I hope she will make more progress on another occasion—but I want to wish her well and congratulate her on her work encouraging employers to adopt some of the principles in the Bill voluntarily.

**Nickie Aiken:** My hon. Friend is absolutely right. Only a small percentage of the population is affected by fertility treatment, but it is so important that we support those people through what is quite often a difficult time.

**Dean Russell** (Watford) (Con): I thank my hon. Friend for introducing this Bill on a matter that is so important to so many people. The point that she just made is ultimately about the stresses. Many constituents have told me that going through IVF is emotionally challenging. For many people, knowing that they have the surety of time off work during that period would make a huge difference.

**Nickie Aiken:** I thank my hon. Friend for that intervention, for his support and for the time he gave me to discuss my Bill when he was a Minister at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

**Sir Mike Penning** (Hemel Hempstead) (Con): As my hon. Friend the Member for Newcastle-under-Lyme (Aaron Bell) said, fertility treatment does not affect everybody across our constituencies, but that does not matter. As my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) knows—I have been in contact with her about it—the issue affects some of my constituents, and if something is wrong for one, 1,000 or 10,000 constituents, we in this place should put it right.

**Nickie Aiken:** My right hon. Friend is right. I have been in contact with his constituent, who contacted me via his office, which I thank for its support with the Bill too.

The organisations with which I have been working include Fertility Matters at Work, whose recent research shows that a third of people going through IVF treatment have considered leaving their job rather than face possible workplace discrimination. Its findings also indicate that many people do not feel comfortable even discussing IVF treatment openly with their employer or their colleagues at work, so they struggle through the journey largely unsupported.

**Matt Rodda** (Reading East) (Lab): The hon. Lady is making an excellent speech on an important issue that means so much to so many of our constituents. I commend her for her work with employers and for bringing the Bill to the House today.

**Nickie Aiken:** I thank the shadow Minister for his support. I put on record the support that I have received across the House. My friend the hon. Member for Pontypridd (Alex Davies-Jones) has been particularly supportive; I know the personal journey that she has had. I have been really touched by the support from Members of every party in this place.

Some people surveyed by Fertility Matters at Work said that they feared that undertaking fertility treatment would be held against them, that they would not be considered for the next promotion or that they would face redundancy. When they did have a conversation with their employers, many felt that it was used against them when future opportunities and progressions arose.

On my journey looking into the rights of those who undertake fertility treatment, I have been contacted by people across the country, especially women. They all said the same: once it was out in the open that they were undertaking fertility treatment or even thinking about it, they were sidelined for promotion or did not get the extra project that they had hoped for, because it was thought that they might not be around so much. It was thanks to a constituent of mine that I came to the subject; I am afraid she has to remain anonymous because of her situation with her employer in the City of London.

**The Minister for Industry and Investment Security (Ms Nusrat Ghani):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster (Nickie Aiken) on promoting the Bill. Briefly, may I confirm that the present Minister will work closely with her, as the previous Minister, my hon. Friend the Member for

[Ms Nusrat Ghani]

Watford (Dean Russell), did? I also congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Cities of London and Westminster on the fertility workplace pledge, which I think she is just about to come to.

**Nickie Aiken:** I thank the Minister for her warm words. I also thank the Minister responsible for employment law, who has been extremely supportive and has met me to discuss the issue.

My constituent, who ended up having to sign a non-disclosure agreement and is not allowed to speak about her experience, feels that the situation has to be righted for the next generation of women. I am delighted to be working with her, with Fertility Matters at Work and with Fertility Network UK, who have all been so supportive.

As well as trying to get this private Member's Bill through Parliament, I have launched a voluntary scheme called the fertility workplace pledge, as the Minister says. Hon. Members may have heard of it; I have invited many of them to take part. It is about encouraging employers not to wait for the law to change, but to do the right thing now: train line managers to understand what fertility treatment means, support people going through it, have a fertility ambassador and fertility policies, and work with employees undergoing treatment to give them the flexibility they need in the workplace. I am delighted that the House of Commons has signed up to my workplace pledge, as well as NatWest, the Co-op—

**Sir Mike Penning:** Other banks are available.

**Nickie Aiken:** Other banks are available. Others include Channel 4 and many different law firms, such as Burgess Mee Family Law; Natalie Sutherland has been an amazing advocate for fertility policies in the workplace. I pay tribute to all those amazing organisations. If hon. Members would like to persuade employers in their constituencies to sign up to the workplace pledge, they should talk to me, because I have plenty of information—

2.30 pm

*The Deputy Speaker interrupted the business (Standing Order No. 11(2)).*

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 9 December.*

## Business without Debate

### BRITISH GOODS (PUBLIC SECTOR PURCHASING DUTY) BILL

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 20 January 2023.*

### CONSUMER PRICING BILL

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 20 January 2023.*

### BROADCASTING (LISTED SPORTING EVENTS) BILL

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 20 January 2023.*

### EMPLOYMENT (APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS) BILL

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 20 January 2023.*

### PUPPY IMPORT (PROHIBITION) BILL

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 20 January 2023.*

### PUBLIC SECTOR WEBSITE IMPERSONATION BILL

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 20 January 2023.*

### HUNTING TROPHIES (IMPORT PROHIBITION) (NO. 2) BILL

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 20 January 2023.*

**John Spellar** (Warley) (Lab): On a point of order, Mr Deputy Speaker. How might I convey to those outside who have taken a huge interest in the Bill that, although the House has shown support for the excellent Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill from the hon. Member for Crawley (Henry Smith), I am continuing to support the progress of this Bill to prevent the Government backsliding, as they have on previous occasions?

**Mr Deputy Speaker** (Mr Nigel Evans): The right hon. Gentleman has just skilfully done that.

### ARMENIAN GENOCIDE (RECOGNITION) BILL

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 20 January 2023.*

### HOUSE OF LORDS (HEREDITARY PEERS) (ABOLITION OF BY-ELECTIONS) BILL

*Motion made,* That the Bill be now read a Second time.

**Hon. Members:** Object.

*Bill to be read a Second time on Friday 20 January 2023.*

## Pilot Officer William McMullen: Posthumous Recognition

*Motion made, and Question proposed.* That this House do now adjourn.—(Nigel Huddleston.)

2.32 pm

**Peter Gibson** (Darlington) (Con): It is a genuine privilege and a huge pleasure to have been granted an Adjournment debate—my first—on the posthumous recognition of Pilot Officer William Stuart McMullen of 428 Squadron Royal Canadian Airforce—Darlington’s “Gallant Airman”. I have sought it for many months to pay tribute to a man who is worthy of this House’s recognition and a local hero for the people of Darlington.

In preparing for this debate, I was determined to let William’s family know that it was taking place. Luckily, a constituent is in correspondence with William’s daughter Donna, and with the kind help of Chris Lloyd at *The Northern Echo*, I was able to speak to her by telephone at her home in Ontario, Canada, and I believe that she will watch proceedings via parliamentlive.tv. I also thank my former researcher Jake Freeman and my current researcher Theo Wrigley, who are in the Gallery, for their help.

I was surprised to discover that *Hansard* contains no record of William McMullen’s story, so I am grateful to Mr Speaker for granting this debate to right that wrong. I have three aims: first, to tell William’s story of sacrifice; secondly, to ensure that his actions and memory are on the record in this House; and thirdly, on behalf of my constituents, to ask that William and his family receive the recognition that I and many others in Darlington believe is owed to them.

Pilot Officer William McMullen was probably born in Toronto in 1912. I say “probably” because at the time of his death in 1945 in Darlington there appeared to be some confusion about his age in the press, with its being variously reported as 29 or 33. He won his wings in November 1942, and in 1944 he left behind his wife Thelma and daughter Donna, who was six at the time, and came to England to learn to fly Lancaster bombers. At around this time, on 16 August 1944, six Canadian fliers became available when their pilot broke his leg after they had bailed out of their burning Lancaster over France. They teamed up with McMullen, and on Christmas eve they were posted to RAF Middleton St George—or, as it is better known now, Teesside International Airport.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, let me take you back 77 years, to Saturday 13 January 1945, and tell you the story of Pilot Officer McMullen’s brave and heroic actions in the air that evening. I want to record my thanks again to Chris Lloyd, the chief feature writer on *The Northern Echo*, whose research has allowed me to retell this story today.

At 5.47 that evening, William and the rest of his crew took off from Goosepool, aboard the Lancaster bomber KB793. The flight was meant to be a routine three-hour navigation exercise, carried out at 10,000 feet over the North York Moors. The exercise went off without a hitch, and at 8.35 pm, with the exercise over, McMullen called Goosepool for “joining instructions” and was told he would be touching down within 10 minutes. The engineer, Sergeant “Lew” Lewellin, wrote in his log:

“All temperatures and pressures normal. All four engines running evenly.”

Almost immediately after this, however, a fault developed in the outer port Rolls-Royce Merlin engine, which emitted a shower of sparks into the dark night. The shower quickly became a sheet of flame, and a red glow began spreading up the wing.

At 2,500 feet over Acklam, with three engines still working and McMullen still in control of the plane, he gave the order to abandon the aircraft. All six of William’s crew parachuted safely to earth, drifting downwards along what is now the A66 between Elton and Sadberge. At 600 feet, engineer Lewellin was the last to leave. It was reported that as he stood by the main door, he looked over to McMullen at the controls and gestured for him to leave. But McMullen’s mind was already made up. According to the Air Ministry, over the roar of the developing catastrophe he replied with the last known words he uttered: “It’s only me for it. There are thousands down below.”

William could have jumped to safety—Lewellin landed unscathed a mere 500 yards from the crash site—but in that split second, he took a selfless decision and chose to remain at his post until the end. As the plane continued its descent, he would have seen Darlington, with its population of 80,000 at the time, laid out before him. He might even have seen hundreds of Darlingtonians, drawn by the unusual sound of an engine in trouble, rushing from their homes to view what was unfolding in the skies above them. One eyewitness told *The Northern Echo*:

“It seemed to circle round, and looked as though it was going to drop somewhere in the town. Then it turned east and a few seconds later we heard a crash, followed by a few muffled explosions and the glare of a fire.”

In his last moments, William had fought to keep the plane away from the homes of the Yarm Road area and, at 8.49 pm, its undercarriage skimmed the rooftops of the last of the houses and plunged to earth in a field belonging to Lingfield Farm. It cartwheeled 150 yards across the soil, losing various bits of flaming fuselage as it went, its fuel tanks exploding vividly and its bullets dancing like firecrackers. The hay and oats in the farm’s Dutch barn caught fire, illuminating the parachutes of McMullen’s crew as they drifted down to safety.

Pilot Officer William McMullen, sadly, was dead, having been killed on impact. He had been catapulted, still strapped to his seat, 120 yards out of the windscreen, although his flying boots were found later in the aircraft still attached to the rubber pedals in the cockpit where he had remained in those dying seconds. William was a hero to the end. He could have joined his crewmates and bailed out to save himself, but he chose to save the lives of hundreds of Darlington residents. The official accident report said that a mechanical fault in a piston had caused the initial fire and noted that

“the pilot retained control of the aircraft sufficiently long enough to avoid crashing into the built-up area of Darlington.”

McMullen is now buried with his comrades from the Royal Canadian Air Force in Stonefall Cemetery in Harrogate. In the immediate aftermath of the events, all Darlington was convinced that William had remained in the plane to save their lives. Immediately, the *Northern Echo*’s letters page began to fill up with correspondence calling for the “gallant airman”, as Pilot Officer McMullen had become to be known, to be memorialised.

[Peter Gibson]

The desire to see William recognised began almost immediately after his death. On 17 January 1945, Darlington mayor Jimmy Blumer wrote to the *Northern Echo* "hear all sides" section to say that he was trying to get through officialdom and make contact with McMullen's family in Canada. James O Walker, honorary secretary of the Twenty Club wrote:

"Our members feel the townspeople's appreciation of the courageous act of the bomber pilot, who on Saturday night by giving his life undoubtedly averted serious loss of life in Darlington should be shown in some tangible form, either as a memorial or as an assistant to his dependants."

This all led to the gallant airman appeal. The people of Darlington quickly donated £1,000—a huge sum at that time—to be sent to McMullen's widow and his daughter. However, Thelma McMullen refused to accept the money, saying that it would be better spent in war-ravaged Britain.

The appeal, run by the Twenty Club, decided to endow two children's cots at Darlington Memorial Hospital. In the days before the NHS, hospitals such as that relied on voluntary contributions. In the 1930s and 1940s, groups, firms and individuals in the Darlington area collected money to sponsor a bed or a cot. Plaques with sponsors' names on were screwed to the wall above the bed that their contributions paid for. As time has moved on, those plaques have been taken down and only one appears to survive.

Appropriately, it is the gallant airman plaque that survives. It can now be seen on the wall inside the entrance to the memorial hall at Darlington Memorial Hospital, as an enduring legacy for such a great man. In addition, a memorial stone and plaque stand near the crash site, and the adjacent road is now named McMullen Road in his honour. In 1985, Donna Barber, William's daughter, even visited the road named after her father and saw the site of his brave actions.

Eventually, officialdom gave Darlington's mayor Blumer Thelma McMullen's home address. He wrote to her about her late husband, saying:

"By his actions, the pilot realised that he was steering himself to certain death. Not only Darlington, but the whole of the district was stirred to profound admiration and gratitude which could not be expressed in words at this act of supreme sacrifice."

He concluded:

"For sheer self-sacrificing heroism, your husband's actions will be remembered and honoured by the people of Darlington for years to come."

Through their mayor's words to Thelma, the people of Darlington had made a promise that William's actions would never be forgotten.

The feelings of gratitude and respect to him remain among the people of Darlington even to this day. Every year, we mark William's heroic actions. Indeed, two years ago, on the 75th anniversary of his death, over 100 people, including myself, even braved Storm Brendan to mark the anniversary to the minute when, for the first time in decades, the battered and bent propeller from McMullen's plane was returned to the scene. It took 50 years for local aviation historian Geoff Hill, the chairman of the Middleton St George Memorial Association, to track that propeller down. He discovered it in an aviation collection in Northumberland. It is hoped that the propeller will eventually go on display

with Geoff's collection of memorabilia relating to RAF Middleton St George when it is rehoused in the revamped Teesside airport. Even last January, when, due to covid, we could not gather, we met online and were joined by Lieutenant Colonel Ryan Kean—or Moose, as he is called—who leads the squadron that succeeded William's.

We remember his actions in Darlington, but William has never received official recognition for his actions, and yet had William been on an operational flight rather than a training exercise, he would probably have won the Victoria Cross. While William's sacrifice was extraordinary, we must remember that he was not alone. We know that thousands of Canadian pilots were based in England during the war, with a number based at RAF Middleton St George, just outside my constituency. It is fitting that we celebrate our ties with our Commonwealth partners and the struggle that we shared together to fight tyranny in Europe. I am acutely aware of our shared struggle, having only recently secured my own grandfather's posthumous Arctic Star. My grandfather died serving on the convoys that were ably supported by our Commonwealth partners and, for years, went without medallic recognition.

I have made numerous attempts to secure recognition for William since I was elected in 2019, having written to the Honours and Appointments Secretariat on a number of occasions and submitted written questions on this issue. Each time, I have received the same response: no matter what the circumstances, it is considered that those who had full access to the facts of the case contemporaneously were best placed to make judgments regarding medallic recognition. I accept that this is how the honours system works. However, it does not change the fact that William has not received the recognition he deserves for his historic actions.

Stories of bravery and even heroism were plentiful in those last months of the second world war. Indeed, on the same day that *The Northern Echo* told William's story, the paper included the news that five north-east airmen had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for their gallantry.

Pilot Officer William McMullen is a true hero. We will never know how many lives he saved through his sacrifice that night, but his actions have touched the lives of so many people in Darlington. I am proud that I have had the opportunity to put William's story on the record in this House, and I am grateful to the Minister for being here to listen to it. William deserves official recognition, and I leave the Minister with this question: will he work with me to ensure that Pilot Officer McMullen receives the official recognition, be it medallic or otherwise, that he so truly deserves?

2.48 pm

**The Minister for Defence People, Veterans and Service Families (Dr Andrew Murrison):** I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Darlington (Peter Gibson) on securing the debate and providing such a powerful tribute to Royal Canadian Air Force Pilot Officer William McMullen. In every sense of the word, he was a hero. The insight that my hon. Friend has provided of a man prepared to stay at the controls of his burning Lancaster bomber to the very last, saving both the lives of his crew and the lives of Darlington residents, is poignant and inspiring. How many finding themselves in such an unimaginable situation would be likely to act in the

same selfless manner? All who have been privileged to hear this debate will now have the details of the events of 13 January 1945 etched firmly in their minds.

I know that my hon. Friend has long been a passionate advocate for the posthumous medallic recognition by the United Kingdom of Pilot Officer McMullen. Indeed, he has written with equal passion stating his case on behalf of his constituency. I have no doubt about the great importance of Pilot Officer McMullen to the people of Darlington, especially to those families who would have been living in the homes of Yarm Road, whose roofs were scraped by the undercarriage of the plane on its final descent. No praise can be high enough for his actions that day.

My hon. Friend outlined three aims for today's important debate: to tell Pilot Officer McMullen's story of sacrifice; to ensure his actions and memory are on the record of this House; and to ask that Pilot Officer McMullen received posthumous medallic recognition. I hope he considers his immediate objectives met, but I must turn now to his specific question about posthumous medallic recognition. There are a number of points I need to make. In doing so, I would like to say that in my hon. Friend's place I, too, have in the past been part of a campaign to secure medallic recognition for individuals whom I felt had not been recognised sufficiently well during their lifetime, so I am sympathetic.

I am loth to be the stony, unyielding face of the bureaucracy, but the fact is that British awards—that is to say, gallantry awards—are not granted retrospectively. There is good reason for that, and I am sure my hon. Friend will understand. Action is not taken more than five years after the event in question. Neither this Government nor any previous Government have departed from that general rule. Next, all significant battles and operations which took place during the second world war were discussed in great detail after the war had ended. In June 1946, it was recommended that that no further recommendations for gallantry awards arising from service during the war would be considered after 1950. Decisions were made by those concerned at the time to the best of their ability, on the basis of all the evidence before them, and, in the great majority of cases, their very considerable experience of conflict and the application of the honours system. The decision was approved by His Majesty King George VI, whose ruling remains in force today. Finally, and in any event, since Pilot Officer McMullen was Canadian, any further recognition due to him in the form of a posthumous medal would, this far out, be a matter for the Canadian Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, 55,573 Bomber Command air crew lost their lives during world war two. As time passes and the rawness recedes, we risk forgetting the

enormous deeds of sacrifice and service that lay behind those numbers, and what those lives meant to the loved ones they left behind. Sadly, far too many individuals who served did not receive formal recognition, but, as this debate reminds us, that does not mean that their heroism should be forgotten—very far from it. Today, the RAF Bomber Command memorial in Green Park in London, which was unveiled a decade ago, stands as a stirring tribute to both the pilots and ground crews who made the ultimate sacrifice. However, it feels right that the people of Darlington have also erected a specific memorial dedicated to Pilot Officer McMullen, and that McMullen Road in the town is named in his honour. I know his daughter has visited since then, and I hope she was assured that her father's sacrifice has not been forgotten by those who have every reason to be grateful to him.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for the opportunity he has provided today to raise awareness of Pilot Officer McMullen's inspiring deeds some 77 years ago. Thanks to his efforts, they are now firmly and indelibly written into the parliamentary record. He has also afforded us the opportunity once more to recognise and pay tribute to the herculean efforts of our finest generation in defence of our freedoms. Pilot Officer McMullen joined 428 Squadron, and its motto was "Usque ad finem", or "To the very end." William McMullen unquestionably kept that promise.

It is perhaps also worth noting that the plaque my hon. Friend mentioned as being situated in the entrance to the memorial hall at Darlington Hospital reads:

"His life beside the many he regarded as nought. Selfless, he lived this token quite unsought."

Seventy-seven years on, William S. McMullen of British Columbia remains an inspiration to the RAF, to the people of Darlington and to the whole United Kingdom and Canada. As my hon. Friend so eloquently expressed, his name will now remain on the record in the annals of this House as a permanent tribute to his heroism.

**Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Nigel Evans):** Peter, I have chaired many Adjournment debates, but none better than today's. The word "hero" is bandied around and abused, but not in William McMullen's case. I thank you for bringing it to our attention. As the Minister said, he has now been properly recognised in Parliament and his name will live on in *Hansard*. I am sure you will send a copy to the family with the love of every Member of Parliament.

*Question put and agreed to.*

2.55 pm

*House adjourned.*



# Written Statements

Friday 25 November 2022

## BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### COP27: UK Presidency

**The Minister for Climate (Graham Stuart):** After COP26 we were able to say with credibility that we kept the pulse of 1.5°C alive. We welcome the progress made at COP27, but there is no cause for complacency.

We have seen progress since COP26 during our presidency year, and outstanding work is taking place to cement the gains of the Glasgow climate pact. A full breakdown of progress has been captured in the “Presidency’s Outcomes” publication, and I will place a copy in the Libraries of both Houses.

In the challenging geopolitical context and amidst a global energy crisis, the UK’s objective at COP27 was to secure continued delivery of the Glasgow climate pact, make further progress to keep 1.5° in reach and support those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister pledged at COP27 to speed up the transition to renewables to create new high-wage jobs, protect UK energy security and deliver on net zero.

He also chaired a high-level meeting on forests, which built on momentum secured through the Glasgow leaders’ declaration for forests and land use.

With regard to support for the most vulnerable, the Prime Minister reinforced that the UK is delivering on the commitment of £11.6 billion in international climate finance, and made a number of other financial announcements within this: the tripling of funding for climate adaptation from £500 million in 2019 to £1.5 billion in 2025; recommitting to spend £1.5 billion on forests; £90 million for conservation programmes in the Congo basin; £65 million in funding for the nature, people and climate investment fund; and £65.5 million for the clean energy innovation facility.

In parallel to COP27, at the G20, leaders agreed to implement fully their Glasgow climate pact commitments to limit global warming to 1.5°C and accelerate coal phase-down and the transition to clean energy.

To demonstrate delivery on COP26 commitments, we hosted a series of high-level side events at COP27 which helped to drive progress on the key sectoral areas: the breakthrough agenda, forests and nature, energy transition and zero-emission vehicles. Events at the UK pavilion covered a range of topics, including finance, adaptation, indigenous leadership, youth and education, gender, forests and nature, energy and sustainable agriculture.

The negotiations were challenging, concluding only in the early hours of Sunday morning. The UK negotiating team played a key role throughout and particularly in the final 24 hours in mobilising countries behind ambition. The deal made significant progress on loss and damage, and the agreement that was reached to establish new funding arrangements, including a fund, took place

against the backdrop of increasing climate impacts globally. Designed and implemented well, this has the potential to increase support for the most vulnerable from a range of sources.

The deal in Egypt also preserves the historic commitments to keep 1.5° alive that countries agreed to last year in the Glasgow climate pact. The UK rallied nearly half the parties to push for further ambition, including on fossil fuels and peaking global emissions before 2025. Those were not taken up by the presidency, but we did secure a reiteration of the commitment made in Glasgow for countries to revisit their NDCs before the end of 2023 to ensure that they are aligned with the Paris agreement, as the UK has done. Progress was made on the work programmes on mitigation and adaptation agreed in Glasgow, on carbon markets and on the new post-2025 finance goal.

My right hon. Friends the Foreign Secretary, the Business Secretary and the Environment Secretary also announced a range of investments throughout the summit, including more than £100 million to support developing economies to respond to climate-related disasters and £65 million for the world’s first large-scale industry transition programme.

Just energy transition partnerships were pioneered with UK leadership at COP26. At COP27, a joint statement on the South Africa investment plan was published during the world leaders’ summit, while the Prime Minister joined other world leaders announcing the Indonesia JETP at the G20 summit in Bali.

The Government are grateful to my right hon. Friend the Member for Reading West (Alok Sharma) and his team for their service and leadership as COP presidency over the past two and half years. The UK will continue to deliver net zero in the UK and to support other countries in their own transitions, ensuring we leave no communities behind and keep 1.5°C alive. We will use all our levers—including through the G7 and G20, our bilateral partnerships, our climate finance, trade and diplomacy, as well as our deep UK expertise and track record—to uphold the legacy of COP26, and we will continue to work with all countries through to COP28 in the UAE.

[HCWS387]

## JUSTICE

### Intimate Images Abuse Offences

**The Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice (Dominic Raab):** I wish to inform the House that the Government intend to legislate to introduce a package of new criminal offences on intimate image abuse when Parliamentary time allows. We also intend to make some of these changes earlier by way of Government amendments to the Online Safety Bill.

Intimate or sexual images can now easily be taken, copied or shared without consent and used for unacceptable, cruel or malicious reasons. This behaviour can be highly intrusive, humiliating and distressing. It is therefore important that we ensure that our legal framework effectively deals with this behaviour.

The Government intend to bring forward a package of criminal offences based on the recommendations made in the Law Commission's report, "Taking, Making and Sharing of Intimate Images Without Consent", which was published in July 2022. We will create a new "base" offence of taking or sharing an intimate image without consent, and three further, more serious, offences. Two of these more serious offences will cover instances where the intimate image is taken or shared without consent, and with the intention of obtaining sexual gratification, or of causing humiliation, alarm or distress to the victim. The third more serious offence will target those "threatening to share" an intimate image. Finally, we intend to introduce a fifth new offence, aimed at prohibiting a person from installing equipment with the intention, or enabling them or another person, to commit the offence of taking an intimate image without consent.

These measures will involve the repeal or amendment of several current offences, and the creation of a new, more coherent package of measures. While we have already created criminal offences to deal with upskirting, revenge porn and breastfeeding voyeurism, this new package of offences will also ensure that we deliver on the PM's pledge to criminalise "downblousing".

These new offences will provide the police with the powers they need to fully investigate this increasingly intrusive and disturbing behaviour, and address mounting public concern around the law's ability to deal effectively with the harms caused by non-consensual taking, making and sharing of intimate images.

In addition to this medium-term plan, we do have the opportunity in the Online Safety Bill to address some of the current concerns with the criminal law. We will therefore bring forward a Government amendment to the Online Safety Bill during the Lords stages of the Bill to address concerns in relation to the sending of intimate images, including addressing matters concerning intent and the type of images the offence will cover. Introducing these specific measures in the Online Safety Bill will ensure that we provide victims with the additional protection they deserve sooner rather than later.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks for all the important work that the Law Commission has carried out as part of this review, which has enabled the Government to conclude there is a need to legislate.

[HCWS388]



# Ministerial Corrections

*Friday 25 November 2022*

## WORK AND PENSIONS

### **Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Bill**

*The following is an extract from Second Reading of the Bill on 28 October 2022.*

**Tom Pursglove:** As my hon. Friend said, the CMS has collected and arranged more than £1 billion-worth of child maintenance payments each year since 2019.

*[Official Report, 28 October 2022, Vol. 721, c. 566.]*

*Letter of correction from the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, the hon. Member for Corby (Tom Pursglove):*

An error has been identified in the response given to my hon. Friend the Member for Hastings and Rye (Sally-Ann Hart).

The correct response should have been:

**Tom Pursglove:** As my hon. Friend said, the CMS has collected and arranged more than £1 billion-worth of child maintenance payments each year since **2021**.

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

### **International Men's Day**

*The following is an extract from the Backbench Business debate on International Men's Day on 17 November 2022.*

**Maria Caulfield:** The Government have increased funding by **60%** for community-based support focused primarily on male survivors, and we will update the supporting male victims statement in August this year to outline the further work that we will do in this area.

*[Official Report, 17 November 2022, Vol. 722, c. 928.]*

*Letter of correction from the Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Maria Caulfield):*

An error has been identified in the debate on International Men's Day.

The correct response should have been:

**Maria Caulfield:** The Government have increased funding for community-based support focused primarily on male survivors, and we will update the supporting male victims statement in August this year to outline the further work that we will do in this area.



# WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Friday 25 November 2022

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
<b>BUSINESS, ENERGY AND INDUSTRIAL</b>		<b>JUSTICE</b> .....	20WS
STRATEGY .....	19WS	Intimate Images Abuse Offences .....	20WS
COP27: UK Presidency.....	19WS		

# MINISTERIAL CORRECTIONS

Friday 25 November 2022

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
<b>HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE</b> .....	6MC	<b>WORK AND PENSIONS</b> .....	5MC
International Men's Day .....	6MC	Child Support Collection (Domestic Abuse) Bill...	5MC

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## CONTENTS

Friday 25 November 2022

**Electricity and Gas Transmission (Compensation) Bill [Col. 549]**

*Motion for Second Reading—(Dr Fox)—agreed to  
Read a Second time*

**Hunting Trophies (Import Prohibition) Bill [Col. 570]**

*Motion for Second Reading—(Henry Smith)—agreed to  
Read a Second time*

**Carbon Emissions (Buildings) Bill [Col. 608]**

*Motion for Second Reading—(Jerome Mayhew)—debate adjourned  
Read a Second time*

**Fertility Treatment (Employment Rights) Bill [Col. 625]**

*Motion for Second Reading—(Nickie Aiken)*

**Pilot Officer William McMullen: Posthumous Recognition [Col. 629]**

*Debate on motion for Adjournment*

**Written Statements [Col. 19WS]**

**Ministerial Corrections [Col. 5MC]**

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