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HOUSE OF COMMONS
OFFICIAL REPORT

PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Tuesday 25 March 2025

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The House met at half-past Eleven o'clock

PRAYERS

[MR SPEAKER *in the Chair*]

Mr Speaker: I have a special announcement to make: today is Jim Shannon's 70th birthday.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Oral Answers to Questions

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The Secretary of State was asked—

Community Hospitals

1. **Lloyd Hatton** (South Dorset) (Lab): What steps he is taking to shift care from major hospitals into community hospitals. [903374]

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): On behalf of His Majesty's Government, I congratulate the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) on reaching his 70th birthday—I think you said 70th, Mr Speaker, but I am sure you meant 60th.

In response to my hon. Friend the Member for South Dorset (Lloyd Hatton), we promised in opposition to transform the NHS into a neighbourhood health service, and we have hit the ground running. As a first step, we have announced the biggest boost to GP funding in years—an extra £889 million—which will recruit 1,000 more GPs. We are delivering 700,000 extra urgent dental appointments, and we have given adult and children's hospices a once-in-a-generation £100 million funding boost. At the same time, we are delivering our plan for change and have cut waiting lists for five months in a row. Change has begun, but the best is still to come.

Lloyd Hatton: I, too, pass on my best wishes to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon).

In South Dorset we urgently need to restore clinics and shift services back into our community hospitals in Weymouth, Portland, Swanage and Wareham. Sadly, the previous Conservative Government hollowed out those community hospitals, meaning that services left our towns to go further and further up the road. Combined with poor transport links, this means that many local people in my patch find it difficult to access the care they need. With that in mind, what steps is the Secretary of State taking to restore clinics and services in our community hospitals, and will he support my campaign to restore the chemotherapy clinic at Wareham community hospital?

Wes Streeting: The big thrust of our 10-year plan will be to deliver on the three shifts: from hospital to community, from analogue to digital, and from sickness to prevention. We believe that by moving services closer to people's homes—and, indeed, into their homes—we will be able to provide faster diagnosis and faster access to treatment, which will be better for patients and for taxpayers. Through the reforms we are making to the structure of NHS England and the governance of the NHS, we are also presiding over the biggest devolution in the history of the NHS, with more powers and decisions taken closer to the communities they serve. In that spirit, I urge my hon. Friend to make representations locally to his integrated care board, as I know he is doing. Ministers will also be open to receiving his representations.

Sir Oliver Dowden (Hertsmere) (Con): Following the Government's regrettable decision not to fund Watford general hospital's refurbishment in this Parliament, providing community care facilities in a town such as Borehamwood in my constituency—a significant town without its own dedicated facilities—is more important than ever. Will the Secretary of State undertake to use his offices to urge the ICB and others to get their act together so that we can finally have those facilities in Borehamwood?

Wes Streeting: I am very sympathetic to the argument that the right hon. Gentleman makes about the importance of neighbourhood health services in Borehamwood, and indeed in towns and communities across the country. What I am not sympathetic to is a former Deputy Prime Minister complaining about the state of the NHS, which he played a key part in creating when he sat around the Cabinet table.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): One in three hospital admissions occurs in a person's last year of life, and 43% of people will die in an NHS hospital. Clearly, that is not acceptable when people are at their frailest. What is my right hon. Friend doing to invest in virtual wards so that we can keep those people at home, and in the district nurse workforce to ensure that district nurses have a proper career structure and that theirs can be a profession of choice once again?

Wes Streeting: My hon. Friend is absolutely right about the innovation and the impact of virtual wards. I have seen at first hand the impact they can have—not just in providing better value for taxpayers and freeing up hospital beds for those who genuinely need to be in hospital, but in providing what everyone wants, which is to receive high-quality care in the comfort of their own home wherever possible. That will be a big part of our 10-year plan, and of course, it will be underpinned by really good community nursing and community healthcare teams.

Lisa Smart (Hazel Grove) (LD): Stepping Hill hospital in Hazel Grove has a huge repairs backlog. Patients are having to park miles away to get to the hospital, corridors have been flooded and there have been frequent power cuts. Alongside Stockport council, the local hospital trust and the community, I am calling for an additional site in Stockport town centre, whether that is a diagnostic centre or otherwise. What assurance can the Health Secretary give my constituents that they will be able to get the health services they need closer to them, and what support can he provide?

Wes Streeting: I am well aware of the challenges at Stepping Hill hospital and the need for support and investment in services in Stockport, not least thanks to the representations of my hon. Friend the Member for Stockport (Navendu Mishra). We are looking carefully at this situation and are committed to working with leaders locally to try to improve the quality of and access to services to give local people what they deserve.

Andrew Cooper (Mid Cheshire) (Lab): A new state-of-the-art surgical centre is set to open at the Victoria infirmary in Northwich in the next few weeks. The new facility will be a centre of excellence and a regional hub for outstanding cataract care, and it is an excellent example of how we can reduce pressure on our major hospitals, while making the best use of facilities in the heart of our communities. Will the Secretary of State join me in congratulating the Mid Cheshire hospitals trust on completing this project? Can I invite him to join me on a visit to the centre in the coming months?

Wes Streeting: I join my hon. Friend in congratulating the local trust on the work it is doing and the impact it is having, and I would be delighted to pay a visit as soon as my diary allows.

Julia Lopez (Hornchurch and Upminster) (Con): The new St George's NHS hub in Hornchurch has freed up space in Queen's hospital in Romford to remodel the accident and emergency there. Will the Secretary of State now fund that remodelling, so that our constituents can get better emergency care?

Wes Streeting: I am grateful to the hon. Member for raising the need for investment in the accident and emergency at Queen's hospital in Romford. As she alluded to, that department serves my constituents, too, so this will be a rare occasion at the Dispatch Box where I urge and encourage her to lobby the Minister of State, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth), because in such decisions I must recuse myself. However, she will know where my sympathies lie.

Access to NHS Dental Services

2. **Rosie Wrighting (Kettering) (Lab):** What assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to NHS dental services. [903375]

9. **Anneliese Midgley (Knowsley) (Lab):** What assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to NHS dental services. [903383]

10. **David Williams (Stoke-on-Trent North) (Lab):** What assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to NHS dental services. [903384]

12. **Alex Baker (Aldershot) (Lab):** What assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to NHS dental services. [903386]

18. **Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby and Cleethorpes) (Lab):** What assessment his Department has made of the adequacy of access to NHS dental services. [903393]

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock): Rebuilding our broken dentistry system is a priority for this Government. We are already rolling out 700,000 extra urgent dental appointments a year, as promised in our manifesto; we have launched a supervised toothbrushing scheme for three to five-year-olds; and we are committed to reforming the dental contract and making NHS dentistry fit for the future in the long term.

Rosie Wrighting: In Kettering, we know the scale of the challenge facing NHS dentistry after 14 years of Tory failure. My constituents regularly tell me how impossible it is to get an appointment. Some are driving tens of miles to see a dentist, and it is simply a scandal how many children are admitted to hospital with tooth decay. While it cannot be rebuilt overnight, in Kettering we welcome the extra 17,000 urgent appointments, which are a vital first step. Can the Minister confirm that it is this Government who will make NHS dentistry fit for the future?

Stephen Kinnock: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. After 14 years of Tory neglect and incompetence, far too many people are still struggling to find an NHS appointment. This Government are tackling the challenges for patients trying to access NHS dental care by delivering 700,000 more urgent dental appointments a year and by recruiting new dentists to areas that need them. My hon. Friend's local integrated care board has been asked to deliver nearly 17,000 of the additional urgent appointments. I am in no doubt that she will continue to campaign tirelessly on behalf of her constituents.

Anneliese Midgley: My constituent, Kevin Buckley, had his NHS dentist shut with no notice. NHS dentists in Knowsley are not taking on any new patients and he is stuck. This is not just a local issue, but a national crisis. What action will the Minister take to address the shortage of NHS dentists?

Stephen Kinnock: I am sorry to hear of the difficulties faced by Mr Buckley. Sadly, that is a challenge we face nationally after 14 years of abject failure from those now on the Opposition Benches. There are no quick fixes or easy answers, but we are committed to reforming the contract and helping those who need it most. My hon. Friend's local ICB has been asked to deliver more than 46,000 additional urgent care appointments from April onwards, getting care to those constituents who need it most. The north-west has also been allocated 21 posts in the golden hello scheme to recruit dentists into underserved areas.

David Williams: More than one in three five-year-olds in Stoke-on-Trent has tooth decay. That is the worst rate in the west midlands and is 10% above the national average. Children in deprived areas, like much of my constituency of Stoke-on-Trent North and Kidsgrove, are twice as likely to suffer, and that is not acceptable. Can the Minister please outline what steps the Government will take to reduce regional inequalities in NHS dental access for children?

Stephen Kinnock: It is shameful that tooth decay is the biggest reason for hospital admissions of children aged between five and nine, and the inequalities surrounding that are stark. On 7 March, we confirmed a £11.4 million investment in supervised toothbrushing for three to five-year-olds. The scheme is targeted at children in the most

deprived areas—those in index of multiple deprivation groups 1 and 2—and will reach up to 600,000 children. Our innovative partnership with Colgate-Palmolive will result in the donation of more than 23 million toothbrushes and toothpastes, providing outstanding value for taxpayers' money.

Alex Baker: Aldershot and Farnborough are dental deserts. My constituent Nick had an infected wisdom tooth and was in agony. He had been registered with a practice in Farnborough, but it kicked him off its patient list. He obtained an emergency appointment through 111, but two weeks later the infection was back. He was left with little choice but to go private, which cost him £700—10 times what the treatment would have cost on the NHS. Can the Minister explain how Labour's plan for change will help to prevent such cases from being repeated as we end the 14 years of dentistry failure that we saw under the Conservatives?

Stephen Kinnock: My hon. Friend has demonstrated again that she is a tireless campaigner for the people of Aldershot, and I am sorry to hear of the challenges faced by her constituents. This Government will deliver 700,000 more urgent dental appointments a year, and will recruit new dentists to the areas that need them most. My hon. Friend's local ICB has been asked to deliver nearly 7,000 of those additional urgent care appointments in the year from April. In the long term, we will reform the dental contract with the sector, with a shift to focusing on prevention and improving the retention of NHS dentists.

Melanie Onn: The Secretary of State and Ministers' commitment to 700,000 more emergency dental appointments is already taking effect in my NHS area, with an extra 27,000 slots, and the feedback is excellent. However, constituents have told me that some dentists seem to be removing non-emergency patients from their lists. Can the Minister please reassure them that their NHS dentists will be there when they need them?

Stephen Kinnock: As my hon. Friend says, we are delivering 700,000 additional urgent appointments. Patients are not limited to a registered practice in England, and practices are required to keep their status up to date on the NHS website. Anyone struggling to find a dentist should go to nhs.uk or call 111. It is also clear that while NHS England is not mandating an approach to the purchasing of these additional appointments, ICBs could consider either buying more appointments through new or recommissioned contracts or modifying existing contracts, and/or using flexible commissioning.

Sir Roger Gale (Herne Bay and Sandwich) (Con): The Minister is aware of my concern about the inability of some 200 fully qualified Ukrainian dentists to practise because of the restrictions placed on them by the General Dental Council. I know that the Minister has written to the GDC about this, but has he received a reply?

Stephen Kinnock: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for the constructive meeting and discussion that we had on this matter. As he will know, we are exploring the use of provisional registration for overseas dentists, and we are urging the GDC to arrange more examinations for dentists. I have a meeting set up in short order with the head of the GDC, and I will keep the right hon. Gentleman posted on that conversation.

Manuela Perteghella (Stratford-on-Avon) (LD): My constituents are being forced to travel out of county to Coventry or Evesham to obtain basic NHS dental care. Does the Minister agree that it is a disgrace that access to an NHS dentist has become a postcode lottery? What urgent steps are the Government taking to end this dental desert and restore NHS services to rural communities such as mine?

Stephen Kinnock: I absolutely agree. The state of NHS dentistry in our country is shameful. The golden hello scheme enables 240 dentists to receive a £20,000 joining bonus payment to work in dental deserts, and we are negotiating with the British Dental Association the long-term reform of the contract. The issue is not the number of dentists in the country, but the paucity of dentists who are doing NHS work.

Aphra Brandreth (Chester South and Eddisbury) (Con): The north-west has some of the worst levels of children's oral health in England, with Cheshire and Merseyside falling below the national average. In rural villages in my constituency like Bunbury, where bus services have been cut, and Kelsall, where a dentist is keen to open an NHS practice but faces barriers due to city centre prioritisation, residents are struggling to access NHS dental care. Given the challenges of rural access, what steps is the Minister taking to ensure that NHS dental provision is available in those rural communities?

Stephen Kinnock: I find it quite striking when Conservative Members stand up and describe the abysmal state of NHS dentistry. It makes me think, "Well, who created this mess in the first place?" But that is as an aside. The fact is that we have the golden hello scheme for dentists to come and work in so-called dental deserts. We recognise that the fundamental problem is around incentives for dentists to do NHS work. That is why we are doing a long-term contract negotiation to ensure we have an NHS dentistry contract that is fit for purpose and where every penny allocated to NHS dentistry is spent on NHS dentistry.

James Wild (North West Norfolk) (Con): There is an urgent need for dental training in Norfolk, so can the Minister confirm that the Government will enable the Office for Students to allocate new dental training places in the east of England to start in 2026?

Stephen Kinnock: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that question. I have met hon. Members from the area and made it clear that in principle we support any creation of new teaching capacity for dentistry. What I have also set out is that, before we can give an instruction to the Office for Students to go ahead with that work, we have to have the settlement of the comprehensive spending review, so we know what our financial envelope is. We will not have that until June, but certainly we will be looking at that as and when we know whether the funding will be available.

Mr Speaker: I call Jim Shannon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): There's only one Jim Shannon, by the way, you know? *[Laughter.]* Mr Speaker, thank you very much for your birthday wishes. I am terribly embarrassed. I thank right hon.

and hon. Members for their kind wishes. As I often say, I don't count the years, I make the years count. That is the important thing.

Can I ask the Minister a very important question? What discussions has he had with the Education Secretary on providing more financial support to young students who want to study dentistry, to ease the burden of high costs associated with studying dentistry which many young people may find off-putting?

Stephen Kinnock: I thank the hon. Gentleman for that question and I congratulate him again on his 60th birthday. [*Laughter.*] He raises an important point on teaching and training in dentistry. There is not enough capacity in the system. We absolutely want to ensure that we are building that capacity. As I said, a lot of that will depend on the comprehensive spending review settlement in June. I would be more than happy to discuss the issue with him in greater detail once we have a better sense of where we are on the funding.

Women's Health Services

3. **Paulette Hamilton** (Birmingham Erdington) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the adequacy of the provision of health services for women. [903376]

The Minister for Secondary Care (Karin Smyth): The Government are committed to improving women's health outcomes. We have already taken urgent action to tackle the gynaecology list through the elective reform plan, and we recently announced an £11 million trial using AI tools to detect breast cancer cases earlier. The 10-year health plan will set out how we will tackle the factors that lead to poor health outcomes and the improvements we expect to see.

Paulette Hamilton: What assessment has the Minister made of the adequacy of research into and the provision of fibroid treatment for women, taking into consideration that fibroids are three times more likely to appear in black women than in white women?

Karin Smyth: The Government welcome the work my hon. Friend has undertaken and the work of the Caribbean and African Health Network in highlighting health inequalities for black women. She highlights shocking and unacceptable statistics. The National Institute for Health and Care Research has funded a significant amount of research into women's health issues, including a £1.5 million trial comparing treatment options for fibroids. I am happy to make sure she is updated on that work and on the details of that work.

Mr James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con): Early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer can make a huge difference to the women involved, and, of course, to the prognosis and the cost to the state of health provision. I welcome the reference in the cancer plan to early diagnosis, but what specifically will the Government do to encourage greater awareness of the full range of breast cancer symptoms, and to encourage women to get early diagnosis and treatment for better outcomes?

Karin Smyth: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for that question and for the work he has supported on behalf of his wife to raise awareness. Screening access

and uptake are shockingly low across the country right now, and looking at that is a key part of what we need to do to ensure that women come forward for the screening test. The AI work will support the faster response time so that we can get women treated more quickly, and will absolutely form part of what we need to do in the coming years.

Nadia Whittome (Nottingham East) (Lab): I want to put on the record my thanks to the Health Secretary for coming to Nottingham last week and meeting some of the families who have been harmed by extremely serious failings in maternity services at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS trust, and for his sincere commitment to them. It was clear just how moved he was by their stories. One of their asks is that the Government implement the 22 recommendations from the Shrewsbury and Telford Ockenden review, so I ask the Minister today to commit to doing that.

Karin Smyth: I know that my hon. Friend and other Members representing that area have supported the trust and particularly the families who have been affected. As she highlights, my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary visited last week and was deeply moved by those stories, and has committed to visiting again. The Government are working through those recommendations and will update the House shortly.

Jess Brown-Fuller (Chichester) (LD): Following on from the question asked by the hon. Member for Nottingham East (Nadia Whittome), I held a debate in Westminster Hall a few weeks ago on maternity services and spoke to families across the country who have experienced failures in the system that ultimately left them without their babies to take home. It was a devastating experience for all involved. The immediate and essential actions in the Ockenden review were supported by the previous Government, and the Secretary of State for Health has been vocal in his support for their implementation. However, those families want to know how quickly they will see real change in maternity services up and down the country so that families can confidently go to deliver their babies.

Karin Smyth: The hon. Lady is right to highlight the impact of the failures in maternity services on women and their families across the country. As she highlights, my right hon. Friend the Health Secretary takes this matter personally and is looking at it. We will continue to work closely with Donna Ockenden on those recommendations and will continue to update the House regularly. This is an important issue for Members across the House representing their constituents, whether in this Chamber or Westminster Hall, and we are very keen to ensure that we support staff, build that confidence for women and their families and give them a good experience of maternity services.

Independent Review of Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender

4. **Joani Reid** (East Kilbride and Strathaven) (Lab): What assessment he has made of the potential implications for his policies of the independent review into data and statistics on sex and gender by Professor Alice Sullivan. [903377]

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): I am grateful to Professor Sullivan for her report. Sex and gender identity are not always the same, and it is important for patients that we record both accurately. I know the House will share my concern at some of the findings from Professor Sullivan's report, such as trans patients not being invited for cancer screening because of how their gender is recorded. I can assure the House that I am already acting on reports. Last week, I instructed the health service to immediately suspend applications for NHS number changes for under-18s to safeguard children. Taking such action does not prevent the NHS from recording, recognising and respecting trans people's gender identity.

Joani Reid: I thank the Secretary of State for his response, which will give much-needed reassurance to patients across the UK. Any public body that fails to accurately record sex and instead conflates it with gender puts people at serious risk of harm. Unfortunately, this type of organisational capture has been widespread across Scotland, with devastating consequences. Can the Secretary of State assure me that he will raise this issue with his counterparts in the Scottish Government to ensure that NHS Scotland does not put my constituents at risk?

Wes Streeting: I will absolutely undertake to share the approach we are taking with my counterparts across the United Kingdom. The approach I have always taken is one that understands the importance of biological sex, that recognises, understands and supports that someone's gender identity may not always match their biological sex, and that seeks to navigate a way through what has been an extremely toxic and sometimes harmful debate in a way that protects the sex-based rights of women and protects trans people and their identity. I know that my colleagues across Government are taking an equally sensitive approach, and I think it would be in everyone's interests if we saw a similar approach across the whole of the United Kingdom. It is important not just in the provision of services, but in accurate data and research, that we make that distinction, which does not in any way undermine respect for people's gender identity.

Liz Jarvis (Eastleigh) (LD): The inquest into the tragic death of a young woman who lived in Eastleigh has highlighted the importance of continuity of specialist care for vulnerable people who move home. My constituent, Alex, is still waiting for an appointment for ongoing specialist care three years after moving to Eastleigh. Will the Minister meet me to discuss the provision of mental healthcare in my constituency?

Mr Speaker: This question is about sex and gender. Do not worry; I am sure that the Secretary of State has the message.

I now call the shadow Minister.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): Given the findings of the Sullivan review on patient and health safety, which came about as a result of inaccurate and poor data collection, can the right hon. Gentleman confirm what meetings he has had with Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology to discuss the reliability of the data on sex

that is intended to be used by the digital verification platform in the Data (Use and Access) Bill?

Wes Streeting: I am grateful to the shadow Minister for her question. I speak to the Science Secretary on too frequent a basis—on a daily basis. He and I are both looking very carefully at the findings of the Sullivan review and working through its implications for both the health and care services, for which I am responsible, and for the Government digital and data services, for which he is responsible.

Dr Johnson: The UK Health Security Agency, for which the Secretary of State is responsible, publishes health statistics. This includes data on sexually transmitted infections, which is published by sexual orientation and sex. However, a footnote states that women are defined in the dataset as "women and trans women", which does somewhat undermine the value of the data. What will the Secretary of State do to ensure that data is not just collected properly, but published and presented in a way that is most clinically useful?

Wes Streeting: The shadow Minister raises a good example of how conflation of sex and gender identity is not helpful both in terms of data analysis and of recognising health inequalities. It is also not helpful in making sure that we understand variances between people based on their different backgrounds and characteristics and that we provide targeted, personalised and effective healthcare that deals with healthcare inequalities. That is why we are carefully studying the recommendations made by Professor Sullivan, with a view to making sure that we are meeting the needs of everyone, including the trans community, who I understand, not least because of the way that the debate has been conducted in recent years, are anxious about the implications of the report. However, I genuinely think that the report will lead to better, more inclusive and fairer outcomes for everyone, including the trans community.

Cancer Care: West of England

5. **Max Wilkinson (Cheltenham) (LD):** What steps his Department is taking to improve cancer care in the west of England. [903379]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Ashley Dalton): I know the hon. Member is acutely aware of the impact that cancer can have on families. We are committed to catching cancer earlier and treating it faster. We have achieved our manifesto pledge of 2 million extra appointments seven months early and we have invested in more surgical hubs, longer opening times, which have benefited 23 community diagnostic centres in the south-west, and new radiotherapy machines. The national cancer plan will also seek to improve every aspect of cancer care to improve patient outcomes and experiences across the country, including in the west of England.

Max Wilkinson: I thank the Minister for her answer. The Big Space Cancer Appeal being run by the Cheltenham and Gloucester Hospitals Charity is going on in my constituency. It is having to raise £17.5 million for a new cancer centre at Cheltenham general hospital, which is a regional cancer centre, because the previous Government

did not fund it. I am proud of the fund-raising work that is being done by the hospitals charity, including by my caseworker, Mateusz, who is running two half marathons for the cause. Will the Minister meet me and Dr Sam Guglani and Dr Charles Candish to discuss how the Government might provide more support for this crucial piece of infrastructure?

Ashley Dalton: I commend the hon. Member's campaign activity for improved cancer facilities. I commend, too, Mateusz's two half-marathons. I wonder when the hon. Member will be doing his half-marathon, but I can guarantee that I will not be joining him. The fact that this sort of activity is taking place is fantastic. Local provision for healthcare is managed by the local health system. I would be delighted to meet him and local representatives as soon as diaries allow.

Steve Yemm (Mansfield) (Lab): Cancer care is important for people right across the UK, particularly early diagnosis. How do the Government plan to raise cancer awareness among young people during Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Awareness Month and ensure that they are fully aware of the signs and symptoms?

Ashley Dalton: This is a really important issue. We have reinstated the children and young people cancer taskforce, which I visited a couple of weeks ago. We have tasked it with ensuring that children and young people are a part of its work. The Department will be marking Teenage and Young Adult Cancer Awareness Month appropriately. We encourage all children and young people to get the checks that they need and be aware of cancer symptoms.

Nursing Career Progression: Inequalities

6. **Kevin McKenna (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) (Lab):** What steps his Department is taking to help tackle inequalities in nursing career progression. [903380]

The Minister for Secondary Care (Karin Smyth): I know that this subject is very close to my hon. Friend's heart, after many years of NHS service. Ensuring great careers for NHS staff, including nurses, has been a key theme of our engagement with staff to shape the 10-year plan. I will shortly set out further measures to improve progression for nurses and their colleagues in other key NHS professions.

Kevin McKenna: I thank the Minister for her answer. Nurses across the profession are increasingly taking on complex roles and responsibilities, yet many do not have access to higher pay bands that reflect these changes, and there is too much variation around the country. As well as looking at this, will the Minister ask the Department of Health and Social Care to implement a consistent model for supported, structured progression from band 5 to band 6 for early career nurses based on the completion of key competencies and the acquisition of necessary experience?

Karin Smyth: My hon. Friend is right that NHS staff, including nurses, should be paid appropriately for the work they are asked to do and will be asked to do in future. We are working with the NHS Staff Council to ensure that the national job evaluation scheme is implemented fairly and consistently across nursing and all professions.

Alison Bennett (Mid Sussex) (LD): My constituent Ben has spent two decades working as a nurse. He tells me that his paramedic and midwife colleagues received automatic pay band increases post qualification while he and his nursing peers did not. Ben and his hard-working nursing colleagues have missed out on tens of thousands of pounds compared to colleagues in other disciplines. Does the Minister agree that something must be done urgently to make up for this inequity?

Karin Smyth: I am absolutely clear that we need to make sure that the job evaluation scheme looks at staff across the piece and that people are rewarded appropriately for the work they are asked to do. We will do that as part of our discussions with the NHS Staff Council, and we will be working consistently with staff as part of the 10-year plan to ensure that people are rewarded. We depend on these staff, and we want to encourage them to be part of the NHS workforce. That is the approach we intend to take.

NHS Waiting Lists

7. **Sojan Joseph (Ashford) (Lab):** What steps his Department is taking to reduce the number of people waiting for NHS treatment. [903381]

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): The 18-week standard for elective care has not been met for almost a decade. That is the legacy of the Conservative party. Our plan for change commits us to cutting waiting lists from 18 months to 18 weeks by the end of this Parliament through a combination of investment and reform. Since we took office, the waiting list has reduced by over 190,000. We achieved our manifesto pledge of 2 million extra appointments seven months early, and waiting lists have fallen five months in a row. A lot done, but a lot more to do. Change has begun, and the best is still to come.

Sojan Joseph: I welcome that NHS waiting lists for physical health have fallen for the last five months in a row and that NHS waiting lists are down by almost 200,000 since Labour was elected, but with people who have mental health conditions eight times as likely to have to wait 18 months for treatment, what steps are the Government taking to ensure that we see the same progress in waiting times for both mental and physical health treatments? Can they deliver a parity of esteem that the Opposition failed to achieve in their 14 years in power?

Wes Streeting: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question and for his long-standing commitment to improving mental health services. Lord Darzi highlighted that those waiting over a year for mental healthcare outnumbered the entire population of Leicester. We are committed to tackling this. We will fix the broken system by recruiting an extra 8,500 mental health workers, introducing access to a specialist in every school and rolling out community Young Futures hubs in England. We will shortly be publishing before Parliament our mental health investment standard report, which will show that when it comes to mental health this Government are putting their money where their mouth is.

Sir Christopher Chope (Christchurch) (Con): Waiting times for patients living in the village of Burton outside Christchurch could be drastically cut if the local integrated care board were to approve the creation of a new branch surgery. That application has been outstanding for more than four months. Will the Secretary of State put a bomb under Dorset ICB and get it to approve it straight away?

Wes Streeting: That sounds like an invitation to commit a criminal offence, and I think I will resist the temptation. I am sure that the ICB has heard the hon. Gentleman's forceful representations, and we will make inquiries to get him an update.

Mr Speaker: I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

Helen Morgan (North Shropshire) (LD): Shrewsbury and Telford hospital trust has some of the longest waiting lists in the country for cancer and A&E, among other areas. It has been receiving national mandated support from NHS England's recovery support programme. NHS England also provides support to hospital trusts that are struggling with excessive waiting lists through its Getting It Right First Time programme. Given the announcement to abolish NHS England, will the Secretary of State reassure my constituents that there will be continued support for hospital trusts such as Shrewsbury and Telford with unacceptable waiting times, and a clear pathway to improvements for patients who deserve better?

Wes Streeting: Yes is the short answer. Removing the duplication, waste and efficiency that came with having two head offices for the NHS will lead to better, more effective and streamlined decision making, but that will not in any way detract from the support that the hon. Member describes. In fact, we should see more support and, crucially, more investment going to the frontline as a result of the savings, efficiencies and improvements that we are making.

Community Pharmacy

8. **Sarah Hall** (Warrington South) (Lab/Co-op): What recent progress his Department has made on implementing the hub and spoke model for community pharmacy. [903382]

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock): This Government recognise the vital role that community pharmacies play as an integral part of our health system and local community. We are working with Community Pharmacy England on the pharmacy contract, which will start to stabilise the sector and make it fit for the future, and we will announce the outcome very shortly. On hub and spoke dispensing, we intend to lay draft secondary legislation in the coming weeks to come into force later this year.

Sarah Hall: Community pharmacy funding is at a critical juncture, with many pharmacies in my constituency facing financial challenges. With running costs increasing and uncertainty around the date of the upcoming settlement, community pharmacies are concerned that there may be disruption to their business. What steps is the Department taking to ensure that input from community pharmacies is considered, and prior to any further legislative or regulatory changes relating to the hub and spoke model?

Stephen Kinnock: My hon. Friend is right that we inherited a community pharmacy system that had been neglected for far too long, such that over the past two years, on average six pharmacies have been closing every week. A wide range of community pharmacies and representative organisations fed into the public consultation on hub and spoke reform, and I am pleased to confirm that their responses were overwhelmingly positive in support of model 1 of hub and spoke, which we will be going with.

Rishi Sunak (Richmond and Northallerton) (Con): I recently visited Well pharmacy in Northallerton, which, like so many others, plays an important role in providing community health services. One valued service is the provision of free blood pressure checks to those over the age of 40. Will the Minister to join me in urging anyone with health worries or a family history of high blood pressure to take advantage of this fantastic free, pharmacy-led, preventive community health service?

Stephen Kinnock: The right hon. Gentleman is right that a big part of the Government's shift from hospital to community is the pivotal role that community pharmacies will play in that process. We are committed to the Pharmacy First model of enabling community pharmacies to do more clinical work, such as the type that he just described. That is at the heart of our 10-year plan.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Dr Luke Evans (Hinckley and Bosworth) (Con): Now that the Secretary of State is abolishing NHS England, will he listen to the calls from the National Pharmacy Association and the Independent Pharmacies Association, and publish immediately the independent report commissioned by NHS England on pharmacies' finances?

Stephen Kinnock: We will publish the economic analysis imminently. He mentioned the National Pharmacy Association, which gives me the opportunity to say that I think that the collective action that it is taking is premature, unnecessary and detrimental to community pharmacy patients. I urge the NPA to reconsider its position and wait for the outcome of our negotiations with the CPE, which will come very shortly. We will announce that very soon.

Dr Evans: The National Pharmacy Association, which has been waiting for months to get the answer, is advising all its 6,000 pharmacy members to reduce services and hours, for the first time in 104 years. That has never happened before under a Labour Government, or under the Lib Dems or the Conservatives, but it is happening under this Government. Its chair said:

"The sense of anger among pharmacy owners has been intensified exponentially by the Budget",

citing unfunded national insurance contributions and national living wage increases. The Minister acknowledges that there is potential action. What contingency plans does the Department have to ensure that we keep patients safe if pharmacies close their doors in industrial action next week?

Stephen Kinnock: On the NPA, it has taken us a while to clean up the utter mess that we inherited in community pharmacy. That involved agreeing financial envelopes and getting into negotiations with CPE. Those negotiations

have been constructive, and I am delighted to confirm again that we will soon announce the outcome of those negotiations. What we see here is the shadow Minister apparently taking the side of people taking collective action in a premature way that is detrimental to patients. They would be better off waiting for the outcome. The Government are taking industrial relations into the 21st century, as opposed to the performative nonsense that we saw for 14 years.

Mental Health Act: Family Support

11. **Caroline Voaden** (South Devon) (LD): What steps he is taking to support families of patients who have been sectioned under the Mental Health Act 1983. [903385]

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock): When someone is detained, family involvement is extremely valuable, and families should be supported to maintain contact with their loved ones. Our Mental Health Bill will strengthen requirements to involve families in people's care. We will require clinicians to involve patients and their families where possible when developing new statutory care and treatment plans.

Caroline Voaden: I have two ongoing constituency cases with adult men who have serious and long-term mental health issues. One of my constituents believes that her life is in danger because of her son's threatening behaviour towards her—her own mental health has been seriously affected by the fear and stress. The other case involves a young man causing serious distress to his neighbours with his behaviour, which recently led to an incident where he reportedly threatened a police officer with a knife. Both men are living alone in unsupported accommodation, both are at risk of coercion and abuse because of their mental health problems, and both are causing serious distress to their families and neighbours. Will the Minister tell the House whether he is working with other Departments to ensure the availability of more provision to support people such as my constituents to live safely in the community and not cause harm or distress to those around them?

Stephen Kinnock: I know that the hon. Member has met my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State about at least one of those constituency cases. NHS England has asked mental health trusts to review the care of high-risk patients and has published national guidance on the standards of care that are expected. Ultimately, the Mental Health Act is there to protect people and provide the necessary powers to enable clinicians to manage and support such patients—and to do so, where possible, in the community.

Chris Vince (Harlow) (Lab/Co-op): Yesterday I met Essex partnership university NHS foundation trust and spoke to it about the need to support the families of those suffering with mental health issues in Harlow, and particularly those with caring responsibilities. Will the Minister consider how mental health services can better identify and support young carers?

Stephen Kinnock: My hon. Friend will be aware that we are bringing forward the Mental Health Bill, and an important part of that legislation will enable family

members—when they are chosen as a nominated person—to have powers to request assessment under the Act, challenge decisions and request considerations of discharge in line with the nearest relative powers.

Special Educational and Disability Needs

13. **Sarah Smith** (Hyndburn) (Lab): What steps he is taking to ensure special educational and disability needs are met by the NHS. [903388]

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Ashley Dalton): I commend my hon. Friend for her dedication to improving support for children in her role as the opportunity mission champion. Children with special educational needs and disabilities may access a range of NHS services, including health assessments and specialised support. All integrated care boards must have an executive lead for SEND to ensure that that work receives sufficient focus. We are working closely with the Department for Education on reforms to the SEND system.

Sarah Smith: As the Minister is aware, last year we faced the devastating closure of the Accrington Victoria hospital after 14 years of mismanagement by the Conservative party. I place on record my thanks to the frontline staff who have managed that transition and the operational challenges to relocate services, but sadly a fully purposed building for children with SEND had to be used to relocate clinical services. How does the Minister plan to ensure that those with SEND are at the heart of commissioning plans and service development?

Ashley Dalton: The system we inherited has been failing to meet the needs of children with SEND for far too long—that became clear in what happened at the Accy Vic. Through the 10-year health plan, we will consider all those policies, including those that impact on children and young people. We are working closely with the Department for Education to support the delivery of the opportunity mission. I also hosted a roundtable recently with children and young people, including those with SEND, so that they can feed directly into the 10-year plan. They will be at the heart of our thinking and planning on these issues.

Graham Stuart (Beverley and Holderness) (Con): Mr Speaker, your heart would have been gladdened last week to see colleagues from across the House coming together to support my debate calling for the Down Syndrome Act 2022 to be implemented three years on. The Minister for Secondary Care said in response that Down syndrome-specific guidance would be produced, which is welcome. Will the Minister ensure that the consultation group is restricted to organisations that represent Down syndrome people only, and will she promise that, after three long years, that statutory guidance will finally be issued before the end of this calendar year?

Ashley Dalton: Work to develop the Down Syndrome Act statutory guidance is being taken forward as a priority, with a view to publishing it for consultation by the summer. It does involve people with Down syndrome, as part of a wider group.

Topical Questions

T1. [903399] **Anneliese Midgley** (Knowsley) (Lab): If he will make a statement on his departmental responsibilities.

The Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Wes Streeting): Since I reported to the House on the Government's plans to abolish NHS England, hammering the final nail into the coffin of Lord Lansley's disastrous 2012 reorganisation, the reforms have been welcomed almost universally across Parliament—with the exception of Lord Lansley. I am pleased to report that the new chief executive of NHS England, Sir Jim Mackey, has appointed the transformation team that will deliver better care for patients and better value for taxpayers' money. We are working closely together as we finalise the 10-year plan for health, which will be published around the spending review in June.

Anneliese Midgley: My constituent June is 74 years old and has stage 4 cancer. She had to queue—not phone, but queue—at her GP surgery at 8 am, only not to be given an appointment. What is the Secretary of State doing to stop such dreadful situations?

Wes Streeting: I am very sorry to hear of June's experience. It illustrates why our determination to end the 8 am scramble for appointments is so necessary, starting with a new requirement for practices to make online appointment requests available through core hours, as well as the big uplift we have invested into general practice. I hope that will start to see improvements so that people like June will not be left queuing outside in the cold.

Mr Speaker: I call the shadow Secretary of State.

Edward Argar (Melton and Syston) (Con): May I take this opportunity to thank the Secretary of State for his kindness following the death of my father earlier this month? It was very much appreciated.

I welcome the moves to streamline decision making and improve efficiency in the context of the Secretary of State's NHS England announcement, if he genuinely drives decentralisation to integrated care boards. However, in a written answer on 21 March, the Minister for Secondary Care said:

“We recognise there may be some short-term upfront costs as we undertake the integration of NHS England and the Department”.

For clarity, can the Secretary of State confirm what the quantum of those reorganisation costs will be and the date by which they will have been recouped?

Wes Streeting: I am sure that the whole House will want to send our condolences to the right hon. Gentleman following the loss of his father. It is good to see him back in action—if not always back in action.

Given the scale of the job reductions and savings that we are seeking to make, the total quantum will be determined once the final shape of the organisation is determined.

Edward Argar: Can I also welcome, as I did in January, the Secretary of State's commitment to seek to work cross party on the future of social care? He was right and I welcomed that at the time, but like him and many

others, we are all keen to see progress. Can he update the House on when he anticipates the cross-party talks that were postponed in February will be rescheduled to take place?

Wes Streeting: Baroness Casey will be making contact with all party groups in order to set dates with parties across this House very shortly, and of course she will be kicking off her commission in April, which is now only days away.

T2. [903400] **Alan Strickland** (Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor) (Lab): It has been brilliant to meet residents who in recent weeks have had their operation dates brought forward, thanks to the additional evening and weekend appointments that the Labour Government have funded, but we know that too many people are still waiting too long. What more will Ministers be doing to really drive down waiting lists in my community and across the country?

Wes Streeting: As my hon. Friend says, we have brought NHS waiting lists down five months in a row, including during the peak winter pressures. We have delivered the 2 million more appointments we promised seven months early, and we published our elective reform plan at the beginning of the new year with the Prime Minister, which sets out the combination of measures, the investment and the reform that will ensure that we deliver the shorter waiting times and the faster access to treatment that my hon. Friend's constituents and people right across the country deserve. I look forward to keeping him updated.

Mr Speaker: We are not going to get everyone in unless we pick up the pace. The Liberal Democrat spokesperson will set a good example.

Helen Morgan (North Shropshire) (LD): In last night's “Panorama” programme, the Secretary of State was reported to have said that he did not need to wait for a review to put more money into social care, which we agree with. If that is the case, will he explain why the Casey commission will take three years, and will he instead commit to getting it done this year in order to fix the social care crisis straightaway?

Wes Streeting: Phase 1 of the Casey commission reports next year and the final Casey report is due by 2028, but the Chancellor has already announced an increase in funding for social care in the Budget, through means that the hon. Lady's party regrettably seems to oppose.

T3. [903401] **Alistair Strathern** (Hitchin) (Lab): It is impossible not to be inspired by my constituent Hayley and the bravery of her daughter, Lily, after Lily was diagnosed with an optic pathway glioma at the age of just one. Hayley stepped back from work not just to look after Lily but to make sure she was able to campaign for change. The Government's commitment to a national cancer plan is welcome, but with brain tumours not typically being staged or screenable, how can we ensure that they are not overlooked as part of the plan's development?

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health and Social Care (Ashley Dalton): I commend my hon. Friend's constituent for her work with the Brain Tumour Charity, and I wish Lily well with her treatment. The Government have launched the brain tumour research consortium, which will support efforts to speed up the diagnosis of tumours and aid the recovery of patients, and the national cancer plan will ensure that we include brain tumour patients. We know that everyone's cancer is as unique as they are, and this will be reflected in the plan.

T4. [903402] **Andrew George** (St Ives) (LD): In reviewing the NHS workforce plan, will Ministers urgently review the pay and status of registered nurses, who are, after all, the backbone of the NHS? Many are now dependent on food banks, thousands are saddled with student debt, and most will expect never to rise beyond band 5, which is a maximum of £35,000 a year.

Wes Streeting: The Chancellor took almost immediate action to deliver the uplift in pay for NHS staff that they deserve. We are working closely with the Royal College of Nursing, Unison and others ensure that we tackle the challenges of low pay in the nursing profession that the hon. Member describes.

T5. [903403] **Patricia Ferguson** (Glasgow West) (Lab): Since being elected, I have been contacted by a number of constituents registered with a GP in Scotland who find themselves unable to get medication for which they have a prescription while visiting England. Will my hon. Friend take steps to encourage NHS England and NHS Scotland to work together to find a solution that works for patients?

The Minister for Care (Stephen Kinnock): I am very sorry to hear about my hon. Friend's constituents' experience. Accessing vital medicines while travelling between nations should be seamless, and I will ask NHS England to work with NHS Scotland to better understand what needs to change to make things easier for patients across the UK.

T7. [903405] **Ian Sollom** (St Neots and Mid Cambridgeshire) (LD): In the light of the recently announced 50% staffing reductions across integrated care boards, has the Secretary of State made any assessment of how those cuts to the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough ICB will delay the delivery of essential new primary care services for my rapidly growing constituency, particularly in Northstowe, Cambourne and St Neots, where thousands of constituents are already facing unacceptable difficulties in accessing care?

Wes Streeting: Despite the significant uplift announced by the Chancellor at the Budget, system financial returns during the planning round suggested an overspend for the coming year of between £5 billion to £6 billion. When I said I would not tolerate overspending in the NHS, I meant it. When I said I would go after unnecessary administrative costs, duplication and bureaucracy, I meant it. That is what this Government are doing to protect frontline services.

Jenny Riddell-Carpenter (Suffolk Coastal) (Lab): In Saxmundham in my constituency, Dr Havard has led a campaign for 20 years to transform the healthcare centre into a one-stop community healthcare hub. His

practice has already expanded services, transforming health locally. Does the Minister agree that the Saxmundham healthcare hub is an excellent example and model for what this Government are trying to do to transform community healthcare?

Stephen Kinnock: My hon. Friend is absolutely right that shifting care from hospitals to the community is at the heart of our 10-year plan. I would be happy to meet the doctors leading this pilot to find out more about the excellent work that she describes.

Christine Jardine (Edinburgh West) (LD): For eight years, I have seen how a young constituent has been able to completely control his previously life-threatening seizures with medicinal cannabis, but at huge cost to his family—a cost that is prohibitive for other people. Will the Secretary of State meet me to discuss how we can make access to such treatments more affordable, accessible and safe, so that we can help more people?

The Minister for Secondary Care (Karin Smyth): We recently had a helpful debate in Westminster Hall on this topic. We are doing more research on this issue to ensure that the evidence base is there. I am happy to discuss the matter further with the hon. Member.

Mohammad Yasin (Bedford) (Lab): In the ongoing discussion on assisted dying, one point on which we all agree in this House is the urgent need to improve palliative care. I therefore welcome the Government's recent £100 million commitment to supporting hospices, including those that help my constituents. Can the Minister confirm whether long-term funding for hospices will be a priority in the upcoming 10-year health service plan?

Stephen Kinnock: My hon. Friend is right that the hospice sector has been provided with the largest capital spend in a generation—£100 million. We are also providing £26 million of revenue funding to children and young people's hospices. I can confirm that hospices will play a key role in our shift from hospitals to the community, as he set out in his question.

Victoria Collins (Harpenden and Berkhamsted) (LD): Tragically, Ed was just 24 years old when he decided to take his own life, and that is why the family have joined us today in the Gallery. What urgent action are the Government taking to improve mental healthcare and suicide prevention for young people like Ed?

Stephen Kinnock: The hon. Member raises an important issue. We are investing in 8,500 more mental health specialists, as well as specialists in every school, and in Young Futures hubs across the country, to ensure that we do whatever we can to prevent these tragedies.

Markus Campbell-Savours (Penrith and Solway) (Lab): An early day motion from 2007 noted that women were typically waiting eight years to be diagnosed with endometriosis. Shockingly, nearly 20 years later, that wait has increased to nine years. The Government are right to tackle the appalling waiting lists for surgery, but the one in 10 women who suffer with endometriosis often struggle with years of pain before surgery is even suggested. What plans does the Department have to deal with these delays, and how we can ensure that those working in primary care recognise this debilitating condition earlier?

Karin Smyth: Those statistics are shocking. Campaigns here and elsewhere have helped to raise awareness of endometriosis. The update to National Institute for Health and Care Excellence guidelines will help, as will more appointments, and our commitment to the 18-week target. Training for GPs is now part of the core curriculum, and we expect that to yield good results. NHS England and the Office for National Statistics have look-across to the statistics on diagnostic metric standards. I am happy to update my hon. Friend outside the Chamber, and I know other Members are also interested in how we are delivering on these commitments.

Mr Gagan Mohindra (South West Hertfordshire) (Con): My constituents in South West Hertfordshire remain concerned about the significant delay to the redevelopment of Watford general. With the Chancellor already bringing a second emergency Budget before the House tomorrow, and with care homes, hospices and charities facing unsustainable pressure from this Government's national insurance increases, what reassurances can the Minister give my constituents that the Labour party truly care about healthcare, rather than scoring political points?

Wes Streeting: The irony! There is one big difference between what this Government are doing and what the Conservative party did for 14 years, which is that this Government will actually deliver a new Watford general hospital where the Conservative party failed.

Chris Hinchliff (North East Hertfordshire) (Lab): Do Ministers agree that a logical conclusion of the Darzi report is that the national care service that we are committed to creating must be free at the point of use? As Lord Darzi found, as long as the social care system remains means-tested and the NHS is a universally free service, unmet care needs will continue to put unsustainable pressure on our health services.

Stephen Kinnoek: That is a vital issue. The Casey commission will look at how best to create a fair and affordable adult social care system, and at which structural reforms will be needed where health and social care meet, because reform must always be married with investment.

Cameron Thomas (Tewkesbury) (LD): General practitioners in my constituency have consistently restructured over 10 years of constant systemic and economic pressures. How will the Minister convince the Treasury to exempt GPs from the increase to national insurance contributions, and show my GPs that he has their back?

Wes Streeting: It was thanks to the decisions taken by the Chancellor in the Budget that we were able to award £889 million for general practice. That is why the Minister for Care was able to get the GP contract agreed for the first time since the pandemic. Opposition Members cannot continue to welcome the investment and oppose the means. They have to spell out where they would cut services or raise taxes instead.

Euan Stainbank (Falkirk) (Lab): Last year, my constituent Danielle was diagnosed with POTS—postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome. She found herself unable to get out of bed and unable to speak for long periods. She

could not receive care in Scotland. Specialist treatment does not seem to exist for POTS. What more can we do for people like Danielle, and what conversations has the Minister had with counterparts about establishing specialist treatment in Scotland?

Ashley Dalton: In England, it is the responsibility of local integrated care boards to work with clinicians, service users and patient groups to develop services and care pathways that are convenient and meet the needs of patients with POTS. NICE has published a clinical knowledge summary on the clinical management of blackouts and syncope, which provides advice for UK clinicians on best practice and the assessment and diagnosis of POTS.

Charlie Dewhirst (Bridlington and The Wolds) (Con): I have twice invited Ministers to visit Bridlington district hospital with me to see its much-underutilised potential. In the light of the ongoing challenges faced by coastal and rural health services and the newly announced changes to integrated care boards, may I hope that it will be third time lucky, and extend that invitation once again?

Wes Streeting: We are delighted to receive the hon. Gentleman's representations. We will look carefully at the case he makes and will consider visits as diaries allow.

Tulip Siddiq (Hampstead and Highgate) (Lab): Much to my alarm, the North Central London ICB has recommended the closure of the maternity unit at the Royal Free hospital in my constituency. The Secretary of State knows the Royal Free well. Will he meet me to see how I can save my local maternity unit, which looked after me so well when I had gestational diabetes?

Karin Smyth: These local services are so important for local women, as my hon. Friend has experienced. It is really important that reconfigurations are discussed with local Members of Parliament, representing their constituents. This is obviously a matter for the local ICB, but I am happy to discuss it further with her.

Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD): Following my long-running campaign, I am grateful to the Government for finally updating the outdated Treasury rules that were preventing local health boards from spending more money on keeping city centre GP locations. Will the Government now issue guidance to local health boards and NHS trusts to accelerate the pooling of resources, so that we can get more services out of hospitals and on to our high streets, especially as our high streets need extra footfall right now?

Wes Streeting: I am grateful to the hon. Member for all the work she has been doing on this issue. She is right: we need more integration of services, and we need to look at where we can share facilities to achieve better care for patients and better value for taxpayers.

Naz Shah (Bradford West) (Lab): The former chair of my local trust, Bradford teaching hospitals NHS foundation trust, Dr Max Mclean, has today secured whistleblowing protection for himself in a landmark victory. Last week marked a year since a non-exec director at the trust was

suspended, and a third non-exec director has put in an ET1 form to the employment tribunal. There appears to be a clear culture of targeting and witch-hunting whistleblowers at Bradford teaching hospitals trust. I appreciate the Secretary of State's team supporting me, but given these recent developments, will he meet me?

Wes Streeting: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising these serious issues. There are issues of concern here, and she clearly describes a concerning situation for the local community. We need to look carefully at what is happening, and the Minister of State for Health, my hon. Friend the Member for Bristol South (Karin Smyth), would be delighted to meet her.

Mr Richard Holden (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): Smile Dental Centre is in one of the least affluent parts of my community in Basildon. It is looking to expand and provide more NHS dental services, but it has come up against a few issues. Will the Minister, or one of his officials, meet me and Smile Dental Centre to see what we can unblock to deliver more dental health services for local people?

Stephen Kinnock: We are always looking for opportunities to unblock more capacity, and I would be happy to meet the right hon. Gentleman.

Tom Hayes (Bournemouth East) (Lab): Coastal constituencies such as mine in Bournemouth East suffer significant health inequalities. What are the Government doing to address them, and will the Minister meet me and coastal Labour MPs to address the issue?

Ashley Dalton: My hon. Friend is right: coastal communities face unique challenges when it comes to health inequalities. I will shortly attend the all-party group for coastal communities, where I will meet him and colleagues to discuss these issues.

Charlie Maynard (Witney) (LD): As the Secretary of State will know, in 2018, this House allocated £40 million of funding in memory of Dame Tessa Jowell, who was killed by a brain tumour. Seven years on, less than half of that money has been spent. The money is doing no

good sitting in a bank, so will the Secretary of State please commit to spending that money within a decade of Dame Tessa's death?

Wes Streeting: I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his question, as it gives me the chance to pay tribute to the late great Baroness Jowell, as well as to the work taking place in her name through the Tessa Jowell Brain Cancer Mission. There have been frustrating delays in getting funding out the door for the purpose for which it is intended. Ministers are looking carefully at this issue, and we want to make more progress more quickly, to ensure that families do not receive the same death sentence that our late friend did.

Mr Speaker: That concludes Question Time.

Dr Evans: On a point of order, Mr Speaker. Since 14 January, I have tabled 15 named day written parliamentary questions to the Department of Health and Social Care. Fourteen have received a holding response, meaning that just one was answered on time. To give a simple example, I asked how many times the Minister had met Community Pharmacy England. Four days later, I received a standard holding answer, which stated that

"it will not be possible to answer this question within the usual time period."

It then took five days for an answer to come, which stated:

"Ministers meet regularly with external stakeholders on a variety of topics, including, but not limited to, pharmacy."

May I ask your advice, Mr Speaker? What mechanisms are in place to ensure that named day questions are answered on time? If they continue not to be answered on time, how can I escalate the matter further?

Mr Speaker: First, I am disappointed that questions are not being answered, but I am not responsible for ministerial answers. I hope that those on the Treasury Bench, including the Secretary of State, have taken on board the importance of replying. Named day questions are called that because they are meant to be answered on the day that is named. I am very disappointed. The Department may be overworked; if that is the case, perhaps we ought to bring in staff from other Departments to ensure that questions are answered on time. I know that the Secretary of State will have immediately made a note to ensure that those questions are answered.

Asylum Hotels and Illegal Channel Crossings

12.43 pm

Chris Philp (Croydon South) (Con) (*Urgent Question*): To ask the Home Secretary to make a statement on asylum hotels and illegal immigrants crossing the channel.

The Minister for Border Security and Asylum (Dame Angela Eagle): As the right hon. Member is aware, the Home Office discharges its statutory duty to provide accommodation and to support destitute asylum seekers through seven asylum accommodation and support services contracts. Those contracts were entered into by the previous Government, commencing in 2019, and are split between three providers: Clearsprings Ready Homes Ltd, Serco Ltd, and Mears Ltd.

Significant elements of the behaviour and performance of one of the sub-contractors of Clearsprings Ready Homes fell short of what we would expect from a Government supplier. That is why the Home Office has informed Clearsprings Ready Homes that it must exit the arrangements with a subcontractor in its supply chain, Stay Belvedere Hotels. We will not hesitate to take further action in respect of Clearsprings and its wider supply chain if that proves necessary, and we are conducting a full audit of our supply chain.

We expect the highest standards from those contracted to provide essential services, and this Government will always hold them to account for delivery, performance and value for money. Where there are concerns about how contractors or their subcontractors are discharging their contractual obligations, we will not hesitate to take swift and decisive action.

The Home Office progresses matters relating to these contracts with its providers in commercial confidentiality. I will not give a running commentary, but I assure the House that whatever the position with any of its providers, the Home Office remains focused on maintaining continuity of service and ensuring that our statutory obligation is met at all times, and has contingency plans in this regard. None of that takes away from our commitment to reducing the huge cost of asylum hotels, which remains our priority.

In relation to channel crossings, this Government have put forward a serious, credible plan to restore order to our asylum system, including tougher enforcement powers, ramping up returns to their highest levels for more than half a decade, and a major crackdown on illegal working to end the false promise of jobs, used by gangs to sell spaces on boats. Increased law enforcement action and disruption is already showing some indication of pressure on the business model of the gangs, and we are introducing new powers for law enforcement to use against the vile trade in people smuggling and trafficking.

Chris Philp: Last summer, the Government were elected on a promise to end the use of asylum hotels. Well, it has now been nine months, so let us see how they are getting on. The use of asylum hotels has gone up by 8,000 since the general election—it has not gone down; it has gone up. Some 38,000 mainly illegal immigrants are now in those hotels, costing hard-working taxpayers around £2 billion a year. It is completely unacceptable that taxpayers are asked to foot a bill that size. The

people living in those hotels broke our laws by coming here from France, which is a manifestly safe country that nobody needs to leave. I have a very simple question for the Minister: when will the Government end the use of asylum hotels?

During the election campaign last summer and subsequently, the Government also promised to “smash the gangs”, but that promise now lies in tatters. In the nine months since the election, 29,162 people—nearly 30,000 people—have illegally crossed the English channel, which is a 31% increase on the same period 12 months before. In fact, 2025 is even worse. Since 1 January, more people have crossed the English channel illegally than in any year in history—this is the worst year. It is 38% worse than the previous worst year, so things are getting worse not better. They have not smashed the gangs, but capitulated to them.

The hon. Lady mentioned returns. Most of those returns do not relate to people who arrived by small boat. In fact, those people being returned who came by small boat amount to only about 4% of small boat arrivals; I do not know how letting 96% of people who arrived by small boat stay here is a deterrent.

At the weekend, we saw briefings—to the press and not to Parliament, Mr Speaker—that the Government are now considering some kind of offshore removal scheme. That sounds vaguely familiar! At last they have realised that some kind of removals deterrent is needed. Will the Minister now apologise for cancelling the Rwanda deterrent before it even started and, as a consequence, losing control of our borders?

Dame Angela Eagle: I will not take any lessons from the shadow Minister. In his last three months as Immigration Minister, nearly 10,000 people crossed the channel in small boats, but he is complaining about half that level of crossings happening in the past three months. Neither will I take any lessons from someone who served in a Government who presided over a situation where, at its height, there were 56,000 people in more than 400 hotels. We are getting a grip on the problem by starting up asylum processing once more, but we inherited a huge backlog. There was a 70% fall in asylum processing in the run-up to the general election, with more than 100,000 people stuck without being processed in the asylum system. We are getting a grip of that, but by definition, the backlog and chaos that the Conservatives left us is taking time.

Chris Murray (Edinburgh East and Musselburgh) (Lab): Does the Minister share my astonishment at the shadow Home Secretary’s argument given that the Conservatives wasted tens of millions of pounds on accommodation that could not be used and billions on hotels? The state of the asylum system that we inherited is unbelievable. Will the Minister commit to reforming that seriously dysfunctional system, including scrutinising asylum contracts with the providers when the break clause comes up next year?

Dame Angela Eagle: We inherited a system in chaos and a series of asylum contracts worth billions of pounds that were 10 years long, with a break clause in 2026, so we are looking seriously at what we can do to get better value for public money in those contracts. The action on Stay Belvedere Hotels Ltd is one example of the work we are doing to drive better value in the

[*Dame Angela Eagle*]

contracts that we inherited. We will not tolerate the behaviour of subcontractors or contractors who do not provide good value for money, which is why we have insisted that Clearsprings Ready Homes removes Stay Belvedere Hotels Ltd from its supply chain.

Mr Speaker: I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

Lisa Smart (Hazel Grove) (LD): It is a pleasure to be back in the Chamber to hear the shadow Home Secretary's greatest hits of Conservative failures from the last Parliament, whether it be cuts to neighbourhood policing or the woeful handling of the asylum system under the previous Government, in which he was a Home Office Minister. Of course the Home Office should ensure that all asylum accommodation providers deliver value for money, safety and security, but tinkering with contracts will not change the fact that asylum hotels are a lose-lose. They eat up taxpayer money and leave local councils and communities to sort out the mess.

To pick dates at random, the share of asylum applications that received an initial decision within six months fell from 83% in the second quarter of 2015 to just 6% towards the end of the last Government's time in office. When does the Minister think that the processing of applications will speed up so that the backlog will come down, communities such as mine will get the use of their hotels back and those granted refugee status can integrate and contribute to our economy?

Dame Angela Eagle: I certainly agree with the hon. Lady that the shadow Home Secretary sounds like a broken record; we are well used to him running that argument in this place. I also agree that the key to dealing with hotels is to get the system back up and running from the chaos that it was in. I can tell the hon. Lady that asylum processing at first decision has ramped up considerably and we are getting through the backlog we inherited, but there is also a huge backlog by definition in the appeals system, partly caused by the legacy appeal—the dash to end the legacy system ahead of the fantasy Rwanda scheme beginning—which has led to a big backlog in appeals. We are looking to see what we can do about that, because it is important that we get a fast and fair system from end to end, and that includes appeals.

Mr Paul Foster (South Ribble) (Lab): Because the previous Government lost complete control of our borders, the Leyland hotel in my constituency of South Ribble was closed down three years ago—yes, three years ago—and used for asylum seekers. There is a chronic undersupply of hotels in South Ribble, Chorley, Preston and central Lancashire. Can Ministers provide any indication at all of when the hotel will cease to be used as an asylum hotel? I am asked that question every single week.

Dame Angela Eagle: I want to get out of hotels as quickly as is feasible. I will not name particular dates, because that is a pointless thing to do. We have to get through the appeals system and the first asylum processing system so that we can move people through the system much more quickly. We also need to continue our work on ramping up returns, which have seen a huge increase—the highest figures for the last five years—and we intend to continue with that process.

Mr Speaker: I call the Chair of the Home Affairs Committee.

Dame Karen Bradley (Staffordshire Moorlands) (Con): The media are reporting that the earliest the contract can be broken is September next year. Can the Minister confirm whether that is the case? What liability does the taxpayer have for a contract ending today that we cannot get out of until September next year?

Dame Angela Eagle: The right hon. Lady is talking about the prime contractor, which in this case is Clearsprings Ready Homes. As with the other two contractors, the break clauses are with it. We have approval or not of sub-prime contractors. Stay Belvedere Hotels Ltd is a sub-prime contractor, and as the Home Office we have withdrawn our approval for it to be in the supply chain.

Ms Stella Creasy (Walthamstow) (Lab/Co-op): The shadow Home Secretary has a nerve to come to this House and make that argument when we in the communities saw the damage that the contract he managed did to the public purse. Shall we revisit some of those greatest hits? His contract put councils and Clearsprings against each other, pushing up prices and making it impossible for local communities to help those housed there. He caused absolute chaos.

I have in my hand one of the letters that the hon. Gentleman's Government were presenting to people who were refugees, giving them less than five days' notice of where they were being moved, meaning that school places had to be hastily reorganised and children had to be hastily re-clothed because of the decisions he made on public funds. Absolutely no savings were made in the way in which he managed the contracts.

Will my hon. Friend make a commitment and a pledge to all of us who have had to deal with Clearsprings and its chaotic management that when she has the opportunity to renegotiate the contract, or possibly even break it for good, she will put public value for money first and not repeat the chaos of the shadow Home Secretary?

Dame Angela Eagle: We are doing all that we can with the existing contracts to drive value for money, and we are also looking to pilot some other potential alternatives to supply.

Mr Speaker: I call the Father of the House.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): Under the refugee convention, we can automatically deport illegal migrants who come here, but under the European convention on human rights we cannot. I had a probing new clause moved on my behalf in Committee on this subject, and, with your permission, Mr Speaker, I hope to move it again on Report. I know that the Minister cannot answer absolutely now, but will she look at that new clause in a constructive spirit? Surely we can all agree that we do not want criminals entering this country illegally.

Dame Angela Eagle: I certainly agree with the Father of the House on that subject. We had a small but perfectly formed debate, albeit in his absence, on his new clause, and I look forward to debating it with him on Report of the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill.

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Ind): I think I still have the largest number of asylum seekers in hotels in the country, with more than 2,000, and I have experience of Clearsprings and Stay Belvedere. It would be really helpful if the new contractual arrangements involved full consultation with some of the organisations working at the frontline of supporting asylum seekers, so that some of the lessons can be learned about past performance to improve future performance.

Dame Angela Eagle: I am more than happy to meet with the right hon. Gentleman to talk about his experience on the ground with respect to both Stay Belvedere Hotels Ltd and Clearsprings Ready Homes.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I hope I am not the only person here who is utterly depressed by the complete lack of compassion shown by the shadow Home Secretary and the lack of recognition that the people we are talking about have stories of their own and have experienced horrors that we can barely even imagine. Is it not right that we look at this in a more thoughtful way? To reduce cost to the taxpayer and help those who will be successful asylum seekers to integrate, would it not be wise to allow people who are asylum seekers to work after being here for three months?

Dame Angela Eagle: Those asylum seekers who have not had their claims processed within a year through no fault of their own are allowed access to work. I am unconvinced that allowing access to work earlier would do anything other than create more demand for people to come here.

Mike Tapp (Dover and Deal) (Lab): It is widely accepted across the whole country, including in my constituency, that the Conservatives left us with open borders, with 150,000 people crossing on their watch and the opening of 400 asylum hotels, costing our taxpayers £9 million per day. This Government have already established Border Security Command and have deported 19,000 people; that is record numbers, up 24% from what the Opposition could achieve. We are also bringing in counter-terror powers to take on the smuggling gangs. Does the Minister agree that the Opposition need to get behind our Bill, so that those counter-terror powers can empower the National Crime Agency to take out the smuggling gangs?

Dame Angela Eagle: My hon. Friend is correct that the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, which has been through Committee and is awaiting its Report stage, will create counter-terror-style powers that will help us prevent some of these crossings and disrupt the sophisticated criminal smuggling gangs that were allowed to take hold across the channel, unabated by the Conservative party. It will enable us to tackle this problem at source by working across borders with colleagues in other countries, tackling the people-smuggling routes as well as the gangs.

Mr James Cleverly (Braintree) (Con): When in opposition, the Labour party talked tough about what it would do when it entered government. As my right hon. Friend the shadow Home Secretary has said, though, small boat arrivals and hotel use are both up, and asylum seekers are being waved through the system just to make the Minister's numbers look good. This all

reeks of arrogance and complacency, and we are now seeing the real-world impacts; for example, Wethersfield in my constituency has seen the number of asylum seeker users go up. While Labour talked tough before the election, it took things off the statute books before it replaced them with anything else, so when will the Minister actually come to the House with serious proposals to reduce the number of small boat arrivals, which have gone up by over 30% on her Government's watch?

Dame Angela Eagle: The right hon. Gentleman says that Wethersfield is now getting more people, but it is still not holding the numbers that his Government planned for it to hold when it was opened, so that is rather an odd argument for him to make. If he was serious about reducing the problems at our borders, I would have thought that he would want to support the counter-terrorism-style powers in the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, but it seems that he is not.

Sally Jameson (Doncaster Central) (Lab/Co-op): Under this Government, illegal workplace raids and arrests are up by a third. While that is welcome, we all know from our high streets and constituencies that there is still a way to go, so can the Minister confirm that we will continue at pace on this trajectory to send a clear message that the UK will not tolerate people abusing the asylum system, or indeed illegal activity in any form?

Dame Angela Eagle: Yes. Of course, we have to crack down on abuse of our asylum system, but also on the exploitation of vulnerable and desperate people by vicious criminal gangs.

Pete Wishart (Perth and Kinross-shire) (SNP): During Committee proceedings on the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill, I said to the Minister that it would only be a matter of time before the Government concocted some sort of Rwanda-style deportation scheme. Even I did not think that it would come so quickly, if weekend press reports are to be believed. Can the Minister say that those reports are totally not true, and will she now rule out ever implementing a third country deportation scheme like the one introduced by the Conservatives?

Dame Angela Eagle: I am not going to comment on leaks.

Tony Vaughan (Folkestone and Hythe) (Lab): I welcome the decision to close Napier barracks in my constituency, where there have been long-standing concerns about conditions, among other issues. What assurances can the Minister give my constituents, as well as those being held there, that this site will be operated properly until it closes in September?

Dame Angela Eagle: If my hon. and learned Friend wants to talk to me about any of the details, I would be happy to listen, but of course we want to operate that site properly and appropriately until we hand it back to the Ministry of Defence in September.

Esther McVey (Tatton) (Con): Given that the Government do not believe in sending illegal immigrants to third countries such as Rwanda, can the Minister explain how they plan to deport people who have destroyed

[*Esther McVey*]

their documents so that we do not know their country of origin? Or is the solution to keep those people here forever—in hotels, or in one of the 1.5 million homes that Labour plans to build?

Dame Angela Eagle: Mr Deputy Speaker—sorry, Mr Speaker. I do not know why I am calling you Mr Deputy Speaker today; I have gone back a very long time to when you were, but that was so long ago that I can scarcely remember it. My apologies, Mr Speaker.

The right hon. Lady should remember that the Rwanda scheme was about deporting people for good, not dealing with their asylum claims. That is not in any way what this Government would ever consider doing, which is why that scheme was cancelled.

Jo White (Bassetlaw) (Lab): The shadow Home Secretary can complain all he wants, but while he was in the Home Office, 75,000 people crossed the channel, with thousands housed in hundreds of hotels across the country. A failed Rwanda scheme and a complete freeze on asylum decision making is the reason that the cost of hotels rose to £9 million a day; everything stopped just to send four volunteers to Rwanda, and the shadow Home Secretary is responsible for the chaos. Does my hon. Friend agree that the only party in this House that voted for the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill will be the party that sorts this chaos out?

Dame Angela Eagle: I agree with my hon. Friend.

Vikki Slade (Mid Dorset and North Poole) (LD): We all want to stop the perilous channel crossings that are costing vulnerable people their lives, so what steps are the Government now taking to boost further co-operation with Europol so that we can smash the gangs that are profiting from misfortune?

Dame Angela Eagle: We have put more resource into Europol to co-operate with European partners across borders. Operationally, we are working across Europe; we have a new agreement with the German Government and an agreement on sanctions and illicit finance with the Italian Government, and the Calais Group has met in London. We are doing a lot of work with source areas and countries such as Vietnam, not only on returns but on countering some of the adverts that tell lies about the kind of lives that await those who get on perilous small boats. We are working with our international colleagues across the piece, both diplomatically and operationally, to try to put pressure on the international criminal gangs and begin to close down this evil trade.

Joe Powell (Kensington and Bayswater) (Lab): Under the Conservative party, the asylum budget ballooned to over £4 billion, taking 28% of our overseas development assistance for in-country refugee costs—mainly hotels—against an OECD average of 13.8%, making us a big outlier internationally. I welcome the commitments to speed up processing and reduce hotel use, but with the aid budget being reduced to 0.3% from 2027, can the Minister reassure me that an ever-increasing chunk of a smaller aid budget will not be spent in-country, instead of on supporting vital poverty alleviation work internationally?

Dame Angela Eagle: It is clearly important that overseas development moneys are used to try to prevent the flows of people that have been the result of collapses in various countries. We in the Home Office will do all we can to minimise the spend that we currently take from the overseas development aid budget.

Sir Roger Gale (Herne Bay and Sandwich) (Con): Mr Speaker, you will know that most of the illegal cross-channel migrants who come to this country come through my constituency, at the processing centre in Manston. As such, I have taken a particular interest in this subject. What I have to say is certainly not going to be popular, either among Conservative Members or among Labour Members, but neither is it going to be populist. The Home Secretary and I—not together—both visited the Calais area recently. We saw there hundreds if not thousands of very determined, very desperate people who are going to risk their lives to cross the channel. The Conservatives' Rwanda scheme and this Government's much-vaunted smashing of the gangs will not solve that problem. There is no quick fix, and the only solution will be long term and international. In that context, does the Minister believe that cutting overseas aid is going to do anything other than worsen the problem?

Dame Angela Eagle: I suggest that the right hon. Gentleman raises that issue with the Chancellor.

Amanda Martin (Portsmouth North) (Lab): It beggars belief that the Conservatives have the gall to question the actions we have taken as a Government in clearing up the mess they left behind, because they simply stopped doing anything other than wasting £9 billion of taxpayers' money. We have returned 19,000 people with no right to be here, we have increased Border Force, and we have increased working with our European allies and our intelligence services, but there is more to do. It was a mess, and people in our country feel let down and a deep mistrust of politicians. That is causing division and rumour mills to develop and fester in our communities. Can the Minister tell me what we are doing as a Government to rebuild public trust and community cohesion? Does she agree that that should start right here in this House?

Dame Angela Eagle: I believe that people need to think about the language they use and the impressions of human beings they give when they talk about this very emotive issue. It raises huge concern, I know. As a Government, we have certainly got to do all we can to try to reassure people that we can get this system back under control, after finding a chaotic mess when we came into Government.

Mr Paul Kohler (Wimbledon) (LD): I recently wrote to the Minister to request the estimated savings the Government expect from the closure of 10 asylum seeker hotels. In response, I was informed that while the Home Office publishes data on the number of people housed in hotels, it does not report on the number of rooms occupied. A hotel accommodating people in shared rooms incurs significantly different costs from one where individuals occupy separate rooms, yet that critical distinction is overlooked. Given that effective policy decisions must be based on clear evidence, will

the Minister commit to publishing room occupancy data to ensure accountability and informed decision making?

Dame Angela Eagle: I will write to the hon. Gentleman.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): I can assure asylum seekers that they will be treated with kindness and compassion in my human rights city of York. However, tragically, a mother at full term lost her baby at a hotel. Will the Minister give a guarantee that pregnant women will not be moved from hotel to hotel, so that they can have continuity of services and a safe pregnancy?

Dame Angela Eagle: That certainly should not be happening. If my hon. Friend wants to talk to me about it, I will try to see what happened in that instance.

Dr Caroline Johnson (Sleaford and North Hykeham) (Con): A directive from the Treasury reported in *The Times* appears to suggest that house building by the Government will help with the backlog of asylum seekers staying in hotels. Does the Minister believe that individuals who have arrived in the UK illegally should be given access to social housing ahead of British citizens?

Dame Angela Eagle: No.

Chris Webb (Blackpool South) (Lab): Back in 2021, the Conservatives, when in government, told the town of Blackpool that they would use the Metropole hotel as an asylum hotel for three months. They lost control of the borders and drove the asylum system into chaos, and we are still paying the price now, in one of the most deprived communities in the country. Does the Minister agree that we need to close these hotels as soon as possible and give back that prime real estate—especially in coastal communities such as Blackpool—to help the tourism industry thrive?

Dame Angela Eagle: We do not believe that it is sustainable to keep hotel use indefinitely, and we are working to close hotels.

Lewis Cocking (Broxbourne) (Con): Small boat crossings are up 30% since the general election. The number of illegal asylum seekers in the asylum hotel in my constituency of Broxbourne is also up. Illegal asylum seekers are being prioritised for GP appointments and school places, which is outrageous to me and my hard-working constituents. Can the Minister tell the House when she will meet her manifesto commitment of closing the asylum hotel in my constituency of Broxbourne?

Dame Angela Eagle: Our aim is to close asylum hotels and get out of what we feel is an unsustainable situation as quickly as practicable.

Alex Sobel (Leeds Central and Headingley) (Lab/Co-op): I am sure that the Minister agrees that one of the root causes of this crisis was the last Government's politically motivated actions, first slowing down and then freezing the processing of asylum applications. I have asylum seekers waiting 10 or more years for a decision. The British public want to see a contribution by asylum seekers to the system, reducing the public burden on

taxpayers, so has the Minister considered lifting the ban on work so that people waiting more than six months for a decision can contribute to our tax system until a decision is made?

Dame Angela Eagle: Asylum seekers who wait longer than a year are allowed to work, so long as that wait has not been caused by them—that is, a wait through no fault of their own. We have that system now, and I am not considering shortening the length of time that must elapse before work is allowed.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani): Order. Questions are getting considerably longer. Can we keep them on point?

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Ind): Like the right hon. Member for Herne Bay and Sandwich (Sir Roger Gale), I have visited Calais on a number of occasions, and I have met people there who are desperate. They are victims of war, human rights abuses, environmental degradation and sheer poverty and desperation. They do not cross the channel without a reason to do it. What conversations is the Minister having with those in European countries, north Africa and the middle east about the root causes of the huge numbers of people globally who are seeking asylum at the present time? Inhumanity and deportation will not work.

Dame Angela Eagle: I do not apologise for deporting people who have no right to be here or who have been through the system and are discovered neither to be asylum seekers nor to have any right to stay in the country. I accept the right hon. Gentleman's point about the desperate situation that people are in. They could claim asylum in the country they are in, and we need to work with our counterparts in the European Union and along all the routes to see what we can do to divert those people who are seeking a better life in our country and see if we can look after them closer to home.

Steve Yemm (Mansfield) (Lab): Under this Labour Government, illegal working raids and arrests are up by a third. Does the Minister agree that that sends a clear message that the UK will not and should not tolerate those who abuse our immigration system, and that we will crack down on illegal activity in all its forms?

Dame Angela Eagle: Yes. Illegal working arrests and visits have increased by 38%. More people have been arrested. More people have been fined. We are seeking to ban those who abuse illegal workers—often underpaying them and treating them like modern slaves—from running companies. The fines are now £60,000 per illegal worker. There is no reason why legitimate small businesses should be undermined by illegal working and illegal practices.

Lincoln Jopp (Spelthorne) (Con): Are the Government considering sending failed asylum seekers to overseas return hubs?

Dame Angela Eagle: I am not going to comment on leaks.

Tom Hayes (Bournemouth East) (Lab): It is always a pleasure to see the shadow Home Secretary shoot himself in the foot, particularly when he brings a sawn-off shotgun to do the job. The Government are getting a grip on the issue of asylum hotels, and the Conservatives should be ashamed. We heard in the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Bill Committee how children were being targeted for organ harvesting and for sexual abuse and were going missing from the system. The Conservatives put Bills on the statute book that they never implemented, and I am pleased that this Government have committed to closing asylum hotels. They have given me the assurance that they will not be adding hotels in Bournemouth.

When the Conservatives on the Bill Committee defined a deterrent, they said it was about detaining and deporting. Does my hon. Friend agree that the Conservatives neither detained nor deported, so we should stop calling the Rwanda gimmick a deterrent?

Dame Angela Eagle: I agree with my hon. Friend. Between the announcement of the Rwanda scheme and its ending, 85,000 people came across in small boats.

Richard Foord (Honiton and Sidmouth) (LD): Last month we learned that overseas development assistance would be cut from 0.5% to 0.3% of gross national income. Some of us assumed that this saving would be found in the closure of so-called asylum hotels, but now we learn that the Government will continue to hire hotels for many years to come despite the broken contract. The Minister says that she wants to minimise the effect on the ODA budget, but how much of it will remain?

Dame Angela Eagle: I understand that, ahead of the reductions that were announced, 20% is currently spent on housing asylum seekers in this country. Clearly, if we can get the system running faster from start to finish and we can get people through it faster, we can reduce those costs.

Shaun Davies (Telford) (Lab): This Government inherited a chaotic and broken system and disorder at the border. Under the last Conservative Government, the local community was deprived of a manor house in my constituency because it was used as an asylum hotel. Can the Minister confirm that it is the hard-yards mission of this Government to close those hotels and give them back to their communities?

Dame Angela Eagle: Yes, that is our aim.

Ben Obese-Jecty (Huntingdon) (Con): I appreciate that the Minister's curt responses suggest that she is struggling somewhat with her brief, but does she actually know how many gangs have been smashed? If she does not know, and on the basis of her previous answers to me I suspect that she does not, why does she not know, and if she does know, will she inform the House—unless, of course, the answer is that no gangs have yet been smashed?

Dame Angela Eagle: I thank the hon. Gentleman for his belief in my ability to get on top of my brief.

The National Crime Agency recently arrested three men in the UK who were wanted in Belgium after being convicted of being members of an Afghan organised

crime group. It has arrested a Turkish national suspected of being one of the most significant suppliers of boats and engines to gangs, who was detained in Amsterdam following a joint operation involving the NCA and Belgian and Dutch police. There have been convictions of two men based in south Wales who ran a people-smuggling ring that involved moving thousands of migrants through Iran, Iraq and Syria and across Europe. As a result of a major international operation involving the NCA targeting a Syrian organised crime group considered to be one of Europe's most significant people-smuggling gangs, at least 20 people were arrested in a series of raids across the continent, including one in the United Kingdom.

That is just what has been happening recently. A great deal more work is going on involving many, many investigations, the fruit of which will be borne—and we will talk about it—when it is delivered.

John Slinger (Rugby) (Lab): I commend the work that the Government have undertaken with European countries and others to smash the criminal smuggler gangs, such as the French deployment of specialist units on the beaches, German raids on small boat warehouses and, indeed, the efforts of my right hon. Friend the Home Secretary in Iraq and in respect of the Kurdistan Regional Government in Iraq. Can the Minister confirm that although we will not smash the gangs overnight, the Government remain committed to working with our international partners to secure our borders?

Dame Angela Eagle: We are doing that work day in, day out. If the Conservatives had not allowed smuggling gangs to take hold across the channel for six years, we would not be experiencing the difficulties that we are experiencing now in dealing with them. *[Interruption.]* This takes time, there is no simple, easy solution, and chuntering about it from the Opposition Front Bench—which, let us face it, is where the Conservatives belong—will not make any difference.

Carla Lockhart (Upper Bann) (DUP): In the first nine months of this Government we have witnessed the cruel impact of their decision making on farmers, pensioners and WASPI women—people who have worked all their lives—while taxpayers' money continues to fund hotel accommodation for economic migrants arriving illegally via the channel. My constituents want to see the Government put British citizens first, rather than prioritising spending on those who are arriving illegally. What can the Minister say to them today?

Dame Angela Eagle: It is important, in order to deal with the chaos that we inherited, to create a system that is faster, fairer and much easier to get through than the one we inherited. Unless the hon. Lady wants people to be destitute on the streets, we have to look after them while we are processing their asylum claims. Speed is important, as well as ensuring that we do that processing fairly.

Jonathan Hinder (Pendle and Clitheroe) (Lab): I thank the Minister and her colleagues in the Department for the work that they are doing to tackle illegal immigration, especially the enforcement against the gangs who put vulnerable lives at risk. My constituents want illegal immigration stopped, and the chaotic huffing and puffing from the Conservatives is one of the reasons they were

booted out on this issue at the general election. It is important to restoring faith in politics that we deliver on it. Does the Minister believe that the existing legal framework on asylum and returns will allow us to do so?

Dame Angela Eagle: The Prime Minister has made it clear that the answer will not be to ignore international law, so we have to ensure that we create a system that is fast and fair and does the job much more effectively than the one we inherited. We are looking into how we can make changes to ensure that that happens.

Shockat Adam (Leicester South) (Ind): Everyone agrees that we must have sensible immigration policies, but does the Minister agree that phrases such as “Stop the boats” and “Smash the gangs” are just populist sloganeering that dehumanises the most vulnerable in society and serves as a scapegoat for successive Government shortcomings including the £700 million spent on the useless Rwanda scheme, the billions wasted on personal protective equipment, and the lack of investment in the NHS? That is the reason why people cannot obtain appointments with their GPs, not people arriving on a boat. Does the Minister agree that we must take a holistic approach, including perhaps opening up safe routes and efficient processing, so that when people arrive in this country they can start working from day one?

Dame Angela Eagle: I do not think that safe routes would stop people trying to get into this country clandestinely. It is important that we can assert control at the border so that we decide who comes into our country, not the people-smuggling gangs.

Luke Myer (Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland) (Lab): When I speak to my constituents, they accept that the last Government overspent by billions on the

asylum system and it fell to this Government to make the difficult decisions to settle the bill. What they cannot accept is that it is fair for taxpayers to continue to be expected to spend £9 million a day on asylum hotels. That was a mark of shame for the last Government, and it may become one for us unless it is resolved. What steps will the Minister take to speed up processing, increase returns and end the use of hotels for good?

Dame Angela Eagle: We have restarted asylum processing, and we are looking into what we can do to speed up the appeals backlog that we inherited. We will create a system that is faster, firmer and fairer so that we can get people out of asylum hotels, which are not a sustainable model for the future.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I thank the Minister for her answers to the questions that others have posed. There is a clear difference between asylum seekers—those fleeing persecution, those who are threatened—and economic migrants. How can the Government gain control of accommodation for those who are economic migrants to reduce this horrific bill? In my constituency, as in others, people are sleeping on floors in the homes of family members because the Housing Executive that has responsibility back home cannot cope with demand. How will the Minister, and the Government, ensure that families and children are housed, whether they are asylum seekers or British citizens?

Dame Angela Eagle: My right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister made some announcements recently about the capacity to increase house building in this country in order to deal with some of the pressure on demand. It is important from an asylum seeker point of view that we make the system work end to end much faster so that we can get people through it, deport those who have no right to be here, and integrate those who have been accepted as asylum seekers.

Point of Order

1.28 pm

Victoria Atkins (Louth and Horncastle) (Con): On a point of order, Madam Deputy Speaker. The head of Dover Port Health Authority has told the House that if funding is not secured for the new financial year, food security checks at the border will be stopped. On 6 February I asked the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to confirm that funding. He did not answer, and has not responded to my two written parliamentary questions on the subject. We are now more than two weeks past the deadline for a response and days away from the new financial year, with no answer to the question of whether those important checks at our border will continue. May I please have your guidance, Madam Deputy Speaker, on how we can secure a prompt and accurate response from the Secretary of State before the checks for diseased meats, in particular, are stopped?

Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani): I am not sure whether the Chair was alerted to that point of order. It is always good to give prior notice on the exact language.

The right hon. Member will know that that is not a matter for the Chair, but she has put her point on the record. No doubt those on the Treasury Bench will have heard it and will pass on her views.

BILL PRESENTED

ARM'S-LENGTH BODIES (ACCOUNTABILITY TO PARLIAMENT) BILL

Presentation and First Reading (Standing Order No. 57)

Sir Christopher Chope presented a Bill to make provision for arm's length bodies to be directly accountable to Parliament.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 28 March, and to be printed (Bill 208).

Regulators (Growth Objective)

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

1.30 pm

Luke Murphy (Basingstoke) (Lab): I beg to move,

That leave be given to bring in a Bill to provide for the inclusion of economic growth as an objective for certain statutory regulators; and for connected purposes.

For too long, our regulatory system has been tangled, inefficient and disconnected from the mission of economic growth and prosperity. Instead of fostering investment, encouraging innovation and delivering good jobs, regulation has too often acted as a brake on progress: too slow, too risk-averse and too unpredictable. The previous Government hid behind regulators, deferring decisions, creating unnecessary bureaucracy and allowing inefficiencies to flourish. Too many businesses today face an overlapping, complex regulatory environment, with too many regulators, too many conflicting duties and too little co-ordination. It is a system that frustrates ambition and slows down investment.

This Government are determined to change that. Under the leadership of the Prime Minister, the Chancellor, and the Business Secretary, the Government are committed to smarter regulation: regulation that is pro-growth, pro-innovation and—yes—pro-worker. We recognise that regulation, when designed and implemented well, is not an obstacle but a tool. It is a tool to unlock private investment, tackle systemic risks, protect the environment, and deliver better outcomes for people and communities.

Britain's businesses, large and small, are ready to drive economic growth, but they can only do so if the regulatory system enables them. There are now more than 100 regulatory bodies, many with overlapping mandates and responsibilities. The 17 key regulators the Prime Minister wrote to in December collectively employ 36,000 staff and spend £5.4 billion a year. That is a significant national investment, but one that too often lacks strategic co-ordination. Instead of working together, many regulators operate in silos duplicating work, slowing decisions, and creating unnecessary costs and confusion for businesses. Their powers and duties have expanded over time, without any overarching framework to keep them aligned. The result is a fragmented, sometimes contradictory system that no longer serves our national economic interest.

A clear example is the Payment Systems Regulator. Firms operating payment systems like Mastercard or Faster Payments were forced to engage with three different regulators just to function in the UK. That meant three sets of rules, three sets of processes and three sets of conversations to deliver just one service. For major firms, it was frustrating. For small or scaling businesses, it was a serious obstacle. That is why the Prime Minister announced its abolition, with its core responsibilities to be folded into the Financial Conduct Authority. This is not about deregulation for deregulation's sake. It is about smart simplification: removing duplication, reducing cost and creating clearer points of accountability. In short, it is about regulating for growth.

But let us be clear: one example is not enough. The problem is systemic. The entire regulatory landscape needs to be reviewed, streamlined and refocused around a shared mission of economic growth. That is what the Regulators (Growth Objective) Bill would deliver. The

Bill would support the Government's broader regulating for growth agenda. The Chancellor and the Business Secretary have now published a radical new action plan, backed by businesses, to create a more agile, investment-friendly regulatory environment. As part of that work, the Chancellor secured 60 pledges from regulators that will deliver real, tangible change within the next 12 months. The CBI rightly called it:

"a shift towards more proportionate, outcomes-based regulation."

This is practical, pro-growth reform: delivering for businesses, supported by businesses. But we must be clear that regulation can be both pro-growth and pro our other priorities, too. Balanced, purposeful regulation can support growth, and support the environment, strengthen public trust and raise living standards.

Take the Government's new deal for working people. Opposition Members claim that our proposals—to raise the minimum wage and end exploitative zero-hours contracts, introduce day-one rights against unfair dismissal, and expand access to sick pay and parental leave—are somehow misaligned with the Government's wider approach to regulation. But they fail to recognise that for too long, the UK has operated with a labour market divided between secure, well-paid jobs and a growing share of insecure, low-paid work. The result is a low-wage, low-productivity doom loop. Our new deal for working people is regulation with a purpose, making work more secure, businesses more productive and the economy stronger. These policies are not just good for workers; they are good for business, too.

The Government are not tearing up the regulatory rulebook, but rewriting it for a new era. We can and must learn lessons from home and abroad. Take Japan's Top Runner programme, a pioneering regulatory approach that sets energy efficiency standards based on the best-performing products on the market, pushing industries to innovate and improve. By combining ambitious targets with industrial flexibility, it has successfully driven technological advancement and economic growth, while also reducing energy consumption. Or take the push by UK financial regulators to require major banks to open up their customer data, with consent, to third parties. That has helped to create a globally leading fintech ecosystem, with investment in UK fintech soaring. The Bill would force us to ask: "How we can repeat those successes in other sectors?" For too long, regulators have been left without that kind of strategic guidance, forced to make politically sensitive decisions in a vacuum. That is not fair on them, and it is not good for the country.

The Bill gives regulators the direction they have been missing. It does not ask them to stop doing their work; it asks them to do it better, together, and with a shared

focus on creating prosperity. Because when regulation drifts, so does the economy. Yet right now, there is no formal mechanism to align regulators with the Government's growth strategy. The Bill would provide it. It enshrines one simple principle: regulators must not only regulate for risk, they must regulate for growth. That means: every regulator must consider the impact of their decisions on investment, innovation and prosperity; and regulators must work together, ending duplication and aligning around shared national priorities. Growth would become a statutory objective, not an afterthought.

This is not theory; it is delivery. Regulation is not confined to the corridors of Whitehall. Its effects are felt in constituencies across our nation. The Bill is a call to action for the Government to bring forward a full review of regulators' duties and objectives, with the ambition of creating a simpler, smarter framework fit for the modern economy. Too many of our regulators are operating under a patchwork of outdated or overlapping mandates. The result is duplication, drift and decisions that lack co-ordination or clarity. It is confusing for businesses, inefficient for regulators, and a barrier to growth. That is why today I urge the Government to go further and begin the work of legislating for a core set of statutory duties, including growth, across the regulatory landscape: duties that promote long-term growth and investment, protect consumers and the environment, and embed a culture of speed, clarity and accountability in decision making; and a system where regulators remain independent, but the expectations placed on them are consistent, transparent and aligned with our national priorities.

We will continue to protect what matters: safety, fairness, the environment and public trust. However, we must also deliver on what moves us forward towards innovation, economic renewal and growth. Growth is not a luxury—it is how we raise living standards, improve public services and restore pride in every part of this country.

Let us give regulators a clear foundation. Let us bring forward a new legislative framework that reflects the ambitions of a dynamic, pro-growth Britain. Let us regulate for growth. I commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Ordered,

That Luke Murphy, Mr Luke Charters, Uma Kumaran, Lola McEvoy, Chris Curtis, Sonia Kumar, Gregor Poynton, Kanishka Narayan, Mike Reader, Ms Polly Billington, Rachel Blake and Anneliese Midgley present the Bill.

Luke Murphy accordingly presented the Bill.

Bill read the First time; to be read a Second time on Friday 4 July, and to be printed (Bill 207).

National Insurance Contributions (Secondary Class 1 Contributions) Bill

Consideration of Lords message

Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani): I must draw the House's attention to the fact that financial privilege is engaged by Lords amendments 1B, 5B and 8B. If the House agrees to any of those amendments, I will cause the customary entry waiving Commons financial privilege to be entered in the *Journal*.

After Clause 1

EXEMPTIONS FROM THE CHANGES MADE BY SECTION 1: NHS AND SOCIAL CARE

1.42 pm

The Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury (James Murray): I beg to move, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 1B.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to consider the Government motions to disagree with Lords amendments 5B, 8B and 21B.

James Murray: I welcome the opportunity to consider the new Lords amendments to the National Insurance Contributions (Secondary Class 1 Contributions) Bill. I start by repeating my thanks to Members of both Houses for their careful scrutiny and consideration of the Bill. Four new amendments have been made during consideration of the Bill in the other place, which we will seek to address today.

As I reminded hon. Members last week, when we entered government, we inherited a fiscal situation that was completely unsustainable, and we have had to take difficult but necessary decisions to repair the public finances and rebuild our public services. The measures in the Bill represent some of the toughest of those decisions, but they, along with other measures in the Budget, have enabled us to restore fiscal responsibility and get public services back on their feet. The amendments from the other place before us today put at risk the funding that the Bill seeks to raise. Let me be clear again: to support the amendments is to support higher borrowing, lower spending or other tax rises.

It is with that in mind that I turn to the first group of amendments: Lords amendments 1B, 5B and 8B. These amendments seek to create powers as part of the Bill to exempt certain groups from the changes to employer national insurance rates and threshold in the future, including exemptions for care providers, NHS GP practices, NHS-commissioned dentists and pharmacists, charitable providers of health and care and those providing hospice care. It also includes powers to exempt businesses or organisations with fewer than 25 full-time employees from the changes to the employer national insurance threshold.

Gregory Stafford (Farnham and Bordon) (Con): I thank the Minister for giving way so early in his speech. I just want to understand very clearly why the Government think that the NHS, under the banner of NHS England, should—rightly, in my opinion—be exempt from national insurance contributions, but that other parts of the NHS, such as GP surgeries, dentists and hospice care, should not.

James Murray: As I set out during consideration of Lords amendments last week, and, indeed, at pretty much every other stage of consideration of the Bill, the response to the changes in employer national insurance contributions that we are undertaking as a Government is in line with what the hon. Gentleman's Government did with the health and social care levy in the previous Parliament—namely providing direct support for public employers, meaning central Government, local government and public corporations. That is the standard way in which support for employer national insurance contribution changes is responded to.

As I have set out, the revenue raised from the measures in the Bill will play a critical role in repairing the public finances and rebuilding our public services. Clearly, any future changes that would exempt certain groups from paying national insurance would have cost implications, which, as I have made clear, would necessitate higher borrowing, lower spending or alternative revenue-raising measures. It is for that reason that I ask the House to support the Government's position by disagreeing to amendments 1B, 5B and 8B.

Sir Roger Gale (Herne Bay and Sandwich) (Con): The Commons' disagreement to Lords amendment 1, debated last week, states that the amendment "interferes with the public revenue, and the Commons do not offer any further Reason."

Does the Minister not think that those we represent would—just perhaps—prefer to see their taxed income generously donated via spending on children's hospices, rather than spent on an idiotic deal to spend millions of pounds on the Chagos islands?

James Murray: The right hon. Gentleman raised the question of hospices during last week's debate on amendments from the other place. As I made clear at the time, although hospices do not receive support to meet the changes in employer national insurance contributions, we greatly value the work they do. I pointed to the wider support that the Government are giving the hospice sector—namely, the £100 million boost for adult and children's hospices to ensure they have the best physical environment for care, and the £26 million revenue to support children and young people's hospices.

The right hon. Gentleman also referred to people giving to hospices, which are established as charities. Of course, the Government provide support for charities, including hospices, through the tax regime, which is among the most generous in the world, with tax reliefs for charities and their donors worth just over £6 billion for the tax year to April 2024.

Lords amendment 21B would require the Government to conduct assessments on the economic and sectoral impacts of the Bill. As we have discussed previously, the Government have already published an assessment of this policy in a tax information and impact note published by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs. That note sets out that, as a result of measures in the Bill, around 250,000 employers will see their secondary class 1 national insurance contributions liability decrease, and around 940,000 employers will see it increase. Around 820,000 employers will see no change. The Office for Budget Responsibility's economic and fiscal outlook also sets out the expected macroeconomic impact of the changes to employer national insurance contributions on employment, growth and inflation. The Government

and the OBR have therefore already set out the impacts of this policy change. The information provided is in line with other tax changes, and the Government do not intend to publish further assessments. However, we will of course continue to monitor the impact of these policies in the usual way.

I hope that right hon. and hon. Members will understand why we are not supporting these amendments from the other place. The measures in the Bill will play a crucial role in fixing the public finances and getting public services back on their feet. The amendments require information that has already been provided, do not recognise other policies the Government have in place or, most seriously, seek to undermine the funding that the Bill will secure. I therefore respectfully propose that this House disagrees with these amendments, and urge all hon. and right hon. Members to support the Government on that disagreement.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani): I call the shadow Minister.

Gareth Davies (Grantham and Bourne) (Con): I rise on behalf of the official Opposition to support Lords amendments 1B, 5B, 8B and 21B. It feels like only last week that we were all here, but it is clear that our colleagues in the other place feel as strongly as the Opposition do about these amendments, as they have returned them to us with a similar aim once again.

Lords amendments 1B, 5B and 8B seek to address two of the most serious consequences of the Bill that should concern and unite us all: that a rise in secondary class 1 national insurance could lead to a significant reduction in health and social care services, including our hospices, hitting the most vulnerable in our society; and could represent a complete hammer blow to the future aspirations and very survival of small businesses throughout the country.

We all know that the Chancellor has an addiction to creating fiscal black holes. First she used a fictional black hole, discredited by the Office for Budget Responsibility, as an excuse for her manifesto-breaking tax rises. This has led to more black holes, only this time they are very real because they are being felt out there in the real economy. The Bill before us today will create black holes in the finances of hospices, GP practices, farms, fruit shops, butchers, bakeries and businesses of all shapes and sizes, but especially the very smallest.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Does the shadow Minister find it puzzling that the NHS will be exempt from these changes, yet the many services on which people depend for their health—dental services, social care and so on—will be hit by this rise in national insurance contributions? *[Interruption.]* No services will remain unaffected, so people will not experience the healthcare that they require.

Gareth Davies: It is rare that questions come with a musical accompaniment, but the right hon. Gentleman's mobile ringtone made for a great effect. None the less, his point is the right one, which is that, whether it was intended or not, the rationale for the Bill is to “protect”—in the Government's words—public services. I could say “bolster” public services if I were being generous. The fact is that the Government are taxing public services on which we all rely and he is absolutely right to emphasise that.

Lords amendments 1B and 5B seek to provide the power to exempt from both prongs of attack of the Chancellor's jobs tax: care providers, NHS GP practices, NHS-commissioned dentists, NHS-commissioned pharmacists, and charitable providers of health and social care, such as hospices. And it is hospices specifically that I want to speak more about today.

Hospices are there at what, for many, will be the hardest moments of their lives. They provide vital physical and emotional support to individuals who are coming towards the final chapter of their lives and for their loved ones. In short, hospices are there to look after us at our most difficult time. So, whether through funding, charitable donations or legislation, they deserve our utmost support to continue in this task.

However, as I set out in Committee, this disastrous jobs tax will cost hospices up to £30 million next year alone. Hospice UK has repeatedly warned this Government that the Bill risks a reduction in hospice services, which will lead only to even greater pressure on NHS palliative care services.

Of the more than 200 hospices across our country, around 40 provide care for children. These are children who are living with terminal illness, many of whom have an all-too-limited time left in this world. The organisation Together for Short Lives estimates that the Labour Government's decision to raise national insurance will add almost £5 million to the annual cost of providing care for seriously ill children and their families. Let us be clear: this will mean that every children's hospice in England alone will need to spend an average of £140,000 more just to maintain services for the children in their care, after paying the additional tax that this Bill will impose. The Government cannot seriously be demanding that staff and volunteers at charitable children's hospices—the very people who already give their heart and soul to look after sick and dying children—fundraise their share of £5 million next year alone just to keep their lights on and their doors open.

At Treasury questions on 21 January, the Chancellor stated, in response to an excellent question from my Lincolnshire colleague, my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh), that the settlement for hospices announced by the Health and Social Care Secretary just before Christmas includes money to specifically “compensate” hospices for the national insurance increase. That is not correct, and I am pleased that at least this Minister has tried to acknowledge that point.

Sir Edward Leigh (Gainsborough) (Con): When I visited staff at the much-loved St Barnabas hospice in Lincoln, which provides excellent palliative care, they told me that they are losing £300,000 a year. In the debates on assisted dying, we all agree that we want more palliative care. I just cannot understand the logic of what the Government are doing. I make one last appeal to them not to load this extra cost on to hospices.

Gareth Davies: My right hon. Friend has raised that matter at every single opportunity that he has been afforded, and he is right to stand up not just for St Barnabas, but for all hospices. However, I have to say that St Barnabas holds a particular place in the hearts of people in Lincolnshire. I know, as a Lincolnshire Member of Parliament, that it has been around for 40 years, employs 300 staff and treats more than 12,000 people across our county every single year. The fact that it is going to be

[Gareth Davies]

hit with a cost worth hundreds of thousands of pounds for no good reason is unacceptable. I pay tribute to my right hon. Friend the Father of the House for raising that point so consistently. I hope that the Government will listen to him.

The settlement announced does not compensate St Barnabas, or any hospice, for the damage that the Government are doing, not least because we know that much of this money cannot be spent on facing down the additional running costs that this tax hike will bring. There is £100 million of capital funding, which has been set aside for buildings and equipment. Although that funding is welcome, it will not fill the national insurance blackhole that the Chancellor has created for the hospice sector, and she should not suggest otherwise. Today the Government have a chance to exempt hospices and other key areas of our health and social care sector from this tax hike, by accepting Lords amendments 1B and 5B.

In addition, Lords amendment 8B seeks to provide the power to exempt the smallest businesses—those with fewer than 25 full-time employees—from the proposed cut to the threshold at which an employer is required to pay secondary class 1 national insurance. The Chancellor has spoken a lot about growth, but growth has been consistently downgraded since she took office. Something that we, as Conservatives, know, and that she, as a socialist, does not know, is that that is because economic growth cannot come from the Floor of the House of Commons; it comes from the factory floors and bustling high street shop floors in each of our constituencies. It comes not from state-created quangos such as GB Energy, but from individuals who had an idea, stuck it out, made it work and saw it through. It comes from people in this country who, by seeking a better life through enterprise, create the jobs and services that make our country strong.

Those small businesses are being hammered, but not just by the national insurance hike. In less than a year they have already seen: business rates relief cut from 75% to 40%; aspiration penalised with changes to business property relief; and crippling new red tape through the Employment Rights Bill, adding a staggering £5 billion in additional costs. This is a potent and damaging combination of costs that many fear will mark the end. Lords amendment 8B gives the Government another chance today to change their approach, to throw our smallest businesses a lifeline—a chance of survival.

Finally, while our smallest businesses require specific attention, I made it clear last week that, sadly, this Bill does not discriminate. It will hit business groups of all types, across all sectors, in all parts of our country—from charities to cafés, from pharmacies to children's nurseries and special educational needs and disabilities transport. We must understand the impact the Bill will have. That is why Lords amendment 21B requires the Chancellor to carry out a review of the impact of the Bill on a range of sectors of our economy within six months of its passing into law. I urge Members to support the amendment.

Tomorrow the Chancellor will come to this House to launch her latest attempt to reverse as much as possible of the damage of her Hallowe'en Budget of horrors. Despite the hopes and dreams of business owners across

the country, we can be sure that her emergency Budget will not include scrapping this awful Bill. It is incumbent on all of us in this place to work to protect and support the most vulnerable in our society, and to take decisions that drive growth, backing the people out there who make it happen. They are the people who will be hit hardest by the Bill. The Government must change course.

2 pm

Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani): I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

Daisy Cooper (St Albans) (LD): I rise to speak to Lords amendments 1B, 5B, 8B and 21B. Even before the Budget, there were rumours that the Government were thinking of introducing a hike to national insurance contributions. We Liberal Democrats issued a stark warning to the Government. We challenged them at Prime Minister's questions and in questions to the Deputy Prime Minister, saying that if they went ahead and introduced these changes, social care providers up and down the land would be hit incredibly hard. The Government cannot say that they were not warned. We warned them, even before they made the announcement.

In the many long debates that we have had in the Chamber since the Budget, we have consistently made the case that health and care providers should be exempted from this change. The Government say that they want to make the national health service a neighbourhood health service; we heard this just an hour ago from the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. They also say that they want to take services out of hospitals and on to the high street, but this tax hammers the very providers of the neighbourhood community services on which the NHS relies. It is GPs, dentists, pharmacists, hospices and care providers who hold up our community care, and prop up our NHS, so that it does not fall over.

Government Ministers have said on many occasions that they have increased funding to social care, but the additional funding announced in the Budget is dwarfed by the rise in national insurance contributions. As other Members have highlighted, the Government have said that they have given more funding to hospices, but that funding is for capital projects. There is no point having another hospice building or hospice bed if there are no staff to look after the people lying in them. We know that we have to fix the front door to the NHS—our GPs and dentists—but we have to fix the back door to our NHS too, which is social care.

On hospices, there is nowhere else for the people in them to go. People look for support from hospices so that they can die in dignity, with independence, in a setting of their choice, surrounded by their loved ones—not in the sterile environment of a hospital ward or, worse, a busy corridor or ambulance parked outside. We need our GPs, dentists, hospices, pharmacists and care providers to survive and thrive if we are to end the crisis in our NHS.

The Lords in their wisdom have not sent back an amendment that simply asks for an exemption. They have put in a very clever tweak that asks that the Government to adopt a Henry VIII power. That is not something the Liberal Democrats would normally support, but on this occasion it would give Ministers the power to choose if and when they want to exempt health and care providers from the rise. That way, when we get this

enormous growth booming in our economy—when we see the success that we all hope to see—a Minister could choose to exempt health and care providers and give them the cash injection that they need. I urge the Government to support this measure.

Amendment 8B provides a power to exempt small businesses from the changes. Small businesses are the engine of our economy and of growth. They are the very organisations that prop up our high streets. They are the glue that hold our communities together. The Government have raised the employment allowance for microbusinesses, but they have not put other provisions in place to support small businesses. While our small businesses can be the engine of growth, they are screaming out about the number of obligations being put on them, with the NICs changes, business rates bills going up and the new obligations under the Employment Rights Bill. It is all happening at once, and they say that they are overwhelmed. I support amendment 8B, which would give the Government the power to exempt small businesses.

I am also in favour of Lords amendment 21B on an impact assessment. As Ministers remind us, there is a tax and spend announcement coming, but looking at the impact of the provisions, this is less about tax and spend and more about the overwhelming impact on small businesses, which are really struggling right now. Many of them still have covid loans, and many are struggling with access to finance. Many owners are remortgaging their homes to prop up a new business. This change has come out of the blue. Small businesses have not been able to plan ahead for it, and many of them are fearful about what will happen. I fear that if the measures go ahead, in a matter of days, we will start to see shop fronts boarded up on high streets up and down the land.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani): I was going to call Sir Roger Gale, but he is no longer bobbing—ah, I call him now.

Sir Roger Gale: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I naively assumed that, having already been called twice today, I had to take my place in the pecking order.

I want to come back briefly to hospices. This is a very serious issue, and I do not think that the Minister or the Government understand the deleterious effect of the change on care for some of the sickest people in the land, both in adult hospices and children's hospices. I have listened very carefully—twice now—to the Minister's response about giving this and giving that, but they are giving with one hand and taking away more with the other. The net result will be a reduction in staff. This is a straightforward tax on jobs.

Without dedicated, caring staff, who do jobs that frankly most of us would not begin to know how to do, the health service will not function. There are children living in and being serviced by Demelza House, Shooting Star and all the other children's hospices. The Pilgrims Hospices in Thanet and Canterbury will not be able to afford to recruit and or pay the staff that they need.

Hospice care is an integral part of the health service. The point was made by my right hon. Friend the Member for Gainsborough (Sir Edward Leigh) and others that hospice care is part of the health service and should be treated as part of the NHS. *[Interruption.]* My right hon. Friend asks from a sedentary position, "Where are all the Labour Members?" The answer is

that they will be in the Lobby, voting against these measures, but they are not here listening to the debate. It saddens me to have to say it, but in this instance, their absence speaks volumes. Quite simply, they do not care.

Dave Doogan (Angus and Perthshire Glens) (SNP): The Lords amendments seek to address a clear, present and insurmountable financial challenge for significant elements of health and social care delivery in all our communities. The Government say, in the most spurious and disingenuous way, as though they did not understand their role in the health service, that social care providers, GPs, dentists and pharmacies are contractors. How they are dealt with by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs is irrelevant. It is the role that they fulfil in our society and in the delivery of health and social care services that is at stake. These are not contractors that can go and develop new markets somewhere else. Their market is exclusively within the NHS and health and social care up and down these islands. Many properly commercial businesses will not manage to pivot their way out of this attack from Labour—and GP practices, pharmacies, care providers, nurseries and hospices certainly will not.

I want to mention hospices. When Macmillan Cancer Support speaks, no matter what colour our rosette, we should listen. It has highlighted clearly what the measures mean for end-of-life care. There have been 15 years of chaos in the United Kingdom, most of it economic; there has been the lost decade of Brexit, and its catastrophic effect on the UK's economy and the material welfare of people up and down these islands. I ask: who can we blame? Who is culpable? Who has their fingerprints all over it? Not terminally ill children in hospices, who will, as a result of the Bill, suffer as a result of the debilitating effect on the care with which they are provided. The Minister and his Government could do a simple thing: give hospices a derogation from the grasping hand of the Bill, and protect children in the worst imaginable circumstances.

From the outset, the Government's fiscal misadventure has been met with opprobrium from all manner of sections of the economy and society, but they have held firm. I pay tribute to the Minister; he fronts up here every time with a smile, and does his best to defend what he has to. That is his job, and I do not judge him for that, but the bottom line is that the Government have yielded, not to children in hospitals, or to people trying to deliver social care and free up hospital beds by preventing delayed discharge, but to the bankers by restoring their bonuses, and to the non-doms who want all the benefits of living in this country but do not want to pay for it. That speaks volumes about what a Labour Government in this day and age are all about.

Sammy Wilson: I hope that I can have this intervention without a musical interlude. I apologise to you, Madam Deputy Speaker, for having my phone switched on. Will the hon. Member accept that not only are services likely to be affected, as he has outlined, but the Government's aim of raising additional revenue will be affected as well? As he pointed out, they have given in to the bankers and non-doms because of the fear of losing revenue. Anecdotally, we know that many businesses, whether those supporting the national health service or other small businesses, will cut back on the number of staff that they employ because they cannot afford them, and that will lead to a loss of national insurance and tax

[Sammy Wilson]

contributions. It could be an own goal for the Government if they cause pain to businesses but do not get any revenue from it.

Dave Doogan: I agree entirely. This is a £24 billion fiscal drag that is intended to create growth. Work that one out if you can, because it is beyond my ken. The Government will not make derogations for key elements of health and social care, because the benefit of the £24 billion drag on the economy that the right hon. Gentleman pointed out is, after compensation, already down £10 billion. If they compensate the people who they definitely should, such as GPs, pharmacies, care providers and hospices, that would take it down to somewhere around £7 billion or £8 billion. What type of Chancellor and Treasury orthodoxy says, “We place a £24 billion burden on the economy in exchange for an £8 billion return for the Treasury”? It is absolutely catastrophic. It is misadventure writ large, and it has Labour as its logo.

Daisy Cooper: The hon. Member highlighted the comments by the Office for Budget Responsibility, which said that the £24 billion is, in fact, only £10 billion once behaviour change is accounted for. If the Government were to agree to the exemption that we seek, the figure could be only £8 billion. Does he agree that there are much fairer ways of raising that revenue, such as by putting a digital services tax on the big online media giants and gaming companies?

Dave Doogan: The hon. Member raises two excellent examples of what could be done to raise the funding that the Government need in a just way. Let us not forget that Labour knew fine what it was walking into when it won the election. We told it, as did the Liberal Democrats and the media—the Tories were a bit quiet on the issue, right enough—that there would be an £18 billion black hole if it stuck to Tory tax and spending policy. This is on Labour. The hon. Member mentioned two examples of excellent and just ways to raise funding.

Similarly, the Government could apply Scottish income tax thresholds to the whole of the UK, giving most people a pay rise and raising £16 billion into the bargain. They could raise £40 billion from a 1% wealth tax on assets over £10 million. There are a range of other measures that they could take, such as raising £30 billion by rejoining the single market—not very many people in here talk about that.

2.15 pm

The Government persist in their tendentious references to additional funding, all of which is capital and none of which can soften the blow of the measures contained in the Bill. They do not want to support, in particular, Lords amendment 21B, because they would rather continue to cloak the effect that the Bill will have on care services and contractor elements of the national health service up and down these islands, and the effect that it will have on the real economy, which Labour is a stranger to.

Jerome Mayhew (Broadland and Fakenham) (Con): I am just flummoxed by the Government’s approach to the Bill. Clause 1 raises employer national insurance from 13.8% to 15%. Almost more damagingly, clause 2

reduces the threshold at which they start paying it from £9,100 to just £5,000. The Government know how damaging this measure is for healthcare. We can see that because they have taken action to exempt the NHS from it. That will cost billions of pounds, because healthcare providers cannot just diversify as other sections of the economy might be able to. They cannot raise prices. A general practitioner’s customer is the state, and prices are fixed by the Treasury. As a result, the Government know exactly what the impact of this proposal will be on hospices. We have already heard that without an exemption, they will face an additional £30 million of costs every year as a result of these changes.

When the Bill was first announced, I assumed that there had been an oversight by the Treasury and that it would be addressed as the Bill progressed. But both last week and this week, the Lords have moved to fix what was originally considered to be perhaps an oversight. Today’s decision to seek to reverse Lords amendments 1B and 5B in particular demonstrates beyond doubt that it is not an oversight but a deliberate decision taken by Labour to penalise hospices for the care of the dying, and to do what with that money? We may be in the obscene position in a few weeks’ time of funding for state-assisted dying being raised by taxing palliative care. This is absolute madness. If Members wanted any other reason why they should not support the Government, that is an overwhelming one.

I make one last reference to the emptiness of the Government Benches. There are now two Labour Members sitting there who are not required to be—[*Interruption.*] I take it back, there is only one. That indicates to me that Labour Members do not want to be associated with the Bill. They will scurry through the Lobby later, but they are not brave enough to stand up and defend the decision of their Government.

Gregory Stafford: You do not need any convincing of this, Madam Deputy Speaker, but were you to, the Lords amendments demonstrate why we need a House of Lords. They are the ones standing up and delivering the amendments that this Government are trying to wriggle out of this afternoon. Amendments 1B and 5B, which the Government are trying to derogate from, are essential for our care services. The financial strain that the Government’s national insurance contributions will put on the care sector is astronomical—some predictions are of around £2.4 billion on social care alone. Ultimately, that will lead to reductions in services and, unfortunately, closures, especially in the hospice sector.

The Minister has repeated what he and other Ministers have said on many occasions: they are giving a certain amount of money to the hospice sector, but as Opposition colleagues have stated, that is capital spending. What they desperately need is revenue spending to cover the cost of the rise in national insurance contributions.

Dave Doogan: Is the hon. Gentleman concerned that the Government patently do not understand whole-system cost, which is a key element of fiscal policy? When care providers—whether hospices, in-home care providers or social providers—fall over as a result of these measures, as they will, those costs will get picked up by the rest of the system, and that will have a net cost to the Treasury.

Gregory Stafford: The hon. Gentleman makes an excellent point, which has been made by Opposition Members on numerous occasions. It does not surprise me that Labour Members do not understand the economy. I did hope that they would understand the care sector, which has been telling them time and again that this national insurance increase will hit it disproportionately and cause it to reduce and, indeed, close services.

I think of Phyllis Tuckwell hospice in the centre of Farnham in my constituency, which is fortunately going through a multimillion pound rebuild as we speak, but when it reopens, it will be hit by these national insurance contributions and will have to make decisions about what services it can provide to my constituency and the surrounding areas of Surrey and northern Hampshire. Likewise, on Friday I will see Shooting Star children's hospice, which is a fabulous children's hospice that I have visited on a number of occasions. What is galling to me is that I see photographs of Labour Members turning up to Shooting Star and similar hospices, putting their arms around people and saying what a wonderful job they are doing, but later today they will walk through the Division Lobby to take money away from them. What hypocrisy.

We already know that there are workforce challenges in the care sector, and especially in the hospice sector, so why on earth are the Government targeting those sectors for raising national insurance contributions? As Opposition Members have mentioned, this is not an abstract cost that will hit some sort of nebulous business; this is a cost that will hit patients and, in the hospice sector, those who are dying, because care will be taken from them. It is a tax on community care. It is a tax on dying. The Labour Government should be ashamed that they are bringing this in.

Sir Roger Gale: We have rightly concentrated a great deal on children's hospices, and I still hope that at the 11th hour the Government, as a socialist Government, may have some compassion and give some ground. But the other area, which we have not touched on enough, is the independent care providers who are providing services in people's homes. They will not be able to employ the people that they need—they cannot do so now—even if they can get them. That inevitably means that those cared for will end up in hospital, at still greater cost to the health service.

Gregory Stafford: My right hon. Friend makes an excellent point, echoing one made by the hon. Member for Angus and Perthshire Glens (Dave Doogan). That is correct: there will inevitably be a net cost to the Exchequer because of this policy. He is right that home care has not been touched on but will be affected. Home care companies in my constituency will not be able to expand their staff, which is vital to meeting people's needs.

Pharmacies, which we have not touched on a lot, are in the same position. A few weeks back, I visited Badgerswood pharmacy in Headley in my constituency, and I was told that the measure will hit it hard and cause a real problem in service delivery for my constituents.

This measure will not only have a massive effect on those businesses—GPs, pharmacies, the hospice sector and the home care sector—on the economy, because there will be a net cost, and on patients, who will not receive the services in the wider NHS family that they

deserve, but it runs entirely contrary to the Government's stated policy of wanting to bring healthcare close to home and close to the community. Although they are exempting acute hospital care, which takes place away from the community, they are taxing the bit that they say they want to expand. It is totally illogical, even on the Government's own policy. I hope that the Government have an 11th hour change of heart, either today or at the emergency Budget tomorrow, because it is vital that we support these sectors.

We see with Lords amendment 21B that the proof of the pudding is in the eating, as it were. If the Government were so convinced that their policy was the right, just, fair and proper one, they would allow a review to go ahead so that we could see its impact. The fact that Government Members will be walking through the Division Lobby to hide this policy from the British people tells us all that we need to know: they know that this policy does not stand up to scrutiny, and they are running from it.

James Murray: With the leave of the House, I will respond briefly to some of the comments made by Opposition Members.

Although I feel that the Liberal Democrat spokesperson, the hon. Member for St Albans (Daisy Cooper), will not support us on the Bill, I none the less recognise that she seems to support the extra funding that we put into public services in terms of GPs, dentists, hospices commissioned by the NHS and so on. Although she will not agree with the difficult decision that we have taken to raise that funding, I got the impression that she supports our spending on those public services.

I turn to the official Opposition. The shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Grantham and Bourne (Gareth Davies), claimed that very small businesses will feel the greatest impact from the changes in the Bill. I can only conclude, therefore, that he has not read the Bill, because he would have seen that we are doubling the employment allowance to £10,500, with the result that the very smallest businesses will not pay any national insurance contributions at all when they are employing up to four people earning the national living wage.

More widely, the shadow Minister and many of his Opposition colleagues refuse to take any responsibility whatever for the state of the public finances or the public services after 14 years of the Conservative party being in control. They also resisted the opportunity to acknowledge that the approach we are taking in government to compensate the public sector for changes in employer national insurance contributions is the same one that the previous Government took with the health and social care levy. That came up time and again, and even when the shadow Minister was intervened on, he missed the opportunity to acknowledge that our approach is the same one that he and his colleagues took in government.

The amendments from the other place would require information that has already been provided. Either they do not recognise other policies that the Government have in place, or—most seriously—they would undermine the funding that the Bill will secure. Let me be clear: to support the amendments that create exemptions is also to support higher borrowing, lower spending or other tax rises. I therefore ask the House to support the Government's position by disagreeing to Lords amendments 1B, 5B, 8B and 21B.

Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 1B.

The House divided: Ayes 312, Noes 190.

Division No. 140]

[2.28 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
Ahmed, Dr Zubir
Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
Al-Hassan, Sadik
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Anderson, Callum
Anderson, Fleur
Arthur, Dr Scott
Asato, Jess
Athwal, Jas
Atkinson, Catherine
Atkinson, Lewis
Bailey, Mr Calvin
Bailey, Olivia
Baines, David
Baker, Alex
Baker, Richard
Bance, Antonia
Barron, Lee
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Baxter, Johanna
Beales, Danny
Beavers, Lorraine
Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote cast by Zarah Sultana*)
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Billington, Ms Polly
Bishop, Matt
Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Blake, Rachel
Bloore, Chris
Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Bonavia, Kevin
Botterill, Jade
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
Brash, Mr Jonathan
Brickell, Phil
Buckley, Julia
Burke, Maureen
Burton-Sampson, David
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Caliskan, Nesil
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Irene
Campbell, Juliet
Campbell-Savours, Markus
Carden, Dan
Carling, Sam
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Coleman, Ben
Collier, Jacob
Collinge, Lizzi
Collins, Tom
Conlon, Liam
Coombes, Sarah
Cooper, Andrew
Cooper, Dr Beccy
Costigan, Deirdre
Cox, Pam
Coyle, Neil
Craft, Jen
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Ms Stella
Crichton, Torcuil
Curtis, Chris
Darlington, Emily
Davies, Jonathan
Davies, Paul
Davies, Shaun
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Dean, Josh
Dearden, Kate
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dickson, Jim
Dixon, Anna
Dodds, rh Anneliese
Dollimore, Helena
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duncan-Jordan, Neil
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, rh Maria
Edwards, Sarah
Efford, Clive
Egan, Damien
Elmore, Chris
Entwistle, Kirith
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Fahnbulleh, Miatta
Falconer, Mr Hamish
Farnsworth, Linsey
Fenton-Glynn, Josh
Ferguson, Mark
Ferguson, Patricia
Foody, Emma
Fookes, Catherine
Foster, Mr Paul
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Francis, Daniel
Frith, Mr James
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gardner, Dr Allison
Gelder, Anna
Gemmell, Alan
German, Gill
Gilbert, Tracy
Glindon, Mary
Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Gosling, Jodie
Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Hack, Amanda
Hall, Sarah
Hamilton, Fabian

Hamilton, Paulette
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hatton, Lloyd
Hayes, Helen
Hayes, Tom
Hazelgrove, Claire
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hinchliff, Chris
Hinder, Jonathan
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hopkins, Rachel
Hughes, Claire
Hume, Alison
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hurley, Patrick
Irons, Natasha
Jameson, Sally
Jermy, Terry
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Lillian
Jones, Louise
Jones, Ruth
Joseph, Sojan
Juss, Warinder
Kane, Chris
Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kirkham, Jayne
Kitchen, Gen
Kumar, Sonia
Kyle, rh Peter
Lamb, Peter
Lavery, Ian
Law, Noah
Leadbeater, Kim
Leishman, Brian
Lewell, Emma
Lewin, Andrew
Lewis, Clive
Long Bailey, Rebecca
MacAlister, Josh
MacNae, Andy
Madders, Justin
Martin, Amanda
Maskell, Rachael
Mayer, Alex
McAllister, Douglas
McCarthy, Kerry
McCluskey, Martin
McDonagh, Dame Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Chris
McDonnell, rh John
McDougall, Blair
McEvoy, Lola
McKee, Gordon
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
McNally, Frank
McNeill, Kirsty
Midgley, Anneliese
Minns, Ms Julie
Mishra, Navendu
Mohamed, Abtisam
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen

Morris, Grahame
Morris, Joe
Mullane, Margaret
Murphy, Luke
Murray, Chris
Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Murray, James
Myer, Luke
Naish, James
Naismith, Connor
Nandy, rh Lisa
Narayan, Kanishka
Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Newbury, Josh
Niblett, Samantha
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Onn, Melanie
Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote cast by Kim Johnson*)
Osborne, Tristan
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Paffey, Darren
Patrick, Matthew
Payne, Michael
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Pinto-Duschinsky, David
Pitcher, Lee
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Joe
Powell, rh Lucy
Poynton, Gregor
Prinsley, Peter
Quigley, Mr Richard
Qureshi, Yasmin
Race, Steve
Ranger, Andrew
Reid, Joani
Rhodes, Martin
Richards, Jake
Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
Rigby, Lucy
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robertson, Dave
Roca, Tim
Rodda, Matt
Rushworth, Sam
Russell, Mrs Sarah
Rutland, Tom
Ryan, Oliver
Sackman, Sarah
Sandher, Dr Jeevun
Scroggham, Michelle
Sewards, Mark
Shah, Naz
Shanker, Baggy
Shanks, Michael
Siddiq, Tulip
Simons, Josh
Slaughter, Andy
Slinger, John
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smith, Sarah

Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Stainbank, Euan
Stevens, rh Jo
Stevenson, Kenneth
Stewart, Elaine
Stone, Will
Strathern, Alistair
Strickland, Alan
Sullivan, Kirsteen
Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Sultana, Zarah
Tapp, Mike
Taylor, David
Taylor, Rachel
Thomas, Fred
Thomas-Symonds, rh
Nick
Thompson, Adam
Tidball, Dr Marie
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Toale, Jessica
Tomlinson, Dan
Tufnell, Henry
Turley, Anna
Turmaine, Matt
Turner, Karl
Turner, Laurence

Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Uppal, Harpreet
Vaughan, Tony
Vaz, rh Valerie
Vince, Chris
Walker, Imogen
Ward, Melanie
Waugh, Paul
Webb, Chris
Welsh, Michelle
Western, Andrew
Western, Matt
Whitby, John
White, Jo
White, Katie
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, David
Witherden, Steve
Woodcock, Sean
Wrighting, Rosie
Yang, Yuan
Yasin, Mohammad
Yemm, Steve

Tellers for the Ayes:
Christian Wakeford and
Keir Mather

NOES

Adam, Shockat
Allister, Jim
Amos, Gideon
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Mohindra*)
Andrew, rh Stuart
Aquarone, Steff
Argar, rh Edward
Atkins, rh Victoria
Babarinde, Josh
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi
Baldwin, Dame Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Bedford, Mr Peter
Bennett, Alison
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blackman, Kirsty
Bool, Sarah
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, rh Dame Karen
Brandreth, Aphra
Braverman, rh Suella
Brewer, Alex
Brown-Fuller, Jess
Burghart, Alex
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cane, Charlotte
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Cartlidge, James
Chadwick, David (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Forster*)
Chambers, Dr Danny
Chope, Sir Christopher
Cleverly, rh Mr James
Cocking, Lewis
Coghlan, Chris
Collins, Victoria
Cooper, Daisy

Cooper, John
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Cross, Harriet
Dance, Adam
Darling, Steve
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Ann
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Mims
Davis, rh David
Dean, Bobby
Dewhurst, Charlie
Dillon, Mr Lee
Dinenage, Dame
Caroline
Doogan, Dave
Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
Duffield, Rosie
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dyke, Sarah
Evans, Dr Luke
Farron, Tim
Ford, Richard
Forster, Mr Will
Fortune, Peter
Fox, Sir Ashley
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Franklin, Zöe
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
George, Andrew
Gethins, Stephen
Glen, rh John
Glover, Olly
Goldman, Marie
Gordon, Tom

Green, Sarah
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Alison
Harding, Monica
Harris, Rebecca
Hayes, rh Sir John
Hinds, rh Damian
Hobhouse, Wera
Holden, rh Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Holmes, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hussain, Mr Adnan
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Liz
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Jones, Clive
Jopp, Lincoln
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
Kohler, Mr Paul
Kruger, Danny
Lake, Ben
Lamont, John
Law, Chris
Leadbitter, Graham
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lockhart, Carla
Logan, Seamus
Lopez, Julia
MacCleary, James
MacDonald, Mr Angus
Maguire, Ben
Maguire, Helen
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Martin, Mike
Mathew, Brian
Maynard, Charlie
McMurdock, James (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Anderson*)
McVey, rh Esther
Medi, Llinos
Miller, Calum
Milne, John
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Robbie
Morello, Edward
Morgan, Helen
Morrison, Mr Tom (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Forster*)
Morrissey, Joy
Morton, rh Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mundell, rh David
Munt, Tessa

Murray, Susan
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Obese-Jecty, Ben
O'Brien, Neil
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Patel, rh Priti
Paul, Rebecca
Perteghella, Manuela
Philp, rh Chris
Pinkerton, Dr Al
Pritchard, rh Mark
Raja, Shivani
Reed, David
Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Robertson, Joe
Robinson, rh Gavin
Savage, Dr Roz
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shannon, Jim
Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
Simmonds, David
Slade, Vikki
Smart, Lisa
Smith, Greg
Smith, rh Sir Julian
Smith, Rebecca
Snowden, Mr Andrew
Sollom, Ian
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Gregory
Stephenson, Blake
Stone, Jamie
Stuart, rh Graham
Swann, Robin
Swayne, rh Sir
Desmond
Taylor, Luke
Thomas, Bradley
Thomas, Cameron
Timothy, Nick
Tugendhat, rh Tom
Vickers, Martin
Voaden, Caroline
Whately, Helen
Whittingdale, rh Sir John
Wild, James
Wilkinson, Max
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Wrigley, Martin
Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
Katie Lam and
Jerome Mayhew

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 1B disagreed to.

2.42 pm

One hour having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on the Lords message, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, 19 March).

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

After Clause 2

EXEMPTIONS FROM THE CHANGES MADE BY SECTION 2:

NHS AND SOCIAL CARE

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 5B.—(James Murray.)

The House divided: Ayes 311, Noes 192.

Division No. 141]

[2.42 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
Ahmed, Dr Zubir
Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
Al-Hassan, Sadik
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Anderson, Callum
Anderson, Fleur
Arthur, Dr Scott
Asato, Jess
Athwal, Jas
Atkinson, Catherine
Atkinson, Lewis
Bailey, Mr Calvin
Bailey, Olivia
Baines, David
Baker, Alex
Baker, Richard
Bance, Antonia
Barron, Lee
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Baxter, Johanna
Beales, Danny
Beavers, Lorraine
Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote cast by Zarah Sultana*)
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Billington, Ms Polly
Bishop, Matt
Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Blake, Rachel
Bloore, Chris
Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Botterill, Jade
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
Brash, Mr Jonathan
Brickell, Phil
Buckley, Julia
Burke, Maureen
Burton-Sampson, David
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Caliskan, Nesil
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Irene
Campbell, Juliet
Campbell-Savours, Markus
Carden, Dan
Carling, Sam
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Coleman, Ben
Collier, Jacob
Collinge, Lizzi
Collins, Tom
Conlon, Liam
Coombes, Sarah
Cooper, Andrew
Cooper, Dr Beccy
Costigan, Deirdre
Cox, Pam
Coyle, Neil
Craft, Jen
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Ms Stella
Crichton, Torcuil
Curtis, Chris
Darlington, Emily
Davies, Jonathan
Davies, Paul
Davies, Shaun
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Dean, Josh
Dearden, Kate
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dickson, Jim
Dixon, Anna
Dodds, rh Anneliese
Dollimore, Helena
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duncan-Jordan, Neil
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, rh Maria
Edwards, Sarah
Efford, Clive
Egan, Damien
Elmore, Chris
Entwistle, Kirith
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Fahnbulleh, Miatta
Falconer, Mr Hamish
Farnsworth, Linsey
Fenton-Glynn, Josh
Ferguson, Mark
Ferguson, Patricia
Foody, Emma
Foster, Mr Paul
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Francis, Daniel
Frith, Mr James
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gardner, Dr Allison
Gelder, Anna
Gemmell, Alan
German, Gill
Gilbert, Tracy
Glendon, Mary

Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Gosling, Jodie
Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Hack, Amanda
Hall, Sarah
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Paulette
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hatton, Lloyd
Hayes, Helen
Hayes, Tom
Hazelgrove, Claire
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hinchliff, Chris
Hinder, Jonathan
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hopkins, Rachel
Hughes, Claire
Hume, Alison
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hurley, Patrick
Irons, Natasha
Jameson, Sally
Jermy, Terry
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Lillian
Jones, Louise
Jones, Ruth
Joseph, Sojan
Juss, Warinder
Kane, Chris
Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kirkham, Jayne
Kitchen, Gen
Kumar, Sonia
Lamb, Peter
Lavery, Ian
Law, Noah
Leadbeater, Kim
Leishman, Brian
Lewell, Emma
Lewin, Andrew
Lewis, Clive
Long Bailey, Rebecca
MacAlister, Josh
MacNae, Andy
Madders, Justin
Martin, Amanda
Maskell, Rachael
Mayer, Alex
McAllister, Douglas
McCarthy, Kerry
McCluskey, Martin
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Chris
McDonnell, rh John
McDougall, Blair
McEvoy, Lola
McKee, Gordon
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
McNally, Frank
McNeill, Kirsty
Midgley, Anneliese
Minns, Ms Julie
Mishra, Navendu
Mohamed, Abtisam
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Morris, Joe
Mullane, Margaret
Murphy, Luke
Murray, Chris
Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Murray, James
Myer, Luke
Naish, James
Naismith, Connor
Nandy, rh Lisa
Narayan, Kanishka
Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Newbury, Josh
Niblett, Samantha
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Onn, Melanie
Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote cast by Kim Johnson*)
Osborne, Tristan
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Paffey, Darren
Patrick, Matthew
Payne, Michael
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Phillips, Jess
Pinto-Duschinsky, David
Pitcher, Lee
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Joe
Powell, rh Lucy
Poynton, Gregor
Prinsley, Peter
Quigley, Mr Richard
Qureshi, Yasmin
Race, Steve
Ranger, Andrew
Reid, Joani
Rhodes, Martin
Richards, Jake
Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
Rigby, Lucy
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robertson, Dave
Roca, Tim
Rodda, Matt
Rushworth, Sam
Russell, Mrs Sarah
Rutland, Tom
Ryan, Oliver
Sackman, Sarah
Sandher, Dr Jeevun
Scroggham, Michelle
Sewards, Mark
Shah, Naz
Shanker, Baggy
Shanks, Michael

Siddiq, Tulip
Simons, Josh
Slaughter, Andy
Slinger, John
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smith, Sarah
Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Stainbank, Euan
Stevens, rh Jo
Stevenson, Kenneth
Stewart, Elaine
Stone, Will
Strathern, Alistair
Strickland, Alan
Sullivan, Kirsteen
Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tapp, Mike
Taylor, David
Taylor, Rachel
Thomas, Fred
Thomas-Symonds, rh
Nick
Thompson, Adam
Tidball, Dr Marie
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Toale, Jessica
Tomlinson, Dan

Tufnell, Henry
Turley, Anna
Turmaine, Matt
Turner, Karl
Turner, Laurence
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Uppal, Harpreet
Vaughan, Tony
Vaz, rh Valerie
Vince, Chris
Walker, Imogen
Ward, Melanie
Waugh, Paul
Webb, Chris
Welsh, Michelle
Western, Andrew
Western, Matt
Whitby, John
White, Jo
White, Katie
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, David
Witherden, Steve
Woodcock, Sean
Wrighting, Rosie
Yang, Yuan
Yasin, Mohammad
Yemm, Steve

Tellers for the Ayes:
Christian Wakeford and
Keir Mather

NOES

Adam, Shockat
Allister, Jim
Amos, Gideon
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote*
cast by Mr Mohindra)
Andrew, rh Stuart
Aquarone, Steff
Argar, rh Edward
Atkins, rh Victoria
Babarinde, Josh
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, rh Mrs
Kemi
Baldwin, Dame Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Bedford, Mr Peter
Bennett, Alison
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blackman, Kirsty
Bool, Sarah
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, rh Dame Karen
Brandreth, Aphra
Braverman, rh Suella
Brewer, Alex
Brown-Fuller, Jess
Burghart, Alex
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cane, Charlotte
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Cartlidge, James
Chadwick, David (*Proxy vote*
cast by Mr Forster)
Chambers, Dr Danny
Chope, Sir Christopher

Cleverly, rh Mr James
Cocking, Lewis
Coghlan, Chris
Collins, Victoria
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, John
Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy*
vote cast by Joy Morrissey)
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Cross, Harriet
Dance, Adam
Darling, Steve
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Ann
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Mims
Dean, Bobby
Dewhurst, Charlie
Dillon, Mr Lee
Dinenage, Dame
Caroline
Doogan, Dave
Dowden, rh Sir
Oliver
Duffield, Rosie
Duncan Smith, rh Sir
Iain
Dyke, Sarah
Evans, Dr Luke
Farron, Tim
Flynn, rh Stephen
Foord, Richard
Forster, Mr Will
Fortune, Peter
Fox, Sir Ashley
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Franklin, Zöe

French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
George, Andrew
Gethins, Stephen
Glen, rh John
Glover, Olly
Goldman, Marie
Gordon, Tom
Green, Sarah
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Alison
Harding, Monica
Harris, Rebecca
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heylings, Pippa
Hinds, rh Damian
Hobhouse, Wera
Holden, rh Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Holmes, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hussain, Mr Adnan
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Liz
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Jones, Clive
Jopp, Lincoln
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast*
by Joy Morrissey)
Kohler, Mr Paul
Kruger, Danny
Lake, Ben
Lamont, John
Law, Chris
Leadbitter, Graham
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lockhart, Carla
Logan, Seamus
Lopez, Julia
MacCleary, James
MacDonald, Mr Angus
Maguire, Ben
Maguire, Helen
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Martin, Mike
Mathew, Brian
Maynard, Charlie
McMurdoch, James (*Proxy*
vote cast by Lee Anderson)
McVey, rh Esther
Medi, Llinos
Miller, Calum
Milne, John
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Robbie
Morello, Edward
Morgan, Helen
Morrison, Mr Tom (*Proxy vote*
cast by Mr Forster)
Morrissey, Joy
Morton, rh Wendy

Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mundell, rh David
Munt, Tessa
Murray, Susan
Murrison, rh Dr
Andrew
Obese-Jecty, Ben
O'Brien, Neil
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Patel, rh Priti
Paul, Rebecca
Perteghella, Manuela
Philip, rh Chris
Pinkerton, Dr Al
Pritchard, rh Mark
Raja, Shivani
Reed, David
Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Robertson, Joe
Robinson, rh Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Savage, Dr Roz
Saville Roberts, rh
Liz
Shannon, Jim
Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
Simmonds, David
Slade, Vikki
Smart, Lisa
Smith, Greg
Smith, rh Sir Julian
Smith, Rebecca
Snowden, Mr Andrew
Sollom, Ian
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Gregory
Stephenson, Blake
Stone, Jamie
Stuart, rh Graham
Swann, Robin
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Taylor, Luke
Thomas, Bradley
Thomas, Cameron
Timothy, Nick
Tugendhat, rh Tom
Vickers, Martin
Voaden, Caroline
Whately, Helen
Whittingdale, rh Sir
John
Wild, James
Wilkinson, Max
Williamson, rh Sir
Gavin
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Wrigley, Martin
Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
Katie Lam and
Jerome Mayhew

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 5B disagreed to.

Clause 2

SECONDARY THRESHOLD FOR SECONDARY CLASS 1
CONTRIBUTIONS

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 8B.—(James Murray.)

The House divided: Ayes 313, Noes 194.

Division No. 142]

[2.53 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
Ahmed, Dr Zubir
Alexander, rh Mr Douglas
Al-Hassan, Sadik
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Anderson, Callum
Anderson, Fleur
Arthur, Dr Scott
Asato, Jess
Athwal, Jas
Atkinson, Catherine
Atkinson, Lewis
Bailey, Mr Calvin
Bailey, Olivia
Baines, David
Baker, Alex
Baker, Richard
Bance, Antonia
Barron, Lee
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Baxter, Johanna
Beales, Danny
Beavers, Lorraine
Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote cast by Zarah Sultana*)
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Billington, Ms Polly
Bishop, Matt
Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Blake, Rachel
Bloore, Chris
Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Botterill, Jade
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
Brash, Mr Jonathan
Brickell, Phil
Buckley, Julia
Burgon, Richard
Burke, Maureen
Burton-Sampson, David
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Caliskan, Nesil
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Irene
Campbell, Juliet
Campbell-Savours, Markus
Carden, Dan
Carling, Sam
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Coleman, Ben

Collier, Jacob
Collinge, Lizzi
Collins, Tom
Conlon, Liam
Coombes, Sarah
Cooper, Andrew
Cooper, Dr Beccy
Costigan, Deirdre
Cox, Pam
Coyle, Neil
Craft, Jen
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Ms Stella
Crichton, Torcuil
Curtis, Chris
Darlington, Emily
Davies, Jonathan
Davies, Paul
Davies, Shaun
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Dean, Josh
Dearden, Kate
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dickson, Jim
Dixon, Anna
Dodds, rh Anneliese
Dollimore, Helena
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duncan-Jordan, Neil
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, rh Maria
Edwards, Sarah
Efford, Clive
Egan, Damien
Elmore, Chris
Entwistle, Kirith
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Fahnbulleh, Miatta
Falconer, Mr Hamish
Farnsworth, Linsey
Fenton-Glynn, Josh
Ferguson, Mark
Ferguson, Patricia
Foody, Emma
Fookes, Catherine
Foster, Mr Paul
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Francis, Daniel
Frith, Mr James
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gardner, Dr Allison
Gelder, Anna
Gemmell, Alan

German, Gill
Gilbert, Tracy
Glindon, Mary
Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Gosling, Jodie
Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Hack, Amanda
Hall, Sarah
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Paulette
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hatton, Lloyd
Hayes, Helen
Hayes, Tom
Hazelgrove, Claire
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hinchliff, Chris
Hinder, Jonathan
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hopkins, Rachel
Hughes, Claire
Hume, Alison
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hurley, Patrick
Hussain, Imran
Irons, Natasha
Jameson, Sally
Jermy, Terry
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Lillian
Jones, Louise
Jones, Ruth
Joseph, Sojan
Juss, Warinder
Kane, Chris
Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kirkham, Jayne
Kitchen, Gen
Kumar, Sonia
Lamb, Peter
Lavery, Ian
Law, Noah
Leadbeater, Kim
Leishman, Brian
Lewell, Emma
Lewin, Andrew
Lewis, Clive
Long Bailey, Rebecca
MacAlister, Josh
MacNae, Andy
Madders, Justin
Martin, Amanda
Maskell, Rachael
Mayer, Alex
McAllister, Douglas
McCarthy, Kerry
McCluskey, Martin
McDonagh, Dame Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Chris
McDonnell, rh John
McDougall, Blair
McEvoy, Lola

McKee, Gordon
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
McNally, Frank
McNeill, Kirsty
Midgley, Anneliese
Minns, Ms Julie
Mishra, Navendu
Mohamed, Abtisam
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Morris, Joe
Mullane, Margaret
Murphy, Luke
Murray, Chris
Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Murray, James
Myer, Luke
Naish, James
Naismith, Connor
Narayan, Kanishka
Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Newbury, Josh
Niblett, Samantha
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Onn, Melanie
Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote cast by Kim Johnson*)
Osborne, Tristan
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Paffey, Darren
Patrick, Matthew
Payne, Michael
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Phillips, Jess
Pinto-Duschinsky, David
Pitcher, Lee
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Joe
Powell, rh Lucy
Poynton, Gregor
Prinsley, Peter
Quigley, Mr Richard
Qureshi, Yasmin
Race, Steve
Ranger, Andrew
Reid, Joani
Rhodes, Martin
Richards, Jake
Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
Rigby, Lucy
Robertson, Dave
Roca, Tim
Rodda, Matt
Rushworth, Sam
Russell, Mrs Sarah
Rutland, Tom
Ryan, Oliver
Sackman, Sarah
Sandher, Dr Jeevun
Scroggham, Michelle
Sewards, Mark

Shah, Naz
Shanker, Baggy
Shanks, Michael
Siddiq, Tulip
Simons, Josh
Slaughter, Andy
Slinger, John
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smith, Sarah
Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Stainbank, Euan
Stevens, rh Jo
Stevenson, Kenneth
Stewart, Elaine
Stone, Will
Strathern, Alistair
Strickland, Alan
Sullivan, Kirsteen
Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tapp, Mike
Taylor, David
Taylor, Rachel
Thomas, Fred
Thomas-Symonds, rh
Nick
Thompson, Adam
Tidball, Dr Marie
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Toale, Jessica

Tomlinson, Dan
Tufnell, Henry
Turley, Anna
Turmaine, Matt
Turner, Karl
Turner, Laurence
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Uppal, Harpreet
Vaughan, Tony
Vaz, rh Valerie
Vince, Chris
Walker, Imogen
Ward, Melanie
Waugh, Paul
Webb, Chris
Welsh, Michelle
Western, Andrew
Western, Matt
Whitby, John
White, Jo
White, Katie
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, David
Witherden, Steve
Woodcock, Sean
Wrighting, Rosie
Yang, Yuan
Yasin, Mohammad
Yemm, Steve

Tellers for the Ayes:
Christian Wakeford and
Keir Mather

NOES

Adam, Shockat
Allister, Jim
Amos, Gideon
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Mohindra*)
Andrew, rh Stuart
Aquarone, Steff
Argar, rh Edward
Atkins, rh Victoria
Babarinde, Josh
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi
Baldwin, Dame Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Bedford, Mr Peter
Bennett, Alison
Berry, Siân
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blackman, Kirsty
Bool, Sarah
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, rh Dame Karen
Brandreth, Aphra
Braverman, rh Suella
Brewer, Alex
Brown-Fuller, Jess
Burghart, Alex
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cane, Charlotte
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Cartlidge, James
Chadwick, David (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Forster*)

Chambers, Dr Danny
Chope, Sir Christopher
Chowns, Ellie
Cleverly, rh Mr James
Cocking, Lewis
Coghlan, Chris
Collins, Victoria
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, John
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy
vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Cross, Harriet
Dance, Adam
Darling, Steve
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Ann
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Mims
Davis, rh David
Dean, Bobby
Dewhurst, Charlie
Dillon, Mr Lee
Dinenage, Dame
Caroline
Doogan, Dave
Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
Duffield, Rosie
Duncan Smith, rh Sir
Iain
Dyke, Sarah
Evans, Dr Luke
Farron, Tim
Flynn, rh Stephen

Foord, Richard
Forster, Mr Will
Fortune, Peter
Fox, Sir Ashley
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Franklin, Zöe
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
George, Andrew
Gethins, Stephen
Glen, rh John
Glover, Olly
Goldman, Marie
Gordon, Tom
Green, Sarah
Griffith, Andrew
Harding, Monica
Harris, Rebecca
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heylings, Pippa
Hinds, rh Damian
Hobhouse, Wera
Holden, rh Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Holmes, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hussain, Mr Adnan
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Liz
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenrick, rh Robert
Jones, Clive
Jopp, Lincoln
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast
by Joy Morrissey*)
Kohler, Mr Paul
Kruger, Danny
Lake, Ben
Lamont, John
Law, Chris
Leadbitter, Graham
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewis, rh Sir Julian
Lockhart, Carla
Logan, Seamus
Lopez, Julia
MacCleary, James
MacDonald, Mr Angus
Maguire, Ben
Maguire, Helen
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Martin, Mike
Mathew, Brian
Maynard, Charlie
McMurdoch, James (*Proxy
vote cast by Lee Anderson*)
McVey, rh Esther
Medi, Llinos
Miller, Calum
Milne, John
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Robbie
Morello, Edward

Morgan, Helen
Morrison, Mr Tom (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Forster*)
Morrissey, Joy
Morton, rh Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mundell, rh David
Munt, Tessa
Murray, Susan
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Obese-Jecty, Ben
O'Brien, Neil
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Patel, rh Priti
Paul, Rebecca
Perteghella, Manuela
Philp, rh Chris
Pinkerton, Dr Al
Pritchard, rh Mark
Raja, Shivani
Reed, David
Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Robertson, Joe
Robinson, rh Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Savage, Dr Roz
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shannon, Jim
Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
Simmonds, David
Slade, Vikki
Smart, Lisa
Smith, Greg
Smith, rh Sir Julian
Smith, Rebecca
Snowden, Mr Andrew
Sollom, Ian
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Gregory
Stephenson, Blake
Stone, Jamie
Stuart, rh Graham
Swann, Robin
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Taylor, Luke
Thomas, Bradley
Thomas, Cameron
Timothy, Nick
Tugendhat, rh Tom
Vickers, Martin
Voaden, Caroline
Whately, Helen
Whittingdale, rh Sir John
Wild, James
Wilkinson, Max
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Wrigley, Martin
Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
Katie Lam and
Jerome Mayhew

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 8B disagreed to.

After Clause 3

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 21B.—(James Murray.)

The House divided: Ayes 314, Noes 196.

Division No. 143]

[3.5 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
Ahmed, Dr Zubir
Al-Hassan, Sadik
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Anderson, Callum
Anderson, Fleur
Arthur, Dr Scott
Asato, Jess
Athwal, Jas
Atkinson, Catherine
Atkinson, Lewis
Bailey, Mr Calvin
Bailey, Olivia
Baines, David
Baker, Alex
Baker, Richard
Bance, Antonia
Barron, Lee
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Baxter, Johanna
Beales, Danny
Beavers, Lorraine
Begum, Apsana (Proxy vote cast by Zarah Sultana)
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Billington, Ms Polly
Bishop, Matt
Blake, Olivia (Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)
Blake, Rachel
Bloore, Chris
Blundell, Mrs Elsie (Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)
Botterill, Jade
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
Brash, Mr Jonathan
Brickell, Phil
Buckley, Julia
Burgon, Richard
Burke, Maureen
Burton-Sampson, David
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Caliskan, Nesil
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Irene
Campbell, Juliet
Campbell-Savours, Markus
Carden, Dan
Carling, Sam
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Clark, Feryal
Coleman, Ben
Collier, Jacob
Collinge, Lizzi
Collins, Tom
Conlon, Liam
Coombes, Sarah

Cooper, Andrew
Cooper, Dr Beccy
Costigan, Deirdre
Cox, Pam
Coyle, Neil
Craft, Jen
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Ms Stella
Crichton, Torcuil
Curtis, Chris
Darlington, Emily
Davies, Jonathan
Davies, Paul
Davies, Shaun
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Dean, Josh
Dearden, Kate
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dickson, Jim
Dixon, Anna
Dodds, rh Anneliese
Dollimore, Helena
Doughty, Stephen
Dowd, Peter
Duncan-Jordan, Neil
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, rh Maria
Edwards, Sarah
Efford, Clive
Egan, Damien
Elmore, Chris
Entwistle, Kirith
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Fahnbulleh, Miatta
Falconer, Mr Hamish
Farnsworth, Linsey
Fenton-Glynn, Josh
Ferguson, Mark
Ferguson, Patricia
Foody, Emma
Fookes, Catherine
Foster, Mr Paul
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Francis, Daniel
Frith, Mr James
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gardner, Dr Allison
Gelder, Anna
Gemmell, Alan
German, Gill
Gilbert, Tracy
Glindon, Mary
Goldsborough, Ben (Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)
Gosling, Jodie
Gwynne, Andrew (Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)
Hack, Amanda
Hall, Sarah
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Paulette
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hatton, Lloyd
Hayes, Helen
Hayes, Tom
Hazelgrove, Claire
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hinchliff, Chris
Hinder, Jonathan
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hopkins, Rachel
Hughes, Claire
Hume, Alison
Huq, Dr Rupa
Hurley, Patrick
Hussain, Imran
Irons, Natasha
Jameson, Sally
Jermy, Terry
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Lillian
Jones, Louise
Jones, Ruth
Joseph, Sojan
Juss, Warinder
Kane, Chris
Kaur, Satvir (Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kirkham, Jayne
Kitchen, Gen
Kumar, Sonia
Lamb, Peter
Lavery, Ian
Law, Noah
Leadbeater, Kim
Leishman, Brian
Lewell, Emma
Lewin, Andrew
Lewis, Clive
Long Bailey, Rebecca
MacAlister, Josh
MacNae, Andy
Madders, Justin
Martin, Amanda
Maskell, Rachael
Mayer, Alex
McAllister, Douglas
McCarthy, Kerry
McCluskey, Martin
McDonagh, Dame Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Chris
McDonnell, rh John
McDougall, Blair
McEvoy, Lola
McKee, Gordon
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
McNally, Frank
McNeill, Kirsty
Midgley, Anneliese
Minns, Ms Julie
Mishra, Navendu
Mohamed, Abtisam
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen

Morris, Grahame
Morris, Joe
Mullane, Margaret
Murphy, Luke
Murray, Chris
Murray, rh Ian (Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)
Murray, James
Myer, Luke
Naish, James
Naismith, Connor
Narayan, Kanishka
Nash, Pamela (Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore)
Newbury, Josh
Niblett, Samantha
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Onn, Melanie
Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
Osborne, Kate (Proxy vote cast by Kim Johnson)
Osborne, Tristan
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Paffey, Darren
Patrick, Matthew
Payne, Michael
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Phillips, Jess
Pinto-Duschinsky, David
Pitcher, Lee
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Joe
Powell, rh Lucy
Poynton, Gregor
Prinsley, Peter
Quigley, Mr Richard
Qureshi, Yasmin
Race, Steve
Ranger, Andrew
Reid, Joani
Rhodes, Martin
Richards, Jake
Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
Rigby, Lucy
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robertson, Dave
Roca, Tim
Rodda, Matt
Rushworth, Sam
Russell, Mrs Sarah
Rutland, Tom
Ryan, Oliver
Sackman, Sarah
Sander, Dr Jeevun
Scrogg, Michelle
Sewards, Mark
Shah, Naz
Shanker, Baggy
Shanks, Michael
Siddiq, Tulip
Simons, Josh
Slaughter, Andy
Slinger, John
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smith, Sarah
Snell, Gareth

Sobel, Alex
Stainbank, Euan
Stevens, rh Jo
Stevenson, Kenneth
Stewart, Elaine
Stone, Will
Strathern, Alistair
Strickland, Alan
Sullivan, Kirsteen
Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tapp, Mike
Taylor, David
Taylor, Rachel
Thomas, Fred
Thomas-Symonds, rh Nick
Thompson, Adam
Tidball, Dr Marie
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Toale, Jessica
Tomlinson, Dan
Tufnell, Henry
Turley, Anna
Turmaine, Matt
Turner, Karl
Turner, Laurence
Twigg, Derek

Twist, Liz
Uppal, Harpreet
Vaughan, Tony
Vaz, rh Valerie
Vince, Chris
Walker, Imogen
Ward, Melanie
Waugh, Paul
Webb, Chris
Welsh, Michelle
Western, Andrew
Western, Matt
Whitby, John
White, Jo
White, Katie
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, David
Witherden, Steve
Woodcock, Sean
Wrighting, Rosie
Yang, Yuan
Yasin, Mohammad
Yemm, Steve
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Christian Wakeford and
Keir Mather

NOES

Adam, Shockat
Allister, Jim
Amos, Gideon
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Mohindra*)
Andrew, rh Stuart
Aquarone, Steff
Argar, rh Edward
Atkins, rh Victoria
Babarinde, Josh
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi
Baldwin, Dame Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Bedford, Mr Peter
Bennett, Alison
Berry, Siân
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Blackman, Kirsty
Bool, Sarah
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, rh Dame Karen
Brandreth, Aphra
Braverman, rh Suella
Brewer, Alex
Brown-Fuller, Jess
Burghart, Alex
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cane, Charlotte
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
Cartlidge, James
Chadwick, David (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Forster*)
Chambers, Dr Danny
Chope, Sir Christopher
Chowns, Ellie
Cleverly, rh Mr James
Cocking, Lewis
Coghlan, Chris

Collins, Victoria
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, John
Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Cross, Harriet
Dance, Adam
Darling, Steve
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Ann
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Mims
Davis, rh David
Dean, Bobby
Denyer, Carla
Dewhurst, Charlie
Dillon, Mr Lee
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Doogan, Dave
Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
Duffield, Rosie
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Dyke, Sarah
Easton, Alex
Evans, Dr Luke
Farron, Tim
Flynn, rh Stephen
Foord, Richard
Forster, Mr Will
Fortune, Peter
Fox, Sir Ashley
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Franklin, Zöe
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
George, Andrew
Gethins, Stephen
Glen, rh John

Glover, Olly
Goldman, Marie
Gordon, Tom
Green, Sarah
Griffith, Andrew
Harding, Monica
Harris, Rebecca
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heylings, Pippa
Hinds, rh Damian
Hobhouse, Wera
Holden, rh Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Holmes, Paul
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hussain, Mr Adnan
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Liz
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Jones, Clive
Jopp, Lincoln
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
Kohler, Mr Paul
Kruger, Danny
Lake, Ben
Lamont, John
Law, Chris
Leadbitter, Graham
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewis, rh Sir Julian
Lockhart, Carla
Logan, Seamus
Lopez, Julia
MacCleary, James
MacDonald, Mr Angus
Maguire, Ben
Maguire, Helen
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Martin, Mike
Mathew, Brian
Maynard, Charlie
McMurdock, James (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Anderson*)
McVey, rh Esther
Medi, Llinos
Miller, Calum
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Robbie
Morello, Edward
Morgan, Helen
Morrison, Mr Tom (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Forster*)
Morrissey, Joy
Morton, rh Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mundell, rh David

Munt, Tessa
Murray, Susan
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Obese-Jecty, Ben
O'Brien, Neil
O'Hara, Brendan
Olney, Sarah
Patel, rh Priti
Paul, Rebecca
Perteghella, Manuela
Philp, rh Chris
Pinkerton, Dr Al
Pritchard, rh Mark
Raja, Shivani
Reed, David
Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Robertson, Joe
Robinson, rh Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Savage, Dr Roz
Saville Roberts, rh Liz
Shannon, Jim
Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
Simmonds, David
Slade, Vikki
Smart, Lisa
Smith, Greg
Smith, rh Sir Julian
Smith, Rebecca
Snowden, Mr Andrew
Sollom, Ian
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Gregory
Stephenson, Blake
Stone, Jamie
Stuart, rh Graham
Swann, Robin
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Taylor, Luke
Thomas, Bradley
Thomas, Cameron
Timothy, Nick
Tugendhat, rh Tom
Vickers, Martin
Voaden, Caroline
Whately, Helen
Whittingdale, rh Sir John
Wild, James
Wilkinson, Max
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wishart, Pete
Wood, Mike
Wrigley, Martin
Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
Jerome Mayhew and
Katie Lam

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 21B disagreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83H(2)), That a Committee be appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments 1B, 5B, 8B and 21B;

That James Murray, Christian Wakeford, Alistair Strathern, Chris Vince, Joe Morris, Gareth Davies and Will Forster be members of the Committee;

That James Murray be the Chair of the Committee;

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—(*Anna Turley.*)

Question agreed to.

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

NON-DOMESTIC RATING (MULTIPLIERS AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS) BILL (CHANGED TO NON-DOMESTIC RATING (MULTIPLIERS) BILL) (PROGRAMME) (NO. 2)

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

That the following provisions shall apply to the Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers and Private Schools) Bill (changed to Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers) Bill) for the purpose of supplementing the Order of 25 November 2024 (Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers and Private Schools) Bill (Programme)):

Consideration of Lords Amendments

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

Subsequent stages

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

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

Question agreed to.

Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers and Private Schools) Bill (changed to Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers) Bill)

Consideration of Lords amendments

Madam Deputy Speaker (Ms Nusrat Ghani): I must draw the House's attention to the fact that financial privilege is engaged by Lords amendments 1 to 12, and 14 to 17. If any of those Lords amendments are agreed to, I will cause the customary entry waiving Commons financial privilege to be entered in the *Journal*.

Clause 3

APPLICATION OF MULTIPLIERS

3.18 pm

The Minister for Local Government and English Devolution (Jim McMahon): I beg to move, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 1.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss Lords amendments 2 to 19, and Government motions to disagree.

Jim McMahon: First, I am grateful to Members of both the Commons and the Lords who have so diligently scrutinised the Bill throughout its passage. Before I address the amendments tabled by the Lords, allow me to remind the House of why we introduced the Bill in the first place. This Government have committed to transforming the business rates system, and the Bill is a first step on that important journey. We want to achieve a sustainable system that is fit for the current economic landscape, and where business growth is supported and ratepayers pay their fair share. I thank the noble Lord Khan of Burnley for taking the Bill through the other place and for being so thorough in his approach. I also thank officers of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and my private office for all their work on the Bill.

The Government oppose all the amendments before us today and I will provide further explanation as to why. At the Budget, the Government explained that we wanted to introduce new lower multipliers for qualifying retail, hospitality and leisure properties from April 2026 to address the uncertainty of the temporary, stopgap support provided by the annual RHL relief. Business rates represent a stable source of revenue for local government, meaning that this permanent tax cut must be sustainably funded. That is why the Government also announced our intention to introduce a higher multiplier for all properties with a rateable value at or above £500,000. This Bill makes provision to enable the introduction of those new multipliers, so this is the first step towards delivering on the Government's manifesto commitment to transform the business rates system to one that is sustainable, protects the high street and is fit for the 21st century.

Kevin Hollinrake (Thirsk and Malton) (Con): On a point of detail, the Minister says the Bill is a "first step", so will there be further reforms, following these reforms, to the rest of the business rates system to meet his manifesto commitment to replace the current business rates system completely?

Jim McMahon: I am not going to pre-empt any further decisions on this, other than to say that this represents an important and significant step forward. As a constituency MP, he, like me, will have heard from many small businesses—retailers, hospitality providers or leisure providers—who appreciated the support during covid, but were very clear that there was a cliff edge and that that support was coming to an end. The previous Government did not provide any certainty about what followed, so the Bill ends that uncertainty and hardwires in a permanent relief system to ensure those important businesses that are the foundation of our communities and our economy are supported through the tax system.

Kevin Hollinrake: The Minister has already said, as he has in previous speeches, that this is a “first step”, but now he says it is a “permanent” measure. I agree with him that business wants certainty, so it is important that businesses understand: is this now a permanent position that will not be changed, or a first step?

Jim McMahon: The answer is that it is both, as I will go on to explain in more detail. It is an important first step, and the relief that is provided, funded through the higher rate properties, will be hard-baked into the system, notwithstanding any future support that may well follow, which we are not pre-empting today.

Lords amendments 1, 6, 7 and 12 would remove qualifying healthcare hereditaments from the higher multiplier, and Lords amendments 2, 5, 8 and 11 would do the same in relating to anchor stores. Considering the challenging fiscal environment, it is vital that this permanent tax cut is funded sustainably. The Government have been clear that they will do that by applying the higher multiplier to all properties with a rateable value at or above £500,000. That accounts for less than 1% of all properties and is the fairest approach. The impact on healthcare properties is limited. As set out in the other place, of the 16,780 properties at or above the £500,000 threshold based on the current rating list and rounded to 10, only 350 are in the health sub-sector. Of those, 290 are NHS hospitals and only 30 are doctors’ surgeries or health centres.

At the autumn Budget, the Chancellor fixed the spending envelope for phase 2 of the spending review. The Government are considering the full range of departmental priorities and pressures as part of the spending review, and that includes any impact of the higher multiplier on public sector properties, such as schools and hospitals. I urge the House to disagree with those amendments.

We recognise the importance of anchor stores, and we are doing a great deal to support the high street in this Bill and elsewhere. While the largest anchor stores may be caught by the higher multiplier, they are often part of large retail chains that will have a number of properties with rateable values below £500,000. Those businesses will, therefore, benefit overall from the lower multipliers.

Suella Braverman (Fareham and Waterlooville) (Con): I appreciate the points that the Minister is making. In Fareham and Waterlooville, we have some fantastic pubs, including the Golden Lion in Fareham, the Chairmakers in Denmead and the Heroes in Waterlooville. Many pubs are hubs of our community and make a valid contribution to the local economy, but they have

been trading under challenging circumstances and have been asking for a cut in business rates. What will be the effects of the Minister’s position today?

Jim McMahon: The Bill provides a cash saving for exactly the types of business that the right hon. Member talks about. We all understand the importance of pubs to our towns, villages and estates, not just as businesses in the economy but as places for the community to convene, to meet and to build relationships and networks. That is exactly why the measures are being brought in, and in a permanent way, because pubs need certainty. They know the rising costs of supplies, carbon dioxide and energy have put significant pressure on pub operations, and these measures provide long-term stability that bakes in the support the Government can offer into the system.

Many pubs will be free houses and they will be independent. However, a number of pubs will be part of a brewery chain with managers in place. The measures take away the cash cap of £110,000 per business, allowing, for the first time, multiple operators to benefit. That will benefit pub chains, as well as high street stores, such as Home Bargains, Boots and other retailers. Those businesses draw in footfall, which then supports independent retailers as well. The proposals are rounded and provide long-term stability that is properly funded in a responsible way. On that basis, the Government oppose the Lords amendments as laid out.

Lord’s amendments 3, 4, 9 and 10 are concerned with bringing manufacturing properties into scope of the lower multiplier. If we widen the scope of the lower multipliers in that way, it will dilute the support available to RHL properties or jeopardise the ability of the Government to sustainably fund the lower multipliers. We need to be clear that this is not a wide-ranging offer, but targeted deliberately at supporting our communities, high streets and town centres. That is why the Bill focuses on RHL support. The Government are supporting the manufacturing sector through other means. For those reasons, I urge the House to oppose the amendments.

Lord’s amendments 13 and 16 require the Government to undertake a review of how the provisions to introduce new multipliers may affect businesses whose rateable value is close to the £500,000 threshold for the higher multiplier. The review would need to be put before Parliament three months prior to 1 April 2026 in order for clauses 1 to 4 of this Bill to come into effect. These amendments probe around the way the multipliers in the business rates system currently operate. Those hereditaments on the standard multiplier, or in the future on the higher multipliers, pay rates on that multiplier calculated on all of their rateable value, and not just the rateable value above the threshold. That, of course, generates cliff edges in the rates bills for hereditaments as they move between thresholds, and we acknowledge the presence of those cliff edges—it is a matter of fact.

At the autumn Budget, the Treasury launched a discussion with business on the “Transforming Business Rates” paper. This specifically highlights these cliff edges in the system and considers whether they may act as a disincentive to expand, so I can assure the House that we are already looking at the precise issue identified in the amendment. Reforms are being taken forward through the transforming business rates work and will be phased in over the course of the Parliament. Therefore, we believe Lords amendments 13 and 16 are unnecessary.

[*Jim McMahon*]

Lords amendment 14 would require the Government to commence a review that examines the merits of creating, within three months of Royal Assent, a separate use class and associated multiplier within the non-domestic ratings for retail services provided by fulfilment warehouses in England that do not have a material presence on high streets. The noble Lord Thurlow, who put forward the amendment, made it clear that this use class would apply only to business rates. As he explained in the other place, the key task is to identify those warehouses, as distinct from warehouses used by, say, high street retailers—warehouses that may otherwise look the same.

The Lords amendment would bring together the Government and professional bodies working on business rates to identify those warehouses. We are already exploring that objective through an existing project. The digitalising business rates project will allow us to match property-level data with business-level data from His Majesty's Revenue and Customs to improve the way in which we target business rates, and to identify property and businesses in the way that the Lords amendment envisages.

Chris Vince (Harlow) (Lab/Co-op): I did not intend to intervene, but I was looking through the amendments, and I see that a lot of them focus on exemptions from the business rates. Does the Minister agree that the way to look at supporting businesses in, for example, the manufacturing industry is through other means, not through changing the business rates?

3.30 pm

Jim McMahon: We welcome scrutiny through amendments and the insight that the other place can provide, just as we welcomed scrutiny in the evidence sessions and Committee sittings; it adds value. We need to be honest: it is natural for Members to want to widen the scope of legislation during its passage, and to include more. In Government, we have to deal with the art of the possible, which means balancing a number of competing interests, not least the impact on taxpayers in the round. The Bill is targeted at those who need it the most—communities and local economies—and it is fully funded to ensure that it is sustainable. We cannot draw the legislation so wide that it does not stand the test of time and does not cover its own cost. That would not be responsible, and certainly would not be sustainable.

Lords amendment 14 would require the Government to implement the recommendations of the review. Given that we do not know what those recommendations would be, I trust the House will understand that we cannot accept an amendment to accept them blindly in advance.

Finally, Lords amendment 15 and consequential Lords amendments 17 to 19 would strike from the Bill the clause that removes charitable rate relief from private schools that are charities. We are unable to accept these Lords amendments. This Government made a manifesto commitment to raise school standards for every child, break down barriers to opportunity and ensure that every child has the best start in life, no matter where they come from or their financial background. Achieving our ambition involves meeting our commitment to removing the VAT and business rates charitable relief tax breaks for private schools; the approach and design of this

policy has been carefully considered in the light of that. The measures are necessary in order to raise the revenue to deliver on the Government's commitment to education and young people, and to improve the state sector, where—let us be clear—90% of children are educated. This Government are prepared to take the tough but necessary decisions to deliver on those bold commitments, so, as with all the other amendments brought here from the other place, I cannot accept these Lords amendments. I hope that the rest of the House follows suit.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes): I call the shadow Secretary of State.

Kevin Hollinrake: I thank the Minister for his explanation of the Lords amendments. We shall not agree, and I will explain why. I thank the Lords for their careful consideration of the Bill; in particular, I thank the noble Lord Jamieson and the noble Baroness Scott for their scrutiny and amendments.

The legislation comes at a critical time for businesses. The partial withdrawal of retail hospitality and leisure relief—a policy choice by this Government—is hitting businesses hard. The average pub is more than £5,000 worse off as a result of the Minister's choices. That, together with the Government's trash-talking of the economy, the £25 billion annual tax rise for businesses by means of the rise in employers' national insurance, and the prospect of the job-destroying Employment Rights Bill, has led directly to a massive reduction in business confidence. According to the Institute of Directors, business confidence, which stood at a high of plus 5 in July last year, has collapsed to a covid-level low of minus 65.

Suella Braverman: My hon. Friend is making a very good speech. What is his advice to the many businesses in Fareham and Waterlooville who have told me—I have lost count of them—that they do not know whether they will survive the next few years, particularly because of the rise in national insurance contributions from employers, the Employment Rights Bill and the anti-business rhetoric? Hiring is down, prices are up and many businesses in Fareham and Waterlooville are beginning to wonder whether it is all worth it.

Kevin Hollinrake: My right hon. and learned Friend makes a very good point. These are difficult times. As she knows, I was in business for 30 years, and we go through some difficult times. Many people think that business is easy, but it is not, particularly at times like this, when confidence, including consumer confidence, has gone so low. It means that people are not coming through the door. My advice to businesses is to batten down the hatches and get through this where they can, but inevitably the consequence of these choices will be less employment, lower salary increases and higher prices in shops, public houses and other places. That is the consequence of the choices that this Government have made. The real-world effect of this historic drop in confidence is a 20-year high in business closures. Over 220,000 businesses closed their doors in the last three months of 2024.

When considering the Lords amendments, it is important to remember that the Labour party promised to abolish business rates—another broken promise. The Minister, for whom I have a great deal of time, talks about the art

of the possible; what he is saying is that a promise that he and his colleagues made to the electorate in the run-up to the election has been broken. In its manifesto, Labour promised to

“replace the business rates system, so we can raise the same revenue but in a fairer way. This new system will level the playing field between the high street and online giants”.

That is not what the Bill does, so that is also a broken promise. The reason I challenged the Minister a couple of times during his remarks is that I do not understand how the Bill can be both a first step and a permanent change. That makes no sense, and if I were one of the business people for whose rude health we are all responsible, I would like to know exactly what the Government have planned beyond these changes. That is not clear.

I turn first to Lords amendment 14, which would require the Secretary of State to review

“the merits of a separate Use Class and associated multiplier for retail services provided by fulfilment warehouses that do not have a material presence on local high streets”—

in other words, online giants. It is worth noting that the rates regime proposed by this Bill will mean that only around 10% of businesses paying the higher rate will be the warehouses of online giants. In reality, shops, restaurants, cafés, pubs, cinemas, music venues, gyms and hotels will all see their business rates rise as a result of the higher multiplier. We would support a rates regime that would genuinely level the playing field between online retailers and the high street, but this Bill does not deliver that. We therefore support amendment 14’s requirement that the Secretary of State conduct a review on introducing a higher multiplier for fulfilment warehouses. Such a multiplier would mean that important anchor stores for high streets would not be punished.

That brings me to Lords amendments 1, 5, 8 and 11. We all know from our constituencies how important anchor stores, such as supermarkets and department stores, are for attracting footfall and supporting local economies. When people come into the town centre to use an anchor store, they might stop for lunch in a local café or pop into an independent business. Key anchor stores in the Secretary of State’s constituency will be hit by this Bill: Sainsbury’s in Ashton-under-Lyne has a rateable value of £1.24 million, while Marks and Spencer next door has a rateable value of £770,000. These decisions have real-world effects on companies that are not online giants.

We have seen the impact on our communities when anchor stores leave a town. For many anchor stores, being dragged into the higher multiplier by this Bill could be the straw that breaks the camel’s back; those shops have already been hit by the jobs tax, and will be tied up with even more red tape through the Employment Rights Bill. In fact, the British Retail Consortium has warned the Government that

“The sheer scale of new costs and the speed with which they occur create a cumulative burden that will make job losses inevitable, and higher prices a certainty.”

That contrasts with my party’s proud record of supporting businesses, including small businesses, on the high street by cutting business rates, as well as providing billions of pounds of support throughout the pandemic.

While we are talking about high street businesses, can I once again push the Minister on a very important point—the retention of small business rate relief? Many businesses’ livelihoods depend on that relief, so will he

say at the Dispatch Box that it will be continued? I have not had clarity, and clearly I will not get clarity today. Is that relief also on the chopping block, maybe at the Chancellor’s emergency Budget tomorrow? Let us see what that brings; we may get clearer answers then. Tomorrow’s last-gasp attempt to go for growth comes after GDP falling by 0.1% in January. That was largely attributed to a 1.1% fall in manufacturing output.

That brings me briefly to Lords amendments 3, 4, 9 and 10. They would make manufacturing hereditaments eligible for the lower multipliers when it comes to local ratings lists. That comes at a particularly important time for our manufacturing sector, which is a crucial part of our economy, whether we are talking about automotive manufacturing, aerospace manufacturing or precision engineering. As we boost capital defence expenditure, it is important that we have a strong and resilient manufacturing base that can supply our brave armed forces. I urge the Government to reflect carefully on the impact of the new rates system on manufacturing, and we will listen carefully to the Minister’s responses on this issue.

Turning to Lords amendments 1, 6, 7 and 12, given that the Government are raising taxes to invest in the NHS, it seems perverse for them to levy higher business rates on the hospitals and GP practices that provide the services that so many of our constituents rely on. It is just weeks since the Government shamefully voted to impose a jobs tax on hospices, pharmacies and GP practices—another double whammy. Labour is giving with one hand and taking with the other.

Before we get to the real sting in the tail of this Bill, I will speak briefly to Lords amendments 13 and 16. Like Members of the other House, we have concerns about the cliff edge that the Bill will create in the business rates system, which the Minister referred to. A business crossing the £500,000 threshold, even by £1, could see a near 20% increase in rates payable. For instance, a business with a hereditament of £495,000 invested in their property—just enough to push them over the threshold—would potentially see an increase in rates from around £175,000 to £325,000 as a result of this Bill. The legislation will stifle investment and growth even further.

Finally, Labour’s education tax—the spiteful and ideologically driven decision to remove the charitable rate relief from private schools that are charities—sits alongside the utterly wrong-headed policy of charging VAT on private school fees. Regardless of people’s views on private schools, it is the view of the Opposition that we should never tax education. We are already seeing the gates of independent schools being locked indefinitely. That pushes more children into state education, increases class sizes and puts more pressure on the public purse, and on councils trying to find placements for students with education, health and care plans. Lords amendment 17 would retain rates relief for private schools in England, sparing them part of a cumulative burden that would otherwise send many of them beyond the brink.

It is not just education that is affected. Since the introduction of this Bill, we have learned that the Government will also levy business rates on nursery schools and sports facilities used by the general public if they are on the site of a private school. That regressive decision will jack up the cost of swimming lessons, and

[Kevin Hollinrake]

the costs for Sunday league clubs and cadet units. During our time in government, England became one of the top-performing countries for education in the western world. That is a record that this Government seem determined to trash. Years down the line, Government Members will regret having voted for this Bill as they walk down the high street, passing boarded-up shops, school gates locked shut and a local that called last orders for the final time years ago. I urge the Government to consider and agree to the amendments from the Lords to safeguard businesses, schools and communities across the country from more business-damaging and job-destroying tax hikes.

Mark Sewards (Leeds South West and Morley) (Lab): The Bill is necessary to support our high streets. It strikes a fairer balance between small businesses and large, and I am pleased to have contributed during most stages of its progress. I rise to address some of the amendments put forward by the other place, which would reduce the effectiveness of the Bill.

Amendments 2, 5, 8 and 11 seek to exempt anchor stores from the higher multipliers, thus reducing the revenue raised by the Bill overall. By reducing that revenue, the amendments reduce the support available to smaller retail, hospitality and leisure businesses, when providing that support is the entire purpose of this legislation.

I also fear that the definition of an anchor store could create problems for our high streets and town centres. During the debate in the other place it was said that the Treasury could decide what constituted an anchor store, but it was also admitted that it would be a difficult term to define. It is not uncommon, and not untrue, to say that several shops in a high street can indeed lay claim to that title, and I foresee difficulties in this regard if the amendment is passed.

It is also true that anchor stores are often the largest stores in town, usually part of a big chain, supermarkets being an obvious example. The effect of this amendment would be to exempt those larger businesses from the higher multiplier, again reducing the support available to smaller businesses. The entire purpose of the Bill is to support our smaller retail, leisure and hospitality businesses, paid for by that higher multiplier on larger businesses. Unlike the Opposition, we like to ensure that our numbers add up.

3.45 pm

Kevin Hollinrake: What would the hon. Gentleman say to businesses that are trying to make their numbers add up? In its manifesto and previously, the promise—the commitment—of the Labour party was to level the playing field between online giants and small businesses, but, as the hon. Gentleman can see, that is not what is happening here. Many different premises, including manufacturers and large bricks-and-mortar retailers, are being hit by these increases. What would the hon. Gentleman say to those businesses, given that while there is currently no sign of any increase in their rates, that is exactly what they will see as a result of the Bill?

Mark Sewards: The Bill is designed specifically to revive our high streets. The hon. Gentleman will remember, because his party was in government at the time, that

our high streets were struggling and suffocating, and it is incumbent on this new Government to revive them. That is why it is so important for us to pass the Bill today. [Interruption.] The hon. Gentleman mentioned manufacturing, and his hon. Friend the Member for Broadland and Fakenham (Jerome Mayhew) chirps from a sedentary position—[Interruption.] I mean “chunters”. I think it important to recognise that the Government are supporting manufacturing too. There are other mechanisms for doing that, but the Bill we are pursuing today, and passing today, is all about supporting our high streets, and I am very proud to support it.

Queen Street is in Morley, in the centre of my constituency. You are welcome to visit it any time, Madam Deputy Speaker. There is a lot on offer, almost of all of which comes directly from small businesses. The Lords amendments to which I have referred do not prioritise them; nor do they prioritise the smaller parades of shops in Farnley, Drighlington, Gildersome and Wortley, and they do nothing for the shops and businesses in Ardsley, Tingley, Robin Hood and Lofthouse. That is why I cannot support them. I back the businesses in Morley high street, along with all the other small businesses that I represent.

Lords amendments 15,17,18 and 19 would, in effect, reintroduce the tax break for private schools. We have had this argument about private schools at the general election, in the House, in Bill Committees and again today, but as a former maths teacher at a state school in Leeds, I am more than happy to cover old ground to reinforce my own argument. The proposed amendments seek to remove an integral part of the Bill that generates the revenue that we need to support our plans in government. I will make no apologies for supporting the 94% of children who attend state schools. We all—and I include everyone in the House—want children to have the best opportunities in life, with the highest-quality teaching and schools to match. It should be a basic function of the state to provide well-funded, excellent state school places for all students, whether their parents choose to take advantage of that or not.

On the Labour Benches, as we have proven over recent months, we are prepared to take the action necessary to ensure that all children can access through the state the education they deserve. The £70 million raised by the measure in the Bill, alongside the other revenue-raising measures we have taken in the Budget, will result and do result in a real-terms increase in per pupil funding for the 94% who attend our state schools. I am very proud to support that. We will never make any apologies for properly funding state schools by ending the tax breaks that were previously enjoyed by private institutions. That is why I will not be voting for the amendments.

To conclude, I am pleased to support the Bill in its current, unamended form. I will support our high streets. It will give confidence to small businesses and it will give state schools the funding they desperately need.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes): I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

Munira Wilson (Twickenham) (LD): I, too, begin by putting on record my thanks to the noble Lords in the other place for all their work on the Bill, in particular those on the Liberal Democrat Benches: Baroness Pinnock, Lord Shipley and Lord Fox.

Business rates reform is long overdue and, while we welcome the proposal to permanently reduce business rates for retail, hospitality and leisure, in the meantime many businesses across my constituency, and indeed the country, are reeling as they see the impact of the reduction in rates relief in bills landing on their doormats. I have heard from a number of businesses just in the past few days. I am really concerned about pubs, restaurants and cafés in my constituency who are wondering how, with the national insurance rise and the reduction in rates relief, they will continue.

The Liberal Democrats would like to see a fundamental overhaul of the business rates system, not just the sticking-plaster solutions proposed in the Bill that tinker around the edges. As I said, lower business rates for retail, hospitality and leisure are a step in the right direction, but there are countless small businesses outside those sectors that need their tax burden reduced too, for example manufacturing businesses. We tabled amendments on Report to improve the Bill and to ensure it gave consideration to whether there should be provision for manufacturing facilities, which can be big and built on expensive land but sometimes produce relatively low-value goods. Lords amendment 4 sought to do the same, whereby manufacturing premises would also pay new lower business rates under the Bill. Without that, light engineering and printers, among other businesses in our town centres' mixed economies, could be priced out.

A recent report by Barclays bank concluded that the words "made in Britain" were worth an additional £3.5 billion to UK exporters, so it is important that something is done to support the manufacturing sector. We have learnt the hard way in recent years, with the pandemic and wars, that we need to be much more self-sufficient as a country, yet there has been a big drop in confidence in the sector since autumn, with an increase in manufacturers' costs and orders in general reported to be smaller in size. That comes on top of the additional Brexit red tape that those businesses have to contend with to export. Therefore, we support retaining this amendment in the Bill.

As I have said, we want fundamental reform of business rates so we can boost small businesses and our high streets. We tabled an amendment on Report to require a review of the impact of the Bill on businesses, high streets and economic growth, so we support retaining Lords amendment 13, which would require the Secretary of State to review the impact of the Bill on businesses whose rateable value is close to £500,000 and so will be caught by the new higher business rates.

Turning to our NHS, yet again we see the Government giving with one hand and taking with the other. As with national insurance contributions, so with the business rates changes: there are unintended but significant consequences for our health service. Lords amendment 1 sought to exclude hospitals and other healthcare settings from paying new higher business rates for properties with a rateable of £500,000 or more. Without the amendment, 290 local hospitals will be caught by the rates, an unacceptable new burden when the NHS is already struggling. As my noble Friend Baroness Pinnock pointed out in the other place, without the amendment the likes of Great Ormond Street hospital for children will have an additional burden of £600,000 per year on business rates alone, the John Radcliffe hospital in Oxford has a potential business rates increase from

£3.4 million to £4.1 million, and the Hull Royal Infirmary could see its bill rising from £1.8 million to £2.1 million. Those are typical figures for hospitals across the country. I do not believe it is the Government's intention to reduce hospitals' abilities to drive down their waiting lists, yet that is exactly what the impact of these changes and the consequent higher charges will be, so we support the amendment.

The Bill also levies a tax on education by removing the business rates exemption for private schools that are charities, a measure that will be compounded by the Government's move to levy VAT on private school fees and the increase to employers' national insurance contributions. As I have said many times since the general election—and indeed before—the Liberal Democrats are opposed, in principle, to the taxation of education, as it is a public good. We strongly support and champion parents' right to choose, on which both those tax measures are an assault.

Mark Swards: Does the hon. Lady not accept that this Government won an election on the basis of a promise that we would introduce VAT on private school fees, so it is incumbent on us to deliver that manifesto pledge?

Munira Wilson: I am very grateful for that intervention, because I gently remind the hon. Gentleman that his party won the election with less than 34% of the vote. I cannot remember what the turnout was, but—

Luke Taylor (Sutton and Cheam) (LD): 60%.

Munira Wilson: My hon. Friend tells me it was 60%. I cannot do the maths quickly enough—clearly, I need to do maths to 18—

Luke Taylor: One in five voters—one in seven adults.

Munira Wilson: There we go—basically, not many voters voted for Labour's manifesto. I will happily let the hon. Gentleman continue to plough that furrow, because I have had that argument made to me before—for instance, in the petitions debate on VAT on private school fees just last week.

Mark Swards: I am incredibly grateful to the hon. Lady for giving way again. The simple fact is that we have the electoral system we have, and it is incumbent on whomever wins a majority to deliver their manifesto pledges to govern the country. She may take issue with the electoral system, but it is the one that we have, and we must deliver our manifesto pledges.

Munira Wilson: I respectfully say to the hon. Gentleman that a rise in employers' national insurance contributions was not in his party's manifesto, nor was a cut to the winter fuel allowance, nor was the farmers tax, yet these are all things Labour is implementing.

Mark Swards *rose*—

Munira Wilson: Unless the hon. Gentleman wants to make a different point from his party's manifesto, which was not voted for by many people, I will not give way, although I will pick up on another point he made earlier.

[Munira Wilson]

Clause 5, which implements the removal of charitable rate relief for private schools, undermines the principle that I referred to: we should not be taxing education, and we should respect parents' right to choose. The clause will undermine the ability of independent schools to undertake the brilliant partnership work that they do in our communities and with state schools. I have talked many times in this place of Lady Eleanor Holles and Hampton schools in my constituency, which have done amazing work with underprivileged communities in the Feltham area, such as with Reach academy, and helped to transform the life chances and outcomes for young people in that community. The measure will also limit those schools' abilities to extend bursaries to children from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

Suella Braverman: The hon. Lady is absolutely right in what she is saying on private schools, and I agree with everything she has said on that point. Does she agree that as well as the damaging effects on children who go to private schools, this will affect children in state schools? In Hampshire, thousands of young pupils attend independent schools, but the state schools are running at nearly 100% capacity. This measure is going to push hundreds, if not thousands, of children into state schools, which are already full, thereby harming and undermining the education of all children. Is that not unforgivable?

Munira Wilson: I thank the right hon. Lady for her intervention. I am aware, from talking to colleagues, that there are real pressures on school places in different parts of the country. Clearly, that is where we will see a negative impact. In my own constituency and, indeed, across London, we are struggling with secondary school places, although rolls are falling in primary schools, which will feed into the secondary sector. These pressures of children leaving the private sector to go into the state sector are different in different parts of the country.

4 pm

Taken together, the removal of the business rates exemptions for schools that are charities and the levying of VAT on schools will perversely serve only to make independent schools more elitist and less accessible to many families up and down the country, which seems to be at odds with what this Labour Government purport to stand for. I am perplexed as to why Ministers are so keen to push through these measures. Just last week, they marched their Labour MPs through the No Lobby when the Liberal Democrats sought to impose a profit cap on the shameless profiteering of private equity-run special schools, which are bankrupting our local authorities. Many vulnerable children are missing out on the support that they need because of the behaviour of some of these companies, yet the Labour Government will not take action on them. They are, none the less, happy to tax parents and take away rates relief from those schools operating as charities.

Before I come to a close, let me address the point made by the hon. Member for Leeds South West and Morley (Mark Swards). He said how all of this money raised from business rates exemptions and VAT on private schools would help fund the state sector. May I gently point out to him that it was his Education

Secretary, who, before Christmas, wrote to the School Teachers' Review Body essentially to say that teachers should be given a pay rise that is higher than the extra funding that our state schools will receive in the coming financial year—and that has been confirmed by data released by the Education Department this week.

As a result, many state schools across the country, which are already feeling the pinch, will have a shortfall in funds. Schools in my constituency already run Amazon wish lists for things such as glue sticks, whiteboard markers and tissue boxes. They are relying on Parent Teacher Associations to buy new furniture. Our state schools are already struggling, but the money that the hon. Member says will be raised will not go to them; they will not be funded sufficiently. Therefore, this nirvana of state schools that he claims we will have simply does not exist.

Mark Swards: The hon. Member has been very generous with her time. On the points that she made about funds for state schools and about the other difficult decisions that this Government have had to make, does she not accept that when we came to power, we found an economy that had been absolutely ruined by the Conservative party? We found every Department in reserves and a £22 billion black hole that had to be filled, because we are the party of economic responsibility.

Munira Wilson: I thank the hon. Member for his intervention. Where we can make common cause is over the absolute mess in which the Conservatives left both our public services and our economy. I have no quibble in agreeing with him on that point. We Liberal Democrats set out a whole series of tax measures—actually we were the only party that was not afraid to put forward revenue-raising measures—but his Government are choosing not to accept any of them. They included taxing our big tech giants that are ruining the mental health of our children and young people—[*Interruption.*] Yes, in fact, they are planning to slash that tax altogether. We also suggested reversing the tax cuts that the Conservatives gave to the big banks, so that we can continue putting free school meals on the table for children, which, again, his Government are thinking of cutting. Then we suggested reforming capital gains tax—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes): Order. I remind the hon. Lady that we are in fact debating Lords amendment 1 and the Government motion to disagree.

Munira Wilson: I apologise, Madam Deputy Speaker. I was simply seeking to address the hon. Member's point. I am coming in to land now.

Time and again we see Government policy at odds with their stated objectives. They want to tackle NHS waiting lists but then slap business rates on to large hospitals and put national insurance rises on to our GPs, hospices and social care providers. They claim to drive growth but then slap business rates on to much-needed manufacturing and put a cliff edge on small businesses in our town centres. They want to extend opportunity to all but then go after charitable independent schools that are serving their wider communities—not to mention punishing parents who dare to make that choice for their children.

Amid some good intentions, the Government have lost their way in parts of the Bill. I implore Ministers to genuinely consider the amendments before them in order to support our hospitals and allow businesses up and down our country to grow and flourish.

Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 1.

The House divided: Ayes 316, Noes 183.

Division No. 144]

[4.5 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
Ahmed, Dr Zubir
Al-Hassan, Sadik
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Anderson, Callum
Anderson, Fleur
Arthur, Dr Scott
Asato, Jess
Athwal, Jas
Atkinson, Catherine
Atkinson, Lewis
Bailey, Mr Calvin
Baines, David
Baker, Alex
Baker, Richard
Bance, Antonia
Barron, Lee
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Baxter, Johanna
Beales, Danny
Beavers, Lorraine
Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote
cast by Zarah Sultana*)
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Billington, Ms Polly
Bishop, Matt
Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast
by Chris Elmore*)
Blake, Rachel
Bloore, Chris
Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
Botterill, Jade
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
Brash, Mr Jonathan
Bryant, Chris
Buckley, Julia
Burgon, Richard
Burke, Maureen
Burton-Sampson, David
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Caliskan, Nesil
Campbell, rh Sir
Alan
Campbell, Irene
Campbell, Juliet
Campbell-Savours, Markus
Carden, Dan
Carling, Sam
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Charters, Mr Luke
Clark, Feryal
Coleman, Ben
Collier, Jacob
Collinge, Lizzi
Collins, Tom
Conlon, Liam
Coombes, Sarah
Cooper, Andrew
Cooper, Dr Beccy
Costigan, Deirdre
Cox, Pam
Coyle, Neil
Craft, Jen
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Ms Stella
Crichton, Torcuil
Curtis, Chris
Darlington, Emily
Davies, Jonathan
Davies, Paul
Davies, Shaun
Davies-Jones, Alex
De Cordova, Marsha
Dean, Josh
Dearden, Kate
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet
Singh
Dickson, Jim
Dixon, Anna
Dodds, rh Anneliese
Dollimore, Helena
Dowd, Peter
Duncan-Jordan, Neil
Eagle, Dame Angela
Eagle, rh Maria
Edwards, Lauren
Edwards, Sarah
Efford, Clive
Egan, Damien
Elmore, Chris
Entwistle, Kirith
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Fahnbulleh, Miatta
Falconer, Mr Hamish
Farnsworth, Linsey
Fenton-Glynn, Josh
Ferguson, Mark
Ferguson, Patricia
Foody, Emma
Fookes, Catherine
Foster, Mr Paul
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Francis, Daniel
Frith, Mr James
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gardner, Dr
Allison
Gelder, Anna

Gemmell, Alan
German, Gill
Gilbert, Tracy
Giindon, Mary
Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy
vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Gosling, Jodie
Gould, Georgia
Greenwood, Lilian
Griffith, Dame Nia
Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
Hack, Amanda
Hall, Sarah
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Paulette
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hatton, Lloyd
Hayes, Helen
Hayes, Tom
Hazelgrove, Claire
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hinchliff, Chris
Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hopkins, Rachel
Hughes, Claire
Hume, Alison
Hurley, Patrick
Hussain, Imran
Irons, Natasha
Jameson, Sally
Jermy, Terry
Johnson, rh Dame
Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Lillian
Jones, Louise
Jones, Ruth
Joseph, Sojan
Juss, Warinder
Kane, Chris
Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast
by Chris Elmore*)
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kirkham, Jayne
Kumar, Sonia
Kyle, rh Peter
Lamb, Peter
Lavery, Ian
Law, Noah
Leadbeater, Kim
Leishman, Brian
Lewell, Emma
Lewin, Andrew
Lewis, Clive
Long Bailey, Rebecca
MacAlister, Josh
MacNae, Andy
Madders, Justin
Martin, Amanda
Maskell, Rachael
Mather, Keir
Mayer, Alex
McAllister, Douglas
McCarthy, Kerry
McCluskey, Martin
McDonagh, Dame
Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Chris
McDonnell, rh John
McDougall, Blair
McEvoy, Lola
McKee, Gordon
McMahon, Jim
McMorrin, Anna
McNally, Frank
McNeill, Kirsty
Midgley, Anneliese
Minns, Ms Julie
Mishra, Navendu
Mohamed, Abtisam
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Morris, Joe
Mullane, Margaret
Murphy, Luke
Murray, Chris
Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
Murray, James
Myer, Luke
Naish, James
Naismith, Connor
Narayan, Kanishka
Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
Newbury, Josh
Niblett, Samantha
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Onn, Melanie
Opher, Dr Simon
Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote
cast by Kim Johnson*)
Osborne, Tristan
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Paffey, Darren
Patrick, Matthew
Payne, Michael
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Phillips, Jess
Pinto-Duschinsky, David
Pitcher, Lee
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Joe
Powell, rh Lucy
Poynton, Gregor
Prinsley, Peter
Quigley, Mr Richard
Race, Steve
Ranger, Andrew
Reid, Joani
Rhodes, Martin
Richards, Jake
Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
Rigby, Lucy
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robertson, Dave
Roca, Tim
Rodda, Matt
Rushworth, Sam
Russell, Mrs Sarah
Rutland, Tom
Ryan, Oliver

Sackman, Sarah
Sandher, Dr Jeevun
Scroggham, Michelle
Sewards, Mark
Shah, Naz
Shanker, Baggy
Shanks, Michael
Siddiq, Tulip
Simons, Josh
Slaughter, Andy
Slinger, John
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smith, Sarah
Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Stainbank, Euan
Stevens, rh
Jo
Stevenson, Kenneth
Stewart, Elaine
Stone, Will
Strathern, Alistair
Strickland, Alan
Sullivan, Kirsteen
Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tapp, Mike
Taylor, David
Taylor, Rachel
Thomas, Fred
Thompson, Adam
Tidball, Dr Marie
Timms, rh Sir Stephen

Toale, Jessica
Tomlinson, Dan
Tufnell, Henry
Turley, Anna
Turmaine, Matt
Turner, Karl
Turner, Laurence
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Uppal, Harpreet
Vaughan, Tony
Vaz, rh Valerie
Vince, Chris
Walker, Imogen
Ward, Melanie
Waugh, Paul
Webb, Chris
Welsh, Michelle
West, Catherine
Western, Andrew
Western, Matt
Whitby, John
White, Jo
White, Katie
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, David
Witherden, Steve
Woodcock, Sean
Wrighting, Rosie
Yang, Yuan
Yasin, Mohammad
Yemm, Steve
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Gen Kitchen and
Christian Wakeford

NOES

Adam, Shockat
Allister, Jim
Amos, Gideon
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Mohindra*)
Andrew, rh Stuart
Aquarone, Steff
Argar, rh Edward
Atkins, rh Victoria
Babarinde, Josh
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, rh Mrs
Kemi
Baldwin, Dame Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Bedford, Mr Peter
Bennett, Alison
Berry, Siân
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Bool, Sarah
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, rh Dame
Karen
Brandreth, Aphra
Braverman, rh Suella
Brewer, Alex
Brown-Fuller, Jess
Burghart, Alex
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cane, Charlotte
Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair

Cartlidge, James
Chadwick, David (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Forster*)
Chambers, Dr Danny
Chope, Sir Christopher
Chowns, Ellie
Cleverly, rh Mr James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Cocking, Lewis
Coghlan, Chris
Collins, Victoria
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, John
Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy
vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Cross, Harriet
Dance, Adam
Darling, Steve
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Mims
Davis, rh David
Dean, Bobby
Denyer, Carla
Dewhirst, Charlie
Dillon, Mr Lee
Dinenage, Dame
Caroline
Dowden, rh Sir
Oliver
Duffield, Rosie
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain

Dyke, Sarah
Easton, Alex
Evans, Dr Luke
Farron, Tim
Foord, Richard
Forster, Mr Will
Fortune, Peter
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Franklin, Zöe
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
George, Andrew
Glen, rh John
Glover, Olly
Goldman, Marie
Gordon, Tom
Green, Sarah
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Alison
Harding, Monica
Harris, Rebecca
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heylings, Pippa
Hinds, rh Damian
Hobhouse, Wera
Holden, rh Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Liz
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Jones, Clive
Jopp, Lincoln
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast
by Joy Morrissey*)
Kohler, Mr Paul
Kruger, Danny
Lam, Katie
Lamont, John
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewis, rh Sir Julian
Lockhart, Carla
Lopez, Julia
MacCleary, James
MacDonald, Mr Angus
Maguire, Ben
Maguire, Helen
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Martin, Mike
Mathew, Brian
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Charlie
McMurdock, James (*Proxy
vote cast by Lee Anderson*)
McVey, rh Esther
Miller, Calum
Milne, John
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Robbie
Morello, Edward
Morgan, Helen

Morrison, Mr Tom (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Forster*)
Morrissey, Joy
Morton, rh Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mundell, rh David
Munt, Tessa
Murray, Susan
Murrison, rh Dr
Andrew
Norman, rh Jesse
Obese-Jecty, Ben
O'Brien, Neil
Olney, Sarah
Patel, rh Priti
Paul, Rebecca
Perteghella, Manuela
Pinkerton, Dr Al
Pritchard, rh Mark
Raja, Shivani
Ramsay, Adrian
Reed, David
Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Robertson, Joe
Robinson, rh Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Savage, Dr Roz
Shannon, Jim
Shastri-Hurst, Dr
Neil
Shelbrooke, rh Sir
Alec
Simmonds, David
Smart, Lisa
Smith, Greg
Smith, rh Sir Julian
Smith, Rebecca
Snowden, Mr Andrew
Sollom, Ian
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Gregory
Stephenson, Blake
Stone, Jamie
Stuart, rh Graham
Swayne, rh Sir
Desmond
Taylor, Luke
Thomas, Bradley
Thomas, Cameron
Timothy, Nick
Tugendhat, rh Tom
Vickers, Martin
Voaden, Caroline
Whately, Helen
Whittingdale, rh Sir
John
Wild, James
Wilkinson, Max
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike
Wrigley, Martin
Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Ashley Fox and
Paul Holmes

Question accordingly agreed to.
Lords amendment 1 disagreed to.

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 2.—(Jim McMahon.)

The House divided: Ayes 322, Noes 117.

Division No. 145]

[4.19 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
 Adam, Shockat
 Ahmed, Dr Zubir
 Al-Hassan, Sadik
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Anderson, Callum
 Anderson, Fleur
 Arthur, Dr Scott
 Asato, Jess
 Athwal, Jas
 Atkinson, Catherine
 Atkinson, Lewis
 Bailey, Mr Calvin
 Baines, David
 Baker, Alex
 Baker, Richard
 Bance, Antonia
 Barron, Lee
 Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
 Baxter, Johanna
 Beales, Danny
 Beavers, Lorraine
 Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote cast by Zarah Sultana*)
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berry, Siân
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Billington, Ms Polly
 Bishop, Matt
 Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Blake, Rachel
 Bloore, Chris
 Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Botterill, Jade
 Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
 Brash, Mr Jonathan
 Brickell, Phil
 Bryant, Chris
 Buckley, Julia
 Burgon, Richard
 Burke, Maureen
 Burton-Sampson, David
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Caliskan, Nesil
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Irene
 Campbell, Juliet
 Campbell-Savours, Markus
 Carden, Dan
 Carling, Sam
 Champion, Sarah
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Charters, Mr Luke
 Chowns, Ellie
 Clark, Feryal
 Coleman, Ben
 Collier, Jacob
 Collinge, Lizzi
 Collins, Tom
 Conlon, Liam
 Coombes, Sarah
 Cooper, Andrew
 Cooper, Dr Beccy
 Costigan, Deirdre
 Cox, Pam
 Coyle, Neil
 Craft, Jen
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Ms Stella
 Crichton, Torcuil
 Curtis, Chris
 Darlington, Emily
 Davies, Jonathan
 Davies, Paul
 Davies, Shaun
 Davies-Jones, Alex
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Dean, Josh
 Dearden, Kate
 Denyer, Carla
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dickson, Jim
 Dixon, Anna
 Dodds, rh Anneliese
 Dollimore, Helena
 Dowd, Peter
 Duncan-Jordan, Neil
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, rh Maria
 Edwards, Lauren
 Edwards, Sarah
 Efford, Clive
 Egan, Damien
 Elmore, Chris
 Entwistle, Kirith
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Fahnbulleh, Miatta
 Falconer, Mr Hamish
 Farnsworth, Linsey
 Ferguson, Mark
 Ferguson, Patricia
 Foody, Emma
 Fookes, Catherine
 Foster, Mr Paul
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Francis, Daniel
 Frith, Mr James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gardner, Dr Allison
 Gelderd, Anna
 Gemmell, Alan
 German, Gill
 Gilbert, Tracy
 Glindon, Mary
 Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Gosling, Jodie
 Gould, Georgia
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Dame Nia

Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Hack, Amanda
 Hall, Sarah
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Paulette
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hatton, Lloyd
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, Tom
 Hazelgrove, Claire
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hinchliff, Chris
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hughes, Claire
 Hume, Alison
 Hurley, Patrick
 Hussain, Imran
 Irons, Natasha
 Jameson, Sally
 Jermy, Terry
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Lillian
 Jones, Louise
 Jones, Ruth
 Joseph, Sojan
 Juss, Warinder
 Kane, Chris
 Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kirkham, Jayne
 Kumar, Sonia
 Kyle, rh Peter
 Lamb, Peter
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Noah
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Leishman, Brian
 Lewell, Emma
 Lewin, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 MacAlister, Josh
 Madders, Justin
 Martin, Amanda
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 Mayer, Alex
 McAllister, Douglas
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCluskey, Martin
 McDonagh, Dame Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Chris
 McDonnell, rh John
 McDougall, Blair
 McEvoy, Lola
 McKee, Gordon
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 McNally, Frank
 McNeill, Kirsty
 Midgley, Anneliese
 Minns, Ms Julie
 Mishra, Navendu
 Mohamed, Abtissam
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, Joe
 Mullane, Margaret
 Murphy, Luke
 Murray, Chris
 Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Murray, James
 Myer, Luke
 Naish, James
 Naismith, Connor
 Narayan, Kanishka
 Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Newbury, Josh
 Niblett, Samantha
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Onn, Melanie
 Opher, Dr Simon
 Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote cast by Kim Johnson*)
 Osborne, Tristan
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Paffey, Darren
 Patrick, Matthew
 Payne, Michael
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David
 Pitcher, Lee
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Joe
 Powell, rh Lucy
 Poynton, Gregor
 Prinsley, Peter
 Quigley, Mr Richard
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Race, Steve
 Ramsay, Adrian
 Ranger, Andrew
 Reid, Joani
 Rhodes, Martin
 Richards, Jake
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
 Rigby, Lucy
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robertson, Dave
 Roca, Tim
 Rodda, Matt
 Rushworth, Sam
 Russell, Mrs Sarah
 Rutland, Tom
 Ryan, Oliver
 Sackman, Sarah
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun
 Scroggham, Michelle
 Swards, Mark
 Shah, Naz
 Shanker, Baggy
 Shanks, Michael
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Slinger, John
 Smith, Cat

Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick
Smith, Sarah
Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Stainbank, Euan
Stevens, rh Jo
Stevenson, Kenneth
Stewart, Elaine
Stone, Will
Strathern, Alistair
Strickland, Alan
Sullivan, Kirsteen
Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tapp, Mike
Taylor, David
Taylor, Rachel
Thomas, Fred
Thompson, Adam
Tidball, Dr Marie
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Toale, Jessica
Tomlinson, Dan
Tufnell, Henry
Turley, Anna
Turmaine, Matt
Turner, Karl
Turner, Laurence

Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Uppal, Harpreet
Vaughan, Tony
Vaz, rh Valerie
Vince, Chris
Walker, Imogen
Ward, Melanie
Waugh, Paul
Webb, Chris
Welsh, Michelle
West, Catherine
Western, Andrew
Western, Matt
Whitby, John
White, Jo
White, Katie
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, David
Witherden, Steve
Woodcock, Sean
Wrighting, Rosie
Yang, Yuan
Yasin, Mohammad
Yemm, Steve
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Gen Kitchen and
Christian Wakeford

NOES

Allister, Jim
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Mohindra*)
Andrew, rh Stuart
Argar, rh Edward
Atkins, rh Victoria
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi
Baldwin, Dame Harriett
Barclay, rh Steve
Bedford, Mr Peter
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob
Bool, Sarah
Bowie, Andrew
Bradley, rh Dame Karen
Brandreth, Apha
Braverman, rh Suella
Burghart, Alex
Campbell, Mr Gregory
Cartlidge, James
Chope, Sir Christopher
Cleverly, rh Mr James
Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
Cocking, Lewis
Cooper, John
Corbyn, rh Jeremy
Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy
vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Cross, Harriet
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Mims
Davis, rh David
Dewhurst, Charlie
Dinenage, Dame Caroline
Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
Duffield, Rosie
Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
Easton, Alex
Evans, Dr Luke
Fortune, Peter
Francois, rh Mr Mark
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Gale, rh Sir Roger
Garnier, Mark
Glen, rh John
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Alison
Harris, Rebecca
Hayes, rh Sir John
Hinds, rh Damian
Holden, rh Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hussain, Mr Adnan
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jenrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Jopp, Lincoln
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast
by Joy Morrissey*)
Kruger, Danny
Lam, Katie
Lamont, John
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewis, rh Sir Julian
Lockhart, Carla
Lopez, Julia
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Mayhew, Jerome
McMurdock, James (*Proxy
vote cast by Lee Anderson*)
McVey, rh Esther

Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Robbie
Morrissey, Joy
Morton, rh Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mundell, rh David
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Norman, rh Jesse
Obese-Jecty, Ben
O'Brien, Neil
Patel, rh Priti
Paul, Rebecca
Pritchard, rh Mark
Raja, Shivani
Reed, David
Robertson, Joe
Robinson, rh Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Shannon, Jim
Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
Simmonds, David
Smith, Greg

Smith, rh Sir Julian
Smith, Rebecca
Snowden, Mr Andrew
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Gregory
Stephenson, Blake
Stuart, rh Graham
Swann, Robin
Wayne, rh Sir Desmond
Thomas, Bradley
Timothy, Nick
Tugendhat, rh Tom
Vickers, Martin
Whately, Helen
Whittingdale, rh Sir John
Wild, James
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Ashley Fox and
Paul Holmes

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 2 disagreed to.

*Motion made, and Question put, That this House
disagrees with Lords amendment 3.—(Jim McMahon.)*

The House divided: Ayes 316, Noes 180.

Division No. 146]

[4.31 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
Ahmed, Dr Zubir
Al-Hassan, Sadik
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Anderson, Callum
Anderson, Fleur
Arthur, Dr Scott
Asato, Jess
Athwal, Jas
Atkinson, Catherine
Atkinson, Lewis
Bailey, Mr Calvin
Baines, David
Baker, Alex
Baker, Richard
Bance, Antonia
Barron, Lee
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Baxter, Johanna
Beales, Danny
Beavers, Lorraine
Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote
cast by Zarah Sultana*)
Benn, rh Hilary
Betts, Mr Clive
Billington, Ms Polly
Bishop, Matt
Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast
by Chris Elmore*)
Blake, Rachel
Bloore, Chris
Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
Botterill, Jade
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
Brash, Mr Jonathan
Brickell, Phil
Bryant, Chris
Buckley, Julia
Burgon, Richard
Burke, Maureen
Burton-Sampson, David
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Caliskan, Nesil
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Irene
Campbell, Juliet
Campbell-Savours, Markus
Carden, Dan
Carling, Sam
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Charters, Mr Luke
Clark, Feryal
Coleman, Ben
Collier, Jacob
Collinge, Lizzi
Collins, Tom
Conlon, Liam
Coombes, Sarah
Cooper, Andrew
Cooper, Dr Becca
Costigan, Deirdre
Cox, Pam
Coyle, Neil
Craft, Jen
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Ms Stella
Crichton, Torcuil
Curtis, Chris
Dakin, Sir Nicholas

Darlington, Emily
 Davies, Jonathan
 Davies, Paul
 Davies, Shaun
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Dean, Josh
 Dearden, Kate
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dickson, Jim
 Dixon, Anna
 Dods, rh Anneliese
 Dollimore, Helena
 Dowd, Peter
 Duncan-Jordan, Neil
 Edwards, Lauren
 Edwards, Sarah
 Efford, Clive
 Egan, Damien
 Elmore, Chris
 Entwistle, Kirith
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Fahnbulleh, Miatta
 Falconer, Mr Hamish
 Farnsworth, Linsey
 Fenton-Glynn, Josh
 Ferguson, Mark
 Ferguson, Patricia
 Foody, Emma
 Fookes, Catherine
 Foster, Mr Paul
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Francis, Daniel
 Frith, Mr James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gardner, Dr Allison
 Gelderd, Anna
 Gemmell, Alan
 German, Gill
 Gilbert, Tracy
 Glindon, Mary
 Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy
vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Gosling, Jodie
 Gould, Georgia
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Dame Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Hack, Amanda
 Hall, Sarah
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Paulette
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hatton, Lloyd
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, Tom
 Hazelgrove, Claire
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hinchliff, Chris
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hughes, Claire
 Hume, Alison
 Hurley, Patrick
 Hussain, Imran
 Irons, Natasha
 Jameson, Sally
 Jermy, Terry
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Lillian
 Jones, Louise
 Jones, Ruth
 Joseph, Sojan
 Juss, Warinder
 Kane, Chris
 Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast
by Chris Elmore*)
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kirkham, Jayne
 Kumar, Sonia
 Kyle, rh Peter
 Lamb, Peter
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Noah
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Leishman, Brian
 Lewell, Emma
 Lewin, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 MacAlister, Josh
 MacNae, Andy
 Madders, Justin
 Martin, Amanda
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 Mayer, Alex
 McAllister, Douglas
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCluskey, Martin
 McDonagh, Dame Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Chris
 McDonnell, rh John
 McDougall, Blair
 McEvoy, Lola
 McKee, Gordon
 McMahan, Jim
 McNally, Frank
 McNeill, Kirsty
 Midgley, Anneliese
 Minns, Ms Julie
 Mishra, Navendu
 Mohamed, Abtisman
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, Joe
 Mullane, Margaret
 Murphy, Luke
 Murray, Chris
 Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Murray, James
 Myer, Luke
 Naish, James
 Naismith, Connor
 Narayan, Kanishka
 Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Newbury, Josh
 Niblett, Samantha
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Onn, Melanie
 Opher, Dr Simon
 Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena

Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote
cast by Kim Johnson*)
 Osborne, Tristan
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Paffey, Darren
 Patrick, Matthew
 Payne, Michael
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David
 Pitcher, Lee
 Platt, Jo
 Pollard, Luke
 Powell, Joe
 Powell, rh Lucy
 Poynton, Gregor
 Prinsley, Peter
 Quigley, Mr Richard
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Race, Steve
 Ranger, Andrew
 Reid, Joani
 Rhodes, Martin
 Richards, Jake
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
 Rigby, Lucy
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robertson, Dave
 Roca, Tim
 Rodda, Matt
 Rushworth, Sam
 Russell, Mrs Sarah
 Rutland, Tom
 Ryan, Oliver
 Sackman, Sarah
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun
 Scrogam, Michelle
 Sowards, Mark
 Shah, Naz
 Shanker, Baggy
 Shanks, Michael
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Slinger, John
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Sarah
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Stainbank, Euan
 Stevens, rh Jo
 Stevenson, Kenneth
 Stewart, Elaine
 Stone, Will
 Strathern, Alistair
 Strickland, Alan
 Sullivan, Kirsteen
 Sullivan, Dr Lauren
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tapp, Mike
 Taylor, David
 Taylor, Rachel
 Thomas, Fred
 Thompson, Adam
 Tidball, Dr Marie
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Toale, Jessica
 Tomlinson, Dan
 Tufnell, Henry
 Turley, Anna
 Turmaine, Matt
 Turner, Karl
 Turner, Laurence
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Uppal, Harpreet
 Vaughan, Tony
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Vince, Chris
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Imogen
 Ward, Melanie
 Waugh, Paul
 Webb, Chris
 Welsh, Michelle
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Western, Matt
 Whitby, John
 White, Jo
 White, Katie
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, David
 Witherden, Steve
 Woodcock, Sean
 Wrighting, Rosie
 Yang, Yuan
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Yemm, Steve
 Zeichner, Daniel
Tellers for the Ayes:
**Gen Kitchen and
 Anna McMorrin**

NOES

Allister, Jim
 Amos, Gideon
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Mohindra*)
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Aquarone, Steff
 Argar, rh Edward
 Atkins, rh Victoria
 Babarinde, Josh
 Bacon, Gareth
 Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi
 Baldwin, Dame Harriett
 Bedford, Mr Peter
 Bennett, Alison
 Berry, Siân
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Bool, Sarah
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, rh Dame Karen
 Brandreth, Aphra
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brewer, Alex
 Brown-Fuller, Jess
 Burghart, Alex
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cane, Charlotte

Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartlidge, James
 Chadwick, David (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Forster*)
 Chambers, Dr Danny
 Choqe, Sir Christopher
 Chowns, Ellie
 Cleverly, rh Mr James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Cocking, Lewis
 Coghlan, Chris
 Collins, Victoria
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, John
 Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Cross, Harriet
 Dance, Adam
 Darling, Steve
 Davey, rh Ed
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Mims
 Davis, rh David
 Dean, Bobby
 Denyer, Carla
 Dewhurst, Charlie
 Dillon, Mr Lee
 Dinenage, Dame Caroline
 Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Dyke, Sarah
 Easton, Alex
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Farron, Tim
 Foord, Richard
 Forster, Mr Will
 Fortune, Peter
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Franklin, Zöe
 French, Mr Louie
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 George, Andrew
 Glen, rh John
 Glover, Olly
 Goldman, Marie
 Gordon, Tom
 Green, Sarah
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Alison
 Harding, Monica
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heylings, Pippa
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Holden, rh Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Liz
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Jones, Clive
 Jopp, Lincoln
 Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
 Kohler, Mr Paul
 Kruger, Danny
 Lam, Katie
 Lamont, John
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewis, rh Sir Julian
 Lockhart, Carla
 Lopez, Julia
 MacCleary, James
 MacDonald, Mr Angus
 Maguire, Ben
 Maguire, Helen
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Martin, Mike
 Mathew, Brian
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Charlie
 McMurdoch, James (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Anderson*)
 McVey, rh Esther
 Miller, Calum
 Milne, John
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Robbie
 Morello, Edward
 Morgan, Helen
 Morrison, Mr Tom (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Forster*)
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, rh Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mundell, rh David
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Susan
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Norman, rh Jesse
 Obese-Jecty, Ben
 O'Brien, Neil
 Olney, Sarah
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paul, Rebecca
 Perteghella, Manuela
 Pinkerton, Dr Al
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Raja, Shivani
 Ramsay, Adrian
 Reed, David
 Reynolds, Mr Joshua
 Robertson, Joe
 Robinson, rh Gavin
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Savage, Dr Roz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
 Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Smart, Lisa
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Sir Julian
 Smith, Rebecca
 Snowden, Mr Andrew
 Sollom, Ian
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Stafford, Gregory
 Stephenson, Blake
 Stone, Jamie
 Stuart, rh Graham
 Swann, Robin
 Swaney, rh Sir Desmond
 Taylor, Luke
 Thomas, Bradley
 Thomas, Cameron

Timothy, Nick
 Tugendhat, rh Tom
 Vickers, Martin
 Voaden, Caroline
 Whately, Helen
 Whittingdale, rh Sir John
 Wild, James
 Wilkinson, Max
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin

Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wrigley, Martin
 Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
 Sir Ashley Fox and
 Paul Holmes

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 3 disagreed to.

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 4.—(Jim McMahon.)

A Division was called.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes): Division off.

Question agreed to.

Lords amendment 4 accordingly disagreed to.

Lords amendments 5 to 12 disagreed to.

After Clause 4

REVIEW: THRESHOLD EFFECT

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 13.—(Jim McMahon.)

The House divided: Ayes 320, Noes 180.

Division No. 147]

[4.47 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
 Ahmed, Dr Zubir
 Alexander, rh Heidi
 Al-Hassan, Sadik
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Anderson, Callum
 Anderson, Fleur
 Arthur, Dr Scott
 Asato, Jess
 Athwal, Jas
 Atkinson, Catherine
 Atkinson, Lewis
 Bailey, Mr Calvin
 Baines, David
 Baker, Alex
 Baker, Richard
 Bance, Antonia
 Barron, Lee
 Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
 Baxter, Johanna
 Beales, Danny
 Beavers, Lorraine
 Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote cast by Zarah Sultana*)
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berry, Siân
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Billington, Ms Polly
 Bishop, Matt
 Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Blake, Rachel
 Bloore, Chris
 Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Botterill, Jade
 Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
 Brash, Mr Jonathan
 Brickell, Phil
 Bryant, Chris
 Buckley, Julia
 Burgon, Richard
 Burke, Maureen
 Burton-Sampson, David
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Caliskan, Nesil
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Irene
 Campbell, Juliet
 Campbell-Savours, Markus
 Carden, Dan
 Carling, Sam
 Champion, Sarah
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Charters, Mr Luke
 Chowns, Ellie
 Clark, Feryal
 Coleman, Ben
 Collier, Jacob
 Collinge, Lizzi
 Collins, Tom
 Conlon, Liam
 Coombes, Sarah
 Cooper, Andrew
 Cooper, Dr Becca

Costigan, Deirdre
Cox, Pam
Coyle, Neil
Craft, Jen
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Ms Stella
Crichton, Torcuil
Curtis, Chris
Dakin, Sir Nicholas
Darlington, Emily
Davies, Jonathan
Davies, Paul
Davies, Shaun
De Cordova, Marsha
Dean, Josh
Dearden, Kate
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dickson, Jim
Dixon, Anna
Dodds, rh Anneliese
Dollimore, Helena
Dowd, Peter
Duncan-Jordan, Neil
Edwards, Lauren
Edwards, Sarah
Efford, Clive
Egan, Damien
Elmore, Chris
Entwistle, Kirith
Eshalomi, Florence
Esterson, Bill
Fahnbulleh, Miatta
Falconer, Mr Hamish
Farnsworth, Linsey
Fenton-Glynn, Josh
Ferguson, Mark
Ferguson, Patricia
Foody, Emma
Fookes, Catherine
Foster, Mr Paul
Foxcroft, Vicky
Foy, Mary Kelly
Francis, Daniel
Frith, Mr James
Furniss, Gill
Gardiner, Barry
Gardner, Dr Allison
Gelder, Anna
Gemmell, Alan
German, Gill
Gilbert, Tracy
Glindon, Mary
Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy
vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
Gosling, Jodie
Gould, Georgia
Greenwood, Lilian
Griffith, Dame Nia
Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
Hack, Amanda
Hall, Sarah
Hamilton, Fabian
Hamilton, Paulette
Hardy, Emma
Harris, Carolyn
Hatton, Lloyd
Hayes, Helen
Hayes, Tom
Hazelgrove, Claire
Hillier, Dame Meg
Hinchliff, Chris

Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
Hopkins, Rachel
Hughes, Claire
Hume, Alison
Hurley, Patrick
Hussain, Imran
Irons, Natasha
Jameson, Sally
Jermy, Terry
Johnson, rh Dame Diana
Johnson, Kim
Jones, Gerald
Jones, Lillian
Jones, Louise
Jones, Ruth
Joseph, Sojan
Juss, Warinder
Kane, Chris
Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast
by Chris Elmore*)
Khan, Afzal
Kinnock, Stephen
Kirkham, Jayne
Kumar, Sonia
Kyle, rh Peter
Lamb, Peter
Lavery, Ian
Law, Noah
Leadbeater, Kim
Leishman, Brian
Lewell, Emma
Lewin, Andrew
Lewis, Clive
Long Bailey, Rebecca
MacAlister, Josh
MacNae, Andy
Madders, Justin
Martin, Amanda
Maskell, Rachael
Mather, Keir
Mayer, Alex
McAllister, Douglas
McCarthy, Kerry
McCluskey, Martin
McDonagh, Dame Siobhain
McDonald, Andy
McDonald, Chris
McDonnell, rh John
McDougall, Blair
McEvoy, Lola
McKee, Gordon
McMahon, Jim
McNally, Frank
McNeill, Kirsty
Midgley, Anneliese
Minns, Ms Julie
Mishra, Navendu
Mohamed, Abtisam
Morden, Jessica
Morgan, Stephen
Morris, Grahame
Morris, Joe
Mullane, Margaret
Murphy, Luke
Murray, Chris
Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
Murray, James
Myer, Luke
Naish, James
Naismith, Connor
Narayan, Kanishka

Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
Newbury, Josh
Niblett, Samantha
Nichols, Charlotte
Norris, Alex
Onn, Melanie
Opher, Dr Simon
Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
Osamor, Kate
Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote
cast by Kim Johnson*)
Osborne, Tristan
Owatemi, Taiwo
Owen, Sarah
Paffey, Darren
Patrick, Matthew
Payne, Michael
Peacock, Stephanie
Pennycook, Matthew
Phillips, Jess
Pinto-Duschinsky, David
Pitcher, Lee
Platt, Jo
Pollard, Luke
Powell, Joe
Powell, rh Lucy
Poynton, Gregor
Prinsley, Peter
Quigley, Mr Richard
Qureshi, Yasmin
Race, Steve
Ramsay, Adrian
Ranger, Andrew
Reid, Joani
Rhodes, Martin
Richards, Jake
Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
Rigby, Lucy
Rimmer, Ms Marie
Robertson, Dave
Roca, Tim
Rodda, Matt
Rushworth, Sam
Russell, Mrs Sarah
Rutland, Tom
Ryan, Oliver
Sackman, Sarah
Sandher, Dr Jeevun
Scrogham, Michelle
Sewards, Mark
Shah, Naz
Shanker, Baggy
Shanks, Michael
Siddiq, Tulip
Slaughter, Andy
Slinger, John
Smith, Cat
Smith, Jeff
Smith, Nick

Smith, Sarah
Snell, Gareth
Sobel, Alex
Stainbank, Euan
Stevens, rh Jo
Stevenson, Kenneth
Stewart, Elaine
Stone, Will
Strathern, Alistair
Strickland, Alan
Sullivan, Kirsteen
Sullivan, Dr Lauren
Sultana, Zarah
Tami, rh Mark
Tapp, Mike
Taylor, David
Taylor, Rachel
Thomas, Fred
Thompson, Adam
Tidball, Dr Marie
Timms, rh Sir Stephen
Toale, Jessica
Tomlinson, Dan
Tufnell, Henry
Turley, Anna
Turmaine, Matt
Turner, Karl
Turner, Laurence
Twigg, Derek
Twist, Liz
Uppal, Harpreet
Vaughan, Tony
Vaz, rh Valerie
Vince, Chris
Wakeford, Christian
Walker, Imogen
Ward, Melanie
Waugh, Paul
Webb, Chris
Welsh, Michelle
West, Catherine
Western, Andrew
Western, Matt
Whitby, John
White, Jo
White, Katie
Whittome, Nadia
Williams, David
Witherden, Steve
Woodcock, Sean
Wrighting, Rosie
Yang, Yuan
Yasin, Mohammad
Yemm, Steve
Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
Anna McMorrin and
Gen Kitchen

NOES

Adam, Shockat
Allister, Jim
Amos, Gideon
Anderson, Lee
Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Mohindra*)
Andrew, rh Stuart
Aquarone, Steff
Argar, rh Edward
Atkins, rh Victoria
Babarinde, Josh
Bacon, Gareth
Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi
Baldwin, Dame Harriett
Bedford, Mr Peter
Bennett, Alison
Bhatti, Saqib
Blackman, Bob

Bool, Sarah
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, rh Dame Karen
 Brandreth, Apha
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brewer, Alex
 Brown-Fuller, Jess
 Burghart, Alex
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cane, Charlotte
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartlidge, James
 Chadwick, David (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Forster*)
 Chambers, Dr Danny
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Cleverly, rh Mr James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Cocking, Lewis
 Coghlan, Chris
 Collins, Victoria
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, John
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Cross, Harriet
 Dance, Adam
 Darling, Steve
 Davey, rh Ed
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Mims
 Davis, rh David
 Dean, Bobby
 Dewhurst, Charlie
 Dillon, Mr Lee
 Dinéage, Dame Caroline
 Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Easton, Alex
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Farron, Tim
 Foord, Richard
 Forster, Mr Will
 Fortune, Peter
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Franklin, Zöe
 French, Mr Louie
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 George, Andrew
 Glen, rh John
 Glover, Olly
 Goldman, Marie
 Gordon, Tom
 Green, Sarah
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Alison
 Harding, Monica
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heylings, Pippa
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Holden, rh Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hussain, Mr Adnan
 Jardine, Christine

Jarvis, Liz
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Jones, Clive
 Jopp, Lincoln
 Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
 Kohler, Mr Paul
 Kruger, Danny
 Lam, Katie
 Lamont, John
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewis, rh Sir Julian
 Lockhart, Carla
 Lopez, Julia
 MacCleary, James
 MacDonald, Mr Angus
 Maguire, Ben
 Maguire, Helen
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Martin, Mike
 Mathew, Brian
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Charlie
 McMurdock, James (*Proxy vote cast by Lee Anderson*)
 McVey, rh Esther
 Miller, Calum
 Milne, John
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Robbie
 Morello, Edward
 Morgan, Helen
 Morrison, Mr Tom (*Proxy vote cast by Mr Forster*)
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, rh Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mundell, rh David
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Susan
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Norman, rh Jesse
 Obese-Jecty, Ben
 O'Brien, Neil
 Olney, Sarah
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paul, Rebecca
 Perteghella, Manuela
 Pinkerton, Dr Al
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Raja, Shivani
 Reed, David
 Reynolds, Mr Joshua
 Robertson, Joe
 Robinson, rh Gavin
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Savage, Dr Roz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
 Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Smart, Lisa
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Sir Julian
 Smith, Rebecca
 Snowden, Mr Andrew
 Sollom, Ian
 Spencer, Dr Ben

Stafford, Gregory
 Stephenson, Blake
 Stone, Jamie
 Stuart, rh Graham
 Swann, Robin
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Taylor, Luke
 Thomas, Bradley
 Thomas, Cameron
 Timothy, Nick
 Tugendhat, rh Tom
 Vickers, Martin
 Voaden, Caroline

Whately, Helen
 Whittingdale, rh Sir John
 Wild, James
 Wilkinson, Max
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike
 Wrigley, Martin
 Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
 Sir Ashley Fox and
 Paul Holmes

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 13 disagreed to.

After Clause 4

Motion made, and Question put, (That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 14.—(Jim McMahon.)

The House divided: Ayes 320, Noes 179.

Division No. 148]

[4.58 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
 Ahmed, Dr Zubir
 Alexander, rh Heidi
 Al-Hassan, Sadiq
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Anderson, Callum
 Anderson, Fleur
 Arthur, Dr Scott
 Asato, Jess
 Athwal, Jas
 Atkinson, Catherine
 Atkinson, Lewis
 Bailey, Mr Calvin
 Baines, David
 Baker, Alex
 Baker, Richard
 Bance, Antonia
 Barron, Lee
 Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
 Baxter, Johanna
 Beales, Danny
 Beavers, Lorraine
 Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote cast by Zarah Sultana*)
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Berry, Siân
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Billington, Ms Polly
 Bishop, Matt
 Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Blake, Rachel
 Bloore, Chris
 Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Botterill, Jade
 Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
 Brash, Mr Jonathan
 Brickell, Phil
 Buckley, Julia
 Burgon, Richard
 Burke, Maureen
 Burton-Sampson, David
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, Ian
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Irene
 Campbell, Juliet
 Campbell-Savours, Markus
 Carden, Dan
 Carling, Sam
 Champion, Sarah
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Chowns, Ellie
 Clark, Feryal
 Coleman, Ben
 Collier, Jacob
 Collinge, Lizzi
 Collins, Tom
 Conlon, Liam
 Coombes, Sarah
 Cooper, Andrew
 Cooper, Dr Beccy
 Costigan, Deirdre
 Cox, Pam
 Coyle, Neil
 Craft, Jen
 Creagh, Mary
 Creasy, Ms Stella
 Crichton, Torcuil
 Curtis, Chris
 Dakin, Sir Nicholas
 Darlington, Emily
 Davies, Jonathan
 Davies, Paul
 Davies, Shaun
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Dean, Josh
 Dearden, Kate
 Denyer, Carla
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dickson, Jim
 Dixon, Anna
 Dodds, rh Anneliese

Dollimore, Helena
 Dowd, Peter
 Duncan-Jordan, Neil
 Edwards, Lauren
 Edwards, Sarah
 Efford, Clive
 Egan, Damien
 Elmore, Chris
 Entwistle, Kirith
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Fahnbulleh, Miatta
 Falconer, Mr Hamish
 Farnsworth, Linsey
 Fenton-Glynn, Josh
 Ferguson, Mark
 Ferguson, Patricia
 Foody, Emma
 Fookes, Catherine
 Foster, Mr Paul
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Francis, Daniel
 Frith, Mr James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gardner, Dr Allison
 Gelderd, Anna
 Gemmell, Alan
 German, Gill
 Gilbert, Tracy
 Glindon, Mary
 Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy
vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Gosling, Jodie
 Gould, Georgia
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Dame Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Hack, Amanda
 Hall, Sarah
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Paulette
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hatton, Lloyd
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, Tom
 Hazelgrove, Claire
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hinchliff, Chris
 Hinder, Jonathan
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hughes, Claire
 Hume, Alison
 Hurley, Patrick
 Hussain, Imran
 Irons, Natasha
 Jameson, Sally
 Jermy, Terry
 Johnson, rh Dame
 Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Lillian
 Jones, Louise
 Jones, Ruth
 Joseph, Sojan
 Juss, Warinder
 Kane, Chris
 Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast
by Chris Elmore*)
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kirkham, Jayne
 Kumar, Sonia
 Kyle, rh Peter
 Lamb, Peter
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Noah
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Leishman, Brian
 Lewell, Emma
 Lewin, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 MacAlister, Josh
 MacNae, Andy
 Madders, Justin
 Martin, Amanda
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 Mayer, Alex
 McAllister, Douglas
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCluskey, Martin
 McDonagh, Dame
 Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Chris
 McDonnell, rh John
 McDougall, Blair
 McEvoy, Lola
 McKee, Gordon
 McMahan, Jim
 McNally, Frank
 McNeill, Kirsty
 Midgley, Anneliese
 Minns, Ms Julie
 Mishra, Navendu
 Mohamed, Abtisam
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, Joe
 Mullane, Margaret
 Murphy, Luke
 Murray, Chris
 Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Murray, James
 Myer, Luke
 Naish, James
 Naismith, Connor
 Narayan, Kanishka
 Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Newbury, Josh
 Niblett, Samantha
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Onn, Melanie
 Opher, Dr Simon
 Oppong-Asare, Ms
 Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote
cast by Kim Johnson*)
 Osborne, Tristan
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Paffey, Darren

Patrick, Matthew
 Payne, Michael
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David
 Pitcher, Lee
 Platt, Jo
 Powell, Joe
 Powell, rh Lucy
 Poynton, Gregor
 Prinsley, Peter
 Quigley, Mr Richard
 Qureshi, Yasmin
 Race, Steve
 Ramsay, Adrian
 Ranger, Andrew
 Reid, Joani
 Rhodes, Martin
 Richards, Jake
 Riddell-Carpenter,
 Jenny
 Rigby, Lucy
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robertson, Dave
 Roca, Tim
 Rodda, Matt
 Rushworth, Sam
 Russell, Mrs Sarah
 Rutland, Tom
 Ryan, Oliver
 Sackman, Sarah
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun
 Scrogam, Michelle
 Sowards, Mark
 Shah, Naz
 Shanker, Baggy
 Shanks, Michael
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Slinger, John
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Sarah
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Stainbank, Euan
 Stevens, rh Jo
 Stevenson, Kenneth
 Stewart, Elaine
 Stone, Will
 Strathern, Alistair
 Strickland, Alan
 Sullivan, Kirsteen
 Sullivan, Dr Lauren
 Sultana, Sarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tapp, Mike
 Taylor, David
 Taylor, Rachel
 Thomas, Fred
 Thompson, Adam
 Tidball, Dr Marie
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Toale, Jessica
 Tomlinson, Dan
 Tufnell, Henry
 Turley, Anna
 Turmaine, Matt
 Turner, Karl
 Turner, Laurence
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Uppal, Harpreet
 Vaughan, Tony
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Vince, Chris
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Imogen
 Ward, Melanie
 Waugh, Paul
 Webb, Chris
 Welsh, Michelle
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Western, Matt
 Whitby, John
 White, Jo
 White, Katie
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, David
 Witherden, Steve
 Woodcock, Sean
 Wrighting, Rosie
 Yang, Yuan
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Yemm, Steve
 Zeichner, Daniel
Tellers for the Ayes:
Anna McMorrin and
Gen Kitchen

NOES

Adam, Shockat
 Allister, Jim
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Mohindra*)
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Aquarone, Steff
 Argar, rh Edward
 Atkins, rh Victoria
 Babarinde, Josh
 Bacon, Gareth
 Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi
 Baldwin, Dame Harriett
 Bedford, Mr Peter
 Bennett, Alison
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Bool, Sarah
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, rh Dame Karen
 Brandreth, Aphra
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brewer, Alex
 Brown-Fuller, Jess
 Burghart, Alex
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cane, Charlotte
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartlidge, James
 Chambers, Dr Danny
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Cleverly, rh Mr James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Cocking, Lewis

Coghlan, Chris
Collins, Victoria
Cooper, Daisy
Cooper, John
Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy
vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
Cross, Harriet
Dance, Adam
Darling, Steve
Davey, rh Ed
Davies, Gareth
Davies, Mims
Davis, rh David
Dean, Bobby
Dewhurst, Charlie
Dillon, Mr Lee
Dinenage, Dame
Caroline
Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
Duncan Smith, rh Sir
Iain
Dyke, Sarah
Easton, Alex
Evans, Dr Luke
Farron, Tim
Foord, Richard
Fortune, Peter
Francois, rh Mr Mark
Franklin, Zöe
French, Mr Louie
Fuller, Richard
Gale, rh Sir
Roger
Garnier, Mark
George, Andrew
Glen, rh John
Glover, Olly
Goldman, Marie
Gordon, Tom
Green, Sarah
Griffith, Andrew
Griffiths, Alison
Harding, Monica
Harris, Rebecca
Hayes, rh Sir John
Heylings, Pippa
Hinds, rh Damian
Hobhouse, Wera
Holden, rh Mr Richard
Hollinrake, Kevin
Huddleston, Nigel
Hudson, Dr Neil
Hussain, Mr Adnan
Jardine, Christine
Jarvis, Liz
Jenkin, Sir Bernard
Jerrick, rh Robert
Johnson, Dr Caroline
Jones, Clive
Jopp, Lincoln
Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast
by Joy Morrissey*)
Kohler, Mr Paul
Kruger, Danny
Lam, Katie
Lamont, John
Leigh, rh Sir Edward
Lewis, rh Sir Julian
Lockhart, Carla
Lopez, Julia
MacCleary, James

MacDonald, Mr Angus
Maguire, Ben
Maguire, Helen
Mak, Alan
Malthouse, rh Kit
Martin, Mike
Mathew, Brian
Mayhew, Jerome
Maynard, Charlie
McMurdock, James (*Proxy
vote cast by Lee Anderson*)
McVey, rh Esther
Miller, Calum
Milne, John
Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
Mohindra, Mr Gagan
Moore, Robbie
Morello, Edward
Morgan, Helen
Morrissey, Joy
Morton, rh Wendy
Mullan, Dr Kieran
Mundell, rh David
Munt, Tessa
Murray, Susan
Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
Norman, rh Jesse
Obese-Jecty, Ben
O'Brien, Neil
Olney, Sarah
Patel, rh Priti
Paul, Rebecca
Perteghella, Manuela
Pinkerton, Dr Al
Pritchard, rh Mark
Raja, Shivani
Reed, David
Reynolds, Mr Joshua
Robertson, Joe
Robinson, rh Gavin
Rosindell, Andrew
Savage, Dr Roz
Shannon, Jim
Shastri-Hurst, Dr
Neil
Shelbrooke, rh Sir
Alec
Simmonds, David
Smart, Lisa
Smith, Greg
Smith, rh Sir Julian
Smith, Rebecca
Snowden, Mr Andrew
Sollom, Ian
Spencer, Dr Ben
Stafford, Gregory
Stephenson, Blake
Stone, Jamie
Stuart, rh Graham
Swann, Robin
Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
Taylor, Luke
Thomas, Bradley
Thomas, Cameron
Timothy, Nick
Tugendhat, rh Tom
Vickers, Martin
Voaden, Caroline
Whately, Helen
Whittingdale, rh Sir
John
Wild, James

Wilkinson, Max
Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
Wilson, Munira
Wilson, rh Sammy
Wood, Mike

Wrigley, Martin
Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
Sir Ashley Fox and
Paul Holmes

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 14 disagreed to.

Clause 5

REMOVAL OF RELIEF

*Motion made, and Question put, That this House
disagrees with Lords amendment 15.—(Jim McMahon.)*

The House divided: Ayes 319, Noes 166.

Division No. 149]

[5.10 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
Ahmed, Dr Zubir
Alexander, rh Heidi
Al-Hassan, Sadik
Ali, Rushanara
Ali, Tahir
Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
Anderson, Callum
Anderson, Fleur
Arthur, Dr Scott
Asato, Jess
Athwal, Jas
Atkinson, Catherine
Atkinson, Lewis
Bailey, Mr Calvin
Baines, David
Baker, Alex
Baker, Richard
Bance, Antonia
Barron, Lee
Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
Baxter, Johanna
Beales, Danny
Beavers, Lorraine
Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote
cast by Zarah Sultana*)
Benn, rh Hilary
Berry, Siân
Betts, Mr Clive
Billington, Ms Polly
Bishop, Matt
Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast
by Chris Elmore*)
Blake, Rachel
Bloore, Chris
Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
Botterill, Jade
Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
Brash, Mr Jonathan
Brickell, Phil
Bryant, Chris
Buckley, Julia
Burgon, Richard
Burke, Maureen
Burton-Sampson, David
Butler, Dawn
Byrne, Ian
Byrne, rh Liam
Cadbury, Ruth
Campbell, rh Sir Alan
Campbell, Irene
Campbell, Juliet
Campbell-Savours, Markus
Carden, Dan
Carling, Sam
Champion, Sarah
Charalambous, Bambos
Charters, Mr Luke
Chownes, Ellie
Clark, Feryal
Coleman, Ben
Collier, Jacob
Collinge, Lizzi
Collins, Tom
Conlon, Liam
Coombes, Sarah
Cooper, Andrew
Cooper, Dr Becca
Costigan, Deirdre
Cox, Pam
Coyle, Neil
Craft, Jen
Creagh, Mary
Creasy, Ms Stella
Crichton, Torcuil
Curtis, Chris
Dakin, Sir Nicholas
Darlington, Emily
Davies, Jonathan
Davies, Paul
Davies, Shaun
De Cordova, Marsha
Dean, Josh
Dearden, Kate
Denyer, Carla
Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
Dickson, Jim
Dixon, Anna
Dodds, rh Anneliese
Dollimore, Helena
Dowd, Peter
Duncan-Jordan, Neil
Edwards, Lauren
Edwards, Sarah
Efford, Clive
Egan, Damien
Elmore, Chris
Entwistle, Kirith
Eshalomi, Florence

Esterson, Bill
 Fahnbulleh, Miatta
 Falconer, Mr Hamish
 Farnsworth, Linsey
 Fenton-Glynn, Josh
 Ferguson, Mark
 Ferguson, Patricia
 Foody, Emma
 Fookes, Catherine
 Foster, Mr Paul
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Francis, Daniel
 Frith, Mr James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gardner, Dr Allison
 Gelderd, Anna
 Gemmell, Alan
 German, Gill
 Gilbert, Tracy
 Giindon, Mary
 Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy
vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Gosling, Jodie
 Gould, Georgia
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Dame Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Hack, Amanda
 Hall, Sarah
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Paulette
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hatton, Lloyd
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, Tom
 Hazelgrove, Claire
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hinchliff, Chris
 Hinder, Jonathan
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hughes, Claire
 Hume, Alison
 Hurley, Patrick
 Hussain, Imran
 Irons, Natasha
 Jameson, Sally
 Jermy, Terry
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Lillian
 Jones, Louise
 Jones, Ruth
 Joseph, Sojan
 Juss, Warinder
 Kane, Chris
 Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast
by Chris Elmore*)
 Khan, Afzal
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kirkham, Jayne
 Kumar, Sonia
 Kyle, rh Peter
 Lamb, Peter
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Noah
 Leadbeater, Kim

Leishman, Brian
 Lewell, Emma
 Lewin, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 MacAlister, Josh
 MacNae, Andy
 Madders, Justin
 Martin, Amanda
 Maskell, Rachael
 Mather, Keir
 Mayer, Alex
 McAllister, Douglas
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCluskey, Martin
 McDonagh, Dame Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Chris
 McDonnell, rh John
 McDougall, Blair
 McEvoy, Lola
 McKee, Gordon
 McMahan, Jim
 McNally, Frank
 McNeill, Kirsty
 Midgley, Anneliese
 Minns, Ms Julie
 Mishra, Navendu
 Mohamed, Abtisam
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, Joe
 Mullane, Margaret
 Murphy, Luke
 Murray, Chris
 Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Myer, Luke
 Naish, James
 Naismith, Connor
 Narayan, Kanishka
 Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote
cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Newbury, Josh
 Niblett, Samantha
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Onn, Melanie
 Opher, Dr Simon
 Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote
cast by Kim Johnson*)
 Osborne, Tristan
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Paffey, Darren
 Patrick, Matthew
 Payne, Michael
 Peacock, Stephanie
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David
 Pitcher, Lee
 Platt, Jo
 Powell, Joe
 Powell, rh Lucy
 Poynton, Gregor
 Prinsley, Peter
 Quigley, Mr Richard
 Qureshi, Yasmin

Race, Steve
 Ramsay, Adrian
 Ranger, Andrew
 Reader, Mike
 Reid, Joani
 Rhodes, Martin
 Richards, Jake
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
 Rigby, Lucy
 Rimmer, Ms Marie
 Robertson, Dave
 Roca, Tim
 Rodda, Matt
 Rushworth, Sam
 Russell, Mrs Sarah
 Rutland, Tom
 Ryan, Oliver
 Sackman, Sarah
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun
 Scroggum, Michelle
 Sewards, Mark
 Shah, Naz
 Shanker, Baggy
 Shanks, Michael
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Slinger, John
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Sarah
 Snell, Gareth
 Sobel, Alex
 Stainbank, Euan
 Stevens, rh Jo
 Stevenson, Kenneth
 Stewart, Elaine
 Stone, Will
 Strathern, Alistair
 Strickland, Alan
 Sullivan, Kirsteen
 Sullivan, Dr Lauren
 Sultana, Zarah
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tapp, Mike

Taylor, David
 Taylor, Rachel
 Thomas, Fred
 Thompson, Adam
 Tidball, Dr Marie
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Toale, Jessica
 Tomlinson, Dan
 Tufnell, Henry
 Turley, Anna
 Turmaine, Matt
 Turner, Karl
 Turner, Laurence
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Uppal, Harpreet
 Vaughan, Tony
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Vince, Chris
 Wakeford, Christian
 Walker, Imogen
 Ward, Melanie
 Waugh, Paul
 Webb, Chris
 Welsh, Michelle
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Western, Matt
 Whitby, John
 White, Jo
 White, Katie
 Whittome, Nadia
 Williams, David
 Witherden, Steve
 Woodcock, Sean
 Wrighting, Rosie
 Yang, Yuan
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Yemm, Steve
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:
 Anna McMorrin and
 Gen Kitchen

NOES

Adam, Shockat
 Allister, Jim
 Amos, Gideon
 Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Mohindra*)
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Aquarone, Steff
 Argar, rh Edward
 Atkins, rh Victoria
 Babarinde, Josh
 Bacon, Gareth
 Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi
 Baldwin, Dame Harriett
 Bedford, Mr Peter
 Bennett, Alison
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Bool, Sarah
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, rh Dame Karen
 Brandreth, Aphra
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brewer, Alex
 Brown-Fuller, Jess
 Burghart, Alex
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cane, Charlotte
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartlidge, James
 Chadwick, David (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Forster*)
 Chambers, Dr Danny
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Cleverly, rh Mr James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Cocking, Lewis
 Coghlan, Chris
 Collins, Victoria
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, John
 Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy
vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Cross, Harriet
 Dance, Adam
 Darling, Steve
 Davey, rh Ed
 Davies, Gareth

Davies, Mims
 Davis, rh David
 Dean, Bobby
 Dewhurst, Charlie
 Dillon, Mr Lee
 Dinenage, Dame Caroline
 Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Dyke, Sarah
 Easton, Alex
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Farron, Tim
 Foord, Richard
 Forster, Mr Will
 Fortune, Peter
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Franklin, Zöe
 French, Mr Louie
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 George, Andrew
 Glen, rh John
 Glover, Olly
 Goldman, Marie
 Gordon, Tom
 Green, Sarah
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Alison
 Harding, Monica
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heylings, Pippa
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Holden, rh Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hussain, Mr Adnan
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Liz
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Jones, Clive
 Jopp, Lincoln
 Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast
by Joy Morrissey*)
 Kohler, Mr Paul
 Kruger, Danny
 Lam, Katie
 Lamont, John
 Leigh, rh Sir Edward
 Lewis, rh Sir Julian
 Lockhart, Carla
 Lopez, Julia
 MacCleary, James
 MacDonald, Mr Angus
 Maguire, Ben
 Maguire, Helen
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit

Martin, Mike
 Mathew, Brian
 Mayhew, Jerome
 Maynard, Charlie
 McVey, rh Esther
 Miller, Calum
 Milne, John
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Robbie
 Morello, Edward
 Morgan, Helen
 Morrison, Mr Tom (*Proxy vote
cast by Mr Will Forster*)
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, rh Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mundell, rh David
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Susan
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Norman, rh Jesse
 Obese-Jecty, Ben
 O'Brien, Neil
 Olney, Sarah
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paul, Rebecca
 Perteghella, Manuela
 Pinkerton, Dr Al
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Raja, Shivani
 Reed, David
 Reynolds, Mr Joshua
 Robertson, Joe
 Robinson, rh Gavin
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Savage, Dr Roz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
 Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Smart, Lisa
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Sir Julian
 Smith, Rebecca
 Snowden, Mr Andrew
 Sollom, Ian
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Stafford, Gregory
 Stephenson, Blake
 Stuart, rh Graham
 Swann, Robin
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Taylor, Luke
 Thomas, Bradley
 Thomas, Cameron
 Timothy, Nick
 Tugendhat, rh Tom
 Vickers, Martin
 Voaden, Caroline
 Whately, Helen
 Whittingdale, rh Sir John
 Wild, James

Wilkinson, Max
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wood, Mike

Wrigley, Martin
 Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
**Paul Holmes and
 Sir Ashley Fox**

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 15 disagreed to.

5.21 pm

More than two hours having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on the Lords amendments, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, this day).

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

Lords amendments 16 to 19 disagreed to.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83H(2)), That a Committee be appointed to draw up Reasons to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing to their amendments 1 to 19;

That Jim McMahon, Kate Dearden, Navendu Mishra, Mark Ferguson, Steve Yemm, Kevin Hollinrake and Bobby Dean be members of the Committee;

That Jim McMahon be the Chair of the Committee;

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—(Christian Wakeford.)

Question agreed to.

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

GREAT BRITISH ENERGY BILL (PROGRAMME) (NO. 2)

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

That the following provisions shall apply to the Great British Energy Bill for the purpose of supplementing the Order of 5 September 2024 (Great British Energy Bill: Programme):

Consideration of Lords Amendments

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

Subsequent stages

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

(3) Proceedings on any further Message from the Lords shall (so far as not previously concluded) be brought to a conclusion one hour after their commencement.—(Christian Wakeford.)

Question agreed to.

Great British Energy Bill

Consideration of Lords amendments

Madam Deputy Speaker (Caroline Nokes): I must draw the House's attention to the fact that financial privilege is engaged by Lords amendments 2 and 11. If either of Lords amendments 2 or 11 is agreed to, I will cause the customary entry waiving Commons financial privilege to be entered in the *Journal*.

Clause 3

OBJECTS

5.24 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero (Michael Shanks): I beg to move, That this House agrees with Lords amendment 1.

Madam Deputy Speaker: With this it will be convenient to discuss:

Lords amendment 2, amendments (a) and (b), and Government motion to disagree.

Lords amendments 3 to 12.

Michael Shanks: I am pleased that the Great British Energy Bill has returned to this House. I would like to thank all Members of both Houses for their scrutiny of this important legislation. I extend my thanks in particular to the Minister for Energy Security and Net Zero, Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, for his invaluable support and collaborative approach in guiding the Bill through the other place.

Twelve amendments were made there, which I will seek to address today. Before I turn to them, I remind the House that the Government were elected on a manifesto commitment to set up Great British Energy, and that is exactly what the Bill does. Since the Bill was last in this House, we have appointed five start-up, non-executive directors and announced Dan McGrail as interim CEO, based in Aberdeen, so that Great British Energy can quickly get the expertise needed to help the company develop. I was delighted to convene the first meeting of Great British Energy's board of directors last week in Aberdeen.

We are determined to get Great British Energy delivering for the British people as soon as possible. It has already made some incredibly exciting announcements on initial projects, including a partnership with the Crown Estate, and most recently announcements on solar for schools and hospitals across England, with funding also for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We look forward to GBE making further investment decisions on projects this year, driving forward our clean power mission and creating thousands of jobs across the country in the process.

Lords amendment 2 would prevent the Secretary of State from providing financial assistance to Great British Energy if credible evidence of modern slavery was found in its supply chains. There has understandably been significant interest in this amendment from Members in the other place and on both sides of this House. We recognise that concerns have been raised widely on this issue, and I am seeking to approach it in a collaborative and open way with hon. Members.

I will also address amendment (a) to Lords amendment 2, as our approach to this amendment is similar. I first of all thank my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) for amendment (a). I have been grateful for her engagement with me ahead of the Bill returning to this House. I also pay tribute to her tireless work over many years on this important issue. Her amendment would amend Lords amendment 2 made in the other place by creating a cross-ministerial taskforce to which Great British Energy would need to prove that its supply chains were free of forced labour.

I want the House to be in no doubt that this Government are absolutely committed to confronting and tackling modern slavery in energy supply chains. As set out by my colleague Lord Hunt in the other place, Great British Energy has a range of tools to tackle modern slavery in its supply chains. GBE will prepare a slavery and human trafficking statement when it meets the thresholds set out under section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015. That will outline the steps it is taking to ensure that slavery and human trafficking are not present in its supply chains or any part of its business.

Under the Procurement Act 2023, GBE can reject bids and terminate contracts with suppliers that are known to use forced labour themselves or that have it anywhere in their supply chain. I commit here that GBE will utilise the debarment list to ensure that suppliers with unethical supply chains cannot participate in procurement or be awarded contracts by GBE.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith (Chingford and Woodford Green) (Con): That is not altogether correct. The Minister will know full well that the Procurement Act can only be enacted once a supplier has had a conviction under section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act. To do that, proceedings have to be able to be taken against the company that is involved in the slavery. A British company involved in agency is not involved in the slavery. It would have to get the Chinese Government to prosecute the Chinese company to make sure that they got a prosecution here. That is never going to happen.

Michael Shanks: I thank the right hon. Gentleman for his contribution and his many years of work on this issue. I will come to some of the detail in addition to this measure, but it is important to say that the debarment list, which was part of the Act passed by the Conservative Government, has been in force since February and will be populated in due course. We will use that list as the basis of challenging the decisions that Great British Energy can make not to take contracts with those on that list. I will look in more detail at the specific points that he raised, and I will come to some of that later in my speech.

5.30 pm

In addition, GBE will use the modern slavery assessment tool to assess its supply base for modern slavery risks. We expect Great British Energy to take a leading role in ensuring that any companies in which it invests can demonstrate their own assessment of their supply chains for exposure to forced labour. I assure the House that with these tools, GBE will tackle modern slavery head-on. Where there is credible evidence of involvement anywhere in supply chains, GBE will ensure that it does everything in its power to combat the scourge of modern slavery and to pull up the standards expected of the wider UK energy sector in the process.

Josh Babarinde (Eastbourne) (LD): My constituent Dorit Oliver-Wolff is a Holocaust survivor. She knows what slave labour looks like, and she has written to the Prime Minister to urge that our energy transition does not repeat so many of the atrocities that she has seen. She is awaiting a reply from the Prime Minister. Will the Minister nudge No. 10 to ensure that she gets the response that she needs and deserves on her own behalf and that of victims of modern slavery across the world?

Michael Shanks: I thank the hon. Gentleman for raising that point. I saw that powerful letter, which was widely reported in the press. I am not sure that nudging No. 10 is quite within my gift, but I will certainly raise the issue for a response. The wider point raised is absolutely right. I recognise the need not just in the energy sector but across our economy to ensure that we remove any risk of forced labour in supply chains. We all share that commitment across the House. We need a number of different measures to make that happen. I am determined that Great British Energy will be a leader in the sector on doing that, particularly within the energy space.

Returning to the focus that Great British Energy will have at the highest levels of its work, I can commit today that it will appoint a senior individual in the organisation to lead on ethical supply chains and modern slavery. Further, the statement of strategic priorities outlined in the Bill, which the Secretary of State will issue to GBE once it receives Royal Assent, will include an overarching expectation that GBE proactively works to deliver on these commitments and, in doing so, becomes a sector leader in this space, as we would expect from any company owned by the British public.

To further demonstrate our commitment across Government, we will write to all FTSE 100 companies outlining our expectations on responsible businesses to ensure that these issues, especially forced labour and supply chains, are being effectively identified and addressed. Given the importance of tackling modern slavery, it is crucial that businesses play their part to tackle that abhorrent crime. We cannot do this without their support, so it is an important step across Government.

Mr Richard Holden (Basildon and Billericay) (Con): The Minister is explaining what the Government are doing, but they are not doing what Members of this House and of the other place want—not just asking people to do stuff but leading. That is what this amendment does: it would allow the UK to really show its leadership on behalf of the British public. This will be a huge public company. Why will the Minister not just commit to that further step today?

Michael Shanks: Let me come to that point, because the specific reason that we disagree with their lordships on this amendment is that it would not actually do what the hon. Gentleman says. It would force the Government to cease all GBE's activities, rather than give it the scope to address any of the issues that we are raising today directly within the framework that we have outlined. As I said, we as a Government are wholly committed to doing this. Great British Energy will be committed to ensuring that the highest standards are maintained. The amendment would cease the funding immediately, which would not give GB Energy the scope to actually invest in the appropriate supply chains and to tackle those issues directly.

Sammy Wilson (East Antrim) (DUP): Will the Minister accept that many people listening to this will see it as evading rather than addressing the issue? We can have the Procurement Act, the taskforce and the letters to all the major companies, but the fact remains that most companies will seek financial assistance for the kinds of projects that they wish to do. If credible evidence is discovered that supply chains have been contaminated by slavery, the easy way of stopping purchases from suppliers who act in that way will be to say, "You're not getting any support."

Michael Shanks: I do not disagree with that at all, and that is possible. Nothing forces Great British Energy, or any other company, to take investment from any individual or company. They can choose not to do so for a whole variety of reasons, and if one of those reasons is credible evidence of modern slavery in the supply chain, I would fully expect them not to invest in those companies. That is exactly what we are talking about today. The point is that that conversation must be broader than one just about Great British Energy. It is about wider supply chains and companies right across the economy, and that is what we are hoping to tackle.

In parallel, although the energy sector is particularly important to me, I want to work across Government to outline a comprehensive plan to tackle modern slavery, which is a question right across the economy. Rather than dealing with the problem on a company-by-company basis, we must look to do so more broadly. To drive forward that work, I confirm that in the coming weeks I will convene cross-departmental ministerial meetings involving the Department for Business and Trade, the Home Office, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and my Department to discuss how we can accelerate work across Government on this really important issue.

Rachael Maskell (York Central) (Lab/Co-op): I am grateful to the Minister for his speech and the consideration that he is giving to this issue. Will he look at a reverse burden of proof so that, instead of proving an exclusion, it is switched to show no association with modern slavery?

Michael Shanks: My hon. Friend makes a good point. I will come to that briefly in a moment.

All of this work builds on the implementation of the new procurement regime, which focuses on ensuring fair and open competition and treating suppliers equally, as well as the work that we are doing on the relaunched solar taskforce—it started under the previous Government and has continued under this Government—to develop resilient, sustainable and innovative solar supply chains that are free from forced labour.

We recognise that the landscape has shifted since the Modern Slavery Act came into effect, which is why yesterday the Home Office published updated statutory guidance on transparency in supply chains that provides comprehensive and practical advice for businesses on how to tackle forced labour in their supply chains. Great British Energy will, of course, follow any new measures on modern slavery to which it is subjected, just as any responsible public or private body should. I hope that the new steps I have outlined will reassure the House that Departments across Government will continue to work intensively on this issue.

Before I move on, I will reflect briefly on amendment (b) to Lords amendment 2, tabled by my hon. Friend the Member for Leeds Central and Headingley (Alex Sobel), which would require the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to define “credible evidence” in Lords amendment 2. While I thank him for the amendment, we have to resist it as the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner’s role was established to encourage good practice rather than to look specifically into supply chains of individual companies. The amendment would place a significant lawmaking function on the commissioner, which the role was not designed for, and is currently not within the commissioner’s powers. The amendment would also have wider implications for how evidence of modern slavery is assessed and could create unnecessary legal uncertainty and precedent.

I turn to the remaining amendments. The Government were pleased to table Lords amendment 1 and Lords amendments 3 to 12 following positive discussions with peers in the other place. Lords amendment 1 puts community energy on the face of the Bill. The Government had a manifesto commitment to deliver a step change in community energy across the UK. We set up GBE to deliver our local power plan: it is at the heart of our plans for GBE. However, we recognise that during the Bill’s passage, it was highlighted that the role of community energy should be made explicit in the Bill. As my colleagues in the other place said, the Government have accepted that, and it is right that that is now in the Bill.

Martin Rhodes (Glasgow North) (Lab): I very much welcome the amendment. Does the Minister agree that community energy is important not just for jobs and investment but for engaging communities with the transition to a new energy system? Does he recognise the need for the Government to support those initiatives with funding going forward?

Michael Shanks: I agree with my hon. Friend on both points. Community energy is incredibly important to give communities a stake in their energy future and to deliver the social and economic benefits that go with it. Just last week we announced a significant amount of funding through GBE for community energy projects across England, and funding for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to spend on similar projects, including community energy projects in their own areas.

Dave Doogan (Angus and Perthshire Glens) (SNP): Will the Minister give way?

Michael Shanks: I will give way briefly, but then I will have to make a bit of progress.

Dave Doogan: Can the Minister advise the House on the level of recurrence to that funding? Will it be year-on-year funding? Will he also give us an indication—maybe not precisely, but broadly—what that funding stream will be year on year under GB Energy?

Michael Shanks: It will not be recurring in the same methodology. GBE does not yet exist, so we carried out the initial set of investments in a particular way. Going forward, those projects will be on the basis of the individual investment propositions put forward. Individual projects in Scotland or in other parts of the UK will therefore apply for funding, they will be considered

alongside other investments and those investments will be made. However, we will not deliver funding on a population share on that basis going forward. Of course, funding is already going to the Scottish Government, with a significant increase in the budget this year to fund, for example, the community and renewable energy scheme and the community energy work, which are going on in Scotland already.

Briefly, Lords amendment 3 came in recognition of concerns raised about the length of time GBE could operate without strategic priorities. We have agreed to an amendment that would prepare a set of strategic priorities within six months, although I will say to the House, as I did in Committee, that we intend to move far faster than that. Lords amendments 4 to 10 were brought about following positive engagement with the devolved Governments and we are committed to collaboration on a UK-wide basis. The amendments, which relate to clause 5, moved from consulting with devolved Governments to consent in relation to devolved competencies. I am grateful to my ministerial colleagues in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for engaging so productively and for the Parliaments’ legislative consent motions on the Bill.

Lords amendment 11 introduces an independent review of Great British Energy’s effectiveness. Finally, Lords amendment 12 ensures that Great British Energy will keep the impact of its activities on sustainable development under review. I know that was a concern raised by a number of Members in relation to how we conserve nature and biodiversity while advancing clean power. I therefore hope the House will join me in welcoming that addition.

I look forward to this debate—albeit short—and I urge the House to support the Government’s position on the amendments.

Andrew Bowie (West Aberdeenshire and Kincardine) (Con): This is a sad and quite incredible day in this House. We have debated this Government’s energy policies on many occasions in the past few months. We have frequently debated the merits, or lack thereof, of Great British Energy, an organisation about which we still know very little—what it is for and what it will do.

We were told by the Labour party that it would bring down bills by £300, but bills have gone up. We were told by the Labour party that it would create jobs, but nobody can tell us how many or by when. We were told by the Labour party that it would be based in Aberdeen, but the interim chairman is based in Manchester and it looks unlikely that we will see little more than a brass plaque in the granite city. We were told that it would employ thousands of people, but that then turned to hundreds. We were told it would generate energy, but it will not—it does not have a licence to do that. We were told that it would guarantee a positive return on every investment, but that is impossible. I therefore ask the Minister again: what will the entity actually do? Do they know? Will it be seeking an electricity generation licence? How will it bring down energy costs in this country?

Turning to today’s proceedings, far from the Secretary of State and the Minister’s insistence that Great British Energy will free us from reliance on foreign dictatorships, this headlong rush to clean power by 2030 will, in fact, make us more reliant than ever on the People’s Republic

[Andrew Bowie]

of China. He and his Ministers are quick to note the reluctance to rely on petrostate dictators. I wonder how he would characterise the People's Republic of China, where political opposition is illegal, where citizens have more limited political rights than in the Russian Federation, where dissent is invariably punished and where the use of forced labour is proven.

In 2022 we blocked China General Nuclear from involvement in Sizewell C. In 2020 we prevented Chinese influence on our communications networks under the guise of Huawei. Yet despite serious concerns about the national security implications, the ethical implications and the high climate emissions, the Secretary of State and Ministers are opening the gates to Chinese technology in our North sea wind farms, to solar panels made with slave labour and to using coal power.

It is in the context of our increasing reliance on foreign states that I wish to speak to the Lords amendments, and particularly Lords amendment 2, tabled by Lord Alton of Liverpool. I am grateful to him, and we all recognise his long-standing dedication to this serious matter.

I said that this was a sad day, and I feel for those Labour MPs, for many of whom I have a great deal of respect, who came into this House, into politics and specifically into their party because they believed in social justice and decency, and for whom this is not just a job but a vocation. They came here in July believing that they would be part of a project to create a better world, in the spirit of Bevan, Attlee, Hardie and Wilson. I wonder what those titans of that proud labour movement would make of this today, because it was on this day in 1807 that the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act received Royal Assent, and 218 years on, Labour MPs are going to be whipped to allow the state to directly fund imports of goods built by slave labour in China. [Interruption.] They complain, but it is true.

5.45 pm

What will those MPs say to their constituents—to their voters? How will they explain this vote in the week that we mark 10 years since the Modern Slavery Act 2015? Indeed, how will they explain it to themselves? We are proud to have introduced that Act 10 years ago. It was a landmark piece of legislation. However, it is right that we recognise now that the protections against the use of public money in supply chains with exposure to the use of modern slave labour need to be more robust. They are voting against this incredibly sensible amendment that seeks to protect some of the most oppressed people in the world, and to ensure that our net zero objectives, whatever one's view of them, will not be built on the back of slave labour, or on the backs of the Uyghur Muslims of Xinjiang and elsewhere. The vast majority of solar panels are exposed to Xinjiang silicon, where manufacturers have been found to have links to Uyghur forced labour.

Therefore, what we are seeing today is not simply the offshoring of our emissions, although we are, and it is not just about the offshoring of our energy security, although that is also true. Today we are seeing the offshoring of the Labour party's moral compass, and we all know why: because clean power by 2030 demands it. The fact is that the Government will not achieve that target that they signed up to without the help of China

and without importing this green revolution from coal-powered factories thousands of miles away. They are pursuing a made-in-China energy transition built on the back of slave labour and powered by Chinese coal.

It is quite ironic that the Minister is willing to stomach the higher carbon emissions associated with importing liquefied natural gas from abroad. The emissions are four times higher than those from drilling at home. The Government want to import solar panels manufactured using coal power and tainted by human rights abuses, rather than giving our domestic supply chains the time to grow. It is an irony that is not lost on us, and neither will it be lost on the country. This is, I am afraid, the pyrrhic victory of ideology over sense, and of zealotry over the national interest. It is bad for Britain, it is bad for bill payers and it really is quite bad for the climate.

Lewis Cocking (Broxbourne) (Con): Does my hon. Friend agree that building more of that infrastructure here in the United Kingdom would be good for British jobs and for our energy security, just as issuing new oil and gas licences in Scotland would be, as that would allow us to produce more of our energy here at home and make us safer from volatile energy markets abroad?

Andrew Bowie: My hon. Friend will not be at all surprised to learn that I agree with him entirely. It is purely the imposition on this country of arbitrary, needless targets, such as clean power by 2030, to generate headlines and get the Secretary of State's name up in lights that is requiring us to become more reliant on the People's Republic of China for the goods, technology and equipment to develop the solar farms, nearly all of which will be tainted by slave labour in some way, given the reliance on slave labour in part of that country for that infrastructure and technology. So of course I agree with him, and of course it would be much better if we were issuing new licences and continuing to support our own domestic oil and gas industry. That is something that we have debated time and again, and I am sure we will come back to this House to debate it again in the future.

Great British Energy is not great, it is not British and it will not generate any energy. Public funds should not be—must not be—funding imports tainted by modern slavery and slave labour. British taxpayers deserve better: a domestic supply chain that creates jobs at home rather than funding abuses abroad. That is why we support Lords amendment 2, and I urge Labour Members to do the right thing today and vote for it as well.

Sarah Champion (Rotherham) (Lab): I rise to speak to my amendment (a) to Lords amendment 2, which I hope might act as a bridge between our two Houses. Although I welcome this Bill, from the moment it started its journey through Parliament I have been issuing a warning. Without proper safeguards in place, our transition to net zero will be carried through on the backs of those in slavery.

Renewable energy is vital for our transition to a low-carbon economy, but we know that human rights abuses are inherent in our green technology. There is evidence of child labour in cobalt mining in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and of labour exploitation in nickel processing in Indonesia. Forced labour is committed at scale in Xinjiang in China, with the abuse of Uyghurs

in steel production—a material that makes up nearly 80% of our wind turbines—and, of course, there is well-documented abuse in the production of solar panels.

On Report, I was hugely grateful for the Energy Secretary's commitment to me:

“We have been clear that no company in the UK should have forced labour in its supply chain, and we will be working with colleagues across Government to tackle the issue of the Uyghur forced labour in supply chains”—[*Official Report*, 29 October 2024; Vol. 755, c. 775.]

But too often we have accepted warm words at the Dispatch Box that have failed to materialise.

The Bill is a serious piece of legislation, not least as the Government have committed to capitalising GB Energy with over £8.3 billion. If companies want to benefit from taxpayers' money, they must be able to prove that their supply chains are free of forced labour. I have tabled amendment (a) to that effect, as it would place the burden of proof on businesses.

Cross-Government working is the only way to end the stagnation in our response to modern slavery. Once slavery is found, we must take action, including by placing rogue companies on the Procurement Act's debarment list to ban them from winning other public contracts. The public deserve a guarantee that their money will not be used to fund human rights abuses. To quote a Business and Trade Minister, “no company should have abuses in their supply chains”, so I admire Ministers' resolve to give genuine commitments to root out slavery in their areas of responsibility. When it comes to GBE, my amendment offers a simple, cost-effective method to achieve that. I am glad that the Minister agrees, but for clarity, let me repeat what I believe he has committed to and push him a little further.

Primarily, will the Minister confirm that there will be clarity within GB Energy's strategic objectives and framework document that designated companies must not use forced labour in any part of their supply chains, and that that needs to be mapped down to raw materials? I am glad that there will be a cross-ministerial working group to work across Departments to tackle slavery in supply chains—that is exactly what needs to happen—and a commitment to leverage the Procurement Act's debarment list where there is evidence of bidders or suppliers with unethical supply chains. Let us remember that the Act includes discretionary grounds that do not require a conviction. Of course, all of that requires a designated leader within GBE to take accountability.

Finally, I have one more ask: will the Minister prioritise buying British to boost our economy and avoid the risk of reliance on slave-made renewables from international sources? Of course, the issue of modern slavery is bigger than renewables, but we must start somewhere. With a clear path and strong commitments, GB Energy can lead from the front and stop the UK becoming a dumping ground for slave-made goods.

Based on the Minister's word, and having sought those clarifications, I will not press my amendment. I hope it also satisfies the other place that the Minister has listened and acted to stamp out modern slavery in GB Energy's future procurement, and I thank the Minister for that.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins): I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

Pippa Heylings (South Cambridgeshire) (LD): Alongside community groups across the country, including Power for People and Community Energy England, I am pleased to welcome the inclusion of community energy and benefits in the Bill through Lords amendment 1. It was possible after all, and I congratulate the Government on taking this step. We Liberal Democrats have pushed hard for that in this House and the other place, but there has been a lot of cross-party working to achieve it, and I am delighted that its inclusion is now enshrined in law. This is a victory for community voices, giving them a real stake in the energy transition through full or partial ownership of local power. Communities like mine in South Cambridgeshire, where many are off grid and struggling with volatile oil prices, want to generate and sell their own green energy locally. It is absurd that that is not possible.

Sarah Dyke (Glastonbury and Somerton) (LD): There are five community energy schemes in my constituency, and they all contribute to local energy supplies. An increase in community energy projects would boost the local economy, as my hon. Friend says, create jobs and reduce energy costs, especially in rural areas. Does she agree that we must go further and create long-term plans to support this type of initiative?

Pippa Heylings: I completely agree. The Great British Energy Bill gives a statutory steer that helps us have those long-term plans.

The clean energy transition has to be done with communities, not to communities. I commend the Government for committing an additional £5 million to the community energy fund, bringing certainty at least to its short-term future.

Lords amendment 1 also addresses community benefits, which are critical for taking people with us on this pathway to the energy transition. If communities are to host energy infrastructure, whether for onshore wind or large-scale solar farms, those benefits have to go beyond token gestures such as roofs for scout huts or some apprenticeships. In Scotland, for example, community benefit is worth £5,000 per installed megawatt per year. This means that a controversial large-scale solar project in my constituency, such as the Kingsway solar farm, could provide £2.5 million annually to the local community. That is the scale we should be talking about, and it has to be the community that determines how and where that money is spent.

Lords amendment 12 is also a vital addition to the Bill, requiring GB Energy to keep its impact on sustainable development under review. Credit is due to Baroness Hayman, who fought tirelessly in the other House to ensure that sustainability is embedded in our energy transition through that amendment. We welcome the assurances we have received that in the updated framework agreement, not only will the local economies of coastal communities be taken into consideration, but there will be an explicit climate and nature duty for GB Energy. GB Energy has to consider economic, environmental and social needs, ensuring that future generations can meet their needs.

I would have liked to discuss amendment (a), in the name of the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion), and amendment (b), in the name of the hon. Member for Leeds Central and Headingley (Alex Sobel), both to

[Pippa Heylings]

Lords amendment 2. Modern slavery is a barbaric practice that should have been eradicated long ago. We look to the promise of our green energy transformation, but it cannot take place at the cost of human rights abuses across the world.

Research from Sheffield Hallam University has directly linked China's labour transfer programme to the global solar panel supply chain. China produces 40% of the world's polysilicon and 80% of its solar panels, and right now, 2.7 million Uyghurs are subjected to state detention and forced labour. It is incomprehensible that the Government are seeking to vote down an amendment that would withdraw GB Energy investment from supply chains tainted by forced labour. GB Energy has to set the standard, not muddle along.

There is nothing sufficiently robust in the Bill to ensure that there is no forced labour in this supply chain. The solar taskforce does not have the mandate to ensure that. As we have heard, the Procurement Act 2023 cannot address the issue. This should be an issue not just for the energy sector. The health sector has shown leadership by addressing the matter in the Health and Care Act 2022. The Great British Energy Bill is a key piece of legislation, and measures on forced labour should be part of it.

Luke Taylor (Sutton and Cheam) (LD): This is not just about the practicalities of the need to include these measures. Is it not essential that we show the public that the measures we are promoting to achieve net zero—a cause for which there is overwhelming public support, notwithstanding some parties' attitudes to our need to get there and when—are not tainted by human rights abuses?

Pippa Heylings: I completely agree. That is why the Liberal Democrats will continue to call for restrictions on trade with regions where abuses take place, including Xinjiang, and advocate for Magnitsky-style sanctions against individuals and entities involved in Uyghur persecution. This is about more than Britain. It is about playing our part conscientiously in a global movement to see all human rights abuses stopped.

Alex Sobel (Leeds Central and Headingley) (Lab/Co-op): I rise to speak in support of my amendment (b) to Lords amendment 2, in my capacity as a member of the Joint Committee on Human Rights, which is undertaking an inquiry on forced labour in UK supply chains. Lords amendment 2, tabled in the Lords by our Chair, Lord Alton of Liverpool, and passed there, seeks to prevent the Secretary of State from providing financial assistance to any company designated "Great British Energy" when there is "credible evidence" of modern slavery in its supply chains. My amendment takes into account some of the arguments made by the Government in the Lords, and seeks to refine the Lords amendment by providing a mechanism for determining "credible evidence". My amendment empowers the Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to define what constitutes "credible evidence" of supply chain slavery. It is crafted so as to allow the Bill to be as business friendly as possible, while ensuring that it still has teeth. The commissioner is backing this initiative.

6 pm

I welcome the Bill. I support the creation of Great British Energy and the Government's commitment to achieving our net zero ambitions and clean power by 2030, but we must have the highest ethical standards for our solar industry. The British public do not want our net zero future to be built on slave labour. In its report, "Sourcing solar energy without Uyghur forced labour", Unison stated that all polysilicon manufacturers in the Uyghur region have participated in forced labour transfer programmes, and/or are supplied by raw materials manufacturers that have done so. Multiple UK public sector bodies have been found to procure solar materials from companies sourcing polysilicon from the region. As the UK's solar capacity is set to double, concerns are mounting that councils and other public service bodies will get locked into long-term contracts with unethical suppliers. We must ensure that our solar supply chain is free from Uyghur slave labour.

A report by the China Strategic Risks Institute estimates that if Beijing were to restrict solar exports, it would cost the UK economy £4.4 billion, raise household energy bills by £155, and stall our path to net zero. It would leave our ability to meet climate goals and protect British consumers at the mercy of decisions made in China. We need only look at the raising of tariffs around the world, including on China, to understand the risks of relying solely on China for polysilicon and solar panels. If GB Energy becomes reliant solely on solar panels from China, we will not just be complicit in human rights abuses, but will create an enormous point of strategic vulnerability in our energy system. That would give the Chinese state a lever of influence over our critical infrastructure, and undermine our sovereignty.

Professor Laura Murphy, who until January this year was senior policy adviser to the United States Department of Homeland Security on the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, and is perhaps the world's leading expert on Xinjiang supply chains, stated:

"From a human rights and climate perspective, the alternative of basing our green energy future on Xinjiang coal's high carbon emissions and on the forced labour of oppressed communities is a higher and longer-term price to pay."

If we allow GB Energy to contract with companies that profit from modern slavery, we directly undermine fair competition. No British worker can compete with a system that relies on forced labour. In our manifesto, we pledged secure, well-paid green jobs. My amendment seeks to ensure that British workers are not undercut by Chinese renewables companies that profit from modern slavery, and that GB Energy promotes not only the development of the UK's renewable sector, but improved human rights conditions for all workers at each point in the supply chain.

It is true that the United States's legislation has nudged companies to diversify their supply chains, and there is a gradual move away from suppliers using forced labour in the United States. A number of companies have been sanctioned under the Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act for using forced labour. The solar taskforce, while a welcome step, is not empowered to assess modern slavery risks in procurement, and neither is it equipped with the anti-slavery expertise necessary to mitigate those risks. The taskforce's work is coming to a conclusion, so will the Minister outline the steps that will follow that work to ensure a solid mechanism that excludes forced labour products from the solar supply chain?

As my hon. Friend the Minister has stated, “no UK company should have forced labour in its supply chains”, and the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero reaffirmed that position. The Secretary of State for Business and Trade gave an “absolute assurance” that “no modern slavery” would be permitted in supply chains affecting UK goods. The amendment simply ensures that those commitments are enforced. Sadly, the current statutory position has not been sufficient to prevent slave-made renewables from entering the UK. More must be done, and the amendment is a modest and business-friendly way to incentivise cleaner supply chains. The Bill presents an opportunity to use the Government’s purchasing power to nudge business in the right direction. This week marks 10 years since the Modern Slavery Act 2015 became law. Once a leader in the fight against modern slavery, we are now in danger of falling behind the US, as I have outlined, and the EU. The amendment presents a credible mechanism for ensuring a clean energy future.

As the Minister outlined, this is just one way of ensuring that we remove forced labour from our supply chains. He raised the prospect of using the Procurement Act 2023, and I welcome what he said, but the Act requires a supplier to be convicted under the Modern Slavery Act 2015, or of an offence in their country relating to forced labour. The nature of forced labour in China means that it is disguised, so those conditions would not be met. Will the welcome cross-departmental working group, which the Minister announced in his opening statement, look at the Procurement Act and ensure that it is fit for purpose? Will the group look at the way that the United States has used a rebuttal presumption for goods from Xinjiang, or at another similar mechanism? As a matter of urgency, will the Minister and his group ensure that we have the powers and expertise to prevent forced labour in our solar panel supply chains? Will he work with trades unions, non-governmental organisations and the Independent Anti-Slavery Commission on this?

Will the Minister meet me and Professor Laura Murphy, who works on this issue at Sheffield Hallam University, as a matter of urgency to explore the detail of how we can ensure a robust system, like the one that she helped to implement in the United States—a robust system not just for GB Energy, but for the whole solar industry? I agree with the Minister that this is not just an issue for GB Energy, but for the whole industry. Will the Minister work with me to get a workable debarment list, so that we can ensure that GB Energy is acting on modern slavery? Will he give a commitment that GB Energy’s operating framework is committed to tackling forced labour? If I get these assurances from the Minister, I am happy to withdraw my amendment and work with the Government’s cross-departmental working group and others to ensure that we can take the scandal of forced labour out of our solar supply chain.

Sir Iain Duncan Smith: I am grateful to be called at this point, Madam Deputy Speaker. Others will want to speak, so I will be as brief as I possibly can.

As I said earlier, the Minister is incorrect in believing that the Procurement Act gives any protection at all against modern slavery in the supply chain. That is a fact of life that we have known for ages. I was one of those who brought the Modern Slavery Act into being

10 years ago, but at that time we did not understand how bad the situation was in China. Over 90% of polysilicon is made in China, and we know for a fact that 97% of all the solar arrays being sold here contain polysilicon from Xinjiang, which will have been made by slave labour. There is no dispute at all about that.

The question facing the Government is not—*[Interruption.]* I would be grateful if the Minister could listen. The question facing the Government is not whether they think that modern slavery is good—I do not for one moment accuse them of thinking that. What has gone missing, and what Lord Alton’s amendment focuses on, is recognition that there is no requirement on the Government to deal with slavery in the supply chain, and no way for them to do that. As has been said, America has turned the burden of proof upside down and said, “We assume you have slave labour in your product. You must prove to us that you do not.” That is the only way to deal with this. The Americans then sanction offending companies, but under our legislation, the Government do not have such measures available to them.

The Procurement Act does not even do a whisper of that, because it needs a prosecution to have been mounted under the Modern Slavery Act, and that cannot happen because a company that is an agent for a Chinese-made solar array will not be prosecuted. Under the present laws, only the Chinese company that makes the solar array can be prosecuted. That means that no prosecution will take place; no company in China will be prosecuted by the Chinese Government, because the Chinese Government are the ones who set up this ghastly process. Why? Because it makes their arrays cheaper than anybody else’s in the world. That is how they have pretty much wiped out all other array production in the world. Let us ask ourselves: where will we get our arrays from? The answer is that we cannot get them anywhere else, but if we had to, we would have to pay a lot of money. I understand that there is probably a debate going on in Government about whether we go down that road, which would make arrays awfully expensive.

In conclusion, the Government know the facts. I support amendment (b) to Lords amendment 2; I support the hon. Member for Leeds Central and Headingley (Alex Sobel), who brought it forward for the right reasons; and I support the way in which the hon. Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion) brought forward her amendment (a) to Lords amendment 2. The Government must act. If we do not act, make forced labour illegal and punish the companies involved in it, directly or as agents, then we will be guilty of increasing slavery in China—that is what tonight’s debate is about.

I am sorry that the Government will get rid of this Lords amendment. They could have done a deal to enhance it or whatever, but now they will have to commit to coming forward with legislation to increase and improve the Act that they already have, which will take another debate. I say to the Government: for goodness’ sake. By the way, I had this issue with my own party when we were in government, and I voted against it; I voted with the Labour party to put this provision in the Health and Care Act 2022. We did that together.

I hope nobody thinks that I am being party political, because I am not. I am sanctioned by the Chinese Government because we raised this issue originally. I say to them that I and many in this House will not stop until the Government face up to one thing and one

[*Sir Iain Duncan Smith*]

thing only: not one life through modern slavery is worth a lower cost on a solar array. That should be the epitaph of the ridiculous position that the Government are in.

James Naish (Rushcliffe) (Lab): As an energy industry professional before entering this place, I am very pleased to see that Great British Energy is making impressive strides. It has secured a landmark partnership with the Crown Estate, and we have seen it commit to more and more solar power, which is much welcomed by my constituents. We have also seen investment in carbon capture and storage clusters in Teesside and Merseyside, bringing thousands of jobs to those areas.

More broadly, I welcome the Government's move to lift the ban on onshore wind in England and to promote funding in newer, emerging industries, including hydrogen and fusion energy. I also look forward to the Government announcing the winner of the small modular reactor contract at some point over the coming weeks, when I hope that the Government will also place a sizeable order.

As we advance towards a future of clean, secure, home-grown energy, we must ensure that that future is built on principles of justice and respect for human rights. I will therefore speak to Lords amendment 2. Since being elected last year as the Member of Parliament for Rushcliffe, I have been contacted by constituents voicing their concerns about what is happening in the Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous region of China. In 2021, Sir Geoffrey Nice KC delivered the Uyghur tribunal's judgment here in London deeming that the Chinese Government's policies amounted to

“a deliberate, systematic and concerted policy”

to bring about

“long-term reduction of Uyghur and other ethnic minority populations”.

I am afraid that forced labour is being used as a key instrument in this campaign of oppression.

More than 1 million Uyghurs have been detained in re-education camps, and many are transferred to work in factories, mines and fields under barbaric conditions. As has been mentioned, some of those factories produce polysilicon, which is a critical component in 95% of the world's solar panels. On that basis, it is estimated that around 40% of the UK solar industry may be at risk of sourcing materials tainted by this state-sponsored forced labour. That is why I believe this House has a responsibility to ask hard questions, as these Lords amendments have done. If we are to stand as a country that champions both human rights and climate action, we must ensure that our clean energy future is not built on the backs of exploited peoples.

The choices we make on legislation such as this on who receives British taxpayers' money and what standards we demand in procurement are not abstract: they are ultimately a measure of whether we are willing to trade convenience for complicity. It is therefore right that we always examine how supply chains operate. It is right that we consider how credible evidence of forced labour should be defined and who is best placed to determine that. It is right that we reflect on whether our current legal frameworks are sufficient.

As has been mentioned, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 was groundbreaking at the time, but it lacks the teeth to tackle the forced labour taking place in Xinjiang. In that context, we should note the steps taken across the Atlantic. In June, it will be three years since the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act took effect in the United States, and I believe similar resolve is needed here in the United Kingdom. We should expedite updating and strengthening our modern slavery legislation in the light of Great British Energy's ambitious plans. The Uyghur people, and others facing slavery around the world, deserve to know that Britain will not turn a blind eye. We cannot end all injustice, but we can ensure that our laws, procurement policies and public financing do not sustain atrocities. I therefore implore the Government to listen to Members on the Labour and Opposition Benches today. I thank the Minister for the significant steps he has already outlined, and ask him to reassure us once more that the relevant steps will be taken to prevent Great British Energy from in any way contributing to promoting or sustaining known atrocities.

6.15 pm

Harriet Cross (Gordon and Buchan) (Con): I appreciate that a number of Members still want to speak, so I will keep my comments short. The Government's refusal to support Lords amendment 2 shows the absolutism of their net zero and energy policies. The amendment is not only sensible but morally correct, and in voting against it, the Government are signalling that their ambition to reach net zero trumps everything else. Can that really be correct? If we cannot support those who are suffering from modern slavery, what are we doing? Is the rush to net zero really worth that?

Net zero is intended to prevent people on this planet from going down a route towards a planet that is not inhabitable—that is what we have been sold. What are we saving the planet for, if not to enable people to work in a safe, secure way? We cannot sacrifice that; we cannot condone forced labour by selling our morals to China in order to rush towards net zero. The Uyghur Muslims in China do not have a safe, secure place to work. They are oppressed, and by not supporting Lords amendment 2, the Government are supporting that oppression. We have rightly condemned slavery in the past. The Government have rightly condemned past slavery, but they are now happy to condone forced labour in China.

It is an unbelievable situation that we find ourselves in, but we are getting used to this sort of behaviour from the Government. We have seen the heartless policies that they have implemented since they came to power, whether that is the family farm tax, the tax on jobs that is putting people out of work, or taxing children's hospices, which the Government have voted for this afternoon. By not supporting Lords amendment 2, the Government are effectively saying that they are happy to turn a blind eye to modern slavery across the world. That is something that Conservative Members cannot possibly support. Until July last year, those in the Labour party were happy to promote their morals, but it seems that those morals were left in front of the last door they knocked on in July.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins): With the leave of the House, I call the Minister.

Michael Shanks: With the leave of the House, I will sum up the debate. I thank all right hon. and hon. Members for their contributions to this debate, although it has been short, on a number of the amendments but perhaps most importantly on forced labour and modern slavery in our economy. I want to reflect on some of the contributions from Members on both sides of the House, but let me start by saying that I hear the very strong views that have been expressed on this issue. It is right that Governments of whatever party constantly challenge themselves to go further in tackling these issues, because—as the right hon. Member for Chingford and Woodford Green (Sir Iain Duncan Smith) put it—even one person being affected by forced labour is an absolute disgrace. We should collectively tackle that issue using whatever means we can.

As such, I want to reiterate clearly that contrary to some of the contributions we have heard from Conservative Members, Lords amendment 2 is about amending the Great British Energy Bill, not about the Government's wider commitment to tackling modern slavery. It can be repeated as often as Conservative Members like, but it is simply disingenuous to come to this place and suggest that the Labour party has suddenly decided not to care about this issue. I really do take issue with that.

Sir Gavin Williamson (Stone, Great Wyrley and Penkridge) (Con): Will the Minister give way?

Michael Shanks: The right hon. Gentleman was not in the Chamber for a lot of the debate, but I will give way to him.

Sir Gavin Williamson: I think the Minister would accept that Lords amendment 2 is a very modest proposal that could make a significant difference to people's lives and outcomes in China. There is talk of Labour buying off its Back Benchers by saying that further legislation is coming down the line—is that in six months' time, a year's time, or two years' time? When is it going to come?

Michael Shanks: First, the right hon. Gentleman cares so much about the issue that he has only just turned up to the debate. Secondly, he was a senior member of the Government for 14 years. If this was an issue that he cared about so much, why are we here debating it now? The truth is that the previous Government could have tackled this issue in a much clearer way. I will not follow him on that point.

As I said clearly in opening the debate, which I do not think the right hon. Gentleman was here for, there should be no modern slavery anywhere in our economy or our supply chains. To deliver, we must work across Government and across the economy, because it is not just about the investments that Great British Energy makes.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Michael Shanks: I will give way briefly to my hon. Friend the Member for St Helens South and Whiston (Ms Rimmer), and then I need to finish.

Ms Marie Rimmer (St Helens South and Whiston) (Lab): The Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the Procurement Act 2023 do not work in this area. To do anything, two

criteria must be met, and they are only advisory. In the World Health Organisation, we had to prove that organ harvesting was not an “ethical organ transplant system”, and we cannot get to the supply chains, which are state-invented, state-imposed and disguised. I urge the Minister to give a commitment that he will listen to the argument in these two amendments.

Michael Shanks: I understand the argument that my hon. Friend is making, but the issues she rightly highlights, as other Members have, go much wider than Great British Energy, which the Bill sets up as a publicly owned energy company. Those issues are about the wider economy and investment across our supply chains.

Sammy Wilson: Will the Minister give way?

Michael Shanks: I need to close. I am sorry.

In part, we are setting up Great British Energy because we want to deliver home-grown supply chains and an industrial strategy, in spite of the Conservative party having completely failed to deliver that for 14 years—in fact, it had a complete ignorance of how to build supply chains. Had it delivered on some of the supply chains in this country, we might not have to import so much. *[Interruption.]* Opposition Members can shout all they want; they know that they failed on this matter, and we are picking up the pieces.

For those Members who were in the debate, I want to respond to the points raised, in particular in the powerful speech made by my hon. Friend the Member for Rotherham (Sarah Champion). On her point about how widespread the problem of forced labour is, that underlines why a piecemeal approach, legislating on individual companies here and there, is not the right one. We need to work across Government to tackle the problem throughout the economy. She asked for clarity on some of the points made. She is right to reiterate the point that I intend to pull together Ministers from across Government, including the Foreign Office, the Home Office, the Department for Business and Trade and my Department, to look at how we can collectively tackle the issue. There will be a designated leader within Great British Energy to drive this work forward. We will utilise the debarment list.

More broadly, we fully expect Great British Energy to do everything in its power under the relevant guidance and legislation to remove any instances of forced labour from supply chains. GBE must not approve the use of products from companies that may be linked to forced labour.

This is an important debate on a Bill that was in our manifesto. It delivers the first new national publicly-owned energy generation company in 75 years. It is backed by the British public, and it will deliver jobs and investment all over the country. It will deliver the deployment of clean power. We will tackle the supply chains to ensure that jobs come to this country and that we tackle the scourge of modern slavery, not just through GBE but across the economy. That is our commitment. I urge Members to support the Government's position. In the 15 seconds I have left, I reiterate the point I made earlier: I am willing to work with Members across the House to tackle this fundamental issue, which is of extreme importance across the Government.

6.24 pm

One hour having elapsed since the commencement of proceedings on the Lords amendments, the proceedings were interrupted (Programme Order, this day).

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

Lords Amendment 1 agreed to.

Clause 4

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Motion made, and Question put, That this House disagrees with Lords amendment 2.—(Michael Shanks.)

The House divided: Ayes 314, Noes 198.

Division No. 150]

[6.24 pm

AYES

Abbott, Jack
 Ahmed, Dr Zubir
 Alexander, rh Heidi
 Al-Hassan, Sadik
 Ali, Rushanara
 Ali, Tahir
 Allin-Khan, Dr Rosena
 Anderson, Callum
 Anderson, Fleur
 Arthur, Dr Scott
 Asato, Jess
 Asser, James
 Athwal, Jas
 Atkinson, Catherine
 Atkinson, Lewis
 Bailey, Mr Calvin
 Baines, David
 Baker, Alex
 Baker, Richard
 Bance, Antonia
 Barron, Lee
 Barros-Curtis, Mr Alex
 Baxter, Johanna
 Beales, Danny
 Beavers, Lorraine
 Benn, rh Hilary
 Betts, Mr Clive
 Billington, Ms Polly
 Bishop, Matt
 Blake, Olivia (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Blake, Rachel
 Bloore, Chris
 Blundell, Mrs Elsie (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Botterill, Jade
 Brackenridge, Mrs Sureena
 Brash, Mr Jonathan
 Brickell, Phil
 Buckley, Julia
 Burgon, Richard
 Burke, Maureen
 Burton-Sampson, David
 Butler, Dawn
 Byrne, rh Liam
 Cadbury, Ruth
 Campbell, rh Sir Alan
 Campbell, Irene
 Campbell, Juliet
 Campbell-Savours, Markus

Carden, Dan
 Carling, Sam
 Champion, Sarah
 Charalambous, Bambos
 Charters, Mr Luke
 Clark, Feryal
 Coleman, Ben
 Collier, Jacob
 Collinge, Lizzi
 Collins, Tom
 Conlon, Liam
 Coombes, Sarah
 Cooper, Andrew
 Cooper, Dr Beccy
 Costigan, Deirdre
 Cox, Pam
 Coyle, Neil
 Craft, Jen
 Creasy, Ms Stella
 Crichton, Torcuil
 Curtis, Chris
 Daby, Janet
 Dakin, Sir Nicholas
 Darlington, Emily
 Davies, Jonathan
 Davies, Paul
 Davies, Shaun
 De Cordova, Marsha
 Dean, Josh
 Dearden, Kate
 Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh
 Dixon, Anna
 Dodds, rh Anneliese
 Dollimore, Helena
 Dowd, Peter
 Duncan-Jordan, Neil
 Eagle, Dame Angela
 Eagle, rh Maria
 Edwards, Lauren
 Edwards, Sarah
 Efford, Clive
 Egan, Damien
 Elmore, Chris
 Entwistle, Kirith
 Eshalomi, Florence
 Esterson, Bill
 Fahnbulleh, Miatta
 Falconer, Mr Hamish
 Farnsworth, Linsey
 Fenton-Glynn, Josh

Ferguson, Mark
 Ferguson, Patricia
 Foody, Emma
 Fookes, Catherine
 Foster, Mr Paul
 Foxcroft, Vicky
 Foy, Mary Kelly
 Francis, Daniel
 Frith, Mr James
 Furniss, Gill
 Gardiner, Barry
 Gardner, Dr Allison
 Gelderd, Anna
 Gemmell, Alan
 German, Gill
 Gilbert, Tracy
 Glindon, Mary
 Goldsborough, Ben (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Gould, Georgia
 Greenwood, Lilian
 Griffith, Dame Nia
 Gwynne, Andrew (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Hack, Amanda
 Hall, Sarah
 Hamilton, Fabian
 Hamilton, Paulette
 Hardy, Emma
 Harris, Carolyn
 Hatton, Lloyd
 Hayes, Helen
 Hayes, Tom
 Hazelgrove, Claire
 Hillier, Dame Meg
 Hinchliff, Chris
 Hinder, Jonathan
 Hodgson, Mrs Sharon
 Hopkins, Rachel
 Hughes, Claire
 Hume, Alison
 Hurley, Patrick
 Hussain, Imran
 Ingham, Leigh
 Irons, Natasha
 Jameson, Sally
 Jermy, Terry
 Jogee, Adam
 Johnson, rh Dame Diana
 Johnson, Kim
 Jones, Gerald
 Jones, Lillian
 Jones, Louise
 Jones, Ruth
 Joseph, Sojan
 Juss, Warinder
 Kane, Chris
 Kaur, Satvir (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Kinnock, Stephen
 Kirkham, Jayne
 Kumar, Sonia
 Kyle, rh Peter
 Lamb, Peter
 Lavery, Ian
 Law, Noah
 Leadbeater, Kim
 Leishman, Brian
 Lewell, Emma
 Lewin, Andrew
 Lewis, Clive
 Long Bailey, Rebecca
 MacAlister, Josh
 MacNae, Andy
 Madders, Justin
 Malhotra, Seema
 Martin, Amanda
 Mather, Keir
 Mayer, Alex
 McAllister, Douglas
 McCarthy, Kerry
 McCluskey, Martin
 McDonagh, Dame Siobhain
 McDonald, Andy
 McDonald, Chris
 McDonnell, rh John
 McDougall, Blair
 McEvoy, Lola
 McGovern, Alison
 McKee, Gordon
 McMahan, Jim
 McMorrin, Anna
 McNally, Frank
 McNeill, Kirsty
 Midgley, Anneliese
 Minns, Ms Julie
 Mishra, Navendu
 Mohamed, Abtisam
 Morden, Jessica
 Morgan, Stephen
 Morris, Grahame
 Morris, Joe
 Mullane, Margaret
 Murphy, Luke
 Murray, Chris
 Murray, rh Ian (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Myer, Luke
 Naish, James
 Naismith, Connor
 Narayan, Kanishka
 Nash, Pamela (*Proxy vote cast by Chris Elmore*)
 Newbury, Josh
 Niblett, Samantha
 Nichols, Charlotte
 Norris, Alex
 Onn, Melanie
 Opher, Dr Simon
 Oppong-Asare, Ms Abena
 Osamor, Kate
 Osborne, Kate (*Proxy vote cast by Kim Johnson*)
 Osborne, Tristan
 Owatemi, Taiwo
 Owen, Sarah
 Paffey, Darren
 Payne, Michael
 Pennycook, Matthew
 Phillips, Jess
 Pinto-Duschinsky, David
 Pitcher, Lee
 Platt, Jo
 Powell, Joe
 Powell, rh Lucy
 Poynton, Gregor
 Prinsley, Peter
 Quigley, Mr Richard
 Race, Steve
 Ranger, Andrew
 Rayner, rh Angela
 Reader, Mike
 Reid, Joani
 Rhodes, Martin

Richards, Jake
 Riddell-Carpenter, Jenny
 Rigby, Lucy
 Robertson, Dave
 Roca, Tim
 Rodda, Matt
 Rushworth, Sam
 Russell, Mrs Sarah
 Rutland, Tom
 Ryan, Oliver
 Sackman, Sarah
 Sandher, Dr Jeevun
 Scroggham, Michelle
 Sewards, Mark
 Shah, Naz
 Shanker, Baggy
 Shanks, Michael
 Siddiq, Tulip
 Slaughter, Andy
 Slinger, John
 Smith, Cat
 Smith, Jeff
 Smith, Nick
 Smith, Sarah
 Smyth, Karin
 Snell, Gareth
 Stainbank, Euan
 Stevens, rh Jo
 Stevenson, Kenneth
 Stewart, Elaine
 Stone, Will
 Strathern, Alistair
 Strickland, Alan
 Sullivan, Kirsteen
 Sullivan, Dr Lauren
 Swallow, Peter
 Tami, rh Mark
 Tapp, Mike
 Taylor, David
 Taylor, Rachel

Thomas, Fred
 Thompson, Adam
 Tidball, Dr Marie
 Timms, rh Sir Stephen
 Toale, Jessica
 Tomlinson, Dan
 Tufnell, Henry
 Turley, Anna
 Turmaine, Matt
 Turner, Karl
 Turner, Laurence
 Twigg, Derek
 Twist, Liz
 Uppal, Harpreet
 Vaughan, Tony
 Vaz, rh Valerie
 Vince, Chris
 Walker, Imogen
 Ward, Melanie
 Waugh, Paul
 Webb, Chris
 Welsh, Michelle
 West, Catherine
 Western, Andrew
 Western, Matt
 Whitby, John
 White, Jo
 White, Katie
 Williams, David
 Witherden, Steve
 Woodcock, Sean
 Wrighting, Rosie
 Yang, Yuan
 Yasin, Mohammad
 Yemm, Steve
 Zeichner, Daniel

Tellers for the Ayes:

**Gen Kitchen and
 Christian Wakeford**

NOES

Adam, Shockat
 Allister, Jim
 Amos, Gideon
 Anderson, Lee
 Anderson, Stuart (*Proxy vote
 cast by Mr Mohindra*)
 Andrew, rh Stuart
 Aquarone, Steff
 Argar, rh Edward
 Atkins, rh Victoria
 Babarinde, Josh
 Bacon, Gareth
 Badenoch, rh Mrs Kemi
 Baldwin, Dame Harriett
 Barclay, rh Steve
 Bedford, Mr Peter
 Begum, Apsana (*Proxy vote
 cast by Zarah Sultana*)
 Bennett, Alison
 Berry, Siân
 Bhatti, Saqib
 Blackman, Bob
 Blackman, Kirsty
 Bool, Sarah
 Bowie, Andrew
 Bradley, rh Dame Karen
 Brandreth, Aphra
 Braverman, rh Suella
 Brewer, Alex

Brown-Fuller, Jess
 Burghart, Alex
 Campbell, Mr Gregory
 Cane, Charlotte
 Carmichael, rh Mr Alistair
 Cartledge, James
 Chadwick, David (*Proxy vote
 cast by Mr Forster*)
 Chambers, Dr Danny
 Chope, Sir Christopher
 Chowns, Ellie
 Cleverly, rh Mr James
 Clifton-Brown, Sir Geoffrey
 Cocking, Lewis
 Coghlan, Chris
 Collins, Victoria
 Cooper, Daisy
 Cooper, John
 Corbyn, rh Jeremy
 Coutinho, rh Claire (*Proxy
 vote cast by Joy Morrissey*)
 Cox, rh Sir Geoffrey
 Cross, Harriet
 Dance, Adam
 Darling, Steve
 Davey, rh Ed
 Davies, Ann
 Davies, Gareth
 Davies, Mims

Davis, rh David
 Dean, Bobby
 Denyer, Carla
 Dewhurst, Charlie
 Dillon, Mr Lee
 Dinenage, Dame Caroline
 Doogan, Dave
 Dowden, rh Sir Oliver
 Duffield, Rosie
 Duncan Smith, rh Sir Iain
 Dyke, Sarah
 Easton, Alex
 Evans, Dr Luke
 Farron, Tim
 Flynn, rh Stephen
 Foord, Richard
 Forster, Mr Will
 Fortune, Peter
 Fox, Sir Ashley
 Francois, rh Mr Mark
 Franklin, Zöe
 French, Mr Louie
 Fuller, Richard
 Gale, rh Sir Roger
 Garnier, Mark
 George, Andrew
 Glen, rh John
 Glover, Olly
 Goldman, Marie
 Gordon, Tom
 Green, Sarah
 Griffith, Andrew
 Griffiths, Alison
 Harding, Monica
 Harris, Rebecca
 Hayes, rh Sir John
 Heylings, Pippa
 Hinds, rh Damian
 Hobhouse, Wera
 Holden, rh Mr Richard
 Hollinrake, Kevin
 Holmes, Paul
 Huddleston, Nigel
 Hudson, Dr Neil
 Hussain, Mr Adnan
 Jardine, Christine
 Jarvis, Liz
 Jenkin, Sir Bernard
 Jenrick, rh Robert
 Johnson, Dr Caroline
 Jones, Clive
 Jopp, Lincoln
 Kearns, Alicia (*Proxy vote cast
 by Joy Morrissey*)
 Kruger, Danny
 Lake, Ben
 Lam, Katie
 Lamont, John
 Law, Chris
 Leadbitter, Graham
 Lewis, rh Sir Julian
 Lockhart, Carla
 Logan, Seamus
 Lopez, Julia
 MacCleary, James
 MacDonald, Mr Angus
 Maguire, Ben
 Maguire, Helen
 Mak, Alan
 Malthouse, rh Kit
 Martin, Mike
 Mathew, Brian

Maynard, Charlie
 McMurdock, James (*Proxy
 vote cast by Lee Anderson*)
 McVey, rh Esther
 Medi, Llinos
 Miller, Calum
 Milne, John
 Mitchell, rh Mr Andrew
 Mohindra, Mr Gagan
 Moore, Robbie
 Morello, Edward
 Morgan, Helen
 Morrison, Mr Tom (*Proxy vote
 cast by Mr Forster*)
 Morrissey, Joy
 Morton, rh Wendy
 Mullan, Dr Kieran
 Mundell, rh David
 Munt, Tessa
 Murray, Susan
 Murrison, rh Dr Andrew
 Norman, rh Jesse
 Obese-Jecty, Ben
 O'Brien, Neil
 O'Hara, Brendan
 Olney, Sarah
 Patel, rh Priti
 Paul, Rebecca
 Perteghella, Manuela
 Pinkerton, Dr Al
 Pritchard, rh Mark
 Raja, Shivani
 Ramsay, Adrian
 Reed, David
 Reynolds, Mr Joshua
 Robertson, Joe
 Robinson, rh Gavin
 Rosindell, Andrew
 Savage, Dr Roz
 Saville Roberts, rh Liz
 Shannon, Jim
 Shastri-Hurst, Dr Neil
 Shelbrooke, rh Sir Alec
 Simmonds, David
 Smart, Lisa
 Smith, Greg
 Smith, rh Sir Julian
 Smith, Rebecca
 Sollom, Ian
 Spencer, Dr Ben
 Stafford, Gregory
 Stephenson, Blake
 Stone, Jamie
 Stuart, rh Graham
 Sultana, Zarah
 Swann, Robin
 Swayne, rh Sir Desmond
 Taylor, Luke
 Thomas, Bradley
 Thomas, Cameron
 Timothy, Nick
 Tugendhat, rh Tom
 Vickers, Martin
 Voaden, Caroline
 Whately, Helen
 Whittingdale, rh Sir John
 Wild, James
 Wilkinson, Max
 Williamson, rh Sir Gavin
 Wilson, Munira
 Wilson, rh Sammy
 Wishart, Pete

Wood, Mike
Wrigley, Martin
Young, Claire

Tellers for the Noes:
Mr Andrew Snowden and
Jerome Mayhew

Question accordingly agreed to.

Lords amendment 2 disagreed to.

Lords amendments 3 to 12 agreed to, with Commons financial privileges waived in respect of Lords amendment 11.

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 83H(2)), That a Committee be appointed to draw up a Reason to be assigned to the Lords for disagreeing with their amendment 2;

That Michael Shanks, Anna Turley, Chris McDonald, Luke Myer, Luke Murphy, Andrew Bowie and Susan Murray be members of the Committee;

That Michael Shanks be the Chair of the Committee;

That three be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee do withdraw immediately.—(*Gen Kitchen.*)

Question agreed to.

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

TERRORISM (PROTECTION OF PREMISES) BILL (PROGRAMME) (NO. 2)

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

That the following provisions shall apply to the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill for the purpose of supplementing the Order of 14 October 2024 (Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill: Programme):

Consideration of Lords Amendments

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

Subsequent stages

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

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

Question agreed to.

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill

Consideration of Lords amendments

Clause 3

QUALIFYING EVENTS

6.39 pm

The Minister for Security (Dan Jarvis): I beg to move, That this House agrees with Lords amendment 1.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins): With this it will be convenient to consider Lords amendments 2 to 13.

Dan Jarvis: The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill—Martyn’s law—has returned to this House in good shape. Only a small number of amendments were made in the other place, with all but one made by the Government, all of which we shall consider this evening.

The Government have been particularly grateful for the collaborative approach to scrutinising the Bill across both Houses, and I hope that this will continue this evening, as we take the final steps to passing this important piece of legislation.

I shall begin by speaking to Lords amendments 1, 2, 10, 11, 12 and 13. These amendments, brought by the Government in the other place, make minor and technical changes to further clarify the conditions for qualifying premises and qualifying events. Specifically, these amendments clarify the intention that premises and events are not in scope where attendance is in a personal or private capacity—for example, a wedding attended by relations and friends, or an office party attended by employees and customers. These are private events, not publicly accessible, and the amendments make it even clearer that they should be out of scope. These amendments do not alter the intended policy or the scope of the Bill. They are technical changes to provide further clarity on who will be within scope of this legislation.

Let me turn to Lords amendment 5, which was tabled by Baroness Suttie on behalf of the Liberal Democrats. This amendment places a statutory duty on the Secretary of State to consult as appropriate before publication of the guidance under clause 27. As my noble friend Lord Hanson of Flint made clear in the other place, the Government are happy to accept this amendment. We are acutely aware of the importance of the guidance that will accompany this Bill and it is vital that those responsible for qualifying premises and events have both the time and the information needed to ensure that they can plan, prepare for, and, ultimately, implement the requirements. It is also essential that the guidance is informed by proper consideration and engagement. This had always been the Government’s intention and we are content to enshrine the principle of appropriate consultation in statute by virtue of this amendment.

I turn finally to Lords amendments 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9, which were brought by the Government in light of the clear cross-party support to further strengthen the safeguards on the use of certain Henry VIII powers in the Bill

Amendments 3, 4, 6 and 9 consolidate into clause 32 the powers previously found in clauses 5 and 6, which allow the Secretary of State to add, omit or amend the description of public protection procedures or measures.

Amendments 7 and 8 place conditions on these powers that the Secretary of State must satisfy. These conditions are also added to the powers in clause 32 that enable the Secretary of State to alter the qualifying thresholds for standard duty premises, enhanced duty premises and qualifying events. These conditions limit the use of the powers to lower the thresholds—or to add new procedures or measures—to where the Secretary of State considers it necessary to do so for public protection.

Conversely, the thresholds can be raised—or procedures or measures omitted or amended—only if the Secretary of State considers that their retention is not necessary for public protection. Additionally, Lords amendment 8 will require the Secretary of State to consult such persons as they consider appropriate before exercising any of the powers specified in clause 32, including those I have just described.

The Government consider that this approach provides an extra level of assurance if future Secretaries of State are considering using these powers. It strikes the right balance between ensuring the Bill can be kept up to date, while providing in the Bill an important set of further safeguards to ensure that these powers, if used, are used appropriately and with proper consideration.

I am grateful to those in the other place for their considered scrutiny of these measures and for continuing the collaborative approach that has flowed through the passage of the Bill. I particularly want to thank Lord Anderson of Ipswich for his constructive challenge, and I am pleased that he felt able to add his name to the Government amendments. I am sure this House agrees that the amendments provide further safeguards and ensure that if and when the powers are used, they are used appropriately and with sufficient consultation.

6.45 pm

Before I conclude, I will take this opportunity to recognise the extraordinary campaigning efforts by Figen Murray, without which we would not be here today, and I will have more to say about Figen later. She has always been very clear that the Martyn's law campaign was a team effort, so I want to take the opportunity this evening to recognise the contribution of the whole campaign team, including Brendan, Nick, Nathan and Stuart. With that, I very much hope that right hon. and hon. Members will support all of the amendments before us today.

Madam Deputy Speaker: I call the shadow Minister.

Katie Lam (Weald of Kent) (Con): On 22 May 2017, Islamist extremist Salman Abedi carried out a sickening attack on the Manchester arena following a concert. This barbaric act of terrorism killed 22 people and injured more than 1,000 others, many of them children. It was the deadliest act of terrorism in this country since the 7/7 bombings in 2005. What was taken from the victims and those who love them can never be given back. That of course includes Figen Murray, whose determination and fortitude we honour this afternoon and whose son Martyn Hett we remember, along with all the others who were killed or injured on that horrible day.

This Bill, inherited from the previous Government, is an attempt to address an insufficiency in our anti-terror framework by ensuring that our public spaces and public events are better prepared for any future attacks.

This is a noble goal and one that colleagues on both sides of the House undoubtedly support. When the Bill was last in this place, my hon. Friend the Member for Stockton West (Matt Vickers), spoke of the concern we all share to get the balance right. Our safeguards against potential future terror attacks must be robust but also proportionate and pragmatic. He spoke of the spirit of support, co-operation and openness in which we suggested small amendments to the Bill, and I believe amendments were tabled in the other place in that same spirit.

We particularly welcome the change from invitations to tickets and the clarity that provides on private events being out of scope of this legislation. We are sorry not to see more of those amendments in this place for debate. I urge the Minister, who I know is very conscious of the different pressures and the need for balance, to keep the thresholds under review, which clause 32 provides for, and to continue to assess the impact of this legislation on community institutions. We continue to have concerns that in its current form the legislation risks adding to the already enormous burden of regulation and paperwork that small hospitality and community venues such as pubs, churches and village halls must navigate on a daily basis, so we welcome amendment 8 on consultation.

It is right that people of this country should be able to go about their daily lives and go to events in the knowledge that they are safe. It is also right that we take action to ensure that horrific attacks like the one carried out in Manchester in May 2017 do not happen again. As we pursue this noble goal, we should remain aware of and sensitive to the potential negative impacts of our good intentions. Small venues across the country are already struggling, and we must be cautious about adding to that burden, but we are happy to support the Lords amendments today.

Tim Roca (Macclesfield) (Lab): My contribution will be brief. I start by thanking the Minister and Lord Hanson in the other place for their hard work with others on bringing the Bill to fruition. I also thank them for the kindness and courtesy they have shown my constituents Figen Murray and her husband Stuart. I echo what the Minister said earlier in paying tribute to them and the whole campaign team who have worked so hard on this. They have asked me to place on the record their view that the other place did a good job in its scrutiny of the Bill; it was cross-party and collaborative, and the considered amendments from the other place will strengthen the Bill. For my part, I am glad that the thresholds were not further watered down, and I understand that it is important to keep them under review. This is a good Bill, and it will be a good law. It will have a deterrent effect and a protective effect, and it will save lives.

Lisa Smart (Hazel Grove) (LD): It is a pleasure to return to the Chamber to consider the Bill. Over recent months, it has been scrutinised in detail at the other end of this building, and I thank colleagues in the House of Lords for their collaborative work. The changes brought forward are sensible and proportionate, and they reflect the broad cross-party consensus behind the aims of this legislation.

A number of the changes were technical in nature but crucial for clarity. They address several concerns that I and others raised on Second Reading about the scope of qualifying events under the Bill. The Lords amended

[Lisa Smart]

it to make it clear that private events—weddings, office parties or similar—sit outside its scope. That helps to ensure that the law is designed for public-facing venues without overreaching into personal or private spaces.

In addition, several important changes were made to strengthen the safeguards around delegated powers. The amendments consolidate into a single clause the key power of the Secretary of State to amend the public protection procedures that must be in place in each tier. They also require the Secretary of State to meet a high bar of necessity to make changes to qualifying thresholds for protective measures, and to consult relevant parties before exercising these powers. These are welcome changes that introduce further transparency and ensure that the Bill's implementation is balanced and accountable.

Another key area of discussion throughout the Bill's passage has been the need for clear and accessible guidance. On Second Reading, I and others cautioned that venue operators would struggle to comply with the law without adequate support. I am therefore pleased that the Minister in the Lords gave a firm commitment, repeated by the Minister today, that guidance will be published well in advance of the changes coming into force, and that there will be a period of engagement to ensure that it is robust and practical. I thank my Liberal Democrat colleague Baroness Suttie for her tireless work on this point and for her amendment, which helped secure this assurance. Her contributions in the Lords have strengthened the Bill considerably.

It is impossible to consider this legislation without remembering why we are here. Martyn's law was born from an unimaginable tragedy—the terrorist attack at Manchester Arena in 2017. As the MP for Hazel Grove in Greater Manchester, I witnessed at first hand the resilience and the unity that followed the arena attack. I remember joining my community in Romiley Precinct when residents came together in quiet solidarity the evening after. It was an act of remembrance, but also a statement that terrorism will never define us, and that we will not be divided by it.

Among the 22 lives taken that night was Martyn Hett, a 29-year-old from Stockport. His mother Figen Murray has shown extraordinary resolve in the years since the attack. Her campaign for Martyn's law has been defined by compassion, determination and a belief that no other family should ever experience what hers has had to endure. Today we are seeing the fruits of her dedication. The Bill is a testament to her courage and unrelenting hope that something good could emerge from the darkest of circumstances. Thanks to Figen's advocacy, this country will be better prepared to keep people safe in our public spaces.

I welcome the Bill and the amendments before us today. Martyn's law will not bring back those who were taken from us, but it will save lives. In doing so, it will stand as a lasting tribute to Martyn, Figen and the people of Greater Manchester. The Liberal Democrats are proud to support it.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): First of all, I thank the hon. and gallant Minister. We all look to him for his guidance and support, which is much appreciated by us as individuals on behalf of our constituents. Let me put on record my thanks to all the police forces

across this great United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, particularly the Police Service of Northern Ireland for its work to keep us safe. Without them we could not operate here, nor could we have protection for our constituents, who we are duty bound to represent in this House. I will not delay the House too long, but I wish to ask two questions in relation to the Bill, which are both relate specifically to Northern Ireland. I hope that the House will bear with me for a couple of minutes as I illustrate them.

I have spoken on the Bill several times, and I have always sought to ensure parity of conditions throughout the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Lords amendments to clauses 32 to 35 in particular seek to remove the UK-wide imposition of polygraph licence conditions for terrorist offenders. Will the Minister confirm that their removal will not leave the PSNI in Northern Ireland without the means to watch and assess terrorists as closely as can be done on the mainland and that existing legislation referred to in the amendments is capable of securing protection?

Secondly, it is imperative that police forces have access to transfer of prisoners. Lords amendment 76 has been designed to ensure that provisions could continue to apply to restricted transfers between Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the purposes of determining release. Will the Minister confirm that the Government are convinced that there can be seamless transfers between all nations in this great United Kingdom when necessary? If the Minister does not have access to those answers immediately, I am happy for him to come back to me on that, if that is helpful. I would appreciate the answers.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins): Those questions may not fall within the scope of the debate. With the leave of the House, I call the Minister.

Dan Jarvis: I am grateful to the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for Weald of Kent (Katie Lam), for the constructive way in which she has approached the debate. I assure her that the Government completely understand that we need to strike a balance, and I hope that she will acknowledge that we have been at pains to consult extensively and work across the House. I am happy to discuss these matters with her further.

I am grateful to my hon. Friend the Member for Macclesfield (Tim Roca) not just for his contribution this evening but for his support of his very special constituent. I am also grateful to the spokesperson for the Liberal Democrats, the hon. Member for Hazel Grove (Lisa Smart), and join her in thanking Baroness Suttie for the important contribution she made in the other place.

I am always grateful to the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) for his contributions in terms of both quantity and quality. In fact, I was thinking about him just the other day because I had the privilege of visiting his part of the world, which is a part of this United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland that I hold in the highest regard. I hold him in that high regard as well. He raised some important points, and I am grateful to him for saying that he would be happy for me to write to him about them. To ensure that we address them properly, I will do so. I guarantee that he will get a very good response.

The Bill was a manifesto commitment, and I am proud to say that the Government have delivered it, and done so early in the Session. The public rightly deserve to feel safe when visiting public premises and attending events, and the cross-party approach to passing the Bill and getting it right will demonstrate to the public that nothing matters more than security; it is the foundation on which everything else rests. I very much hope that this will continue and that the House will support the amendments.

I take the opportunity again to thank all of those who have aided in the passage of the Bill. I also take the opportunity to thank Lord Hanson of Flint, my colleague in the other place, whose long experience and sound judgment have been much appreciated. I also thank the excellent team at the Home Office. I am grateful for all their hard work, support and dedication. They have been particularly impressive throughout the Bill's passage—they have always gone above and beyond—and I am grateful for their service.

I want to restate the Government's thanks to the intelligence agencies and all those who serve in law enforcement who work tirelessly around the clock to keep us safe. This is the most vital work, which they do every day, and we as a country owe them a debt of gratitude.

Finally, there is someone, above all, who we must pay tribute to and that is Figen Murray. Her campaign has been nothing short of extraordinary. To have lost her son, Martyn Hett, in the Manchester Arena attack in May 2017 and to have yet still found the strength to drive the campaign forward is both inspiring and phenomenal. I know that all Members right across the House will join me in paying tribute to Figen. She previously said,

“It's time to get this done.”

I am very proud to say that this Government have done just that.

Lords amendment 1 agreed to.

Lords amendments 2 to 13 agreed to.

DEFERRED DIVISIONS

Motion made, and Question put forthwith (Standing Order No. 41A(3)),

That, at this day's sitting, Standing Order No. 41A (Deferred divisions) shall not apply to the Motion in the name of Secretary Jonathan Reynolds relating to Terms and Conditions of Employment. —(*Gen Kitchen.*)

Question agreed to.

Terms and Conditions of Employment

7.1 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Justin Madders): I beg to move,

That the draft National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Regulations 2025, which were laid before this House on 4 February, be approved.

The purpose of the regulations is to increase the national living wage rate and the national minimum wage rates on 1 April 2025. The regulations were laid in draft before Parliament on 4 February and approved by the other place on 17 March.

The Government are committed to making work pay. The plan to make work pay will tackle the low pay, poor working conditions and poor job security that have been holding our economy back for far too long. Earlier this month, the House approved passage of the landmark Employment Rights Bill, which will benefit more than 10 million workers in every corner of the country and deliver the biggest upgrade to workers' rights in a generation. Some aspects of the Bill and accompanying legislation and guidance will not come into effect for some time as the Government continue to engage with stakeholders, businesses and trade unions on its implementation. When we took office last year, however, we committed to taking immediate action where we could, and on the minimum wage we have done so.

One of the proudest achievements of the last Labour Government was the creation of the national minimum wage, which eliminated the extreme low pay that was blighting our country. We are proud to say that one of the first actions taken by this Labour Government within a month of last year's general election was to overhaul the remit to the Low Pay Commission. For the first time, the remit now explicitly includes the cost of living as one of the key factors to be considered when making national living wage recommendations. We have begun the journey towards creating a genuine living wage, as well as extending that to all workers aged over 18 by moving towards a single adult rate.

Before turning to the precise details of the regulations, I want to extend my thanks to the Low Pay Commission. The commissioners and their officials have worked diligently and efficiently, particularly after the updates to the remit were made, and we were pleased to accept all their recommendations. That is testament to their social partnership model and expert analysis and engagement, which ensure that the Government can deliver on their ambitious agenda, but without adversely impacting on businesses, the labour market or the wider economy.

Turning to the detail of the regulations, which, after parliamentary approval, will take effect on 1 April, the national living wage rate, which currently applies to workers aged 21 and over, will increase from £11.44 to £12.21. That represents a rise of 77p or 6.7%, which is well above all measures and projections of inflation, therefore delivering real terms pay increases to an estimated 3 million workers.

We will also be delivering large increases to the other national minimum wage rates. The 18 to 20-year-old rate will increase by £1.40 from £8.60 an hour to £10 an hour. That is a record 16.3% increase for that age group. It means that a full-time worker on the 18-to-20 minimum wage rate will see their gross annual earnings increased

[Justin Madders]

by around £2,500 a year—a well-earned pay rise and a significant step towards parity with the headline rate. The national minimum wage rate for 18 to 20-year-olds will be equal to 82% of the national living wage in 2025, compared with 75% in 2024.

The minimum wage rate for workers above school leaving age but under 18 years old will increase from £6.40 to £7.55 an hour—a large rise of £1.15 or 18%. The same rise will apply to the apprenticeship minimum wage rate, which applies to apprentices aged under 19 or in the first year of their apprenticeship. Finally, the accommodation offset rate, which is the maximum daily amount that an employer can charge a worker for accommodation without it affecting their pay for minimum wage purposes, will increase by 6.7%, or 67p, to £10.66.

I draw Members' attention to the comprehensive impact assessment, which the Department published alongside this legislation. As they may have noted, the impact assessment, which includes an equalities assessment, has received a green fit-for-purpose rating from the independent Regulatory Policy Committee. As I have touched on, we estimate that the increases to the minimum wage rates will deliver a direct pay increase for over 3 million workers, while an additional 4 million could benefit from the positive spill-over effects. The minimum wage has greatly reduced pay inequality in the UK, with the share of low-paid jobs in hourly terms estimated at 3.4% in 2024. That is a record low, and down from 21.9% in 1999.

But the work does not stop there, as we continue to build towards a genuine living wage and the extension of eligibility to workers aged between 18 and 20 by ending the discriminatory age bands. To that end, we will publish in due course a fresh remit to the Low Pay Commission, asking it to recommend minimum wage rates to apply from next April. As part of this, the Low Pay Commission will consult about the appropriate trajectory towards the single adult rate as we ensure that this is delivered without adverse impacts on youth employment as well as participation in training and education. Like the previous Labour Government, with their creation of the minimum wage over a quarter of a century ago, this Labour Government will be proud to leave a profound legacy for workers' rights, because we are making work pay and we are proud to make more progress on this by supporting this instrument today. I commend the regulations to the House.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins): I call the shadow Minister.

7.7 pm

Dame Harriett Baldwin (West Worcestershire) (Con): I rise to say that we will not oppose the increases to the national minimum wage or the national living wage—the national living wage being something that my party introduced to make work pay. We celebrate the fact that progress was made in ending low pay, and the Minister cited that from the Dispatch Box this evening. But it is also our duty, as His Majesty's official Opposition, to scrutinise the Government on all matters, so I have several questions for the Minister this evening.

In particular, I want to highlight the fact that the work that the Low Pay Commission has done—for which I also thank it—was done before the Hallowe'en

Budget of broken promises last October. After the increases to the national living and minimum wages in the Budget—but also measures such as the increase to national insurance—the Unison assistant general secretary Jon Richards welcomed the increase to the pay measures but said that

“as it stands, the new legal minimum is more than the current lowest hourly rate in the NHS, universities and some other public services. This will give employers multiple headaches.”

So my first question is: what will the Government do to address the pay implications of this rise on those working in the public sector in such important roles?

The second question relates to the national minimum wage for workers above school leaving age but not yet 18 going up by nearly 18%. On 1 April this year, the national insurance threshold for employers drops to £5,000 per year. This means that an employer will have to start paying national insurance on any young person if they work for 13 or more hours a week. Because of this, businesses have warned that they are cutting back on hiring younger workers or reducing the hours that they give to them. That risk, of course, is faced not solely by those in work, but by those seeking to get into work. What assessment has the Minister made since the Hallowe'en Budget of the impact of the increase on young people's ability to access jobs? What will the Government do to ensure that young people or those looking for a job will not be penalised by this increase?

The increase will significantly affect small and medium-sized enterprises. As usual, it looks like they will bear the brunt of the increased labour costs. It looks that way not just to us; according to the Government's own impact assessment, SMEs will face 56% of the cost of the increase despite representing only 37% of the share of employment. That is another cost increase on smaller businesses, which already have to pay for this Government's national insurance jobs tax, for the hike in business rates, and for the impact of the measures from the Employment Rights Bill. In particular, businesses in the retail, hospitality and leisure sector are most likely to pay the minimum wage.

I remind the House that the Government's own impact assessment states that they expect the policies covered within the Bill to impose a direct cost on businesses of up to £5 billion a year. It also notes that, on average, those costs will be greater for those smaller businesses and microbusinesses. Will the Minister provide the House with a figure for the total cost increase of employing someone full time on the previous national living wage because of the other changes introduced by his Government?

The Government have created a challenging business environment. They recognised that themselves when they stated in their impact assessment that

“there is some evidence of challenging business conditions for SMEs”.

Around 42.7% and 36.8% of microbusinesses and small businesses respectively reported having less than three months of cash reserves in September 2024. We support the principle of fair pay for workers and making work pay. However, having listened to businesses, we are concerned that the rises could impact workers and businesses in industries already facing financial challenges through a range of unintended consequences.

It is easy for those in Whitehall to squiggle their pen, but all those measures combined have real-life consequences for businesses across the country. The national insurance jobs tax and the Employment Rights Bill are piling additional costs on to businesses and hammering the private sector, which we rely on to grow the economy.

In summary, have the Government considered the full impact of all these increases on businesses that are happening at the same time? I fear that tomorrow's emergency Budget will be another wakeup call.

7.12 pm

Yuan Yang (Earley and Woodley) (Lab): We have heard how the rise in the national minimum wage will deliver a direct pay increase for over 3 million workers. For the first time in history, the minimum wage in this country is being linked to the true cost of living, beginning the journey of making it a genuine living wage. We can take from history a wealth of economic evidence on the positive impacts of minimum wages, which shows they lead to overall rises in pay with no significant impact on employment.

Although I take on board the questions of the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Dame Harriett Baldwin), and I appreciate her contributions as a fellow Treasury Committee member, studies have shown time and again that while similar concerns echoed throughout the '80s and '90s, the overall outcome of increasing the minimum wage is simply that: an increase in pay with no significant impact on employment.

Mark Ferguson (Gateshead Central and Wickham) (Lab): Does my hon. Friend agree that many of the concerns shared by the Conservatives are the same as those raised at the time of the introduction of the minimum wage?

Yuan Yang: Yes, that is the case. We have heard such concerns raised throughout history, yet when we look at econometric evidence that looks in hindsight at the actual impact on the economy, we see that there is no discernible impact.

I will whizz through a few different studies. In the United States there is David Card and Alan Krueger's study, based on the 1992 increase in New Jersey's minimum wage, the 1988 rise in California's minimum wage and the federal minimum wage increase the following year. In the European Union there is Tomas Kucera's 2017 study from 18 countries. In the UK there is Christian van Stolk's 2017 study. We can go on and on about the evidence, but we can see from the trends that, although these concerns have been raised over time, the outcome is increases in the minimum wage, which is what we are seeking to ensure.

Jayne Kirkham (Truro and Falmouth) (Lab/Co-op): Does my hon. Friend agree that these uplifts are a huge boost for equality, because they benefit women, younger and older workers, workers with disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds more than others?

Yuan Yang: I absolutely agree. As the Women's Budget Group has shown, the measures on the minimum wage in the Employment Rights Bill will disproportionately benefit female workers, who are likely to be paid less than men.

These studies on the minimum wage use econometric methods to confirm what many of us can see in our communities at first hand: that too many people have too long been due a pay rise, and when we make the lowest paid better off, that spending goes back into our high streets and local economies. I would like to see even more studies done, producing better data. That must start with improvements to the labour force survey, which the hon. Member for West Worcestershire and I have discussed on the Treasury Committee, as many organisations have flagged that data as an area of concern.

Today I want to focus on one particular group of low-paid workers who are very significant for me and my constituency of Earley and Woodley: young people. There are around 13,000 undergraduates at the University of Reading, which sits in my constituency, who will be better off because of this new law that raises the minimum wage for 18 to 20-year-olds to £10 an hour. It will mean a record wage boost for that age group, who will see their gross annual earnings rise by £2,500, and for apprentices, too, who are the skilled workers of tomorrow.

I support the Government's youth guarantee, to ensure that all young people are in education, employment or training. The King's Trust has found that one in 10 young people outside of education, employment or training have turned down a job because they could not afford the costs associated with it—for example, travel, clothing or childcare. For many young people, a barrier to employment is that it does not pay well enough for them.

Gareth Snell (Stoke-on-Trent Central) (Lab/Co-op): My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech. I was concerned by what I think I heard the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Dame Harriett Baldwin) say about the rate at which the living wage is paid to young people, almost advocating for a reduction in that rate because of the impact it would have on business. Does my hon. Friend agree that is a rather regressive view, given that what young people need is the ability to pay their bills, live a life they enjoy and build a home for themselves in the future?

Yuan Yang: I very much agree with that sentiment. Young people are the future, and to ensure they get off to the best possible start in life, they need work that pays and enables them to live in stability, not concerned about paying the bills from day to day or month to month.

Most young people nowadays have to do a mixture of work and education or training to make ends meet. More than half of full-time students were working long hours in paid jobs in 2024, which is a significant rise from 2021, during the pandemic, when two thirds had no term-time employment. That has been driven by the escalating cost of living for young people, and especially rises in rent.

I want to quote a constituent of mine called Poppy, who is 20 years old and studies at the University of Reading. She says:

"Working part-time was never optional but rather a necessity... With my wages being so low... I found myself working 20-25 hours a week—leading me to miss some lectures and seminars throughout the month".

I want to ensure that young people such as Poppy are able to study without worrying about how they are going to pay their bills. We also know that young people

[Yuan Yang]

are less unionised, which means they have less bargaining power and less ability to fight against unfair terms or ask for pay rises, so it is even more important that we support them by raising the minimum wage.

In conclusion, it is essential that we make work pay, for the sake of our high streets, our living standards and our future—our young people. Poppy said:

“I personally cannot wait for the new minimum wage increase in April as it means I should be able to reduce my hours at work, giving me more time to focus on my studies”.

For people like Poppy, in my constituency and across the UK, the new deal for working people is transformational, and I am very glad to support today’s motion.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins): I call the Liberal Democrat spokesperson.

7.18 pm

Sarah Gibson (Chippenham) (LD): Let me begin by thanking the Government for laying this important statutory instrument. The Liberal Democrats welcome this uplift in the minimum wage. We all have constituents who we know are struggling to make ends meet. Nobody should be in a position where they cannot pay their bills despite being in employment. I am particularly pleased that apprentices and those under 18 will benefit from increased pay under this instrument. In a few weeks’ time, I will join Wilshire College students and businesses across my constituency at a careers fair, and this will be an important piece of legislation to share with them.

My constituency is rural, and many of the people I represent are elderly and depend on the social care system to stay independent. Unfortunately, they are struggling to get the care they need and deserve, in part because care workers are not being paid properly. If we paid care staff more, we might encourage more people into that hugely understaffed sector. In south-west England alone there are 13,000 vacant jobs, and in a rural constituency such as mine, where public transport is expensive and unreliable, care staff are not compensated for their travel time, and they often end up bringing home less than the minimum wage. While I share the official Opposition’s concern about small businesses, of which my constituency has a huge number, it is important that low-paid workers earn enough to live, especially our young people and women.

If the Government were to adopt the Liberal Democrat proposal for a carer’s minimum wage, which would see carers receive £2 more per hour than the current minimum wage, a staggering 850,000 care workers across the UK would benefit from that increase in pay, and over 80% of them would be women. We understand that the carer’s minimum wage is not a silver bullet, but it is serious proposal that could make a big difference to patients and families across the country. Although the Liberal Democrats support increasing the minimum wage, it is a shame that this statutory instrument does not go further and give weight to that proposal.

7.21 pm

Liz Twist (Blaydon and Consett) (Lab): I draw the House’s attention to my entry in the Register of Members’ Financial Interests: I am a member of the Unison trade union.

When the national minimum wage came into force on 1 April 1999, I was working as a trade union official in Unison’s northern region, representing many low-paid members of staff who were working in social care and other sectors in the north-east, and with colleagues in the TUC, who in many cases were on even lower wages. That fantastic achievement came after 30 years of fighting in the face of huge opposition at the time from the Conservative party, but after 26 years of the national minimum wage, I think we can say that the argument has been definitively won—so much so that there are Members of this House who have never known a time without a statutory minimum wage.

On 10 April 1999, I was proud to don a high-vis vest and join my trade union colleagues and Members on a march across the Tyne bridge from Gateshead to Newcastle. That was part of the campaign for a living wage to celebrate the introduction of the national minimum wage, and to argue for it to be improved. We were led by the then general secretary of Unison, Rodney Bickerstaffe, and I well remember a photograph in our local newspapers as we prepared for the march, with an AA sign directing traffic that said, “Campaign for a living wage—long delays expected.” Well, we have continued to campaign for a living wage since that time.

I am so glad to speak here today, with a Labour Government again in power, making real progress towards a real living wage. The changes we are making with this legislation will mean a direct, real-terms pay increase for over 3 million workers. That includes steps towards a single adult rate, with a record increase in the minimum wage for 18 to 20-year-olds, amounting to £2,500 per year, as well as directions to the Low Pay Commission to look at the cost of living in its future decisions.

Back in 1999, when the national minimum wage was first introduced, it made such a difference to so many people in the north-east. Similarly, I know that the legislation we are passing today will make a huge difference to my constituents.

Let me be clear that my ambition is for good, well-paid jobs for people in the north-east. My constituents and people in our region deserve decent pay and secure work, and I will continue to work towards that. Meanwhile, for those on minimum wage, this legislation will mean more money in their pay packets, which is a real Labour achievement. Taken with our Employment Rights Bill, that means there will be a real shift for working people across the country and in my region.

7.25 pm

Chris Law (Dundee Central) (SNP): Increases to the national living wage and national minimum wage will always be supported by Scottish National party Members. Indeed, we have been pushing for the UK Government to adopt the real living wage for those of all ages since 2011. Disappointingly, we have to continue to do so, as the Labour party has failed to take the opportunity to do that, now that it is in government.

While we support the changes that are being introduced today, the SNP’s position is clear: we want the real living wage for all workers, not just a politically convenient definition of the living wage that falls short of meeting the actual costs of living, and not just for those who are 21 and over. The Resolution Foundation has the real living wage set at £12.60, whereas this regulation increases

the national living wage for workers aged 21 or over from £11.44 to £12.21 per hour. It is evidently still short of where it needs to be.

Furthermore, for those aged between 18 and 21, the national living wage is 18% lower, at £10 per hour. Given that the Minister today said that there would be a consultation looking at the cost of living, can he tell me if rent is 18% lower for those under 21? Do 18-year-olds get a special rate on their electricity bills, or on petrol for their car? Do supermarkets give them an 18% discount?

Jayne Kirkham: On that point, will the hon. Member give way?

Chris Law: I will not, as I would like to make this point very clear, because it is important. The answer to my questions is obviously no. While I welcome the Minister's comment that the national living wage may be looked at next year, and may be increased so that there is parity for everybody, we are not there yet. I would like the Government to go further, and I look forward to hearing more about how they will consult on doing so next year.

It is worth noting that in Scotland, the SNP Government have taken proactive steps to ensure that the real living wage is implemented wherever we have control, particularly in our public sector. The Scottish Government have paid all staff within their pay scheme, including NHS staff, the real living wage since 2011—that is 14 years ago. Scotland has the highest proportion of employees paid the living wage of any nation in the UK, with 25% of accredited real living wage employers in the UK based there. The Scottish Government are also providing funding to enable adult social care workers to be paid the living wage, benefiting up to 40,000 care workers, and they are working to ensure that all staff in private nurseries delivering our childcare pledge are paid the real living wage, too.

The Labour Government should demonstrate similar willingness to tackle the scourge of low pay. In their manifesto, they pledged to make changes in line with the real living wage, and to take into account the cost of living, but they have failed, at least today, to do so. They were voted in with a mantra of change, and it is in their power to legislate for the introduction of the real living wage for all, but so far, they have chosen not to. They must go further and adopt the living wage for people irrespective of their age, as the SNP has called on successive Governments to do for the past 14 years.

7.27 pm

Sally Jameson (Doncaster Central) (Lab/Co-op): I draw the House's attention to my entry in the Register of Members' Financial Interests and to my trade union membership.

I welcome today's move by the Government to bring a record pay boost of around £1,400 to over 3 million workers. The measures will also mean a record wage boost for 18 to 20-year-olds, who will see their gross annual full-time earnings rise by £2,500. For apprentices, the skilled workers of tomorrow, there will be a boost of 18%, so that they can learn their trade with better financial security. Why is all of that important? Because when I visit food banks in my constituency in Doncaster, I have been saddened to learn that some of the people

accessing those services are in work, yet still cannot make ends meet. For too long in this country, work has not paid, but with this legislation, that will change.

We hear a lot about the tough choices that this Government have had to make after the 14 years of Conservative Government, whether because of the Conservatives' disastrous mini-Budget, which left mortgages soaring; the neglect of our prisons, which were allowed to fill up to the point of collapse; or the lack of investment in our NHS. This Labour Government have taken a number of very difficult decisions to get our country back on track, but I can tell hon. Members that it has not been a tough choice to give millions of workers a pay rise. It has not been a tough choice to ensure that our apprentices have better financial security—in fact, it is a choice that I am proud to make; it shows that this Government value workers across the country and value the working contribution of young adults from the age of 18. This measure, along with our landmark Employment Rights Bill, will mean that it will once again pay to work in this country, and secure employment will be the foundation of the British economy, which will be strong going forward.

7.30 pm

Richard Foord (Honiton and Sidmouth) (LD): The increase in the national minimum wage in the next fortnight is very welcome. Nobody in work in this wealthy country of ours should be struggling to make ends meet. While that uplift is a step in the right direction, it does not address the challenges that we face in social care, both nationally and in Devon, the area that I know best. Devon has 28,000 filled social care positions, but 2,000 positions remain unfilled, and I am very concerned about that shortage in the workforce. It partly explains why people are going without care, and why our hospitals are struggling to discharge patients.

Deirdre Costigan (Ealing Southall) (Lab): I take the hon. Member's point about the social care sector. Does he therefore welcome Labour's Employment Rights Bill, which includes a negotiating framework for our social care staff, to ensure that they are properly paid and can progress in their jobs?

Richard Foord: I think a negotiating framework might be helpful, but a lot will depend on the negotiations. It would be far better if the Government looked at the minimum wage, sector by sector, and identified social care as a special case.

The turnover rate for social care staff in Devon is 27%. That is not only higher than the national average, but roughly double the figure for other sectors. That is why I want a separate, higher minimum wage for social care. A striking 16% of social care workers cited low pay as the primary reason why they left the job. Many of them are simply not paid enough for the skilled, difficult and vital work they do, and many are earning more by moving into jobs such as stacking supermarket shelves—important though that is—than by doing the vital work of social care. In a rural county such as Devon, people have to travel long distances between the people for whom they care, which sometimes means that their real income is less than the national minimum wage.

[Richard Foord]

We in Devon are looking at a shortage of social care beds. Devon county council projects that by 2027, Devon will face a shortfall of 270 care home beds for older people with complex needs. Looking further ahead, the situation gets worse. By 2033, in Honiton, the unmet need will be 72 care beds; in Cullompton, the need will be 79 care beds. In Seaton and Ottery St Mary, an additional 40 care beds will be required by then.

The shortage of facilities in mid and east Devon makes it plain that even more care workers will be required to meet the growing demand for social care. That is why the Liberal Democrats are calling for the introduction of a carers' minimum wage, £2 per hour more than the minimum wage. Of course, that funding cannot come from thin air. According to Skills for Care, increasing pay by between £1 and £2 per hour above the national minimum wage for care workers could save up to £947 million from reduced hospital admissions, but there would need to be some funding up front to make that happen. I suggest that the remaining funding comes from an additional tax on the gambling industry, which, according to Public Health England, costs the UK economy about £1.4 billion annually due to the financial, physical and mental impacts of problem gambling and the resulting crime and loss of productivity.

According to the Gambling Commission, 300,000 adults and 40,000 children in the UK suffer from problem gambling. It is not an industry that we should be incentivising through low taxation. Doubling the remote gaming duty is recommended by the Social Market Foundation. That would not only address the harms of problem gambling, but be a fairer way of funding that £2 per hour increase above the national minimum wage for social care workers.

It is time that the Government acted to ensure that those who profit from gambling contribute more to the public good. Increasing pay for the lowest-paid social care workers is a simple, effective step to attract and retain staff, and ensure that people in our communities receive the care that they require. I support the national minimum wage increases, but we must go further and pay our social care staff more, recognising their vital role in looking after the elderly and vulnerable.

7.35 pm

Alan Strickland (Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor) (Lab): I strongly welcome the proposed increases to minimum wage rates, which will help people of all ages across all communities in our country. There is a particularly welcome boost for apprentices, who are the future of our economy. Those increases will make a real difference to people in my constituency and across our great nation, for three reasons.

First, as colleagues have said, we must make work pay; that is vital for the health of our economy. It is crucial that we ensure that those who contribute to our economic growth, deliver services in our communities, and manufacture the goods that we need are fairly rewarded, but for too long, that has not been the case in my constituency, or in other areas. Between 2014 and 2022, salary growth in County Durham was among the lowest in the United Kingdom, increasing at less than half the rate of the growth in regions such as London. To tackle these issues, we need to drive economic growth in regions

like mine, but we also need clear action to ensure that those on the lowest wages see the growth in their pay that they deserve.

Secondly, it is crucial that we tackle the cost of living crisis. In the two and a half years I spent campaigning as a Labour candidate before being elected to this House, the cost of living crisis was raised with me time and again. Family after family has been hit by rising bills but flatlining pay. That issue affected my local residents particularly acutely, because median weekly pay for those in full-time work in my constituency is £150 less a week than the UK average—that is £600 a month less to pay the bills and make ends meet. That is why it is so vital that this time, the Government have taken the cost of living into account when setting minimum wage levels.

Thirdly, we must support growth. If we are to grow our economy, routes into work—including apprenticeships, entry-level jobs and other routes into starting a career—must be attractive. A key part of that is having pay levels that reward those going into work and incentivise participation in the labour market. For young people in my constituency, getting a job with decent pay has too often meant moving away from the town they grew up in. That is another reason why this direct action to tackle low pay is so important. As the representative of a constituency with a significant history of manufacturing, including modern manufacturing, such as in the fantastic Hitachi trains factory, I particularly welcome the wage increase for 18 to 20-year-olds, and for those on apprenticeships. It will ensure that young people going into work, who are the future of our country's manufacturing sector, are paid properly, and that a secure future is possible locally.

I came into politics to make a genuine difference to the people of my home town of Newton Aycliffe, the wider constituency, and our country. Increasing the minimum wage is one way to do that, putting more money into the pockets of 3 million of our citizens. That is the difference a Labour Government make.

7.38 pm

Rosie Wrighting (Kettering) (Lab): This Government have made a solid commitment to make work pay and put more money into working people's pockets. In my constituency, we have a large number of distribution jobs, and as a result of this Government's actions, people in Kettering on the minimum wage will have more money in their pockets to last them through to the end of the month.

Having spent my career in business, I know how important it is for businesses to have a productive, motivated workforce with minimal turnover. That benefits not only businesses but workers. In Kettering, it means that people earning a decent wage will spend their money supporting our local economy. It is shameful that the Conservative party let this country get to a place where people who work full time are queuing at food banks to feed their family. The uplift in the national minimum wage is a huge part of the national renewal that Labour has promised this country, and will mean a pay increase for 3 million people in Kettering and across the UK.

Young people in my constituency deserve a minimum wage that reflects the work they do. I speak to many 18 to 20-year-olds in Kettering who face the same financial pressures as adults older than them. One of

the best things about my job is visiting many schools and colleges across my constituency, where young people talk to me about their plans for their future. This uplift will mean a wage boost of 18% for apprenticeships in Kettering, so that we can incentivise young people to see apprenticeships as a financially viable option and start to fill the skills gaps that businesses across the UK face after 14 difficult years under the Conservatives.

The last Labour Government brought in the national minimum wage, and it is this Labour Government who will secure Britain's future and make work pay.

7.40 pm

David Pinto-Duschinsky (Hendon) (Lab): I start by declaring an interest as a proud member of the GMB and Unison unions. This is a debate about four numbers: 3 million, £1,400, £2,500 and 10 million. Three million is the number of people who will benefit from the fantastic measures being announced today; £1,400 is how much they will benefit—a real life-changing amount—while £2,500 is how much someone aged 18 to 20 years old will benefit from these changes and 10 million is the number of people whose lives will see a transformative impact from our Employment Rights Bill. All of that is being achieved by a Labour Government, with our plan for change delivering security for working people, but so much of it is opposed by the Conservatives.

On a day when we are debating giving a pay rise to 3 million people, it is striking and speaks volumes that the Opposition Benches are completely empty. That is the difference between the Government and the Conservatives. That pay rise is the difference that a Labour Government make.

The Opposition spokesperson, the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Dame Harriett Baldwin) just tried slightly to rewrite history, but I am old enough to remember the pre-minimum wage era and who brought it to an end: a Labour Government. The introduction of the national minimum wage was a radical and transformative step, and it was opposed every step of the way by the Conservatives. When Labour included a policy for a minimum wage in our 1992 manifesto, Michael Howard claimed that it would destroy up to 2 million jobs. When we brought it to this place as legislation in 1998, the Conservatives fought it tooth and nail every single step of the way.

The Conservatives' concerns turned out to be totally unfounded. It was a pointless opposition to measures that increased the wages of more than a million workers immediately in the UK, as the evidence from my hon. Friend the Member for Earley and Woodley (Yuan Yang) pointed out. Indeed, the shadow Chancellor at the time, now better known for his railway journeys, eventually ended Tory opposition to the minimum wage, saying:

"The minimum wage has caused less damage to employment than we feared."

How different the picture looks today. We have a Leader of the Opposition who recently said that the minimum wage was "overburdening" business and that maternity pay was "excessive". In an article for ConservativeHome, the shadow Chancellor, the right hon. Member for Central Devon (Mel Stride) said that our measures to boost employment rights and make work pay would have a negative effect on business,

"especially in lower-wage sectors like hospitality and retail".

Perhaps the shadow Chancellor does not realise that the entire point of these measures is to bring these workers—in particular, young workers—out of low pay, to improve retention, to keep people in work and to boost our economy. The low-wage, low-growth economy that the Conservatives presided over for 14 years brought with it stagnation and a growing number of people who either left employment or never entered it in the first place. Given that, we all know where we stand.

I will wrap up by saying that this measure represents a choice. Our choice is to increase the minimum wage and put money back in the pockets of working people. It is a choice to put people first. It will help thousands of people in Hendon and millions of people across this country, and it is a choice I am proud to support.

7.44 pm

Deirdre Costigan (Ealing Southall) (Lab): May I begin by declaring an interest as a member and former employee of Unison? I know that its young members will welcome the unprecedented rise in the minimum wage for 18 to 20-year-olds. As we have already heard, it will add £2,500 a year to their gross salaries.

This is a record change, and it will make a huge difference for young constituents of mine. Moreover, the Labour Government have made it clear that this is only the start of a journey. We are working towards increasing the youth rate so that we eventually have a single adult rate. Equal pay for equal work has long been a belief of the Labour party, and it is right that that also extends to younger people, but I am delighted that this Labour Government will also deliver for disabled and black, Asian and minority ethnic workers, and that we have embarked on a consultation on the introduction of mandatory pay gap reporting in respect of those workers.

The change in the youth rate, in particular, goes hand in hand with our youth guarantee and our plan to create pathways to good-quality employment for those under 22 with health conditions, whom the last Government left on the scrapheap with no help at all. Labour will ensure not only that those young people are helped to find jobs, but that those jobs are decently paid. We will make work a better choice than benefits for young people.

As I said earlier, the decision that we are making today is the beginning of a journey. The shadow Minister, the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Dame Harriett Baldwin), said that the Conservatives would not vote against the motion, although I must say that in her speech she gave a very good impression of someone who was against it. In my view, if the Conservatives do not agree with it they should vote against it, and should tell us how much they think young people are worth. They should tell us whether we should pay them £10 an hour. They should tell us whether £12.21 is the minimum wage that they would pay. They should let us know by how much they would cut people's wages. In contrast, the Labour Government are proud to be putting money back into 3 million working people's pockets—money that they will spend with local businesses and in local high streets. After 14 years of failure from the Conservatives, Labour is making work pay.

7.47 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Business and Trade (Justin Madders): With the leave of the House, Madam Deputy Speaker, I will begin by addressing the

[Justin Madders]

many contributions that were made to what I think was, overall, a very positive debate. I welcome the support of the Liberal Democrats, and also welcome the hon. Member for Chippenham (Sarah Gibson) to the Chamber: it is good to see her back in her place. She made some important points about the social care sector. We know that the abuse of travel time reimbursement is a huge issue. The Low Pay Commission is keen to look into it, and I am sure that once the fair work agency is up and running, it will focus on it as well.

The hon. Lady's colleague, the hon. Member for Honiton and Sidmouth (Richard Foord), also talked about the importance of that sector. Our impact assessment has established that about one in five social care workers will receive a direct pay rise as a result of the increases announced today. As would be expected, before making its recommendations the Low Commission has consulted widely with, among others, representatives of social care workers. We believe that they have been undervalued for far too long, which is why we are introducing the first ever fair pay agreement in the adult social care sector so that care professionals are recognised and rewarded for the important work that they do. While I appreciate the hon. Member's wish for a separate rate for care workers, we think we are taking the right measures to recognise and value them. The operation of different rates brings a range of challenges relating to enforcement and to clarity for employers, which we think is important.

There were, I have to say, a number of excellent speeches from the Labour Benches. My hon. Friend the Member for Earley and Woodley (Yuan Yang) made the positive economic case and referred to the wealth of evidence in support of increases in the minimum wage. On the Labour Benches, we passionately believe that increased protections at work and increases in the minimum wage are good not just for individuals but for the wider economy. She mentioned the many young people in her constituency who will benefit from the moves to parity for the 18 to 20 age band with the adult rate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Ealing Southall (Deirdre Costigan) has great knowledge and experience in this area. She said that this is the beginning of the journey. That is right. We recognise that it will take time to achieve our ambitions for the Low Pay Commission for the people in this country, but it is a journey we are determined to finish.

My hon. Friend the Member for Blaydon and Consett (Liz Twist) took us back into the depths of history. I must declare that I am one of those who can remember what it was like before the minimum wage. When I tell my children how much I used to earn in my first jobs, they cannot believe it. But it was true: that is what the world was like before the minimum wage. She also reminded us of the doom-laden warnings we got from the Conservative Opposition at the time. We heard a small echo of that tonight, but I think history has proved that those warnings were wrong.

My hon. Friend the Member for Doncaster Central (Sally Jameson) spoke passionately about the issues with in-work poverty, which is one of the key things that we must change in this country. For too long, people have not had work pay for them. Earnings have not kept up with the cost of living and that is one of the reasons why the Low Pay Commission's remit has changed.

Mark Sewards (Leeds South West and Morley) (Lab): I am very grateful to the Minister for giving way. The Low Pay Commission previously said that about 300,000 people are not being paid the minimum wage despite being on it—they are being underpaid. Will he update the House on the Government's progress to ensure that all people on the minimum wage are paid the minimum wage?

Justin Madders: My hon. Friend makes a very important point that those rights are only as good as the ability of the Government to enforce them. As we know, His Majesty's Revenue and Customs has a very effective system to deliver on the minimum wage and we will shortly be releasing our latest round of naming and shaming of those employers who have not done the right thing. We hope that the fair work agency, when it is established, will be even more effective at delivering fairness across the country and ensuring that everyone gets the minimum wage they deserve. We know there are particular sectors where there are acute challenges.

I turn to the points made by the Scottish National party spokesperson, the hon. Member for Dundee Central (Chris Law), about the bills and costs of an 18-year-old being the same as those for an adult. That is something I absolutely understand. It is why we changed the Low Pay Commission's remit to ensure that we eventually get parity for that age group on the full adult rate. It is also why we have changed the remit of the Low Pay Commission to move towards a real living wage for all adults. We understand that that is such an important thing for us to deliver on. He may feel that we are not quite there yet, and we must ensure we take evidence as we go along from businesses on how it impacts on particular sectors and particular parts of society, but 18 to 20-year-olds are getting a £2,500 pay rise this year as a result of the regulations. That is something I am sure he will welcome.

My hon. Friend the Member for Newton Aycliffe and Spennymoor (Alan Strickland) raised very well the regional impacts of the wage increase in his part of the world. It is the case that the regulations will mean 140,000 workers in the north-east, or 14.5% of the total workforce in that region, will benefit from the increase. We should all be absolutely delighted about that.

My hon. Friend the Member for Kettering (Rosie Wrighting) also raised in-work poverty. That is why the remit is being changed. We want to ensure that in-work poverty is consigned to the history books.

My hon. Friend the Member for Hendon (David Pinto-Duschinsky) set out in stark terms the figures associated with the regulations. I may mention them again at some point before I finish. They are the bold numbers that will go directly into people's pockets and that we can show as tangible proof of a Labour Government delivering for working people.

My hon. Friend also raised the matter of the empty Opposition Benches. I do not want to equate that with meaning that the Conservatives do not support these increases, as I think the shadow Minister, the hon. Member for West Worcestershire (Dame Harriett Baldwin), said that they did. I do put her on notice, though, that her party leader has been less than full in her support for the minimum wage, so I hope that the shadow Minister's support for today's measures has not damaged her career prospects. It may well be that there is another leader in a few months anyway, and that things will be

looking up. We do hope that the Conservatives continue to support the minimum wage as we move forward and that they do not change tack now that they have entered opposition.

However, the shadow Minister did raise a number of important questions, which I will now try to address. She raised the impact on public sector workers. Of course, pay for most frontline workers is set through pay review body processes, which do take account of national living wage increases as part of their processes. We do not believe that many public sector workers will be directly affected by this change, but it is something the Departments will take into account when they set their budgets.

The shadow Minister also asked about the cumulative impact of the changes. The impact assessment does show that this year's upratings will represent a 0.14% increase in the UK-wide wage bill, which I think is incredibly good value for what we are delivering into people's pockets. Of course, the total impact of the Employment Rights Bill is, at most, 0.4% of the total wage bill.

The hon. Lady raised questions about burdens on SMEs. The Low Pay Commission does take into account the impact on business as part of its operations. It looks at the competitiveness of individual businesses, the labour market and the wider economy, drawing on extensive labour market pay analysis and stakeholder evidence when recommending rates, and we would expect the commission to do exactly the same next year. Small businesses have, of course, had support from this Government. We have increased the employment allowance from £5,000 to £10,500, meaning that 865,000 employers will pay no national insurance contributions at all, and more than half of employers will gain or see no change from this measure. We have also extended business rates relief for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors.

The hon. Lady raised concerns about the impact of the measures on young people. The youth guarantee will ensure that every young person has access to education or training to help them to find a job, and we are transforming the apprenticeship levy to ensure that young people get the opportunities they deserve.

The shadow Minister raised concerns about the overall labour market. I would just make the point that payroll employment is actually higher now than it was this time last year, and the latest labour force survey last week showed record numbers of people in work. Perhaps the negative headlines that we have been seeing are not actually the reality of the situation. I like to deal with facts, Madam Deputy Speaker, and the facts are that these regulations will put more money into the pockets of workers around the country—around 200,000 workers in Scotland, 160,000 workers in Northern Ireland and 150,000 workers in Wales. This will make a real difference to people: £1,400 for a full-time worker and £2,500 for someone on the 18-to-20 rate.

This is truly a worthwhile exercise, and we thank the Low Pay Commission for its work, as well as HMRC, which enforces on behalf of the Department, and ACAS, which offers impartial advice and expertise to ensure that workplace disputes can be resolved and workers' rights can be upheld. This is a meaningful change being delivered by this Government that delivers a powerful message: this Government, and indeed this Parliament, are committed to making work pay. These real-terms increases to the minimum wage will end insecurity at work. I commend these regulations to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That the draft National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Regulations 2025, which were laid before the House on 4 February, be approved.

Business without Debate

DELEGATED LEGISLATION

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

PAYMENT SCHEME

That the draft Infected Blood Compensation Scheme Regulations 2025, which were laid before this House on 12 February, be approved.—(*Gen Kitchen.*)

Question agreed to.

Madam Deputy Speaker (Judith Cummins): With the leave of the House, I will put motions 11 and 12 together.

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

CHURCH OF ENGLAND (GENERAL SYNOD) (MEASURES)

[*Relevant document: 246th Report of the Ecclesiastical Committee, Chancel Repair (Church Commissioners' Liability) Measure; Church Funds Investment Measure, HC 771.*]

That the Chancel Repair (Church Commissioners' Liability) Measure (HC 773), passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to His Majesty for his Royal Assent in the form in which it was laid before Parliament.

That the Church Funds Investment Measure (HC 772), passed by the General Synod of the Church of England, be presented to His Majesty for his Royal Assent in the form in which it was laid before Parliament.—(*Marsha de Cordova.*)

Question agreed to.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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

That this House authorises the Secretary of State to undertake to pay, and to pay by way of financial assistance under section 8 of the Industrial Development Act 1982, a grant or grants exceeding £30 million and up to a total of £129 million to BioNTech UK Limited to support their planned expansion of Research and Development and Artificial Intelligence activities in the UK over the next 10 years.—(*Gen Kitchen.*)

Question agreed to.

PETITION

Dualling the A66

8 pm

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale) (LD): I rise to present a petition on behalf of 2,247 of my constituents who call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to urgently give the go-ahead to plans to dual the A66 from Penrith to Scotch Corner. They declare that this would bring

“huge benefits to the north West region, reducing congestion and providing a big boost to the North economy; further note that it will limit the number of serious and fatal accidents which tragically are a regular occurrence on this road.

[Tim Farron]

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to give the green light to plans to dual the A66 between Penrith and Scotch Corner, which would reduce congestion, boost the economy, and save lives.”

Following is the full text of the petition:

[The petition of residents of the constituency of Westmorland and Lonsdale, Declares that giving the go-ahead to plans to dual the A66 from Penrith to Scotch Corner would bring huge benefits to the north West region, reducing congestion and providing a big boost to the North economy; further notes that it will limit the number of serious and fatal accidents which tragically are a regular occurrence on this road.

The petitioners therefore request that the House of Commons urge the Government to give the green light to plans to dual the A66 between Penrith and Scotch Corner, which would reduce congestion, boost the economy, and save lives.

And the petitioners remain, etc.]

[P003054]

Veterinary Products in Waterways

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

8.1 pm

Rachel Gilmour (Tiverton and Minehead) (LD): I am delighted to secure my first Adjournment debate, and for it to be about veterinary products in waterways, specifically neonicotinoids such as fipronil and imidacloprid. From now on, for your sake and mine, Madam Deputy Speaker, I shall be referring to these neonicotinoids as neonics.

I have been extremely keen to secure a debate on this matter for some time now, having had it raised with me before the general election by a constituent, Ueli Zellweger, who is a vet. It is high time that we gave this topic the scrutiny that it so desperately needs.

We are a nation of pet lovers. It is estimated that there are around 25 million cats and dogs in the UK. I speak as a doting dog and cat owner myself and I know that our furry friends are an integral part of millions of British families. And so when fleas and ticks come biting, bringing discomfort and annoyance to our beloved pets, we of course want to act swiftly and efficiently to alleviate their suffering.

Flea treatment products containing fipronil and imidacloprid are seen as a highly convenient and effective way of dealing with the problems caused by fleas and ticks. In the UK, Imperial College London claims that fipronil is an ingredient in 396 different pet anti-flea and tick treatments, with imidacloprid authorised in some 138 veterinary products. However, this convenience comes at a cost to our waterways and associated ecosystems. Popular though these products are, safe they are not. These two ingredients are extremely toxic. They are very powerful killers indeed and the picture is not pretty. In fact, so powerful are these chemicals that just one drop of fipronil has the potency to wipe out 30,000 bees as well as causing serious neurological damage and hampering the mobility of thousands upon thousands more.

As well as this, according to extensive research conducted by Imperial College London, one monthly flea treatment for a large dog contains enough imidacloprid to kill a staggering 25 million bees. The decline in pollinator populations, which in part can be attributed to the use of imidacloprid, threatens agricultural productivity and has very serious long-term implications for our national food security. This is not simply a mere triviality to be neglected.

Authorities have recognised the toxicity levels and the hideous harm that these chemicals can cause on the natural world. Since 2017, fipronil has been banned in agricultural use, and imidacloprid has been banned since 2018. But given the unregulated nature of these chemicals in relation to flea products, we are allowing these products into our environment through the back door, and our aquatic and nearby ecosystems are paying the price.

There is not just one route for these neonics to enter our British waterways. It is important to be aware of all the various pathways towards this pollution. The most obvious, and most direct, is simply the contact of pets with water bodies themselves. If a dog goes swimming in a river after receiving their course of treatment, the product is then introduced into the waterways, allowing

it to enter our rivers, lakes and streams and go wherever the water takes it, wreaking havoc as it travels. Dissemination can also occur because of rainwater run-off, with residual product washing off from treated animals into drainage systems and ending up in our waterways. Equally, the washing of pet bedding and even pet owners' hands are thought to be common ways in which these dangerous products enter our waterways.

There are some less direct pathways that still pose a problem—and at this point I must apologise to those currently eating their supper. These products are generally harmless to our dogs and cats, but they can be absorbed by our four-legged friends. Once absorbed, the products can be excreted, and even when responsible owners clean up after their pets—something that is not universal, unfortunately—the traces of fipronil and imidacloprid left behind can still prove incredibly damaging once washed into our waterways.

Studies have revealed that imidacloprid is one of the most frequently detected pesticides in dogs' urine, but the level is still comparatively low, with the National Office of Animal Health finding that only around 11% of topically applied fipronil is systematically absorbed. The shedding of treated hair or skin can also lead to a pathway being created.

Once these products are in our waterways, not only are they utterly deadly for the thousands of native aquatic organisms in the UK, but they are highly toxic to sea and freshwater fish. Even at low concentrations, fipronil can be disruptive to aquatic life cycles. River sample data gathered by the UK Environment Agency over the course of a two-year period between 2016 and 2018 from 20 different waterways in England discovered fipronil residue in 98% of freshwater samples and traces of imidacloprid in 66% of all samples.

Beyond the effect on our waterways, other studies have found fipronil to be incredibly toxic to birds. It brings me no joy to report that this is not just an aquatic problem. Indeed, through a process of collecting 103 different bird nests, researchers found that every single one without exception contained fipronil, and an overwhelming majority had significant remnants of imidacloprid.

The truth is that the decline in aquatic insects that emanates from the flowing of these products in our waterways affects fish populations, who rely on these insects as a primary food source. This in turn impacts bird species that prey on fish, producing a dangerous snowball effect that reverberates throughout the ecosystem. This deterioration of biodiversity greatly diminishes the overall resilience of our ecosystems, exposing a vulnerability to factors of climate change and invasive species.

One of the most troubling aspects of the likes of fipronil and imidacloprid is their persistence in the environment. The chemicals disintegrate slowly and can remain in soils and waterways for extensive periods of time. In the case of imidacloprid, scientists say that the residual effect lasts in soil for months, sometimes even years, and the breakdown product of these chemicals is understood to be even more toxic than the parent compound.

Jayne Kirkham (Truro and Falmouth) (Lab/Co-op): Does the hon. Member agree that some pet owners may not be aware of how bad this issue is, and so packaging, usage guidance and point-of-sale advice for pet treatments should give some warning of the danger that the product could affect aquatic life if it ever entered watercourses?

Rachel Gilmour: I am coming on to that later, but the hon. Member is absolutely right.

It is also important to note that the economic costs of mitigating the environmental and health impacts of these chemicals are substantial.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): Would the hon. Lady give way?

Rachel Gilmour: With pleasure—and happy birthday.

Jim Shannon: I commend the hon. Lady on bringing this issue forward. She is right to outline the problems with fipronil and what it can do to our water, but there are many other things that can affect water. Northern Ireland Water goes around all the farms providing a free service collecting herbicides, weed killer, sheep dip, insecticide sprays, rodenticides, fungicide sprays, veterinary medicines and empty containers. Take all those things out of the country and away from the waterways and we can make our water cleaner. This issue is not just about the specific chemicals that the hon. Lady mentions; there are many other things that need to be removed as well. Does she agree with that?

Rachel Gilmour: I thank the hon. Member for his interesting intervention. I agree, and I will talk about farmers in particular in a moment.

It is also important to note that the economic cost of mitigating the environmental and health impacts of these chemicals is substantial. Water bills are set to rise precipitously this year, causing pain to the average consumer. In Tiverton and Minehead, rises of 20% and 32% have been announced by the two water companies that supply us. Purifying contaminated waterways and restoring the ecosystems blighted by those chemicals requires significant financial resources, placing a burden on communities and straining local government purses. How much of that financial impact is reflected in these bill rises? Are consumers facing price rises in their water bills because we are not effectively regulating problem products such as neonics?

We know that there is an issue with our water quality—the issues at Dunster beach and Blue Anchor in my constituency spring to mind. That is why the Government passed the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025—and why my party leader fell into Windermere several times during the general election campaign to raise awareness. When will we clean up our act and put in place the firmest restrictions on these polluting water companies? When will we look at what we can do to stop other pollutants from getting anywhere near our waterways in the first place? I will be interested to hear from the Minister whether this cost has been factored into the Government's thinking on this issue, and whether there could be some answers to the questions I have posed.

On a broader note, I will touch on how we can help our farmers and those in our rural communities with these environmental challenges. Our waterways make up a key part of our natural biodiversity, but each part relies on the other. That makes the recent decision to axe the sustainable farming incentive scheme all the more worrying and damaging to our rural communities. If there is not the money for sustainable farming, agricultural practices will naturally follow economic sense, if not the careful environmental custodianship on which our farmers pride themselves.

[*Rachel Gilmour*]

Farmers are suffering at the hands of this Government, and with them so suffers our environment. Will the Minister take this opportunity to reassure the House that her colleagues in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are doing everything they can to support our farmers as they balance the agricultural and environmental needs of the land? Will she also ensure that due consideration is given to the restoration of the SFI scheme, so that we can keep making progress on our environmental goals, hand in hand with farmers, and not be distracted from the harms of damaging products such as the neonics that I have been talking about by losing our much needed local and rural allies?

I am aware that this speech has been slightly doom and gloom, but I will now turn to what we can do as an alternative. Research has shown that the likes of coconut oil, citronella oil, good old lavender and eucalyptus provide good natural and, most importantly, non-toxic alternatives for flea and tick repellents. The market is awash with collars for cats and dogs infused with these essential oils, which are both practical and natural. There has been very little emphasis on these solutions. We should be doing much more to promote the benefits of these chemical-free remedies.

As seen in recent developments in Switzerland, where the Government are carrying out water testing, there is a clear need for environmental impact assessments of the use of fipronil and imidacloprid. These should be launched as a matter of urgency, and I would welcome the Minister's reflections on this point. We Liberal Democrats have called for any emergency authorisations of neonics to be revoked, and for the introduction of tighter restrictions on their use. I invite the Minister to comment on the state of play and whether there is a serious appetite in the Government to address this issue.

It is clear that we have a serious challenge on our hands. As the hon. Member for Truro and Falmouth (Jayne Kirkham) said, these products are advertised widely and sold ubiquitously. I am not blind to the fact that these products have brought undeniable benefits in pest control, but their unintended consequences serve as a stark reminder of the need for sustainable and nature-friendly practices. I genuinely believe that there is a desire to do more to regulate these highly toxic chemicals. Lawmakers were right to impose a blanket ban on fipronil and imidacloprid in agricultural settings in 2017 and 2018. The will should be there to ensure that these products cannot be allowed to continue damaging our freshwater ecosystems. Further regulation is the only way forward to remove harmful contaminants and arrest the degradation of aquatic fauna in this country's waterways.

The Government also need to go further and faster in regulating our waterways and the water companies damaging them overall. The Water (Special Measures) Act is a good first step, but the Government can and must do more. Ofwat is failing in its duties. The time has come for a new clean water authority to replace it as we up our game in protecting our precious waterways. I see no reason why reforms designed to keep neonics out of our waterways cannot come hand in hand with our push to keep sewage and other contaminants and pollutants out of our waterways.

In the short term, for neonics, restrictions should be placed on the trade of fipronil and imidacloprid, with the only exception to their continued use coming under strict conditions of prescription only by veterinary medical professionals and for a limited time period. We know that Amazon and the over-the-counter market in pet stores can lead to the propagation of those products in our natural environment, so restrictions would make some sense.

When the time allows, a ban for all other usage should certainly be in the Government's scope. It is clear that decisive action must be taken on this matter. Could the Minister shed some light on whether the Government would be willing to assess the potential merits of moving in that direction? From all that I have seen, that appears the prudent—and perhaps only—direction to take.

8.15 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Emma Hardy): It is, as always, a pleasure to see you in the Chair, Madam Deputy Speaker. I congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Minehead (Rachel Gilmour) on securing the debate, and I especially congratulate her on her first Adjournment debate in the House. I am sure that it will be the first of many—and probably the first of many regarding water, so we might get used to seeing each other on such evenings.

Obviously, we cannot miss the opportunity to congratulate the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) on his birthday. I am sure that I speak for the entire House when I say that I hope he has had a wonderful day. An Adjournment debate would not be the same without him, so I thank him for joining us, even on his birthday.

I know that the Government have carried out monitoring in the Tiverton and Minehead area to deliver programmes such as updating the water framework directive status, natural capital ecosystems assessment and catchment sensitive farming. As hon. Members know, the quality of our rivers, lakes and seas is essential for supporting our ecosystems, providing clean water and producing our food. Our beautiful rivers, lakes, seas and beaches are a source of pride for our communities, and we want to restore them to that end.

I totally agree that we are a nation of pet lovers. Again, I have to mention my three wonderful cats—I never miss the opportunity to mention them—who are Meglatron, Lily and Serena. Serena was given that name because she is such a beautifully serene lady, and Meglatron because he is a crazy little boy we have running around the house all the time. The hon. Lady is quite right, and I am sure that the concerns about fleas and ticks are felt by many pet owners up and down the country.

On our wider neonics work, on 21 March—just four days ago—we released the national action plan on pesticides. It has three objectives: to encourage the take-up of integrated pest management; to establish a timeline and targets for the reduction of the use of pesticides; and to strengthen compliance, to ensure safety and better environmental outcomes. Can you believe, Madam Deputy Speaker, that the NAP, which we published just last Friday—we put out the written ministerial statement

on Monday—had been waiting over a decade under the previous Government? We managed to get it out in eight months. I am quite proud of that.

On our wider work on neonics, before Christmas we made a written ministerial statement talking about how we wanted to ensure a complete ban in the use of the emergency authorisation. The hon. Lady will know that I declined this year's emergency authorisation for the use of Cruiser pesticides. That demonstrates the Government's commitment to tackling some of the concerns that are widely held.

The quality of our water is, of course, essential for supporting ecosystems, providing clean drinking water and producing our food. Maintaining healthy and clean water sources is vital to achieving the Government's mission for sustainable economic growth, but the public are also concerned about chemicals used for the treatment and prevention of fleas and ticks for pets in UK waterways. The Government are committed to understanding the impacts of veterinary medicines entering our environment.

Speaking more widely about water quality, the flawed water system that the Government inherited is still discharging record levels of sewage into our rivers, lakes and seas. The situation is not just an environmental failure; it is also a public health crisis, demanding our immediate and decisive action to rectify decades of neglect and mismanagement. We need a systematic approach to tackling issues that impact the whole of the drainage and waste water systems, stopping the unnecessary pressure from rainwater and sewage misuse entering the system to the point at which it is discharged into the environment.

As mentioned, the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 gained Royal Assent on 24 February 2025, boosting the power of water sector regulators to tackle pollution. That major legislation delivers on this Government's promise to clean up the water sector and is the most significant increase in enforcement powers for water industry regulators in a decade. The Act will give regulators new powers to take tougher and faster action to crack down on water companies damaging the environment and failing their customers. However, we do not just want to give that—oh no, we want to do so much more.

Further legislation aimed at fundamentally transforming how our entire water system operates will be guided by the findings of the Independent Water Commission, led by Sir Jon Cunliffe, which is currently conducting the largest review of the industry since privatisation. I also mention the wonderful start to the day I had today, because earlier this morning, at 9 o'clock, I met Sir Steve Redgrave and lots of young rowers from the University of Reading to discuss how we can improve our water quality for the rivers and lakes that we all love. It was a pleasure to have a cup of coffee with him very early this morning and talk about our shared ambition to clean up our rivers.

Having spoken about the importance of water quality, I will turn in detail to the topic of veterinary medicines in waterways. The Government recognise the presence of parasiticides—I nearly got away with that—in the wider environment as a significant concern, and we are actively gathering evidence on that complex, multifactorial issue. All veterinary medicines undergo a rigorous scientific assessment before approval. As the regulator for veterinary medicines, the Veterinary Medicines Directorate balances the benefits of veterinary medicine for animal health

and welfare, as well as human health protection, against the associated risk, which obviously includes environmental risks. Medicines are only ever authorised if the benefit outweighs the risk. The VMD follows internationally recognised guidelines for assessing the environmental risks of veterinary medicines for all animals, including pets.

Fleas and ticks can lead to, as mentioned, discomfort and distress in pets. Those parasites can host microbes that cause disease in pets and potentially in pet owners who encounter the fleas and ticks. Topical flea treatments play a crucial role in protecting both animal and human health from fleas, ticks and disease. It is therefore essential that we take a balanced approach to the benefits of such treatments and their potential environmental impact when considering the issue.

While there is evidence of the presence of fipronil and imidacloprid in fresh waters, it is well established that, as insecticides, these substances are inherently toxic to invertebrates and we do not understand the effects that current levels are having at a population and ecosystem level. We are, however, committed to understanding the potential impacts of veterinary medicines entering the environment. The VMD has led on the formation of a cross-Government group on pharmaceuticals in the environment to develop a co-ordinated strategy to reduce the impact of the substances in the environment. The group includes key governmental bodies, including the Environment Agency, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, the Health and Safety Executive and representatives from the devolved Governments. While the VMD is prioritising the development of an evidence base, working to resolve the issue will require involvement by all key stakeholders, including the pharmaceutical industry and veterinary professionals.

The work does not come without challenge and stakeholders remain divided on the way forward. Some advocate for the benefits of year-round parasiticide use for humans and animal health, others emphasise the need for more cautious use, while some push for a complete ban. Any decision to limit use must be carefully weighed against the benefits to ensure a balanced approach, as restrictions could impact animal welfare, animal health and even public health. Also, there is still a critical evidence gap in understanding the full impact of those options on both animal and human health, as well as on the environment, and that must be explored further before any regulatory action is taken.

Tessa Munt (Wells and Mendip Hills) (LD) *rose—*

Jayne Kirkham (Truro and Falmouth) (Lab/Co-op) *rose—*

Emma Hardy: I will give way to the hon. Lady on the Liberal Democrat Bench and then to my hon. Friend.

Tessa Munt: Could the Minister just clarify whether that group will consider the benefits of using natural remedies, or a combination of natural remedies, and of ensuring that people are fully aware of the benefits of that, and that that will be in some way quantified, as my hon. Friend the Member for Tiverton and Minehead (Rachel Gilmour) mentioned during her speech.

Emma Hardy: Yes, we are going to look at all the evidence on the available options. As I say, there is a difference of opinion over the best way forward; people have different views on that. It is my job, as we are a responsible Government, to look at all the evidence and try to find a balanced way forward, so that will be included as part of the evidence base.

Jayne Kirkham: Is there a rough timeline for that group to come back with a report?

Emma Hardy: My hon. Friend is always very dedicated to DEFRA-related issues, and it is always nice to see her here. I will check to see whether I can give her a more detailed decision on timing—if I cannot do so in this meeting, I will ensure that I let her know afterwards.

As I said, the VMD is developing the evidence base and has commissioned scientific research to investigate how these substances reach rivers and streams. It is working closely with stakeholders to collect data and address the issue. It is supporting calls for a review of the internationally agreed environmental risk assessment standards. The VMD and the Environment Agency are working closely together to understand the risks posed by these chemicals and to respond appropriately.

To further address this issue, the group on pharmaceuticals in the environment has developed a road map for reducing levels of two veterinary substances

in UK surface waters. The priority for this road map is to raise awareness and improve pet owner education on risks and appropriate use—I know that point has come up here. Once finalised, that road map would be available to all stakeholders. As unresearched policies can fail badly, any changes we implement must be evidence based and measurable to achieve success.

This Government will not turn the other way or continue to allow our rivers, lakes and seas to be polluted. Through the Water (Special Measures) Act 2025, the independent Water Commission, future legislation and many other actions, we are demonstrating our commitment to a comprehensive reset of the water industry and will drive long-term transformative change. We remain dedicated to addressing the environmental impact of veterinary medicines, and will continue working with relevant stakeholders to find solutions that protect both animal health and the environment. I again congratulate the hon. Member for Tiverton and Minehead on securing the debate. The public want clean water and we are determined to deliver it.

Question put and agreed to.

8.26 pm

House adjourned.

Westminster Hall

Tuesday 25 March 2025

[PETER DOWD *in the Chair*]

9.30 am

Sitting suspended.

Horticulture Trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland

11 am

Mr Gregory Campbell (East Londonderry) (DUP): I beg to move,

That this House has considered horticulture trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Mr Dowd. May I say at the outset that I am glad to see the Minister in her place? On a separate issue, I thank her publicly for her endeavours with a constituency query of mine a week ago, on which she went above and beyond the call of duty. Both I and my constituent are extremely grateful to her for doing so.

The horticultural sector encompasses mostly small and medium-sized enterprises, and it supports over 700,000 jobs across the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, the original protocol agreement presented substantial difficulties for horticultural businesses based in GB in supplying Northern Ireland. It has to be said, and I am more than happy to say so, that in the time since then there have been some improvements, but unfortunately those improvements do not get us where we need to be. They simply get us a few steps along what seems as if it will be an exceptionally long road, and we have to try to make it much shorter than it looks like being at the moment.

The problems with which we were originally faced emanated from what I call the fantasy of the so-called hard border—the whole concept of a hard border on the island of Ireland—which just was not going to come about, but was used by the EU, and we ended up with the protocol as a result.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I commend my hon. Friend. He says there have been some advances or steps forward, but all they are really doing is just picking at the scab, so the scab is still there. Does he not agree that, after the Government have been saying for months that the kinks are being worked out, consumers in Northern Ireland are still finding it impossible to procure seeds for plants that simply pose no risk to the EU, which is absolutely frustrating? With the greatest respect, the Government must negotiate, on our constituents' behalf, with those who refuse a common-sense approach. If only we all had common sense, it would be a big day, would it not?

Mr Campbell: I thank my hon. Friend for his intervention, and yes, indeed. We have come a small number of steps, but there is an exceptionally long road to reach the finishing line.

Robin Swann (South Antrim) (UUP): I thank the hon. Member for bringing forward this debate. As he knows, I have raised this in relation to Colemans Garden Centre in my constituency. It has said about one of its

suppliers based in Scotland, which got a new contract in Japan, that it is easier for that Scottish supplier to send plants to Japan than to send them 14 miles across the water to Northern Ireland. Richard Fry, the manager of Colemans, has said that when it engaged with that supplier it just came up against a wall of bureaucracy, in having to name everything on a pallet and in the trailer with the trailer's registration number. The bureaucracy and the paperwork have actually stolen that easier trade.

Mr Campbell: I thank the hon. Member for that. He itemises a problem that is faced on multiple occasions by many of the companies in our constituencies. How that wall, or that restriction, came about was summed up by the then Chief Constable six years ago, who said:

“There are 300 crossing points between our two countries, how on earth are my officers supposed to police that effectively?”

He was of course talking about the security implications, but similarly it applies to the consumer border that exists.

Alex Easton (North Down) (Ind): Thank you for your chairmanship, Mr Dowd. Does the hon. Member agree that the sixfold burden on horticultural trade, encompassing regulatory divergence, sanitary and phytosanitary checks, certification requirements, increased costs and paperwork, is imposing an untenable strain on businesses across Northern Ireland?

Mr Campbell: I do indeed agree with the hon. Member. A year ago, I said:

“Whilst prohibitions have been lifted for 12 types of plants, engagement continues between the UK and EU on a further 9 species, there needs to be further progress.”

The horticultural working group was set up to identify and resolve issues such as this, but it needs to move on these outstanding problems so that a simpler system is in place to enable people of all backgrounds to purchase goods within their own country. For example, large full-scale advertisements in daily broadsheet newspapers for various seeds and plants say at the bottom that they are available throughout most of the United Kingdom—but not all. At the bottom of the adverts in small print there is the wording, “We are also unable to ship seeds or plants to EU countries and Northern Ireland.” That is as a result of the issues that emanated from the protocol.

A local nursery in my constituency works closely with Magilligan prison to reduce reoffending, and with inmates who are coming to the end of their term and are trying to work their way back into society. The local nursery project wrote to me recently to say:

“The project has established a ‘UK and Ireland Sourced and Grown’ accredited native tree nursery within Magilligan Prison, working with inmates to supply native trees to the public, private and voluntary sector. In recent weeks”—

they said almost six months ago, and I checked with them last week and this still pertains now—

“the tree nursery has run into difficulties sourcing saplings from UK suppliers...At present DAERA advise that it is impossible to bring from the UK to Northern Ireland, species on this following list”.

The letter itemises the list, and then goes on to say:

“The current situation threatens the sustainability of the tree nursery within HMP Magilligan with impacts on the future supply of trees from the tree nursery and the associated employment of staff assisting with delivery of the tree nursery (the funding of these roles with Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust relies on income generated), and the rehabilitation of inmates engaged

[*Mr Gregory Campbell*]

with delivery of tree nursery activities. I wished to bring this situation to your attention, in the hope that in your discussions with the UK Government you can raise the bizarre situation in relation to the bringing of plant saplings from UK suppliers to supply a UK and Irish Sourced and Grown Accredited Tree Nursery in Northern Ireland.”

That letter is from a local nursery that is telling me and others that there is a huge problem, where it is being told that it cannot bring in some saplings, and the outcome of not being able to do that threatens employment and the good work that the nursery and the prison are doing to try and rehabilitate prisoners coming to the end of their sentences.

The Consumer Council in Northern Ireland did research a few months ago looking at the experiences of retailers that do not deliver to Northern Ireland, focusing on online marketplaces. It did a survey of over 1,000 Northern Ireland customers, and 76% of those surveyed stated that they had experienced online marketplaces that do not deliver to Northern Ireland. The second most common product category was garden plants, seeds and horticulture—38% of those surveyed said that they experienced the impossibility of getting plants and seeds delivered.

The ironic thing is this: as an MP from Northern Ireland I am in Westminster today; before the end of the week, I will go to an airport. En route to the airport, if I wanted, I could go to a garden centre and acquire the self-same seeds. I could pay for them at the garden place, put them in my pocket, board the plane and arrive in Belfast, and there would be no checks whatsoever. I can distribute, plant, sow or do whatever I want with those seeds in Northern Ireland, having taken them from the same nursery that will not supply customers in Northern Ireland online or by post. It is no wonder that my local nursery in Magilligan says that this is utterly bizarre, and it needs to be resolved.

The Consumer Council informed us of the situation, and it says that the problem is not getting any better and that improvement is needed. That is why I hope the Minister can respond on the horticultural working group and what progress it has made. It would appear that the progress is quite small, in so far as it has achieved anything.

The Horticultural Trades Association represents 1,200 businesses, the majority of which are small and medium-sized enterprises, and it made a representation to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee. My good friend, my right hon. Friend the Member for Belfast East (Gavin Robinson), is present today, and he serves on that Committee. In its evidence, the HTA gave some information and highlighted the problems, including the continuing ban on up to 30 native plants and complete species, and it said that online sales from business to consumer were still not possible in Northern Ireland. The HTA indicated that the new Northern Ireland plant health label represents some marginal progress but still requires compliance with a range of rules, creating additional cost. The diversion of trade and re-orientation of production to the EU is a major problem.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): In my constituency, we lost a large number of trees as a result of the storm five or six weeks ago. Mount Stewart had 10,000 trees

destroyed, and other people across Strangford and the Ards peninsula, as well as those further afield, had something similar; but garden centres in my constituency tell me they cannot access the trees for replenishment. Does my hon. Friend agree that there is now an even bigger onus on us to ensure that the trees are available?

Mr Campbell: My hon. Friend is absolutely right; that is just further evidence of the ongoing problems. I suppose the problem is that we have potential solutions in the making but they seem interminably long. The establishment of Intertrade UK offers us the prospect of further progress, but it needs to be given adequate support not only to identify the problems, some of which we have identified here today, but to try to provide the solutions. The EU must be persuaded of the miniscule impact. In the grand scheme of things, Northern Ireland is 3% of the population of the United Kingdom, so any thought that this will jeopardise or provide unforeseen problems to the EU internal market is ludicrous.

Carla Lockhart (Upper Bann) (DUP): I thank my hon. Friend for securing this morning’s debate. I believe the biggest problem that we face is the fact that Northern Ireland has basically been left outside the UK’s plant health area, which means that NI businesses have to comply with EU rules over British ones. Many native British trees are not available in Northern Ireland, and the Woodland Trust free school packs are not available in Northern Ireland for that very reason. Decade-old trading arrangements have been undermined, and there is bureaucracy. The protocol and the Windsor framework are failing horticultural society, and we need our Government to step up and intervene for this sector, or it will fail.

Mr Campbell: My hon. Friend is right. I will conclude with this important point: this is not a political issue in the Northern Ireland sense of Unionists complaining about the protocol. Plants, seeds and business affect people of every community. This is not a Unionist problem; it is a problem of unfairness to everybody in Northern Ireland who wants to do business—every firm, no matter their background, and every customer, no matter their background or political persuasion. It is a problem that needs to be resolved.

There will not be any checks. I recently raised with the Home Office the issue of electronic travel authorisations in terms of visitors to the Republic coming to Northern Ireland, and the point I made was that there will not be any checks because there cannot be. There are 300 crossing points on a 300-mile land border. There are not going to be any checks for ETAs for travellers, just as there are not going to be any checks in terms of people taking seeds across by plane or by ferry, or a boat from Cairnryan to Larne.

We need to get it resolved. Burying our heads in the sand will not make the problem go away. The problem will not be dealt with by politicians simply complaining about it, which is what we have seen and heard about over the past few years. I have been exceptionally critical of those politicians who complain but do not offer a diligent, effective representation to try to get a resolution. I hope the Minister will be able to contribute and give us some examples and indications of the significant progress that will be made in the next few months.

11.16 am

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Fleur Anderson): It is a great pleasure to respond to this debate and to serve under your chairship, Mr Dowd. I thank the hon. Member for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell) for bringing this important debate to the Chamber, and for raising the many issues that he talked about in his speech. It was a pleasure to work with him recently to help one of his constituents. When we can do that, it is wonderful to see the results. I also thank all the other hon. Members who raised issues about their constituencies.

The hon. Member for East Londonderry is a strong advocate for businesses and consumers in Northern Ireland, and I acknowledge the work that he has done and continues to do. As he said, we need to be constructive. We need to come together and get solutions. The debate will be significant in achieving that.

The first provisional estimate for farm incomes in Northern Ireland in 2023, published by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, showed that the horticultural sector had an output of £70 million, with the main horticultural export being mushrooms and vegetables, which made up £46 million of that. The total gross output for agriculture in Northern Ireland in 2023 was £2.87 billion. Just two weeks ago, I visited C & L Mushrooms in Newry to learn about its success in exporting to the organic market across the UK, which it does daily. I also picked some mushrooms and learned about that with the Northern Ireland DAERA Minister, Andrew Muir.

There is one fundamental point that we must accept when discussing the matter raised by the hon. Member for East Londonderry. As a result of leaving the European Union, we have two trading entities—the European Union and the United Kingdom—and the ability to have different rules while seeking to ensure the freedom of movement of goods, which is so vital for businesses, jobs and consumers across Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The practical outworkings of that situation are exemplified in the trading of horticultural goods, as the hon. Member has pointed out. It is important that we recognise that the island of Ireland has been treated as one single epidemiological unit for decades, and that is an important part of the negotiations that are happening now.

However, the hon. Member rightly pointed out that challenges exist. The Windsor framework protects the UK internal market, while enabling the EU to be confident that its rules will also be respected. Significantly, the arrangements in the Windsor framework protect trade in agricultural goods between GB and Northern Ireland through the establishment of the Northern Ireland retail movement scheme and the Northern Ireland plant health label, also known as the NIPHL. The framework has ensured that movements of agricultural goods from Northern Ireland to Great Britain continue to benefit from unfettered market access.

The Northern Ireland plant health label removes the requirement to obtain burdensome and costly phytosanitary certificates, replacing them with free-of-charge, self-printed labels. Nearly 600 businesses in Great Britain and Northern Ireland have joined the Northern Ireland plant health label scheme since it went live on 1 October 2023. Indeed, the NIPHL has also ensured that seed potatoes

can once again move freely between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Since the implementation of the plant health label, more than 1,500 tonnes have been moved, protecting this key industry.

Carla Lockhart: Perhaps the Minister will come and visit one of the largest potato producers in Northern Ireland in my constituency, which still experiences daily problems when getting seed and ware potatoes from Scotland. I have raised this issue in the House and I have issued an invitation to the Secretary of State, but perhaps the Minister would like to take up that invitation to come and hear that her words ring hollow for the businesses in Northern Ireland that still experience difficulties on a daily basis.

Fleur Anderson: I thank the hon. Member for raising that. I would be very pleased to visit and talk about exactly what practical issues still exist. The label scheme should have enabled free movement from business to business, so we need to address the fact that it has not in the case she mentions. The horticultural working group needs to address that as well. I would be pleased to visit and to hear more about the issues that she has already raised in the House.

The framework safeguards horticultural movements—generally—providing a sustainable long-term footing. However, I recognise that improvements need to be made in the areas raised by the hon. Members for Upper Bann and for East Londonderry, and by others. That is the focus of the horticultural working group, and I commend its work. The body is co-chaired by senior officials from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and the Cabinet Office, and it draws on support from other officials in those Departments and across Government as the focus of the agenda requires. There are representatives of the Ulster Farmers Union, the National Farmers Union and the Horticultural Trades Association. Business leaders, as well as a small number of other horticultural businesses, also sit on the working group. The group meets regularly to address issues, and I welcome the constructive and honest way in which it approaches its work. I am also very ready to meet any of its members; I met the Ulster Farmers Union last week.

There is guidance and support available to help businesses in Great Britain understand the schemes that can be used for moving goods from GB to Northern Ireland. The horticultural working group membership worked with UK Government officials to revise that guidance, which was published earlier this year. I reassure the House that it is a well-established process through which industry can raise issues and they will be addressed.

In addition, the framework and our improved relationships with our European Union counterparts continue to facilitate the movement of high-risk plants. As the hon. Member for East Londonderry pointed out, there has been progress, but more needs to be made and that is what we need to keep working on.

Through that constructive engagement, we are seeing results. Last month, we lifted the ban on a further two species of plant—silver and downy birch—taking the total to 23. The hon. Member for East Londonderry highlighted how important that is for the tree nursery in his constituency, which is doing such good work rehabilitating prisoners. The hon. Member for Upper

[*Fleur Anderson*]

Bann pointed out that the Woodland Trust free school packs are not available. I hope the horticultural working group will listen to that. I will point out the issue to its members, and they can work out why it is happening and work on common-sense ways in which we can overcome it.

Active scientific dialogue is taking place on a further six species, including white dogwood and English yew. There is a small list that is being worked through one by one. The UK Government have submitted a further 17 species for scientific assessment, again with areas of focus being led by industry and its priorities. In matters relating to horticulture, as in other sectors, the Government have sought to resolve challenges in constructive and mutually beneficial ways. These are the actions of a responsible Government responding to the concerns of their citizens and abiding by their commitments in international law on the world stage.

There are other ways in which the Government can intervene to protect and support the internal market and the flow of horticultural goods. The hon. Member for East Londonderry wrote to the Secretary of State recently to advise him of a GB-based seller of plants and seeds that was not selling to consumers in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State asked DEFRA officials to meet representatives of that company to provide more information on the schemes available to facilitate GB-NI trade. As a result of that conversation, the company has undertaken to review its current arrangements. The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) mentioned that there needs to be common sense in this discussion. We need to have businesses exploring solutions with the Government, hopefully enabling us to support each other.

Mr Gregory Campbell: I thank the Minister for her reference to my correspondence with the Secretary of State. Indeed, I was quoting the management of that firm, who say that they are still unable to supply Northern Ireland. Will the Minister indicate when those discussions may terminate? Are they likely to end in the company revising that advert to remove the statement, and supplying to Northern Ireland?

Fleur Anderson: I recognise that it is frustrating that, this long after Brexit, we are still trying to work this out but it is the reality of the situation. I am glad that the

hon. Member secured this debate because it adds to the urgency that is clearly needed by businesses and consumers in Northern Ireland. I want to see a solution agreed. The horticulture working group and businesses need to look at ways to work this out. Business-to-business is enabled, but business-to-consumer is hard. That is where the solution is needed.

Gavin Robinson (Belfast East) (DUP): I thank the Minister for responding to this important and timely debate, secured by my hon. Friend the Member for East Londonderry (Mr Campbell). The Minister knows that we are working through the consequences of a wholly disproportionate approach, in which the EU tries to control what we do within our own internal market. She has two significant opportunities coming up: Lord Murphy's review and the negotiations between the Paymaster General and the European Union on SPS, and all the rest. Will she take the contents of this debate, and her experience of the frustrations of Northern Irish businesses and ensure that they form part of those processes?

Fleur Anderson: I thank the right hon. Member for raising the SPS veterinary agreement; it is an important part of the picture. Many issues need to be resolved soon, both through the processes that the right hon. Member mentioned and by resetting our relationship with the EU. I met deputy heads of missions from the EU last week to talk about the opportunities in Northern Ireland, the importance of a faithful working through of the Windsor framework, and resolving these issues. Work is absolutely being done to resolve all those issues, and it will be important to reach an SPS veterinary agreement. That will not just support the Government's mission for economic growth, which is a priority for this Government, but further protect the UK's internal market. Achieving those goals will not only support the Union but benefit consumers. I acknowledge the strength with which the hon. Member for East Londonderry supports both those aims and common-sense solutions to working through these issues for businesses and consumers in Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. I reassure him, and the House, that I share his support for and commitment to those aims, and to working this through.

Question put and agreed to.

11.27 am

Sitting suspended.

Nutrition for Growth Summit

[CHRISTINE JARDINE *in the Chair*]

3.17 pm

Christine Jardine (in the Chair): Because of our delayed start, the debate may now continue until 4.47 pm. I call David Mundell to move the motion.

David Mundell (Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale) (Con): I beg to move,

That this House has considered the Nutrition for Growth Paris Summit 2025.

It is a particular pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine. I am grateful for the opportunity to propose this motion and to make the case for a strong, ambitious and well-targeted UK commitment at the Nutrition for Growth summit, which takes place in Paris this Thursday and Friday, and which I am pleased to be able to attend alongside my friends the hon. Members for Exeter (Steve Race) and for Worthing West (Dr Cooper).

It is more than three years since we last gathered in Westminster Hall to debate the previous Nutrition for Growth summit, held in Tokyo in December 2021. This debate comes at an important moment for global nutrition, especially in the light of recent decisions in the US and here in the UK about spending on aid and international development. It also comes the week after the publication of the report of the International Development Committee, on which I serve as a member, “The Government’s efforts to achieve SDG2: Zero Hunger”.

We all know that access to good nutrition is foundational to development. It plays a critical role in health, education, gender equality and economic advancement. It is essential to achieving so many of the other sustainable development goals.

For pregnant women, good nutrition in pregnancy leads to healthier mothers, fewer complications in childbirth, less chance of stunting in children and a greater chance of children reaching their educational potential. Proven, cost-effective interventions, such as providing expectant mothers with multiple micronutrient supplements can make the world of difference to a child’s start in life.

For children, good nutrition makes vaccines more effective, reducing the risks of infectious diseases, which can spread rapidly and which do not respect borders. A well-nourished child is 11 times less likely to die from common infectious diseases such as pneumonia than a severely undernourished one.

Good nutrition also reduces the risk of obesity, cancer and other non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease, which are on the rise in many low and middle-income countries. Without good nutrition, individuals and communities cannot develop to their full potential, economic productivity and development are constrained, and stability and security are undermined.

Studies have shown that combating malnutrition can raise per capita GDP by up to 11%, helping to break the cycle of poverty, inequality and food insecurity. In addition, investments in nutrition are proven to be low cost and high impact, representing one of the highest-value development initiatives. According to the World Bank, for every \$1 invested in nutrition, \$23 is returned to the

local economy. Conversely, malnutrition costs African economies between 3% and 16% of GDP annually. Yet, despite all we know about the importance of good nutrition, malnutrition is still the leading cause of death in children under five, claiming the lives of 2 million children under five every year.

In 2022, an estimated 45 million children under the age of five suffered from wasting, 148 million had stunted growth and 37 million were overweight. In 2023, an estimated 733 million people globally faced hunger. Around 200 million more people face acute food insecurity this year compared with pre-pandemic levels. Conflicts and humanitarian crises, including in Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria and Gaza, are causing global hunger to soar. Up to 1.9 million people are estimated to be on the brink of famine.

The UK has a long and proud history of global leadership and action on nutrition. The UK was the founder of the Nutrition for Growth summit in 2013, when more than 100 stakeholders pledged more than \$4 billion in new nutrition-specific projects, and a further \$19 billion in nutrition-sensitive projects. Our excellent civil servants in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office are world-class thought leaders and conveners on innovation regarding malnutrition, and the UK is home to world-leading scientists and researchers who are making strides to advance technologies and nutrient-dense, drought-resistant crops, supporting communities all over the world to have more secure and nutritious diets.

The recent cuts to official development assistance could have devastating impacts on the global hunger and malnutrition crisis. The nutrition budget was disproportionately impacted by the cuts to ODA in 2021; research conducted by Development Initiatives for the FCDO indicated that nutrition spending was cut by more than 60%. The Government must not allow this further reduction in spending to exacerbate the existing global crisis or to damage our reputation globally.

This week’s Nutrition for Growth summit is a real opportunity for the Government to show continued UK leadership and commitment to global nutrition. This Thursday and Friday, the Government of France, led by President Macron, will convene Governments, philanthropists, non-governmental organisations and business leaders at the summit to commit finances and make policy changes that will help to end malnutrition.

It will be the fifth Nutrition for Growth summit since it was launched by the UK in the margins of the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games. The previous summit in Tokyo mobilised \$27 billion through commitments made by 181 stakeholders across 78 countries. Unfortunately, the previous UK Government were not able to make a commitment at the Tokyo summit in 2021, which sparked widespread criticism from partner countries. Thanks, I believe, to the great efforts of my right hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Wendy Morton), who was then a Minister in the FCDO, that decision was reversed two months later and the UK made a £1.5 billion pledge. We still hope that this year the UK will play its full part in ensuring the summit is a success.

The Paris summit is a crucial opportunity to build on that momentum and a critical step in turning the tide against the scourge of malnutrition. It will also put nutrition at the heart of the sustainable development agenda, recognising that nutrition is foundational to

[David Mundell]

development—as indeed it is to the UK’s wider development aims—and will make the fight against all forms of malnutrition a universal cause. Since 2013, the Nutrition for Growth summit has been a key event for driving greater action towards ending malnutrition, mobilising the international community and placing nutrition higher up the development agenda.

This year, the commitments made will be more important than ever in elevating the fight against malnutrition. The summit’s outcomes will have a lasting impact on the health, development and economic potential of millions of people worldwide, especially women and children. We welcome the fact that the new Minister for International Development will represent the UK at the summit, but I hope the Minister here today will be able to confirm that the UK will demonstrate its commitment to leadership on sustainable development goal 2 by doing everything we can to ensure that the summit is a success. I also hope that he will commit to a strong, ambitious and well-targeted UK pledge at the summit—or, if that requires the spending review to be completed, that that pledge will come after the spending review.

In addition, I hope the Minister can reaffirm the recent commitment to integrating nutrition across all aspects of development at the summit to make meaningful progress in tackling the underlying causes of malnutrition. As the International Development Committee inquiry report recommended, as well as a generous pledge at the summit, I hope the Minister will commit to

“a new reach commitment on nutrition and food security within the next six months”,

which would

“focus efforts and improve accountability.”

The all-party group on nutrition for development, which I co-chair alongside the hon. Member for Exeter, is calling for the UK to invest at least £500 million in nutrition-specific interventions by 2030. I hope the Government can confirm that they will begin this journey by investing £50 million in the child nutrition fund this year. That would give us an opportunity to maximise our investment by leveraging domestic resources and philanthropic funding, with the potential to transform a £50 million contribution into up to £500 million-worth of impact.

Whatever colleagues’ views on the overseas aid budget, I am sure we all agree that taxpayers’ money should be spent as impactfully as possible. Therefore, we must prioritise nutrition and use summits such as the Nutrition for Growth summit to maximise our contribution at a time of restricted finances, and we must co-ordinate our approach with other countries to maximise the impact even further. It is vital that low-cost, high-impact nutrition-specific interventions, such as MMS and ready-to-use therapeutic food, are protected and prioritised. They can pull young children back from the brink of starvation in weeks.

I hope the Minister will set out an ambition to reach at least 50 million children, women and adolescent girls with nutrition-related interventions by 2030, and commit to reporting yearly on how many people are reached with nutrition-specific interventions. I also hope the UK Government will support global accountability efforts by funding the global nutrition report to enhance

the nutrition accountability framework, which is a critical tool to ensure that Governments follow through on their Nutrition for Growth commitments. Finally, I hope the Government will ensure that partnerships with local civil society organisations are strengthened, so that they can advocate more effectively for nutrition to their own Governments.

To conclude, let me give just one example of the difference that such commitments can make by speaking about Hanzala. Hanzala struggled with pneumonia and malnutrition before he could even sit up on his own. Born in a remote village in Afghanistan, his mother was unable to access care, with the nearest clinic being more than 40 km away. That was until 2023, when World Vision Afghanistan opened a health centre supported by the FCDO in Hanzala’s village.

Hanzala’s mother rushed him to the clinic, where he was found to weigh just 6.8 kg, well below the 9.2 kg that a healthy 13-month-old boy should weigh. Hanzala was immediately enrolled in the out-patient department for severe acute malnutrition programme, receiving ready-to-use therapeutic food. His mother received nutritional counselling and a sanitation kit to improve their living conditions. I am sure that everyone will be pleased to learn that only four months later Hanzala had made a full recovery and was able to play like any other child—a direct result of decisions made by the UK Government and the support of organisations such as World Vision.

Let us grasp the opportunity that the Nutrition for Growth summit this week affords. Let us continue to wield our convening power as the UK and play a leading role as a key global nutrition partner, driving this agenda and working alongside other donors and high-burden countries to ensure that global nutrition investments are prioritised and deliver maximum impact. I look forward to the rest of the debate and to the Minister’s positive response.

3.32 pm

Steve Race (Exeter) (Lab): It is a privilege to serve under your chairship for the first time, Ms Jardine.

I thank the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell) for securing this important debate on the eve of the Nutrition for Growth summit in Paris. His long-standing commitment to improving the lives of the most disadvantaged in the world, particularly those experiencing malnutrition and hunger, is clear to see, both in this debate and through his work in the House. I am proud to work alongside him as his new co-chair of the all-party parliamentary group on nutrition for development, and to attend the summit with him over the coming days. I will also take this opportunity to pay tribute to my predecessor as co-chair of the APPG, Lord Collins of Highbury, who continues to be a passionate champion for nutrition in Government as the Minister for Africa.

As the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale ably set out, the summit comes at a critical time for global nutrition and its outcomes will have a lasting impact on the health, cognitive development and economic potential of millions of people. Across the world, 733 million people suffer from hunger and over 2.8 billion people are unable to afford a healthy diet. Malnutrition claims the lives of over 2 million children every year, with millions more left with permanent physical and

cognitive impairment, and more than 1 billion adolescent girls and women worldwide suffer from undernutrition. It is therefore critical that the summit this week is a successful platform for global action.

A few weeks ago, I visited Paris with the right hon. Member to meet the organisers of the summit, including special envoy and secretary-general of Nutrition for Growth, Brieuc Pont, and some of our counterparts in the French Parliament. They all emphasised the importance of the UK playing a leadership role at the summit and using our considerable convening strength to press for collective action on nutrition and to underscore its importance to global development and stability. I was again struck by the fact that addressing malnutrition must be a collective endeavour. It is not an issue that one country can solve by itself; we must all play our part.

The UK has a proud history on malnutrition and hunger. The last Labour Government's strategy, "The neglected crisis of undernutrition", marked the start of a decade of UK leadership on global nutrition, and the UK initiated Nutrition for Growth, convening the first summit in London in 2013. The UK's first investment at that summit reached over 50 million people with nutrition services between 2015 and 2020. I am pleased that the new Minister for International Development will attend the summit this week, and I hope that the UK, as the founder of Nutrition for Growth, can play a full role, including by making an ambitious financial pledge. The urgency could not be clearer: the growing crisis of global malnutrition is inflicting immense suffering on millions of people, undermining economic development and driving instability, with huge geopolitical implications.

Just before I became a Member of Parliament, I travelled to Kenya with UNICEF, United Against Malnutrition and Hunger, and Action Against Hunger, along with the hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Monica Harding), to see the positive impact of interventions to help treat and prevent malnutrition for children and families in hard-to-reach communities hit by severe drought. Seeing how UK development assistance is delivered on the ground had a profound impact on me. In Isiolo county, we visited mobile outreach stations set up by local health workers to deliver emergency nutrition, vaccines and maternal health, as well as education about nutrition. The nurses there told us that since the clinic has been running in the county, they have seen malnutrition rates drop year on year. These interventions work.

We know that access to good nutrition is the foundation on which sustainable development is built. Suffering from malnutrition at an early age will impact a child throughout their life; it will impact their education, economic and health outcomes. The children we met were getting what they needed not only to survive, but to thrive. That is why the all-party parliamentary group on nutrition for development would like to see the UK invest at least £500 million in nutrition-specific interventions by 2030. Those interventions, such as ready-to-use therapeutic food, known as RUTF, vitamin A supplements, support for breastfeeding and prenatal multiple micronutrient supplementation—MMS—are cost-effective, proven and powerful interventions that support women, who have the highest nutritional needs but often eat last and least, and enable them to give their children the best start in life.

MMS, for example, is proven to support the health of both baby and mother and reduce the risk of birth complications. At £3 per pregnancy, it is a low-cost intervention with a high return on investment. The recovery rate of children with severe acute malnutrition who receive a full course of RUTF is over 90%. Given that women and girls are disproportionately affected by hunger and malnutrition, I wonder whether the Minister might commit to ensuring that at least 90% of nutrition spending is gender-sensitive.

RUTF can also be locally produced and owned. In Nairobi, we visited a factory manufacturing RUTF that was part-funded by UK development assistance. The factory exports RUTF across east Africa, and is now trialling growing its own groundnuts—the primary ingredient of RUTF—in low-income communities in Kenya. That means that Kenya can produce its own nutrition products closer to people, supporting the local economy and creating jobs and livelihoods. These interventions work, provide value for money and build genuine partnerships with Governments. Will the Minister provide an update on the Government's commitment to nutrition-specific interventions?

One way that could be achieved is through the child nutrition fund, which was developed by UNICEF with support from the UK Government, the Gates Foundation and the Children's Investment Fund Foundation. The fund has huge potential to create genuine, equitable partnerships with low and middle-income countries. It can also leverage significant additional funding through match-funding initiatives by global philanthropies. That would give the Government the opportunity to maximise their investment with the potential, as the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale said, to transform a £50 million UK contribution into up to £500 million of impact, maximising our contribution and our impact at a time of fiscal constraint.

Critically, the child nutrition fund also provides a means to unlock financial and political commitment from low and middle-income countries, creating a path to transition from dependency on global financing to domestic financing, and an exit strategy for global donors. Will the Minister provide an update on the Government's commitment to the child nutrition fund?

The Government have demonstrated positive action on global hunger and malnutrition in recent months. The UK was one of the founding members of the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, which was launched last November in Rio. The Government have also more than doubled their aid to Sudan and neighbouring countries, where malnutrition rates have soared due to the devastating conflicts and subsequent displacement. The FCDO has recently committed to integrating nutrition across all aspects of its work. These are really encouraging steps.

I will make two final points. First, can the Minister tell us how quickly the Government aim to pivot the ODA budget back to its core purpose? The use of ODA to support the broken asylum application system in the UK clearly needs to end. The Government have committed to that by putting money back into the asylum application processing system and shortening the time that asylum seekers spend in hotels. However, that must be accelerated so that the 0.3% ODA budget is spent on ODA programmes, as expected.

[Steve Race]

Secondly, will the Minister comment on the ways in which the UK can use its legislative clout to close tax evasion and other financial loopholes that deprive developing countries of tax income? The International Monetary Fund estimates that the tax gap is over \$200 billion a year. As one of the global centres of finance, London is still awash with money effectively stolen from developing nations, and channelled and hidden through shell companies. That same status brings London the opportunity to further clamp down on that activity, and with significant ties to overseas dependencies that can facilitate the illicit transfer of cash, the UK Government can use their position to close the tax gap for good.

I hope that we can take this momentum to the Nutrition for Growth summit this week and recommit UK leadership, political will and investment in nutrition. Our leadership will help ensure that vital clinics like the one I saw in Isiolo county are able to continue to deliver life-saving support to the most vulnerable communities, especially their young children and mothers.

3.41 pm

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Jardine. It seems to happen nearly every week now—I wish you continued success in what you do. I thank the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell) for leading this important debate. He is a very busy man too: last Thursday he spoke in a Westminster Hall debate, yesterday he chaired Westminster Hall, and today he is back at it again. Well done to him. This is a subject on which we are all very pleased to come along and support him.

I am genuinely pleased to see the Minister in his place. I know from all the years that I have known him in the House that his heart lies with this subject, and I do not think we will be disappointed when we hear his responses to our questions. It is always a pleasure to see the shadow Minister, the right hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Wendy Morton), in her place too.

Combating malnutrition across the world is crucial. We all have a heart for it, and that is why we are here. We are glad to support others in the world like we expect that they would support us back. In some African countries, the situation is hard, and there is more that we can do collectively.

I quickly want to thank—because I think it is important—the churches in my constituency, and churches across this great nation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In particular, Elim Missions in Newtownards in my constituency of Strangford has a really productive strategy and plan for Zimbabwe and Swaziland. I understand that it has relationship of almost 30 years with them, and it has helped them with education, health, food production, and jobs and training. I commend the work that it does in Swaziland in particular, which is ravaged by HIV and all the complexities associated with that.

Of course, there are many other churches that do likewise: the Presbyterian Church, the Church of Ireland, the Methodist Church, the Baptist churches, and many others. There is a real role for a partnership with some of those church groups, which could be productive for

everyone. First of all, we have got the heart of the churches and their congregations—they want to do something, and more often than not it is the congregations' own money that is poured into that—but what they do sometimes fills a gap where the Government maybe just cannot get there. I often ask for this, but I do it because I think there is a partnership role that can be played. If the Minister does not mind, will he give us his thoughts on that?

UN sustainable development goal 2 is to create a world free from hunger by 2030—quite an ambition, to be fair—including bringing down rates of undernourishment, food insecurity, and childhood stunting and wasting. The right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale gave examples of those things, and I know that others will too. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation reported that in 2024 the world was still far off track achieving its goals, with progress having stalled since 2020. All of us here today, and those outside of this place watching, would be encouraged if the Minister could tell us what has been done to get us back on track and ensure that we can deliver the goal by 2030. One in 11 people globally, and one in five in Africa, faces undernourishment. There has been some progress on stunting and wasting, but we are still way off the 2030 target.

In 2024, the UK joined the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, and announced some £70 million of funding over 18 months to address food insecurity. The UK is also participating in the new joint UN initiative on the prevention of wasting, which was launched in March 2025—just in the last week or 10 days. According to UNICEF stats, an estimated 5.7 million children in the region require treatment for acute malnutrition, with 1.8 million children experiencing life-threatening malnutrition.

The one time I watch TV is on a Sunday afternoon. More often than not, when I watch westerns—that probably tells us what age I am—the adverts on either side of the films portray child malnutrition and hunger very graphically. We sit in some grandeur, and we are never hungry for food. The sight of young children from across the world in poverty, and of the mothers who do everything they can to feed their child, is a salient reminder of the level of child poverty and what we have to do.

Child poverty is a widespread issue. As I am my party's health spokesperson, these issues are close to my heart, and they warrant attention and effort to resolve them. It is important to be here and to recognise the good things that the Government do. The right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale outlined a number of things that the Government are doing, and I know that the Minister is committed to this. The Government are upholding the 2022 UK commitment to spend £1.5 billion from 2022 to 2030 on nutrition objectives, but there is more that can be done. Perhaps after reflecting on the figures, the Government can look at the impact and assess whether more is available to enable us to reach out and help communities that are under incredible pressure. We need to do more to support the global effort in combating malnutrition. Every father and grandfather would do whatever he could for his child or grandchild. I know the Minister is a compassionate person, and the Government have a duty to reach out and help.

We must do more to strengthen global partnerships with organisations and other Governments to advocate for better nutrition support in other countries. We cannot do it on our own, because our resources are limited, but we can do it with others and make it happen. I look to the Minister for any commitment that the Government can give to support those in extreme poverty, and for an update, if at all possible, on the UK's contribution to the 2030 targets.

3.48 pm

Dr Beccy Cooper (Worthing West) (Lab): I thank the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell) for organising the debate. So much has been covered already, and I do not want to reiterate or repeat it unnecessarily, but I want to draw attention to some key statistics around the fact that nutrition is a core issue, both for health and for global security. According to the stats from the World Food Programme on global security—they have been cited, but they are worth citing again—a 1% increase in food insecurity leads to a 2% increase in migration. If we think about geopolitical stability and all the issues that we currently talk about, a 2% increase in migration because of a 1% increase in food insecurity makes no sense in the world today. We need to do everything we can to mitigate that.

Similarly, nutrition is a global growth issue. We talk a lot in this country about economic growth, but we all know that we are as much in hock to world economic factors as we are to our own national factors. As the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale has said, according to the World Bank, if we invest \$1 in nutrition we get \$23 back into the local economy. By any account, with any economist, that is surely a no-brainer.

My interest in this subject arises from the fact that I am a public health consultant. Prior to my days in this place, I worked in an NGO that has already been named, World Vision, along with the Minister. We have been in this field for quite a long time, as have many hon. Members here, and we have heard the same conversations about nutrition come up again and again. We all sit here as human beings, and we all have the same basic level of need. In public health, as in so many other disciplines, there is something called Maslow's hierarchy of needs: if we cannot satisfy our basic human needs, we cannot do anything else. If we and our children are hungry, we cannot achieve any of the things we aspire to for our communities, for the people we live with or for our governance, stability and growth.

We think about those foundational elements in two ways. Acute interventions have been mentioned; my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter has talked about the ready-to-use therapeutic foods and vitamin supplements that can address fundamental critical needs in so many places around the globe, including in our own country. Those malnutrition needs are different, but they are malnutrition needs none the less, and we must implement those acute interventions.

Alongside that is longer-term nutritional stability, which is a global conversation as well as a UK one. How do we make sure that the food we grow on this planet is sustainably grown, has the right levels of nutrition and is distributed equally? Those conversations have gone on for many years. The Nutrition for Growth

conference in Paris is another opportunity to bring together people with excellent experience and try to push the conversation forward.

The right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale mentioned maternal and child health. The first 1,000 days are critical. In the Health and Social Care Committee, we are looking specifically at the first 1,000 days in this country. Why we should focus only on this country is beyond me, however, because whether someone lives in this country or another country, they need exactly the same things. Humans are humans wherever they live. A global initiative looking at the first 1,000 days, and concentrating on good nutrition for mothers and babies in the early days, will significantly decrease childhood stunting, wasting and developmental delay. In all our communities, we want people to grow, thrive and do well, but those things cannot happen if the basic elements of nutrition are not in place.

As has been said, the UK has been a leader in this space for some years. I appreciate that there has been a cut in overseas development aid, but that does not mean that we cannot still demonstrate leadership in this space. As a responsible partner in the global health initiative—in our global safety, which has as much resonance for people in this country as it does for those in others—we must prioritise the things that will truly make a difference to people's wellbeing, safety and stability. In the conference that starts tomorrow, I ask respectfully that our Ministers go forward and lead in this space; that they prioritise nutrition for growth in global health and security; and that they continue our proud history of global leadership in this area.

3.53 pm

Edward Morello (West Dorset) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Jardine. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell) on securing this important debate.

Malnutrition is one of the greatest barriers to health, economic growth and development worldwide. It contributes to nearly half of all child deaths and has long-term consequences for education, economic productivity and global stability. The Nutrition for Growth summit presents a crucial opportunity for world leaders to address these issues and commit to sustainable solutions. The World Bank estimates that annual investment in targeted nutrition interventions must increase from £6.3 billion to £19.3 billion by 2034 to meet global needs.

The UK has long played a leading role in tackling these issues through targeted aid and development programmes, but recent reductions in the official development assistance budget threaten our ability to continue making a meaningful impact. The UK spent nearly £1 billion on bilateral aid for basic nutrition between 2009 and 2023. However, spending has declined sharply in recent years, from £146 million in 2017 to just £24 million in 2023. Similarly, broader nutrition-sensitive aid has fallen from a peak of £2.7 billion in 2016 to £1.2 billion in 2023. These reductions have been steeper than the overall decrease in UK aid spending. Since the shift to 0.5% of gross national income for aid in 2021, total UK aid fell by 21%, while nutrition-specific aid dropped by 61% and nutrition-sensitive aid dropped by 54%. The decision to reduce the UK's ODA commitment to 0.3% of GNI by 2027 will only decrease our ability to meet this challenge.

[Edward Morello]

Malnutrition does not just affect health outcomes. The UK has been a leader in development because we recognise that investing in nutrition delivers long-term benefits. Every £1 spent on nutrition intervention generates up to £16 in economic returns through increased productivity and reduced healthcare costs. Cuts to UK aid will leave a vacuum that countries such as Russia and China will fill. The Foreign Secretary has previously acknowledged the strategic risk of stepping back from development aid, and the Liberal Democrats have consistently warned that reducing aid weakens our ability to counter malign influences and support fragile states. Rather than cutting aid, the Liberal Democrats call on the Government to reverse the Tory tax cuts for big banks and tax the social media giants that are currently profiting from spreading misinformation and disinformation on behalf of our enemies.

The Nutrition for Growth summit in Paris is a moment to reaffirm the UK's leadership in global development. We have always stood for a world where every individual has an opportunity to thrive. Liberal values are rooted in the belief that every person has worth, dignity and the right to a healthy life. The Government must ensure that the UK remains at the forefront of the fight against malnutrition, rather than retreating from it.

3.56 pm

Abtissam Mohamed (Sheffield Central) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine. I congratulate the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell) on securing this important and timely debate. I thank him and my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter (Steve Race) for their commitment to advocating for investment and focus on global nutrition through their work on the APPG on nutrition for development. It is fantastic to see cross-party support on this vital issue, and I wish them all the best at the Nutrition for Growth summit later this week.

The summit could not have come at a more critical time for global nutrition. Malnutrition rates across the world are soaring, and the most vulnerable, including women and children, are paying the price. For 2025, the World Food Programme predicts that 343 million people will be food insecure in the 74 countries in which the agency is active. The number of food insecure people is 200 million above pre-pandemic levels.

I will focus my remarks on conflict, which Members will not be surprised to hear has been identified as the main driver of food insecurity. Some 65% of people living in acute food insecurity live in fragile or conflict-affected areas, and 14 of the 16 hunger hotspots identified by the World Food Programme are conflict zones, including Gaza, Nigeria, Sudan, Ethiopia and Yemen.

Hunger and conflict coexist in a deadly cycle. When conflict strikes, civilian populations are often forced to flee their homes, land and livestock-grazing areas, leaving them food insecure and without access to their local markets or agriculture. Women, children and marginalised groups are disproportionately affected, bearing the brunt of violence and its long-term impacts. Malnutrition is a typical outcome in conflict zones, with children most

affected by increased mortality and stunted growth. Conflict also disrupts supply chains and infrastructure, including farms and agricultural land, through looting or destruction of food stocks, agricultural assets, food production facilities and other objects of critical infrastructure, leading to long-term food insecurity.

Similarly, where extreme hunger and child deaths fester, so too do anger, instability and violence, with consequences that spread across the world. A world in which billions of people are malnourished produces instability and perpetuates injustice. Chronically poor populations are marginalised or vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Children and young people are particularly exposed to recruitment into armed groups, forced labour, early marriage and other forms of abuse. These crimes create fragile populations and instability. Addressing long-term drivers of fragility, as well as the immediate causes of conflict, is essential for addressing the deadly cycle of conflict and hunger. We know that adherence to international humanitarian law is vital for mitigating and preventing famine-like conditions in conflict, but across the world, respect for international humanitarian law is steadily being eroded, particularly through the deliberate withholding and blocking of food aid.

In its report “Food Insecurity and Armed Conflict and the Use of Siege-like Tactics” the Geneva Academy identified an increase in violations of international humanitarian law regarding the deliberate withholding and blocking of humanitarian aid to induce food insecurity and famine-like conditions. This tactic can be seen repeatedly in Sudan, South Sudan, Gaza and Mali, among many other crises and conflicts.

In Sudan, millions of people living in Darfur, North Kordofan, South Kordofan and Khartoum are at immediate risk of famine. More than half of the country—25.6 million people—are experiencing severe food insecurity. More than one in three children face acute malnutrition, which is above the 20% threshold for a famine confirmation.

This is a man-made crisis, rife with violations of international humanitarian law. Conflict actors have disrupted supply chains and infrastructure, including farms and agricultural land, through the looting and destruction of food stocks, agricultural assets and food production facilities, as well as other elements of infrastructure. Humanitarian operations are at risk of interference from conflict actors either through bureaucratic impediments or through violent attacks, severely hindering the ability of humanitarian actors to deliver lifesaving aid.

I was grateful to hear the Prime Minister name Sudan as a key priority for the UK following the decrease in order, but with such limited resources available, I am concerned that the UK will simply not be able to follow through on its commitments. Will the Minister commit to protecting nutrition spending in conflict-affected areas such as Sudan to ensure that lifesaving food aid gets to those who are at most risk of famine and malnutrition?

I am also concerned that other hunger spots such as Nigeria, Ethiopia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be forgotten, and the impact there will be devastating. What assessment have the Government made of the impact of the funding cuts on some of these most fragile and conflict-affected countries, where rates of malnutrition are sky high? If they have not conducted such an impact assessment, will the Minister commit to undertaking one?

I finish my remarks by picking up on what the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale said about British science and innovation being at the forefront of efforts to combat global hunger. My constituency of Sheffield Central is home to the world-leading Institute for Sustainable Food, based at Sheffield university. At the institute, scientists are developing drought-resistant crops in growth chambers, which can mimic the conditions brought on by climate change in arid conditions across the world.

With support from the UK Government, these innovations can be shared across the world to support food-insecure communities in some of the world's toughest climates. Scientists at the institute have also developed the pioneering desert garden, a hydroponic system that enables nutrient-dense foods such as basil and tomatoes to be grown in materials that are available to communities in refugee settings, such as mattresses.

These desert gardens use minimal water and readily available conditions, so they are perfect for supporting vulnerable populations. They have been used in the Zaatari refugee camp in Jordan to support those who are fleeing war and conflict to fend off malnutrition and maintain a nutrient-rich diet. Moreover, local people have been given responsibility for the projects, increasing their ownership and control, and supporting their livelihoods. I have seen this work at first hand and I am proud that it has been developed in my constituency, but not enough is known about it.

What work is the Minister doing in collaboration with other Departments, such as the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, to promote and champion the British science and expertise that is contributing to the global fight against hunger? Will the Minister explore ways to build on the UK's existing nutrition policy expertise by partnering with Governments and research institutions to fund research in key areas such as preventing malnutrition and child wasting, adolescent nutrition and the integration of immunisation and nutrition? It makes sense to champion British science, which is at the forefront of efforts to combat global hunger and support innovative solutions.

As Members have said, the upcoming Nutrition for Growth summit is a key moment to address the global scourge of malnutrition, particularly for those who are trapped in conflict and war zones. I urge the Government to take this opportunity with both hands and not to let go the chance to make a strong commitment.

4.4 pm

Monica Harding (Esher and Walton) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine. I thank the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell) for securing the debate.

The Nutrition for Growth summit is an opportunity for the UK to reaffirm our country's commitment to eradicating hunger. Since 2012, when we founded and hosted the inaugural Nutrition for Growth summit in London following our hosting of the Olympic games, Britain and British leadership have achieved so much. We helped to raise £17 billion to fight malnutrition and between 2015 and 2020, we surpassed our goal of reaching 50 million people with food assistance and nutrition-relevant programming, saving countless lives.

But now we are at an inflection point, and there is a risk that progress on nutrition and the development goals is slipping.

In the UN's recent report, we were warned that the world is on track to meet just 17% of our 2030 targets. On a further 17%, we have regressed, and nowhere has there been greater regression than on sustainable development goal 2, on zero hunger. Driven by spreading conflict, worsening climate change and the disruption of the pandemic years, the number of those suffering from malnutrition—

4.5 pm

Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.

5.20 pm

On resuming—

Christine Jardine (in the Chair): We have 42 minutes left for this debate. I call Liberal Democrat spokesperson Monica Harding to continue, please.

Monica Harding: It is still a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine. As I was saying, driven by spreading conflict, worsening climate change and the disruption of the pandemic years, the number of those suffering from malnutrition has risen by 150 million in five years. At this moment, we have a broader challenge. The Government have chosen not to redouble efforts to fight hunger, but to slash the official development assistance budget to its lowest level this century. We believe that that is a moral and strategic mistake that will exacerbate food insecurity and render all of us here in the UK less safe. Since the Prime Minister's announcement in February, there has been little clarity about UK development priorities or about what existing promises this Government intend to honour.

The Nutrition Action for Systemic Change report published last year found that the Government were then tracking to meet our nutrition for growth commitment, made following the 2021 summit in Tokyo, of spending £1.5 billion on nutrition objectives between 2022 and 2030. Just one week before the development budget was cut by 40%, the then Minister for Development, the right hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds), again affirmed the UK's commitment to that £1.5 billion figure. Will the Minister today repeat that pledge and assure us that the UK will not renege on the resources promised by multiple Governments to fight hunger?

In addition to worsening levels of hunger, the overall nutrition picture is growing increasingly complex. The so-called triple burden of malnutrition, obesity and vitamin deficiency requires solutions that combat all three issues together. Those solutions must encompass ready-to-use therapeutic food, vitamin A supplementation as well as other nutrients, and health interventions targeting obesity. Will the Minister share the specific steps that the FCDO is taking to ensure that UK nutrition policy addresses all dimensions of that triple burden, including by requiring that the development finance investments made by arm's length FCDO bodies align with UK nutrition goals?

Nutrition-specific ODA, often delivered in a context of urgent humanitarian need, is indispensable. It is regularly the difference between life and death for some of the world's poorest. As we speak, the UN World Food Programme is closing offices in Africa. That agency received

[Monica Harding]

about half its funding last year from USAID—the United States Agency for International Development—so is now facing acute financial pressures, cutting the delivery of lifesaving RUTF and other supplies.

The impact of USAID's gutting is already devastating. In the coming year, reduced food assistance could result in as many as 550,000 deaths, according to *The New York Times*. We Liberal Democrats believe that there is a moral imperative for the UK to act in the face of that looming catastrophe. We believe that filling some of the funding gaps left by the retreat of USAID will require the UK to play a vital convening role, so could the Minister inform us of what conversations the UK is having and leading with partner nations, NGOs and other philanthropic organisations, aimed at catalysing targeted nutrition interventions?

At the same time, we must recognise that highly focused, specific interventions are capable of addressing only about 30% of the most persistent nutritional challenges, such as child stunting and child wasting. Progress on the other 70% requires progress on a wide range of nutrition-sensitive development areas, including maternal health, agricultural productivity, WASH—water, sanitation and hygiene—and climate change, and vice versa. A pregnant mother experiencing malnutrition and unable to access multiple micronutrient supplements is far more likely to give birth to a stunted child. Even vaccines are less effective when delivered to children experiencing malnutrition.

As the International Development Committee argued in its most recent report—as a Committee member, I must declare an interest—nutrition and food security are cross-cutting themes across UK ODA programming, so success requires not only highly targeted interventions, but a strategic approach that integrates nutrition throughout development work. I know that this integration is a priority for the FCDO, and I am pleased that the Minister will be championing a global compact on nutrition integration in Paris. However, according to the NASC's 2024 report, from 2021 to 2022, the nutrition-sensitive share of the FCDO's ODA spend actually declined. For humanitarian spending it fell from 27% to 22%, for health spending it fell from 11% to 5%, and for education spending it fell from 4% to just 1%. What concrete steps is the FCDO taking to reverse that trend and to model nutrition integration going forward? Moreover, what accountability mechanisms will be tied to the global compact on nutrition integration such that it changes behaviour and produces results?

There may be no area of development linked as closely to nutrition as conflict. The World Food Programme found that conflict was the key driver of food insecurity last year, and it showed that two thirds of those facing acute food insecurity did so in fragile or conflict-affected locations. Not only do violence, conflict and instability lead to displacement and migration, and create a breeding ground for terrorism that can threaten us here in the UK, but they undermine our professed nutrition objectives. Yet the integrated security fund, which addresses acute national security threats and is partially funded through ODA, is facing significant cuts due to the Government's decision to slash aid. Will the Minister therefore assure us that the Government's development cut will not result in cuts to the ODA-funded portion of the ISF?

I am also concerned that the cut will mean a further hollowing out of the UK expert capacity. When the Department for International Development was merged with the Foreign Office in 2020, it was expert teams that gave Britain the know-how on how to lead on areas such as nutrition, which were chronically under-resourced. Our capacity suffered as a result, and I urge the Minister to prioritise protecting the UK's health and nutrition expertise, embedded in-country and in the FCDO.

I am very pleased that the UK will be represented by a Minister at the Nutrition for Growth summit. I give our envoy all our support and encouragement in convening and corraling support for a compact on nutrition integration, yet it is difficult to lead on global nutrition policy when we are stepping back from funding nutrition. I remain deeply disappointed that no new financial commitments will be announced by the Government to mark the summit.

Nutrition is foundational for development. Investments in nutrition are low cost and high impact, representing one of the highest value development initiatives. We also know how to do it. Indeed, we have achieved remarkable success, halving the proportion of people suffering from undernourishment in developing regions between 1990 and 2015. We have led that, but we are now in retreat. I urge the Government to renew that ambition, because nutrition is foundational. Without it, progress on global health, gender equality and peace building is nearly impossible, and the need for that is greater than ever.

5.28 pm

Wendy Morton (Aldridge-Brownhills) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine, and I congratulate my right hon. Friend the Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell) on securing this timely debate. He brings considerable knowledge and experience to it, not least as a long-standing International Development Committee member and as a tremendous advocate for global nutrition. Although the debate has been interrupted by votes, I have enjoyed it and found it incredibly interesting. It is fair to say that Members on both sides of this Chamber have brought considerable knowledge and perspectives, and I thank them for that.

This debate is timely, coming ahead of the Nutrition for Growth summit in Paris later this week. The summit is happening at the end of the UN decade of action on nutrition, and it aims to foster dialogue and action among diverse actors from around the world to put nutrition at the heart of the development agenda. I was pleased to meet the French special envoy on nutrition, Mr Briec Pont, when he visited London in December as his country was preparing to host the summit.

As Conservatives, we have very much led global action on nutrition. We convened the first Nutrition for Growth summit in 2013, where 100 stakeholders endorsed the global nutrition for growth compact and where the UK committed £575 million to nutrition-specific programmes and to reaching 50 million people by 2020. The global nutrition report found that we have reached the commitments made in London in 2013 and in Milan in 2017. We went further in 2022, and pledged to spend at least £1.5 billion up to 2030 on nutrition objectives. Those included addressing the nutrition needs of mothers,

babies and children, tackling malnutrition in humanitarian emergencies and making sure that nutrition is central to the FCDO's wider work.

In February, during her time as the Minister for Development, the right hon. Member for Oxford East (Anneliese Dodds) reiterated that £1.5 billion commitment. I understand that she was due to attend the summit in Paris this week. Following the appointment of Baroness Chapman as Development Minister, will the Minister confirm today that she will attend the summit? Can this Minister also confirm whether the Government continue to stand by the £1.5 billion by 2030 pledge and what steps are being taken to ensure that nutrition remains embedded into the FCDO's work? We are led to understand that the UK will not be making a financial pledge at the summit, and that the Government are preparing to make a policy pledge. Can the Minister confirm whether that is still the case?

As well as playing a key role in Nutrition for Growth summits, the previous Conservative Government led many other nutrition-related initiatives. In November 2023, on the same day as publishing the International Development White Paper, we hosted the Global Food Security summit to galvanise action to deal with hunger and malnutrition, including through cutting-edge UK-funded science and technology.

The UK has a key role to play in solving these global challenges, especially through our superb science and technology and research sectors—the hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Abtisam Mohamed) highlighted some of the work of Sheffield university. That is why the White Paper laid out our commitment to investing in agricultural technology and innovation, to address global challenges such as food security. I ask the Minister what plans there are to mobilise UK science and technology to support international development objectives such as supporting global food security.

I appreciate that we are yet to see the full detail of the changes to ODA, and we have had no clear answers from Ministers about what the priorities will be. Will the Minister confirm what the impact will be on the UK's overall nutrition spend? If the Government still intend to make a commitment in Paris, it would be useful to have clarity on what changes we can expect. The former Minister, the right hon. Member for Oxford East, said in answer to one of my written questions that the Government were committed to continuing the integration of improved nutrition outcomes alongside successes in other sectors such as health, agriculture and humanitarian. Will the Minister outline what specific measures the FCDO will support in each of these sectors?

Members have been waiting since at least December for the Foreign Secretary to finish considering the international development review by Baroness Shafik. Can the Minister tell us if and when the Department plans to publish the review's findings and when we can expect the Foreign Secretary's response? Given the changes to ODA, it is only right that Members are given the opportunity to see the full detail of that review. In addition, has the review informed the wider decisions around ODA, or is it no longer fit for purpose following the changes?

Let me turn now to some country specifics and to some particularly challenging contexts that underscore the importance of this debate. In Sudan the humanitarian

crisis is rapidly deteriorating: over 30 million people are in urgent need of assistance, and we see devastating food insecurity. We know that there are challenges getting aid in and distributing it effectively, so what steps are the Government taking to ensure that humanitarian aid can get through to Sudan and to open new routes? What guardrails are in place to ensure that aid reaches those who need it most, including women and girls?

In Ethiopia the World Food Programme identifies that recurrent conflict, drought, disease and inflation continue to drive up humanitarian needs—5.8 million people required food support in 2024. In 2023 we announced a new funding package of £16.6 million to support more than 600,000 people with food supplies and other nutrition. Over half of those people were women and children, and they bore the brunt of the country's worsening crisis. Between 2015 and 2020, UK nutrition-related interventions reached 5.54 million children under five, women and adolescent girls. What is the latest assessment of the scale of humanitarian need in Ethiopia, and which of the programmes currently operating in the region are expected to continue?

Ukraine's grain exports are crucial to ensuring global food security. Before Russia's full-scale illegal invasion, Ukraine accounted for around 10% of global wheat exports and 12% of corn and barley exports. In 2023, Russia deliberately obstructed and withdrew from the Black sea grain initiative, and then attacked grain storage and export infrastructure. Thanks to Ukrainian resilience and innovation, our support and the support of international partners, as of February 2024 over 13 million tonnes of agricultural produce had been exported through the Black sea since September 2023. Those supplies are crucial for the resilience of global grain markets and global food security, and they are especially important for the developing world. Developing countries, including Egypt, Indonesia and Pakistan, have received significant quantities of grain directly from Ukraine via that corridor. What is the Minister's latest assessment of the quantity of grain going through the Black sea and of the resilience of Ukraine's export infrastructure?

To conclude, this week Nutrition for Growth convenes at a crucial moment for the world, and we wish the parties a successful summit. The Conservatives are proud of the leadership we showed in bringing international partners together and in embedding nutrition at every level of the FCDO's work. I hope the Government will build on that foundation and continue to address these challenges.

5.37 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (Stephen Dougty): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairpersonship, Ms Jardine. It has been a genuine pleasure to listen to and take part in this debate between hon. Members on both sides of the House, who share a deep passion for these issues. I am particularly grateful to the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale (David Mundell) for securing the debate, and to the APPG and the IDC for their crucial and important work.

The debate is timely, as I can confirm that my colleague Baroness Chapman will lead the UK delegation at the Nutrition for Growth summit in Paris. That shows our

[Stephen Doughty]

continued commitment to this issue. The ambassador looks forward to welcoming the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale and my hon. Friends the Members for Exeter (Steve Race) and for Worthing West (Dr Cooper) to the event she will host tomorrow at her residence to discuss these issues.

The right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale gave a typically powerful and informed speech. He rightly noted the UK's leadership on this issue. I have clearly heard his recommendations about the UK's contribution to Nutrition for Growth, and the points he has raised in this debate and over the past months. I cannot provide him with all the assurances he requested on specific financial and related targets, but I will respond to the substance of many of the points raised by him and other hon. Members. I thank him for his kind words about our FCDO staff, with which I heartily concur.

I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter for his work as the co-chair of the APPG and for his kind comments about my ministerial colleague Lord Collins, who we all know has a strong passion for this issue, particularly in his role as Minister for Africa. We heard many powerful personal examples today, including from my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter. I had the honour to see similar work on hunger and nutrition in my past career in the humanitarian sector, including when I worked for World Vision, which was mentioned a number of times in the debate.

My hon. Friend the Member for Exeter raised a number of important points. I agree with him about the links between nutrition and health, which other hon. Members also noted. He mentioned illicit finance, and he will know of the Foreign Secretary's important work in that area and on getting resources back into countries that need them.

It is always a pleasure to hear from the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon), with his consistent and principled pressure on these issues. He rightly highlighted the important role of churches, and faith communities more broadly, on these issues, which reflects my own experience of working with such organisations. In response to him and other Members who asked about this, I can confirm that we are currently on track to meet the 2022 to 2030 commitment of £1.5 billion. To give the latest figure, we spent £366 million in 2022. I do not have more recent numbers, but I am happy to keep the House updated.

My hon. Friend the Member for Worthing West made important links between public health and nutrition—we know how crucial that is—and spoke passionately from her own experience. We heard excellent speeches from the hon. Member for West Dorset (Edward Morello) and my hon. Friend the Member for Sheffield Central (Abtisam Mohamed). She highlighted issues of conflict and food insecurity, and it was particularly important that she raised the situation in a number of places. On Sudan, our emergency assistance is helping over 1 million people, including Sudanese refugees who have fled the conflict and are seeking safety in Chad. On Gaza, UK support means that over 500,000 people have received essential healthcare and 647,000 have received food. Those are important issues, which my hon. Friend raised.

The shadow Minister, the right hon. Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Wendy Morton), asked about Ethiopia—[*Interruption.*] I am glad to have some inspiration on that issue. We are supporting Ethiopia through the child nutrition fund, which is helping the Government there to deliver lifesaving nutrition services through the health sector. She also made some very important points about Ukraine, and I can again confirm that we are providing over £240 million for humanitarian support. We are also providing support on issues such as energy and reconstruction, which are crucial to dealing with food and nutrition needs.

I understand the concerns that Members around the Chamber have raised about the Prime Minister's recent announcement on the necessary cuts to our aid budget. We all know the challenges we face today—the challenges to our national security and to the security of Europe and our world order are truly unprecedented—and the choice made about ODA and defence spending was extremely difficult. It is one that the Prime Minister did not take lightly, as he shares our collective pride in the difference that UK support is making in saving and improving lives all around the world.

The Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the entire ministerial team strongly believe in the importance of our international development agenda for the national interest and our standing in the world, and in terms of our moral obligations to serve the most vulnerable. I have been privileged to see at first hand the impact of that work on many occasions. We have a proud record, and as the Prime Minister has said, we are committed to spending 0.7% of GNI as soon as conditions allow. Until then, we will use every pound we have to focus more than ever on maximising impact and value for money. However, for many of the challenges we face—including in this area—we require more than money, and the partnerships we will be creating in this important work on nutrition are part of that work.

The UK's contribution to this year's summit squarely reflects that approach. We have worked tirelessly with the Government of France to prepare for a successful summit in Paris, and we have mobilised commitments from a wide range of stakeholders. Central to that is an initiative we are launching tomorrow, which is the global compact on nutrition integration, which came up in many of the speeches. It is designed to ensure that policies and investments in key sectors such as health, food and climate place nutrition at their heart. It will help us to make the biggest impact while making the most of limited resources, including through more joined-up service delivery and targeting root causes more effectively. It will have an important impact on our wider work on climate resilience and economic growth, which of course depend on a well-nourished population, and the wider work we are doing on health has been made very clear.

The compact will improve our chance of making progress at the scale and speed we need. Many good examples have been reflected on today, but the compact will support mothers and children to access supplements and therapeutic foods as part of routine visits to primary healthcare, and make sure that the poorest can easily purchase from local markets all the foods they need for a healthy diet. We have already taken that approach with many of our partners, and I have given some examples already. We also support farmers and businesses to produce the most nutritious foods—for example, lentils in Nepal and vegetables in Ethiopia.

We cannot do this alone; we need others to join us if we are to succeed. We need to continue our work on integrating nutrition with our wider development work. One of the areas I would highlight is that only a tiny percentage of climate finance is allocated to nutrition, which is an unacceptable missed opportunity. We need to work with our partners to give more attention to the nutrition impact of their policies and investments in food systems more broadly. That is why we are calling on all those with a stake in Nutrition for Growth—countries in the global north and south, multilaterals, private investors and civil society organisations—to back the new global compact. That more integrated, coherent approach will ensure that the sum of everyone's commitments is greater than the parts. This is a challenging time for the summit, given the global economic climate, but we think it will set out a good way forward and bring people together.

The right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale and others have lobbied for new financial pledges and specific targets. The spending review and the need to look afresh at the specifics of our portfolio mean that we cannot announce a financial commitment this week—I want to be honest with the House about that—but we will submit the specifics of our commitment in due course through the official Nutrition for Growth channels, noting that France has set a deadline of the end of June. We will of course keep the House updated on that and on the work of the compact as we develop it.

Before I end, I want to say a few words about our continued commitment to tackle child wasting—the deadliest form of malnutrition. Only two weeks ago, Lord Collins reiterated his commitment at the launch of the joint UN initiative for the prevention of wasting—a new partnership with UNICEF, the World Health Organisation and the World Food Programme. That important part of our work complements our work on scaling up treatment through the child nutrition fund, which my hon. Friend the Member for Exeter asked about. Since the FCDO's initial investment of £8 million, the CNF has attracted more than \$29 million from 16 partner Governments and \$300 million from philanthropists, including a recent pledge from the Bezos family to match further contributions with up to \$250 million. Our contributions to the child nutrition fund were £15.74 million as of the end of 2024 through the child wasting innovation programme. Again, we are working in partnership with a range of sources and making important contributions.

This has been a hugely helpful debate. It is hugely informative to hear the strength of feeling in the House on these issues. I hope that my words today, and the important words of Baroness Chapman tomorrow in Paris, will reassure the right hon. Member for Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale and Tweeddale, members of the APPG and the Opposition spokespeople that we are not turning our back on the world and that nutrition will remain a key part of our development agenda.

5.46 pm

David Mundell: I commend you, Ms Jardine, on your chairmanship in challenging circumstances in the House. We have still managed to have a very constructive and informed debate. Of course, there are significant challenges on these issues—not least financial challenges—but I feel that the very fact that this debate has taken place

will positively feed into the summit and send the message that the United Kingdom takes these issues seriously. I will certainly do my best to convey that.

I should have thanked Lord Collins earlier for his work in the APPG before coming into government, and for the work he does now in the very challenging role of Minister for Africa. I thank my co-chair, the hon. Member for Exeter (Steve Race), who spoke of his personal experience of seeing on the ground the difference that interventions can make. That is so important. It really is worth Members who get the opportunity making such visits, because they will see the difference that is being made.

The hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) raised an important matter that affects not just nutrition but all development issues: securing public support. We must join with civil society groups across the UK and more widely to ensure that there is public support for development, particularly in relation to nutrition, which is a significant contributor to development—indeed, it is foundational, and critical to achieving most sustainable development goals.

The hon. Member for Worthing West (Dr Cooper) made the important point that a 1% increase in food insecurity leads to a 2% increase in migration. If people are serious about dealing with migration, they must be serious about dealing with food insecurity.

The hon. Member for West Dorset (Edward Morello) made an important point on the need to ensure continued UK global leadership on these and other issues; otherwise Russia, China and other malevolent actors will become involved. As my right hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills (Wendy Morton) set out, we have done tremendously well in soft power terms in our work on the global stage, but we cannot give that up.

The hon. Member for Sheffield Central (Abtisam Mohamed) made a very important contribution on two points, the first in relation to conflict, which is so important to the issue of malnutrition and food insecurity. I was very moved by the exhibition of drawings by children from Sudan, and a lot of the drawings were of people being shot while gathering food. It brought home the connection between conflict and food insecurity. The hon. Lady mentioned the University of Sheffield's institute for sustainable food.

The International Development Committee visited Kew Gardens to hear about its work. I recently visited the John Innes research centre in Norwich with the APPG. A tremendous amount of work is being done on ensuring that we have more sustainable farming and food production that takes account of climate change and local circumstances.

I thank the hon. Member for Esher and Walton (Monica Harding) for her continued support on this issue. She has been a key member of both the International Development Committee, including in producing our report, and the APPG, and she made a particularly important point about ensuring that the UK keeps its expert capacity. I am very positive, as the Minister recognised, about the team in the FCDO, but we have to ensure that that capacity remains if we want to have global leadership. My right hon. Friend the Member for Aldridge-Brownhills did a great deal in her time at the FCDO to make sure that UK leadership was maintained in sometimes challenging circumstances—I think that is the best way to put it.

[David Mundell]

I welcome not just the content but the tone of the Minister's contribution. I know that there are many in the Government who want to ensure that we still maximise the benefit we get from ODA spending. We make the case that spending on malnutrition has the best bang for buck, and many Members have spoken of the output from the relative input.

As the Minister mentioned the child nutrition fund, I hope he will be sympathetic to the call the hon. Member for Exeter and I made on increasing that contribution to £50 million. Given the longer pledging window, I look forward to the post-spending review, as I hope the Government might come back with a financial pledge. That is certainly the mood of this debate.

The Nutrition for Growth summit in Paris is a key moment for the international community to come together and address the scourge of malnutrition. The UK has a leading role to play and, on the basis of this debate, I hope it will play that role—I look forward to observing it.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered the Nutrition for Growth Paris Summit 2025.

Seriously Ill Children: Financial Support for Parents

[Relevant document: e-petition 700285, Provide day 1 financial support to parents caring for a seriously ill child.]

5.55 pm

Christine Jardine (in the Chair): I will call Chris Hinchliff to move the motion, and I will then call the Minister to respond. As is the convention for 30-minute debates, there will not be an opportunity for the Member in charge to wind up.

Chris Hinchliff (North East Hertfordshire) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered financial support for parents caring for seriously ill children.

It is a pleasure to speak under your chairship, Ms Jardine.

I begin by paying tribute to my constituents Ceri and Frances Menai-Davis, who are in the Public Gallery today. Their tireless advocacy, following the tragic loss of their six-year-old son Hugh to cancer in 2021, is an inspiration to me, and I know this feeling is shared by colleagues across the House.

Ceri, Frances and the charity they set up, It's Never You, have highlighted the immense challenges faced by families caring for seriously ill children. When a child is born, there is a support system in place for parents. Maternity pay provides a safety net for those who must stop work to care for their child, and the Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023 covers the parents of babies who are admitted to neonatal care within 28 days of birth. However, if a child falls seriously ill outside those periods, parents must navigate burdensome and insufficient systems that were not designed for families facing what is, for most, the very hardest time of their lives.

Ceri and Frances experienced this unfairness at first hand during the 100-mile round trips they had to make to be with Hugh during his treatment. Thankfully, they were financially stable, but they witnessed the harsh reality of our benefits system as they saw other parents being forced to sell their homes and give up work to care for their seriously ill children. Of course, these issues are compounded by the cost of living pressures that all families face, even without family emergencies piling on.

Approximately 68% of women and 57% of men with mental health problems are parents, which highlights the emotional strain that families across the country already face. Last year, a quarter of parents with children aged 18 and under said they struggled to provide sufficient food for their children, and Shelter estimates that 1.7 million private renters do not have enough savings to pay their rent if they were to become unemployed.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): I commend the hon. Member for securing this debate, and I spoke to him beforehand. Charities such as the Family Fund provide a wide range of grants to families in Northern Ireland who are raising a disabled or seriously ill child or young adult on a low income, to spend on kitchen appliances—a fridge, a cooker or a washing machine—or clothing, bedding, sensory or play equipment, technology or just a much-needed family break.

Does the hon. Gentleman agree that the fact such charities are stepping in no way abdicates the Government's responsibility to do more to help families when they need help? He is speaking about compassion. Compassionate action is what we need.

Chris Hinchliff: I agree that we should commend such charities. The hon. Gentleman shows moral clarity in rightly saying that the Government have an obligation to support families going through this incredibly difficult time.

Research shows that all the factors I have described mean that families are on a difficult footing even before facing the additional pressures of caring for a seriously ill child. When families need extra support during such challenging times, they are often met with bureaucratic hurdles that only add to their mental and financial stress. To access disability living allowance, parents face a 90-day waiting period, a daunting 40-page application form and long waits for responses. Universal credit and shared parental leave are unsuitable options for too many parents in this situation, as the rigid eligibility criteria mean that many parents of seriously ill children simply do not qualify.

Dr Lauren Sullivan (Gravesham) (Lab): My constituent Vicky came to my constituency surgery and spoke about Hugh's law and how she had to take time off to look after her son, who has thankfully recovered. Does my hon. Friend agree that the £750 grant would provide certainty and help parents, by stopping the rigmarole of going through universal credit and those sorts of things? Would the grant help?

Chris Hinchliff: I absolutely agree with my hon. Friend. I encourage the Minister to reflect on the fact that all the evidence we hear from It's Never You shows that this very real problem is impacting families right across the country.

The systems that are in place were not designed to accommodate the urgent and unpredictable nature of childhood illness. Studies have shown that delays in financial support during critical life events significantly increase psychological stress and deepen financial instability. Research published in the *Journal of Pediatric Psychology* found that economic insecurity heightens parental stress, which can in turn hinder a family's ability to provide the best possible care for their child.

Alison Bennett (Mid Sussex) (LD): I thank the hon. Member for his excellent advocacy for Hugh's law since his election to Parliament. I wholeheartedly agree with the campaign. Two families wrote to me in anticipation of this debate. One family's child was diagnosed with stage 4 liver cancer at the age of just two. They were forced to drastically reduce their joint working hours so they could not only care for their sick child but also look after their other children. It is an enormous burden:

"No parent should face financial ruin while fighting for their child's life."

Does the hon. Member agree that day one support for these parents, as advocated by the Hugh's law campaign, would be very welcome?

Chris Hinchliff: The hon. Lady eloquently highlights the importance of this campaign. I wholeheartedly agree with her.

The benefits system available to parents in these situations leaves a gaping hole for the families of seriously ill children, who find themselves with nowhere to turn, grappling with financial ruin, growing debt or the devastating thought of not being able to be at their child's bedside when they are needed most. *The British Journal of Social Work* reports that families in medical crises without immediate financial support often face long-term debt, mental health struggles and career disruption, even after treatment ends.

Chris Bloore (Redditch) (Lab): I thank my hon. Friend for securing this critical debate. He mentions the significant financial impact on families who are trying to make sure their children get the care they need. Statistics from Young Lives vs Cancer, and from my meetings with constituents in Redditch and the villages, show that some parents actually miss getting their children to appointments because of the financial challenges they face. This is not just about what happens to their long-term financial security; children are missing important appointments because their parents cannot afford to get them there.

Chris Hinchliff: I agree that the gaping hole in our benefits system is devastating for families. My hon. Friend once again highlights how incredibly important it is that the Government resolve this as a matter of urgency.

Over 80% of surveyed families experienced a significant decline in household finances due to their child's illness. The core principle underpinning our welfare state is that nobody should have to consider their bank balance when faced with challenges not of their own making. Benefits exist to ensure that when life deals a cruel hand, its cost does not crush those who are already burdened. Instead, we share the responsibility across society, leaving nobody behind.

There is no group more deserving of support than families caring for seriously ill children. If, as a society, we fail to address this gap and spread the burden, we betray the very principle on which our welfare state was founded. Hugh's law offers a straightforward solution to plug this gap, by providing immediate, non-means-tested financial support to parents of children diagnosed with life-threatening illnesses. It would provide a grant of £750 a month for up to three months, activated from the day of diagnosis. Eligibility would be limited to children diagnosed with life-threatening or chronic conditions requiring hospital care. Applications would be completed by the healthcare provider, cutting out needless stress for families and meaning no more 40-page forms.

There are examples of similar policies across the world, including in Sweden, France and Canada, where the employment insurance family caregiver benefit provides financial support to parents caring for a critically ill or injured child under 18 years old. Benefits are paid for up to 35 weeks, helping families to manage the financial strain while focusing on their child's care. It is estimated that Hugh's law would have an annual cost of just £6 million to £7 million and would support around 4,000 families annually.

[Chris Hinchliff]

To put that into context, the figure represents just 0.0025% of the Department for Work and Pensions' 2023-24 budget. Given the unimaginable challenges these families face, caring for a seriously ill child while grappling with emotional strain, financial hardship and uncertainty, it is clear that the cost of such support is minuscule in comparison with the burden they carry. Life does not stop when a child gets sick. In fact, families often face higher day-to-day costs that impact them immediately—not in 90 days' time, when support might become available.

Hugh's law would offer much needed financial relief, allowing parents to focus on what matters most, being by their child's side, without the crushing weight of financial anxiety. We have heard about the immense challenges faced by families caring for seriously ill children, which go beyond emotional strain to include financial hardship and bureaucratic obstacles. The tireless advocacy of Ceri and Frances, through their It's Never You charity, has highlighted a gap in our welfare system that we simply cannot ignore.

Hugh's law offers a practical and compassionate solution: immediate support to parents with a child diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. Some 70 MPs signed my letter to the Prime Minister, and I have since written to the Department for Work and Pensions and met the Minister, who advised that the policy could be pursued with the Department for Business and Trade. I have now requested a meeting with the relevant Minister there.

My request to the Government and the Minister today is simple: embrace this campaign and take practical steps to make Hugh's law a reality. I will meet with any Minister necessary to advance this policy, but the Government must do the right thing and work proactively to turn Ceri and Frances's inspiring campaign into law.

6.7 pm

The Minister for Social Security and Disability (Sir Stephen Timms): I am delighted to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for North East Hertfordshire (Chris Hinchliff) on securing this important debate, commend his consistent advocacy on this topic, and welcome the thoughtful and passionate speech he has made this afternoon.

I have now met my hon. Friend twice, and his constituents Ceri and Frances Menai-Davis, who founded It's Never You—which I think is also what they said when they received their son's diagnosis. I thank them for telling me what had happened and telling me frankly about the journey they went through with their son Hugh, who was in hospital with a very serious illness. Their heartfelt reflections and the Hugh's law campaign help people like me to understand and appreciate much better the emotional and financial impacts that parents experience at an extremely difficult time. I commend the outstanding work that that charity and others do to support the parents and families of children with cancer and other very serious health conditions.

Many parents caring for children and young people with serious illnesses are likely to need additional support through social security. Caring naturally has an impact on work and therefore, very likely, on household income. Financial support is available through universal credit, and if needed support can be available on day one through a universal credit advance. Alongside the universal credit

standard allowance, additional amounts—the child element, the disabled child addition, the carer element and housing costs—are added as appropriate. Of course, universal credit is means-tested, and I recognise that it will not help households with greater financial resources, but it is there as a safety net if those financial circumstances change.

In the tragic circumstances of a child dying, the universal credit bereavement run-on is in place. It is designed to ensure financial stability for the initial period following the bereavement, and it can last for up to three months. Universal credit elements—the child element, the disabled child addition, the carer element and housing costs—will all remain in payment for the assessment period in which the child died and two further assessment periods beyond that. To support parents at this very difficult time, benefit conditionality is switched off for six months, which ensures that bereaved parents do not have to work or search for work during that period. After three months, a work coach will be in touch to offer additional voluntary support, which may or may not be taken up.

There is also disability living allowance for children aged under 16 and personal independence payments for those over 16. They are available if a child or young person's condition or illness is of a long-term nature and gives rise to care, daily living or mobility needs. They are not means-tested. We are currently consulting, following last week's Green Paper on pathways to work, on raising the age at which young people move from DLA on to PIP, the adult disability benefit, from 16 to 18. That proposal has been quite widely welcomed since we published the Green Paper.

Comparing January to February 2020, just before the pandemic, with September to October 2024, the number applying for DLA for children has increased by 193%—it has nearly tripled in that period. As a result, I am afraid the average journey time for DLA claims has risen; it is up now to about 20 weeks. I very much regret those delays and the Department is working to reduce them. We have increased the number of staff dealing with applications; they are clearing cases in date order, to be fair to everybody.

These benefits are a contribution to the extra costs that may arise as a result of a disability or health impairment. They are assessed on the needs arising, not on the condition itself, so they are available irrespective of the diagnosis. The highest level of benefit is over £9,500 per year. The benefit is generally paid to the child's parent or guardian, so it can help with overall family finances and be used as the family choose to meet their needs. Many children and young people with serious illnesses may spend a lot of time in hospital. For those under 18, DLA and PIP continue to be paid in full, which is a difference from the adult benefit.

I will now address the three-month qualifying period—which my hon. Friend rightly referred to in his remarks—that applies to disability benefits such as DLA and PIP. Payment begins once the three-month period has been completed, which helps to establish that the disability and resulting care and support needs are of a long-standing nature and provides a division between short and long-term disability. Claims can be submitted during the three-month qualifying period. Consideration will always be given to whether the qualifying period has already been served, at least in part, before the date of claim.

I want to highlight this point: the three-month qualifying period begins when the care needs began, and we depend on the parents to tell us when that was. It could well be a week or a significant period before the diagnosis or the hospital admission, and before the benefit application was submitted. It is important to look at when the care needs began, because that could have been well before the application was made. If the child sadly has an end-of-life diagnosis, as my hon. Friend knows, special rules apply: claims are fast-tracked and the three-month qualifying period does not apply. The highest rate of the DLA care component or the enhanced rate of the PIP daily living component will be paid from the date of the claim.

My officials are currently exploring the legal implications of another measure that has been proposed, which would introduce a run-on for child DLA and extend disability living allowance for a period after the death of a child. They will report on their conclusions once they have reached them. Receiving DLA and PIP can passport to a range of additional support, such as premiums in income-related benefits, carer's allowance, the Motability scheme and exemption from the benefit cap, providing further help for families.

Help from social security is part of a wider commitment on the part of the Government. For children and young people who have cancer, my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care has relaunched the children and young people cancer taskforce, which is focused on identifying tangible improvements for that particular patient group. I commend the hon. Member for Gosport (Dame Caroline Dinenage), who co-chairs that taskforce and will spearhead its work on patient experience alongside her co-chair, Professor Darren Hargrave of University College London and Great Ormond Street hospital.

The taskforce will examine a wide range of issues across both clinical and non-clinical care, early diagnosis, genomic testing and treatment, research, innovation and, importantly, patient experience, looking at issues such as travel, food and psychological support. Ceri and Frances will be in a position to say a good deal about that, drawing on their own experiences in hospital with their son.

The cost of travel can be a real problem for families of children with serious illnesses. The healthcare travel costs scheme provides financial assistance to patients in England who do not themselves have a medical need for transport, but need help with the costs of travelling to NHS services. The Government recognise that some patients and their families who one might think should benefit from that scheme are in fact unable to do so as it is currently configured. The Department of Health and Social Care is looking at that issue and whether more should be done, alongside its wider work on cancer.

Jim Shannon: The hon. Member for Mid Sussex (Alison Bennett) and I have just been talking about something that we all feel is very important. When a child is experiencing terrible bad health—bad health that, as the hon. Member for North East Hertfordshire said, could lead to their death—the pressure on the parents and immediate family is enormous. All they

want to do is be with their child and love their child all the time. They need someone there to help—“Here are the forms you need to fill out; here is the help we can give you”—to take the pressure off so that they can focus entirely on their child. That is the issue.

Sir Stephen Timms: The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right about the pressures on the family in those circumstances. My hon. Friend the Member for North East Hertfordshire referred to the fact that from April this year, the Department for Business and Trade is introducing a new entitlement of up to 12 weeks of neonatal care leave and pay for those with babies in neonatal care, to make sure that parents have appropriate support during that time—for exactly the reason the hon. Member for Strangford (Jim Shannon) has just set out. That new entitlement was introduced under the Neonatal Care (Leave and Pay) Act 2023, which started as a private Member's Bill in the previous Parliament and received cross-party support. When opening this debate, my hon. Friend the Member for North East Hertfordshire said that he will speak to Ministers in that Department about some ideas along those lines.

It is important that all parents of children with serious illnesses are supported to return to or remain in work, if that is what they choose to do. Carers for seriously ill children are already protected from employment discrimination under the Equality Act 2010 and parents are entitled to up to 18 weeks' unpaid parental leave to look after their children for any reason.

The Government's new Employment Rights Bill will make it easier to access that entitlement, and will make the leave available from day one of starting a new job. It will also make it more likely that flexible working requests will be accepted by employers. To support existing, new and potential unpaid carers to make informed decisions about combining work and care, the Job Help website provides advice and information all in one place, and our new deal for working people will provide further support and help.

This debate has reminded us all that having a child who is seriously ill is surely one of the most worrying and stressful situations a parent can experience. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for North East Hertfordshire for the initiative, which has given us the opportunity to talk about that today. There are no current plans to introduce a day one, non-means-tested grant for parents in this situation, like that proposed in the Hugh's law campaign and supported in this debate, but I underline that there is already significant support offered by my Department. That is just part of the very important work across Government to improve support for parents in these circumstances, including, in particular, the relaunched children and young people cancer taskforce.

Once again, I thank my hon. Friend for securing the debate. It is an important and sensitive subject, and I commend him for pursuing it so energetically, the cause having been raised with him so effectively by his constituents. I thank everyone who has contributed to the debate, and I have no doubt at all that we will return to this subject.

Question put and agreed to.

Construction Standards: New Build Homes

6.23 pm

Michelle Welsh (Sherwood Forest) (Lab): I beg to move,

That this House has considered construction standards for new build homes.

It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine. It is an honour to hold this debate today on the construction standards for new build homes. I will start by thanking the tradespeople who work in my constituency—the brickies, sparkies, plasterers, plumbers, joiners and groundworkers, to mention just a few. I know first-hand how hard they work and how poorly they can be treated sometimes. It is important to note throughout this debate that the quality of the work of most tradespeople is something we and they should be very proud of. The quality of new builds is an issue for many of my constituents. Having one's own home is a dream for many people across the country, including in my constituency of Sherwood Forest. Having a safe, affordable and warm home for all is something we should all strive for.

Jim Shannon (Strangford) (DUP): It is clear that the issue is not necessarily with the workers, but with the developers. There must be rules and legislation in place to ensure that developers cannot cut corners or ignore the guidelines, and that they supply safe properties. If that does not happen, the Government need to enforce it, with fines if necessary.

Michelle Welsh: I thank the hon. Member for his important intervention. I will say more about that later.

Over 70% of people in Sherwood Forest own their own home.

6.25 pm

Sitting suspended for a Division in the House.

6.37 pm

On resuming—

Michelle Welsh: Over 70% of people in my constituency of Sherwood Forest own their own home, either outright or with a mortgage or loan, and a large proportion of them will be living in a new build home.

I know that we need to build more homes across the country and I am proud that this Labour Government are committed to delivering 1.5 million quality homes over the course of this Parliament. Personally, I know the importance of growing up in a safe, warm house—a place to call home. Of course, new homes that are built will be for homebuyers, for social housing and for housing some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. However, the key to the Government's commitment must be quality.

There is a growing narrative around new build homes, suggesting that their construction standards are lower than those of homes built earlier. That is because we too often see new build homes that are not fit for purpose, and that are damaged, draughty or unsafe to live in. It is wrong that when someone moves into a new home or into their first ever house, they may not get the quality that they are paying for.

Helen Morgan (North Shropshire) (LD): Does the hon. Member agree that not only the house must be of a very high quality, but the surrounding estate that the house is built on? That is essential because the guarantees and building certificates that come with a home do not relate to that surrounding estate, and if there are problems with, for example, the drains or the roads, it can be very difficult to get them fixed, which is a nightmare for a new homeowner.

Michelle Welsh: I thank the hon. Member for her intervention and I completely agree with her point, which my constituents have also raised with me. Homebuyers deserve to feel confident that their new home is safe and will not begin to crumble as soon as the key is in the door.

I will refer to the experience of one of my constituents with their new build home. Kelly and her husband Simon moved into their new home in Bilsthorpe in October 2024. They opted to go for a new build home because of their disabled son, thinking that a new build would be clean and that they would not have to spend much time adjusting it to meet their son's needs.

Almost immediately, however, they realised that the high-standard and handcrafted home that they had been promised was not to be. They discovered numerous issues with the house. These included an incorrectly fitted and sized boiler cylinder, which left them without heating for three days; an improperly installed bath, which dropped and left gaps in the tiles; dirty tiles; damage to the flooring; and windows with scratches and stickers left on. I could go on. All of this was on top of the usual moving house stress. I know from my own experience that the days and weeks leading up to moving house are taken over by worry about what could go wrong. That a new home could contain even more nightmares is the last thing on someone's mind.

When Kelly and Simon raised their issues with their constructors and builders, Harron Homes, they were met with more bad treatment. Through their complaints, my constituents learned that despite some of these issues being known to the site manager and sales executive, the home was in fact signed off. Harron Homes stated that there was “nothing to stop them” living in the property and that it was “happy” with the state of the home. I know everyone here will agree that the conditions my constituents faced in the house were certainly not good enough, and should have stopped them from being allowed to live in the property, especially with a disabled son.

Robbie Moore (Keighley and Ilkley) (Con): I feel for the hon. Member's constituents. In Silsden, in my constituency of Keighley and Ilkley, Harron Homes carried out a development of 50 plus properties where my constituents faced exactly the same challenges and scenarios of snagging that she is quite rightly indicating. Alongside her, I reiterate my call to the likes of Harron Homes to, essentially, sort themselves out for the benefit of the constituents of us both.

Michelle Welsh: I agree completely with the hon. Gentleman.

When moving into a new home, a high quality and safe living environment is expected. We should not be expecting anyone to live in properties that do not meet these standards.

What has further shocked me about this case is the treatment of my constituents by Harron Homes. In an email, Kelly and Simon were described as “a pain” and they have had to wait weeks for repairs, and even just for a response. They deserve better, yet they are not alone in their experience.

Sara, a constituent in Hucknall, got in touch with me immediately following my election in July, regarding her ongoing case with Persimmon Homes. Like Kelly and Simon, Sara walked into her new home to find it completely below standards, with over 117 different faults and damages across the property. These included damaged flooring, poor insulation leading to cold spots, and plumbing issues. The company had even left my constituent with a broken patio door that had large gaps around the side, leaving her and her family fearing for their safety as the door could not be locked. This has understandably been extremely distressing for Sara and for her elderly mother. While Persimmon Homes has offered Sara some money to put towards the cost of repairs, it will not be enough to cover the full extent of the damages and faults in her home. Over 70 defects still remain. It is wrong that Sara was ever in this position, and that the construction standards of her home were not properly monitored. How many more families like Sara’s have to battle just to get the quality of home they originally paid for?

Alison Bennett (Mid Sussex) (LD): I thank the hon. Member for giving way, and for the case she is setting out. This is something that I have experienced with residents in Mid Sussex over a number of years, particularly in the village of Hurstpierpoint. The village has taken considerable numbers of new houses, and there have been houses among those developments that have been substandard. I think in particular of a family who had a brand-new house where, if you ran your hand down the wall, you could tell there was a film of grey mould. It took years of hassling the housing association and the developer for them even to admit that there was a problem and that they were at fault.

Does the hon. Member agree that if we are to win the hearts and minds of people who are sceptical about housing growth in their villages and towns, confidence in the quality of new build housing must be beyond question?

Michelle Welsh: I completely agree. I was pleased that the Government announced they are accepting some of the recommendations in the Competition and Markets Authority’s housebuilding market study. I am particularly pleased that we are implementing a statutory UK-wide new homes ombudsman scheme and supporting the development of a voluntary ombudsman scheme to improve consumer protection ahead of the statutory scheme’s launch. For too long, customers have felt like they have nowhere to turn, are not being listened to by the big developers, and do not know their rights. I hope this is a step towards changing that.

I ask the Minister that when drafting the new UK-wide scheme, the Government put quality at the heart and ensure that people have all the necessary protection in cases such as those of my constituents. We must also have better oversight and accountability for companies that do not deliver high-quality construction standards. It is vital that we showcase what good practice looks

like. I know there are many builders who do an exceptional job, and take great pride in their work. We cannot let the reputation of new build homes be ruined by a few rogue companies.

I mentioned earlier that I am proud that this Government have committed to delivering 1.5 million quality homes. In my constituency, the quality has sometimes been very lacking, the infrastructure has been very lacking, and the local Ashfield district council has been gerrymandering with its local plan, which continues to put precious historical land at risk, while there are more than enough brownfield sites to be used across the district. I ask the Minister that when we deliver these homes, the necessary steps are taken to ensure that the right companies and builders are selected to complete this work; that we work to provide the infrastructure that is needed; and that when councils let their communities down, like Ashfield district council has, the Government will step in.

I ask the Minister to ensure that the Government and local authorities have the necessary oversight powers to ensure that quality is maintained throughout the house building process. We have a real opportunity to build the homes we desperately need, while beginning to close the skills gap and shutting out rogue companies that underperform. Tradespeople need protection so that they are able to do a high-quality job.

John Lamont (Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk) (Con): The hon. Lady is making an excellent speech, and I agree with many of her points. Does she agree that when someone buys a new home, not only do they expect to have the mains water running, electric and gas, but in this day and age they expect to have a good broadband connection? Although the last Government made significant progress with obliging new house builders to connect properties, the £2,000 cap is sometimes giving developers an opt-out—a get-out—from connecting some properties to high-quality broadband. Does she agree that we should go further to ensure that all properties have access to high-speed broadband?

Michelle Welsh: I completely agree with that, as somebody who represents a constituency that has a large very rural chunk. With these new builds it is really important that such communities stay connected.

Future generations deserve to know that they are buying and/or living in quality homes, whether that is in new social housing, or their own home that they have purchased. Our construction workers of today and tomorrow, and the future of our housing, rely on us, as a Government, to get this right.

Christine Jardine (in the Chair): Because of the various interventions, we can now continue until 7.47 pm this evening.

6.48 pm

Lee Anderson (Ashfield) (Reform): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Jardine. I congratulate the hon. Member for Sherwood Forest (Michelle Welsh) on securing this important debate. I am very happy about it, because for about 10 years Persimmon Homes, which she mentioned, has been on my radar both as a local councillor and as a Member of Parliament.

[Lee Anderson]

We have an estate in Huthwaite in my constituency called the Mill Lane estate, which was built by Persimmon some 12 or 13 years ago. The standard of work was, to say the least, quite shoddy. There were lots of snagging issues when people moved in, but it is too late then—they have paid the money, they have got the mortgage and they are in these houses with dodgy patios, patio doors that do not fit, kitchens falling to pieces, uneven floors, walls that are not lined up and doors that do not fit. When they complain to Persimmon, it takes ages to come out and see people and put the work right.

In fact, Persimmon did not come out at all, so I ended up, as a councillor, putting in formal complaints on behalf of the residents who had snagging problems. I did it through the previous MP's office, and lo and behold, once the MP got involved and we put in formal complaints, Persimmon started to come round to people's houses and put the problems right. However, it should not be for somebody who has just forked out thousands and thousands of pounds, and made themselves skint to get their new dream home, to have to go to the local MP or councillor to complain about a brand-new but shoddy home and try to get the work put right. The owner of a brand-new home would expect it to be right first time. Imagine waking up one morning and seeing all these problems after being in there for a week. That has been happening to residents in my constituency.

We have another Persimmon estate in Ashfield—the Owston Road estate in Annesley. Persimmon—I will name and shame it because I think it is important to do so, as it has been dreadful to my constituents—decided to put a road on this estate made out of semi-permeable blocks of stone. It is not a normal road, but a type of block paving that has been put on the whole estate. Nottinghamshire county council had never seen this block paving before, so it quite rightly refused to adopt the estate, because once it adopted the estate, it would be responsible for the block paving. They have been arguing the toss for over 10 years, and I have been working on this for 10 years as a councillor and an MP. Every year or so, Persimmon staff turn up on site with their high-vis jackets and their boots, and they meet me and speak to residents. They promise to have a plan to put it all right within six months, and six months later Persimmon has swapped staff or sacked somebody, and another person turns up.

This has been going on for 10 years, and I have a resident called Mr Warhurst—Alan Warhurst—who has been campaigning with me for the past 10 years. I actually feel sorry for this bloke, because it has got to the point where he thinks he is banging his head against a brick wall. The killer is that when people try to sell their houses, they may struggle. Some of them may struggle to get a mortgage on these houses, because the estate is in essence a private one. Nobody has adopted it, and nobody wants to adopt it or the highway, because it could cost hundreds of thousands of pounds to put this work right.

I have a solution. I am not sure whether the Minister will agree with me, but I strongly suggest this for house builders such as Persimmon. Don't get me wrong; I have had this with Ben Bailey, Avant and other house builders, but they have been much better and much more forthcoming in putting right the repairs. I suggest that if we have

persistent problems with a house builder, we should reject any planning application from it in the future, until it starts to build houses correctly. I think that is the only way to stop these people.

When a council adopts a new estate, it takes on full responsibility, and the house builder knows that. However, once the house owner has purchased the house—once they are in their house, have the keys and have a mortgage—they are locked into that house and they are stuck with it. They cannot really battle with the house builder, whereas a local authority can. The local authority holds all the aces. It can say, "No, we're not adopting that road, these pavements or these street lights until you've built them to our standards." It is the same with the local water authority, such as Severn Trent, which can say to the house builder, "No, we're not adopting that sewer or that freshwater supply until you've built them to our standards."

John Lamont: The hon. Member is doing an excellent job of highlighting the problems with new house developments in his constituency. The National House Building Council will in many cases provide a guarantee backing up the developer to fix the repairs that are required, but I have certainly had difficulties with the NHBC in the past. Has he any reflections on the role it plays?

Lee Anderson: I thank the hon. Member for his intervention, which, as usual, is spot on. He is quite right, and I have had loads of these problems over the years. In fact, I had a big project running on a few of my new house builds in Ashfield a few years ago, and I was getting exactly that problem. People think they have a 10-year guarantee, but when they try to get in touch with the NHBC to get the work put right, they find it is next to useless. That is why the people on these new housing estates are contacting their local councillor and their local MP in great numbers.

While I am here, I will give right hon. and hon. Members a tip. Because of what the hon. Member for Sherwood Forest has said, if they get a new housing estate in their patch—I am getting one shortly—they should go and knock on the doors, deliver a snagging leaflet or do a survey to ask people whether they are satisfied with their house builder. Hon. Members would be surprised how many surveys we get back from constituents who are deeply unhappy with the state of their house.

Alison Bennett: I have done exactly that. I sent out a street letter and flushed out all sorts of problems with new build estates. Problems with management companies sometimes come up in those surveys. Is that something that the hon. Gentleman wants to comment on?

Lee Anderson: It is. We have had problems with management companies in one of my estates in Kirkby-in-Ashfield over the maintenance of a local park and some of the green spaces that come with these new house builds.

I want to touch on what the hon. Member for Sherwood Forest said about our problems with Ashfield district council. We have not had a local plan in Ashfield for nearly 25 years. Each time the administration changes, it falls out over a local plan. That has meant that developers can apply to build anywhere in Ashfield, and they are attacking our green spaces at great pace. In 2018,

we were promised a local plan to protect our green spaces within three years by the current independent-led council, the Ashfield Independents, because they had ripped up the old plan. Fast forward seven years and there is no local plan. One has been put in, but it does not protect our green spaces. It will allow developers to run roughshod over our green spaces in Ashfield. It will allow developers of new houses to come in and build their shiny new houses on green fields, which will lead to loads of problems. In my constituency, we will get loads of people complaining about their new build houses.

As the hon. Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) said, people expect to have the internet connected to their houses these days, and some of these housing companies are deliberately misleading their customers. They do not admit that there will not be any broadband in the houses they are selling. Most people assume that in this day and age, it is another utility like their gas, electric and water. It has been a complete nightmare for some of my constituents on the newer estates. I will close there, and I thank the hon. Member for Sherwood Forest once again for bringing this debate to Westminster Hall.

6.57 pm

Mrs Sarah Russell (Congleton) (Lab): I want to talk about some of the new build housing in my constituency. My hon. Friend the Member for Mid Cheshire (Andrew Cooper)—a very able colleague—and I have had difficulties with the same set of developers, so I will hand over to him to talk about the difficulties we have had with the housing in Spen View and Astbury Park, which were dealt with by Stewart Milne Homes. I will also not be giving an honourable mention to the job that Vistry has done in Loachbrook Meadow in Congleton. It is trying to persuade my residents to take on a management company and take over management of the estate, despite the fact that it has not built the sewers or roads to adoptable standards. I can see nods around the room; it is clear to me that I am not the only one suffering with these difficulties.

Currently, however, the leading problem developer in my constituency is Zenith House Developments, which produced Scholars Place in Sandbach. Scholars Place, a mixed development of detached homes and social housing, looks absolutely beautiful. Unfortunately, it was not finished with any sort of sewage pumping station, and that is as bad as one might imagine. At the moment, sewage from these homes simply goes into a well, which has a semi-piece of plasterboard covering it and is inadequately fenced, so it is totally accessible and a massive drowning hazard of excrement. It is incredibly dangerous, and it is about 200 metres, at most, from a local primary school. It is absolutely horrific. There are some real questions about whether we have sufficient legal powers in this country, given that that was ever allowed to happen. It is a public health hazard, causing sewage to back up into people's homes and on to the streets. The road literally runs with poo.

The problems associated with this development and the Spen View development have an impact on social housing providers. In both cases, there were section 106 agreements and social housing was provided. When these enormous and expensive problems occur for residents, the social housing providers that part own the shared ownership homes on such sites become financially entangled

in trying to deal with the matter. Because they part own the homes, it is of course appropriate that they should help their residents. However—I suspect this is a national problem—social housing providers, which need to provide social homes, effectively have to cross-subsidise the failings of the private sector in producing these houses. It is an absolutely shocking situation.

It is important to me that we implement section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which would improve the situation around sewer adoption, and that we have an equivalent for highways adoption. The problem across every one of the developments that I have mentioned is that the sewers and roads have not been dealt with properly. People have bought their dream homes—they are so excited—and then they find they have an enormous financial liability. It is a widespread problem in my constituency, and it is destroying people's lives. It is destroying their mental health; the level of distress among my constituents cannot be overstated.

While we are on the topic of new build homes, I will briefly touch on disability and accessibility in relation to construction standards. In London, category 4 disability access as a planning requirement has been the norm since 2004, but in the rest of the country that is not the case. Baseline category 1 only enables a household to be hypothetically visitable by a disabled person, and it does not guarantee ease of access for someone in a wheelchair. It seems to me to be a very basic minimum that homes that we are building now should be visitable by people who use wheelchairs.

We have an ageing population and lots of people who are waiting for accessible housing. As a Government, we are doing a large amount of affordable housing development, which I welcome. However, I want us to ensure as a minimum that that housing is accessible and adaptable, that a significant proportion of it is fully wheelchair adaptable and that more of it is fully wheelchair accessible.

I suggest we look at the planning frameworks from 2018, because they require local authorities to consider the impact of requiring accessible housing on the viability of their local plan. It is almost a requirement that housing should not be accessible if that will make it difficult to deliver the required number of homes. With the developers I have just described, of course the first thing that they say is that they cannot afford to provide accessible homes—but, of course, they can. They need to be producing good quality homes that everybody can access, in estates surrounded by safe and secure environments in which the roads and sewers are usable. That does not seem too much to ask in an advanced industrial society.

7.3 pm

Robbie Moore (Keighley and Ilkley) (Con): I thank the hon. Member for Sherwood Forest (Michelle Welsh) for securing this important debate. As I said in my earlier intervention, it seems that we have both experienced the challenges of Harron Homes, and she has my full sympathy for having to deal with them. In my own constituency, I had the managing director come out—not that he wanted to, but I managed to get him there—and we had a meeting with residents to talk through some of the challenges. I share the concerns that she raised on behalf of her constituents, because it is not a good housing developer and it does not have its residents' best interests at heart.

[Robbie Moore]

Construction standards are not just about bricks and mortar; they go into a home, and they go beyond that, into the sense of belonging that one feels when living in a good quality space. Construction standards are also about the process of planning, site security and development maintenance, all of which play a part in the experience of a resident who moves into a property.

I will use this opportunity to talk about some of the challenges that I have experienced in my constituency, particularly in Long Lee. In Redwood Close, a development is being undertaken by Accent Housing Group. I was called to look at the condition of an existing construction site about eight months ago. It is derelict because those involved in the construction went bust, but this is a site that is right in the heart of Long Lee and, dare I say it, has been causing a huge nuisance not only to those who wanted to move into the development and are now experiencing delays, but to those living in close proximity. I was invited along to see the access challenges to this particular site for myself. Neighbouring properties have had boundary walls, drainage and access all disturbed as the result of ongoing, existing construction. It is completely unacceptable.

I met again with the director for development, who came out on to the site with me around four months ago and reassured me that things would change at speed. I can tell hon. Members that nothing has changed at all, other than giving me further reassurance and then holding a residents meeting. They have told me that Esh Construction Ltd has now been appointed to complete the works, but those works are not due to start until mid-spring and construction of the site at Long Lee will not be completed until 2026.

All the while, those neighbours—who have had their property damaged, access hindered and boundary walls to their properties completely removed, allowing easy access to a dangerous site—have had to live with this right on their doorstep. It prompts the question: what has the local authority been doing throughout this whole process? Bradford council has not monitored the construction, nor has it carried out sufficient enforcement action; indeed, no enforcement action seems to have been taken at all. That is not a satisfactory outcome for the residents in Long Lee.

John Lamont: My hon. Friend is making an excellent speech and he is right to highlight the important role that local authorities have. However, speaking as a former commercial property lawyer, I think part of the problem is that, when buying a new home, the purchaser is forced to take a contract package that is geared in favour of the developers. When someone buys a second-hand home, there is a degree of negotiation between the parties, but when buying a brand-new home they take the pack from the developer and the remedies for the purchaser to deal with snagging items are very limited. Does he agree that that is part of the problem?

Robbie Moore: I absolutely agree, and that point has been made by the hon. Members for Sherwood Forest and for Ashfield (Lee Anderson): once someone has purchased a property or is tied into a contractual relationship, dealing with those snagging issues is a huge challenge. Where can they go from there? They have

been taken out of the local authority's remit to deal with it, because it has approved the planning application—having probably not carried out any enforcement action at all. That is the problem I observed with Bradford council's lack of any attention to the challenges that we faced in Keighley, Ilkley and the wider area that I represent.

The problem is that, when someone is locked into a contractual relationship, or has even moved into a property, and there are snagging issues, they are effectively trapped and there is no real ability for any organisation with any weight to deal with that. Will the Minister address in her closing remarks what action the Government will now take to deal with cases where new developments have been constructed of a poor quality and concerns have been consistently raised?

It should not take a Member of Parliament to deal with those concerns—it seems that only housing developers only then suddenly realise they have to do something about them. What will the Government do to provide more weight to these concerns that are being raised, so that people with snagging issues can have reassurance that those problems will be sorted out?

I will conclude my comments by discussing the challenges associated with dealing with section 106 moneys. When planning applications have been approved, there is then effectively a negotiation that takes place between the developer and the local authority. I again have to rely on Bradford council negotiating the best deal for whatever that section 106 money is contributing to. Section 106 money is effectively a payment to deal with any mitigating factors that have been negatively imposed on our community through that development. I give the simple example: if those negotiations are not robust enough, that disadvantages the communities we represent. If that section 106 obligation is not spent or enacted within a reasonable time, our constituents are significantly disadvantaged as a result of a local authority—such as Labour-run Bradford council—not responding well enough. That disadvantages the communities we represent.

Alison Bennett: I have no knowledge about the workings of Bradford council, being a Sussex MP, but in my experience—and I should declare an interest in that I am a district councillor in Mid Sussex—local councils do not necessarily have the powers needed to move swift enforcement action. In section 106 negotiations, they do not necessarily have the deep pockets of the development sector to lawyer up and get those good deals. Does the hon. Gentleman agree?

Robbie Moore: I would politely push back on that. My understanding is that local authorities do have the powers available to them throughout the planning process to challenge the planning application put before them and to have a robust level of negotiation with the developer, resulting in a section 106 obligation being firmly and robustly constructed to deliver residents' best interests. It is up to the local authority whether it chooses to utilise the powers awarded to it. In my case, I feel that Bradford council does not use any such powers in the first place.

Mrs Russell: In terms of the ability to do those things, the many years of cuts to local authority budgets—amounting to about 30% of local authority budgets over the last 14 years—are highly relevant. Does the

hon. Gentleman agree that there is also a question here about directors' duties? If those organisations go insolvent, no matter how great a 106 agreement is, that money cannot be recovered because the organisation no longer exists to recover it from. It should never have been possible for such a level of disruption to have happened to those residents, or for the people behind it to just go off in their Range Rovers.

Robbie Moore: The hon. Lady raises two points. I will take the second point on the director's responsibility first. I absolutely agree that it should not be possible for a housing developer to move away from a scheme, leaving it unfinished, as happened in Long Lee, where Accent Housing effectively did not deliver, causing huge nuisance to local residents. That should not be an acceptable situation.

On the section 106 negotiations, the question comes down to this: when is the trigger point kicking in, and is it in the best interests of those residents? If it is not, why? I would argue strongly that, in the scenarios I have seen with Bradford council, those trigger points are not negotiated in the best interests of my residents. That local authority, back in 2021, threw its statutory obligation to Government and said that it was in sound financial health. I do not think that resource or Government cuts are an issue in relation to how it anticipates those negotiations going on; it is just pure lack of willingness to do its job. I conclude my remarks on that point, because I know that there are many other speakers who want to contribute.

Christine Jardine (in the Chair): Order. We have to move on to the Front Bench contributions in 12 minutes, so please keep your remarks to five minutes each.

7.13 pm

Andrew Cooper (Mid Cheshire) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood Forest (Michelle Welsh) on securing this debate. As my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs Russell) has previewed, I will focus my comments on the collapse of Stewart Milne Homes North West, and the lasting consequences it has had for many families across my constituency and no doubt the wider north-west region.

Stewart Milne Homes went into administration in January last year, leaving several housing developments half-built, although the three in my constituency had been completed for some years. Nevertheless, homeowners have been left burdened with a potential financial nightmare, as streets and sewers were never properly adopted by the local highways authority or the water company. That has created a situation where residents, who have every right to expect a functioning, safe environment, are instead left with a looming threat of significant costs. The reason for the predicament is simple: there was either no bonded section 38 agreement in place with the local council, or no bonded section 104 agreement with the water company for the adoption of sewers—or, in some cases, neither—despite residents having deeds, on completion of their sale, showing that the estate would be adopted.

I can only speak with direct knowledge of my own constituency, but I am aware, through research undertaken by my team and through conversations with the local

authority and with United Utilities, that that is far from a unique situation, leading one to wonder whether Stewart Milne either acted negligently, or actively mis-sold properties on the basis that their roads and sewers would be publicly maintained. My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton makes a reasonable point about director's duties in that circumstance.

Without those legal agreements, there is no guarantee that local authorities or utility companies will take responsibility for maintaining those essential services. As a result, the burden of making these streets and sewers adoptable—essentially bringing them up to standard—is being shifted directly on to the homeowners. Families who have already invested in their homes, often using their lifelong savings, are now facing huge, unexpected bills.

That is a situation that residents in one development in Middlewich are currently facing. Despite the estate having been practically complete for a decade, the lack of an appropriate agreement means that the sewers on the development have not yet been adopted by United Utilities. Initial estimates from the inspections to date suggest that costs for the required remedial works could run into thousands. Costs are therefore liable to fall on residents. These homeowners are being forced to pay for poor planning, poor practices and poor execution, through no fault of their own.

We cannot and must not allow this situation to continue unchecked. There is a fundamental need for greater oversight and accountability in the house building sector. The mistakes of Stewart Milne should not become the burden of individuals affected by them, and the gaps in regulation that allowed that to happen must be addressed so that no homeowner is ever left in this position again. We need clearer, stronger regulations on the adoption of streets and sewers. Developers must be held accountable for ensuring that all necessary agreements are in place before any properties are occupied, not after the damage is done. On the utility side, that can be done very easily by implementing section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act, but I would argue that an equivalent is needed for highways.

The financial cost of completing unfinished works should not fall on the shoulders of families who are innocent victims in this situation. In addition, there must be better protection for homeowners in the event of a developer's failure. We cannot allow this pattern of abandonment and negligence to continue, with large companies walking away without facing the consequences and residents being left with the fallout. We must ensure that this situation is rectified and that no more homeowners are left to bear the burden of a developer's failure.

7.17 pm

Steve Yemm (Mansfield) (Lab): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine. I thank my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood Forest (Michelle Welsh) for securing this important debate.

Having listened to the contributions from my good friends, my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood Forest and the hon. Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson), who represent neighbouring constituencies to mine, I am deeply saddened to hear of the difficulties that their constituents have faced during what should be a moment of joy and achievement, particularly for those families who are first-time buyers.

[Steve Yemm]

While many aspire to own their own home, in my Mansfield constituency it has become a dream that many cannot afford. Equally, however, those who cannot also deserve to live in a home that is high quality and fit for purpose. That is why I also welcome the efforts and the work being done by Mansfield district council with its new council home building project. As I saw with my own eyes a few months ago during a site visit, the council are now midway through a £7.7 million development scheme on the Bellamy Road estate in Mansfield, in which an initial 22 high-quality affordable homes are being built. I must say that these homes, which will be rented to local families on the council's housing list, are all being built to an extremely high standard, and one better than that which is legally required.

The council is ahead of the game in delivering these homes to exceed the future homes standard, which will seek to ensure that homes are built to an environmentally friendly specification. This includes building homes with higher standards of insulation, to keep energy bills as low as possible, which is good both for the planet and for my constituents' pockets. I am glad to say that the council's partner, Mercer Building Solutions, had to include a range of social value actions in the development. For instance, it ensured that almost 90% of the workforce lived within a 20 mile radius of the district. These are truly local houses for local people, built by local people.

I am keen that councils and house builders look to British industry for solutions in construction. My constituency is home to Power Saving Solutions, a company that is enabling reduced reliance on diesel-generated power on building sites, and I learnt recently about JCB's response, with its hydrogen-powered combustion unit, which will also reduce carbon emissions in the construction industry. Those are two great examples of private sector firms enfranchising themselves in our mission to make Britain a clean energy superpower.

While I congratulate my council on its innovation and forward thinking, what I have heard in this debate is that it is time for the private sector to up its game and put the quality of houses before profit. As a part of this, we must invest in our local workforce to support the British construction industry. That is why I welcome the Chancellor's announcement of £600 million of funding to train tens of thousands more skilled construction workers in the next four years. The money will go towards creating more places at technical excellence colleges and expanding skills in the sector.

I promised last summer that I would bring good-quality jobs and opportunities to people in my constituency. With this Government pledging to build 1.5 million new homes, it is important that they are built to the highest standards. I look forward to hearing more from the Minister about what the Government will do to ensure that they are.

7.22 pm

Mr Lee Dillon (Newbury) (LD): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairship, Ms Jardine. I congratulate the hon. Member for Sherwood Forest (Michelle Welsh) on securing this important debate and on her powerful description of the impact on her constituent, Sara, of the 70 remaining defects in her home.

Given that 89% of homeowners are satisfied with the quality of their home, we might think that all is well in the world of house building, but throughout the debate hon. Members have highlighted where it simply does not work for our constituents. Just scratching at the surface clearly shows the different reality beneath, because alongside that satisfaction rate sits the stark statistic that 27% of new homeowners report 16 or more defects in their home. That is not minor snagging; it is a quarter of new homeowners moving into homes that are riddled with problems.

As the hon. Member for Keighley and Ilkley (Robbie Moore) set out, existing homeowners are affected as well. Let us be clear: this is not a new problem. Reports going back as far as the 2007 Callcutt review warned about poor-quality construction and inadequate warranties, yet here we are in 2025, debating the same failures.

My hon. Friend the Member for Mid Sussex (Alison Bennett) pointed out that confidence must be beyond question, but time and again we have seen developers prioritising profit over quality. The consequences can be devastating. Look at Solomon's Passage in Southwark, completed in 2012 and condemned just six years later due to serious defects. In my Newbury constituency, a new-build estate, Lancaster Park in Hungerford, does not meet the expectations of the people paying a high price to live there. These are not one-offs; these are symptoms of a broken system.

We cannot ignore that the UK has some of the worst-insulated homes in Europe. Six million households in the UK are living in fuel poverty, including 3,000 in my constituency, yet new homes are still built with gas boilers and inadequate insulation. Minister, we cannot keep building homes that are outdated the moment they are finished. The Government had the opportunity to mandate future home standards in the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, but they did not do so.

The Liberal Democrats would change that. Zero carbon must be the default. Every new home should have solar panels and renewable energy as standard. Planning must include climate resilience and flood mitigation, as the hon. Member for Congleton (Mrs Russell) mentioned in reference to section 42 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Retrofitting must be a priority.

Lee Anderson: The hon. Gentleman talks about all these great ideas for what the Lib Dems will do—fitting solar panels and heat pumps and stuff like that—but does he trust house builders to do that to a high standard?

Mr Dillon: I thank the hon. Member for his intervention, which gets to the heart of this debate. Whether it is building a damp-proof course correctly or installing cutting-edge climate technology, the Government have a responsibility to ensure that a strong regulator holds developers to account when they fail. As Members around the Chamber have said, we have seen failure, but that should not prevent us as Members of this House from setting a high bar for developers to reach.

Finally, I shall talk about infrastructure. It is not enough to build houses; we need to build communities, yet too often we see developments spring up without the GP surgeries, schools, public spaces or public transport links that people rely on, or with highways that cannot

be adopted, as the hon. Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson) highlighted. That is why we Liberal Democrats are calling for a planning system that guarantees delivery alongside housing targets. That means mandatory commitments from developers to fund GP practices, schools and green spaces; to put public transport first—new developments should be built around sustainable travel, not car-dependency—and deploy sustainable drainage, with grey water recycling included as standard in all new builds.

Although the Government have taken positive steps, there is still much to do. Those are all things that have been proven possible. Across the country, Liberal Democrat councils have led the way, from zero-carbon homes when we ran York, to 1,300 new council houses in Portsmouth. We know what works. Now the Government must follow our lead. Every family deserves a safe, warm and high-quality home—not just a roof over their heads, but a real foundation for the future. I urge the Minister and the Government to take action. No more delays, no more excuses—just homes that work for the people who live in them.

7.28 pm

David Simmonds (Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner) (Con): It is a pleasure to serve with you once again, Ms Jardine. I, too, add my congratulations to the hon. Member for Sherwood Forest (Michelle Welsh) on securing the debate.

I was reflecting, as we watched House staff go about their business, that *Hansard* will record all the words that have been spoken by Members in this debate. Indeed, they will mirror some of the historical records of ancient Rome and ancient China, when politicians complained about the quality of the construction of the Great Wall and many iconic buildings, and reflected on what could be done to ensure that buildings were constructed to the standard needed.

Of course, for each new generation the specific challenges change. We have different aspirations for the standard of our homes, as well as different technology and construction methods, and we need to ensure that what is built is fit for purpose. Although its focus has been on new homes, the debate has been wide ranging, touching on elements of housing tenure and the implications for the ability of occupiers to get change dealt with, the complications of the legal situation around warranties and insurances, and the challenges reflected in the ability or otherwise of local authorities to address complaints when they are brought forward.

The hon. Member for Newbury (Mr Dillon) started out talking about tenant satisfaction. It is striking that, on the whole, people in the UK describe a high level of satisfaction with their accommodation, private renters being the most satisfied. Beneath that, however, as the hon. Gentleman set out, there are a number of challenges.

I encourage the hon. Member for Sherwood Forest to make contact with my hon. Friend the Member for Wyre Forest (Mark Garnier)—a forest theme seems to be emerging among Members raising this issue—who has a private Member's Bill specifically on consumer protection for those who commission building work. That would begin to address in law many of the issues that have been raised this evening. Indeed, earlier today I informed a group of housing associations about the

need to appoint a clerk of works for new developments—someone who is there every single day, monitoring on their behalf exactly what is being constructed, in order to ensure that the kind of problems that Members across the Chamber have described are not present when they come to undertake the landlord role in those properties.

The Federation of Master Builders has a number of proposals to ensure that the construction industry in the UK adopts significantly higher standards, not only building on the experience of other countries but reflecting the particular circumstances of the UK housing market.

Anna Dixon (Shipley) (Lab): Talking about future-proofing our homes, a key things we could do with an ageing population is to ensure that all new homes are built to higher accessibility and adaptability standards. The previous Government consulted on that, but never implemented anything. Does the hon. Gentleman agree that that was a lost opportunity? By not implementing M4(2) standards, many new homes have been built that do not meet those higher standards.

David Simmonds: I would not describe that as a lost opportunity, but it is an opportunity that we need to consider. We recognise that we have a new Government with aspirations for housing. We had a Government who, despite all the challenges, set themselves a target of about 1 million homes and came very close to delivering on that during the life of the previous Parliament, but as I frequently point out in debates, we need to ensure that we are not simply thinking about the numbers of units. The 1.5 million target is not something we can achieve by packing the highest number of properties—studio flats—into various locations. We need to think about the nature of the homes and the type of housing that communities need, and about how a more nuanced approach can ensure that we build homes that support our housing market. For example, people may wish to downsize or to move because of disability, and to find accommodation that is fit for purpose in their local area.

A number of Members touched on the role that building control services play in signing off developments to assure that they are fit for purpose. All the debate, as reflected on by Members across the House, has demonstrated the complexity of this issue: fire safety is considered through the lens of one set of legislation; building control is about fitness of construction standards; the local authority has its planning responsibilities to ensure that what is built is what has planning consent; and, too, there is the insurance industry, which in essence is a private market that decides for itself what it considers fit to be an insurable and occupiable property. That has enormous influence.

In my constituency, I have the former Royal Air Force Lime Grove development constructed by Taylor Wimpey, where I have been engaging with constituents since I was first elected. That has been a very slow process, not least because things such as drainage have been built well below the standard required and can only be rectified if we are prepared to demolish all the homes that sit on top of that drainage. Those kinds of challenges are enormously complicated.

I place on the record my thanks to my hon. Friends the Members for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk (John Lamont) and for Keighley and Ilkley (Robbie Moore),

[David Simmonds]

and the hon. Member for Ashfield (Lee Anderson) for the points they made. They described from their personal experience how they engaged with developments that took place in their constituencies in different ways—to enable new occupiers to bring to wider public attention the concerns that they identified, to hold local authorities to account for failure or lack of action, to deal with issues that were patently obvious and needed to be addressed, and to deal with some of the legal complexities, as my hon. Friend the Member for Berwickshire, Roxburgh and Selkirk described. It is all very well having a contract and legal rights in theory, but if those rights cannot be enforced, they do not lead down a useful path.

If we were in government, we would be taking forward these matters, but as we are in opposition, we are challenging the Government to consider them. I will make a few brief points in that respect. A number of Members have highlighted adoptable standards as a significant issue that needs addressing. In encouraging new planning applications to be delivered, I encourage the Government to consider how we will ensure that adoptable standards are complied with. Members on all sides have raised a number of examples of subsequent landlords, such as FirstPort, whose management of the sites has been completely inadequate and compounds the other problems that have been described.

Finally, as we consider the learning from the Grenfell report, which highlights just how complex these projects are to manage, can we ensure that the learning described by the hon. Member for Mansfield (Steve Yemm), where the private sector and the local authority worked well together to bring innovation to bear and to ensure higher standards, is put into the structures of our legal approaches when it comes to all the different issues around development, housing, planning and building control described by Members across the Chamber this evening?

7.36 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (Rushanara Ali): It is a pleasure to serve under your chairmanship, Ms Jardine. I congratulate my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood Forest (Michelle Welsh) on securing the debate, and other Members on their excellent contributions.

There is a great deal of consensus about the challenges that Members of Parliament face when they are trying to provide the support that constituents require in these circumstances. I am deeply sorry to hear about the experiences of constituents for whom moving into what they thought was their dream home has in fact turned into a nightmare. From my own experience as a constituency MP, having to deal with similar cases, I know just how traumatic and challenging that can be for all concerned.

Everyone deserves a safe, decent and affordable home, but after a decade of decline in house building, the dream of home ownership is getting further out of reach for so many. This Government were elected to tackle the housing crisis. We made a commitment in our manifesto to build 1.5 million homes over the course of this Parliament. To deliver those ambitious targets we will take a holistic approach to reviewing the entire housing system, so that we can unlock house building growth while ensuring that standards continue to be met.

I am grateful to hon. Members for highlighting their insights and some of the issues that we need to keep a close eye on. Building more homes of all kinds is a crucial part of the Plan for Change to grow the economy, raise living standards and transform people's lives. Growth is our No. 1 mission, but even as we pull out the stops to boost the pace of house building, we remain absolutely focused on our commitment to protect and enhance our natural environment and strengthen the health and safety standards of the homes we build.

Regulatory reforms have already fundamentally changed the way in which buildings are designed, built and managed, with more stringent oversight. The Building Safety Act 2022 brought in new structures, new ways of working and new expectations. The Building Safety Regulator has a duty to keep the safety and standards of buildings under review, which means that as evidence comes to light, updates to building regulations and approved documents can be brought forward as needed.

Last December, the Deputy Prime Minister announced that approved document B on fire safety is now subject to continuous review, and asked the Building Safety Regulator to undertake a fundamental review of the building safety regulations. Guidance will be produced, updated and communicated to the construction industry, with statutory guidance covering building design that is now subject to continuous review by the Building Safety Regulator. We are building on the work that has gone on so far. The regulator is developing plans to launch a consultation on further changes by autumn 2025.

Sam Carling (North West Cambridgeshire) (Lab): In my constituency of North West Cambridgeshire, there are lots of young families seeking to buy their first home. I am pleased that the Government are committed to building 1.5 million new homes, but it is important that people can trust that they are buying a good-quality home. Just down the road, at the Darwin Green site in Cambridge, 36 new build houses with building control privately managed have had to be demolished for foundational failures. Does the Minister agree that, since the part-privatisation of building control under Margaret Thatcher's Government, it is a real problem that developers can essentially choose their own regulator, and that it is leading to falling standards?

Rushanara Ali: I hope that I have already addressed some of those points in my remarks. We are of course looking closely at what further improvements can be made to building regulations.

We recognise that the industry needs access to materials that are safe and of sufficient quality. We are setting clear directions for growth for the housing sector, and expect suppliers to increase their capacity to meet demand. On the work in relation to the long-term housing strategy, this Government are focused on ensuring that there is quality alongside the quantity that is desperately needed to ensure that people have the housing they need. Homeowners of new builds must feel confident that their new home is safe. The points on that today have been well made. We know that we must take the necessary action to get the quality, as well as the quantity right.

This Government are absolutely committed to improving redress for home buyers when things go wrong. The regulatory framework ensures that the Government's commitment to 1.5 million homes over the current

Parliament can and must be achieved safely and sustainably. Ultimately, by emphasising quality and safety, the reforms pave the way for innovative construction practices and materials, attracting skilled labour and boosting productivity within the sector.

However, we recognise that, as we have heard in the debate today, things can go wrong for people when buying a new build home. That is why we will bring into force measures to introduce a new homes ombudsman scheme, which developers will be required to join. It will have powers to investigate complaints and make determinations.

Robbie Moore: Will the hon. Lady give way?

Rushanara Ali: I want to address the points that have been made—including the hon. Gentleman's points, if he will let me continue.

The ombudsman will have powers to investigate complaints, to make determinations, including requiring compensation to be paid, and to help to set expectations of scheme members around standards of conduct and standards of quality of work. We will also have powers to issue or approve a code of practice. That will make it quicker and easier for home buyers of new builds to gain redress when things go wrong and help our wider objectives to bring up standards in the sector.

The introduction of the new future homes standard represents a considerable improvement in energy efficiency and standards for new homes. From 2025, new homes will be future-proofed with low-carbon heating and high levels of energy efficiency. These homes will be zero-carbon ready, meaning that no further work will be needed to ensure that they have zero carbon emissions as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise.

My hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs Russell) mentioned her local plan. Due to the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in the planning system, I am unable to comment on the details of that specific local plan. However, this Government are committed to the plan-making system. Bringing local councils and their communities together to agree their future plans is the right way to plan for the growth and environmental enhancement that our country needs.

I will respond to a number of points that hon. Members made; if I do not address all the points that were made in the debate, we can follow up in writing. I am grateful to my hon. Friends the Members for Mid Cheshire (Andrew Cooper) and for Mansfield (Steve Yemm), to the hon. Members for Keighley and Ilkley (Robbie Moore) and for Ashfield (Lee Anderson), and to my hon. Friend the Member for Congleton (Mrs Russell) for raising a number of issues, including what more we can do around planning. We will look at the points that have been raised.

On the point made about disability, we will set out our policies on accessible new build housing shortly. The Government expect local authorities to plan for

and deliver the housing and infrastructure that their communities need. The national planning policy framework, which was revised in December 2024, promotes mixed use sites, which can include housing designed for specific groups. That means that councils must consider the needs of disabled people and older people when planning new homes, and reflect that in their local plan.

I am conscious that I need to leave a bit of time for my hon. Friend the Member for Sherwood Forest to sum up. Points were made about water efficiency, and about drainage and waste disposal, which approved document H addresses. However, I am happy to write to hon. Members about the points that were raised that I have not been able to address today.

I am grateful for this debate and for the really constructive contributions to it from all Members, including the Front-Bench speakers, on this very important issue, which affects all of us in different ways in our constituencies, and I am determined to make sure that we work together to address it.

Christine Jardine (in the Chair): I call Michelle Welsh to wind up briefly.

7.45 pm

Michelle Welsh: I thank all the hon. Members here in Westminster Hall today for their contributions to what I think was a very important debate for us to have. It was very clear from all the contributions, regardless of party, that those buying new homes need better protections. Going forward, however, it is not just those better protections that they need. When they are tackling issues, they should not have to contact a Member of Parliament to get them resolved.

We have heard some really horrifying stories today and my constituents, like people across the country, deserve better. When someone buys a property, they are locked into a contractual agreement. Often, however, it is impossible to get repairs and snagging completed, which should not be the case. We must change that. Time and again, we see profit being put before quality. Accessible homes and affordable homes are crucial.

Today, hon. Members have raised issues about the processes to ensure—

Christine Jardine (in the Chair): Order. Our time is up; I am sorry.

Question put and agreed to.

Resolved,

That this House has considered construction standards for new build homes.

7.47 pm

Sitting adjourned.

Written Statements

Tuesday 25 March 2025

EDUCATION

Higher Education: Protecting Public Money

The Secretary of State for Education (Bridget Phillipson):

Today I am setting out the actions this Government are taking to tackle concerning evidence of abuse of public money associated with the franchised higher education system which we inherited.

Franchising, where one higher education provider subcontracts provision to a delivery partner, grew significantly under the previous Government, but most franchised providers were not placed under the direct oversight of the regulator—the Office for Students. When done well, franchised higher education can be an important driver of inclusion, but against a backdrop of growing financial instability within higher education, for some institutions, it is apparent that franchising became less about expanding access and more about maximising income.

In 2023 and 2024, the Government Internal Audit Agency, the National Audit Office and the Public Accounts Committee all raised concerns about abuse, unethical behaviour and fraud. Without the necessary guardrails, or a funding settlement that put universities on a sound financial footing, in some institutions the system has become a breeding ground for abuse, unethical behaviour and fraud.

Earlier this month, I was made aware that there is a disproportionately large number of Romanian students settled in the UK who receive student funding from the Student Loans Company.

Investigative work undertaken by the Student Loans Company suggests organised exploitation both of Romanian students and of the UK taxpayer.

Under this Government, this abuse will end. The Department for Education and the Office for Students already have a programme of investigations under way related to franchised provision. Where these investigations have found abuse of the student finance system there will be serious consequences. I have now also asked the Public Sector Fraud Authority to tackle this threat and take forward this work across Government.

We will also take immediate action on the use of agents to recruit students. The Government can see no legitimate role for domestic agents in the recruitment of UK students. We are taking urgent steps to prevent any further abuse of the system.

Since taking office in July, the Government have moved at pace to tackle the many inherited challenges in the higher education sector, which this Government believe should be treated as a public good, not a political battleground. In November, I set out changes to the level of tuition fees and maintenance, for the first time in seven years, and set out the five principles for broader reform of the sector which underpin the approach this Government will take. We have already reformed the Office for Students, accepting the report of Sir David Behan and bringing new leadership and a tighter focus.

I have written to Edward Peck, the incoming chair, to ask him to make protection of public money a top priority. To support this, I will bring forward legislation at the next available opportunity to give the Office for Students stronger powers to act more quickly and effectively to protect public money.

In January the Department launched a consultation on franchised higher education. The proposals would bring much closer regulatory scrutiny of the largest franchised providers—the ones in which there has been significant growth in recent years—bringing them under direct oversight by the Office for Students. The Office for Students is also consulting to strengthen its conditions of registration, to stop providers with weak governance arrangements from being able to register in the first place. We have asked it also to urgently strengthen the requirements on the providers who subcontract provision. Together, if implemented, these proposals would impose new and significant controls on franchising.

Higher education providers are engines of growth and drivers of opportunity, but these issues threaten the integrity of the sector. With the regulator, we will set the rules, we will enforce them and we will protect public money. However, ultimately universities must take ownership of these issues for themselves and we will look to them to take responsibility to ensure abuse like this is brought to an end. There can be no excuse for the abuse of public money, and under this Government there will be no hiding place for those who perpetrate such abuse.

[HCWS547]

HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Social and Affordable Housing Capital Investment

The Minister for Housing and Planning (Matthew Pennycook): In the multi-year spending review later this year, the Government will set out the full details of a new grant programme to succeed the 2021 to 2026 affordable homes programme. Alongside wider investment across the Parliament, this new programme will help deliver the biggest increase in social and affordable house building in a generation.

The Government have already allocated an additional £800 million in new in-year funding for the 2021 to 2026 affordable homes programme. As a result of significant demand from housing providers across the country, this additional funding is already on course to be oversubscribed.

We know that there are a large number of housing providers who could progress new projects in advance of the new grant programme if the necessary funding were made available. We also know that providing greater funding certainty ahead of the forthcoming spending review will encourage more providers to come forward with ambitious projects and help drive up social and affordable housing supply in this Parliament.

The Government are therefore announcing today an immediate injection of £2 billion of new capital investment to support delivery of the biggest boost in social and affordable house building in a generation and contribute to our plan for change milestone of building 1.5 million safe and decent homes in this Parliament.

This new funding, which will be made available to housing associations and local authorities on the same terms as the affordable homes programme for 2021 to 2026, will act as a bridge to the future grant programme to be announced at spending review and thereby maximise rates of social and affordable house building in this Parliament.

The funding will deliver up to 18,000 additional new social and affordable homes by the end of the Parliament. The majority of that additional funding will fall in 2026-27, and all projects funded will need to have started by March 2027. A tail of funding will cover completions, with projects funded being required to finish by June 2029.

The Government encourage providers to come forward as soon as possible with bids for new ambitious projects, including those ready to commence quickly. We will ask Homes England, the Greater London Authority, and bidders to continue to prioritise homes for social rent in their proposed developments, in line with the Government's firm commitment to support this tenure and the approach taken to recent in-year top-ups.

The £2 billion of new capital investment announced today will, in time, be supplemented with additional funding for 2026-27 and beyond. Full details of wider long-term and future grant investment will be announced at the spending review. Once the new grant programme to succeed the 2021 to 2026 affordable homes programme opens for bidding, the window to bid for the £2 billion of capital investment announced today will close and any unallocated funding will then be allocated under the terms of the successor programme.

[HCWS549]

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Broadband Industry Commitments: Telegraph Poles

The Minister for Data Protection and Telecoms (Chris Bryant): Today, the Independent Networks Co-operative Association (INCA) and the Internet Services Providers' Association (ISPA), the trade bodies representing the fixed-line broadband industry, have published new best-practice recommendations for the deployment of telegraph poles.

The Government understand the concerns of people across the country about the use of telegraph poles to support the deployment of new gigabit-capable broadband networks, especially where this duplicates other infrastructure or seems unnecessary.

I have heard from people who were not aware of new infrastructure coming to their street until telegraph poles were erected, and from people whose access to their driveway was blocked by a new unannounced pole. I certainly do not want to impede or slow down the roll-out of essential connectivity. I support the commercial and competitive roll-out, but I do want to ensure that this is done sensitively and proportionately.

Telegraph poles can play an important role in delivering connectivity. This is particularly important in areas that do not yet benefit from gigabit-capable connections, but even in areas that already benefit from gigabit-capable broadband, competition between different operators using poles and ducts can bring greater choice and lower prices to consumers.

Sharing existing infrastructure is obviously better for everyone, but it will not always be possible, for instance in areas where the existing broadband infrastructure was directly buried in the ground, without ducts. Ducts may also be full, or damaged. In some cases, developers have discovered that underground cabling is buried rather than ducted. In such areas, it is generally not possible to use existing infrastructure. Building new underground ducts can be up to 10 times more expensive than installing poles, and comes with its own challenges such as traffic disruption. Higher costs to operators will ultimately raise costs for consumers or result in infrastructure not being built at all.

The Government considered a range of options to ensure that we can effect change without negatively impacting roll-out. I have met with telecommunications providers on multiple occasions. I have sought targeted action where I was made aware of specific issues, and also voiced my strong concerns about the deployment of new infrastructure where alternatives, such as sharing existing infrastructure, would be viable.

In response to my concerns, INCA and ISPA undertook to work with their members and the wider fixed-line broadband industry to produce new guidelines for the deployment of telegraph poles. These guidelines set out conditions that must be followed when deploying telegraph poles, and set out what operators are expected to do when installing new infrastructure.

But more importantly, the new guidelines include a commitment by its signatories to always consider the needs of communities during the design and construction of new fibre networks.

I am grateful for the efforts of the industry, and trust that this new commitment, underpinned by strong expectations towards operators, will mean that communities can be confident that their needs are put first as the roll-out of gigabit-capable connectivity continues.

A copy of the "Telecommunications Poles Working Group Best Practice Recommendations" will be deposited in the Libraries of both Houses.

[HCWS548]

TRANSPORT

Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Mike Kane): By publishing our new maritime decarbonisation strategy today, the Government have set out plans to encourage and support our maritime sector in using fuels of the future and shipping "chargepoints" to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. The maritime decarbonisation strategy sets out the Government's vision of for the future of the UK's maritime sector, by setting new domestic decarbonisation goals for a 30% reduction by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2040—both relative to 2008—and outlines our key policies to meet them.

To support this, we are also publishing two supplementary calls for evidence: on "Net zero ports" and on "Decarbonising smaller vessels", with measures for small, sub-400 gross tonnage (GT) vessels and accelerating uptake in targeted subsectors. These calls for evidence will allow us to gather evidence to provide a more holistic understanding of the current state of play of the maritime sector and how to decarbonise the sector moving forward.

In 2019, the UK domestic maritime sector produced around 8 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent, on a fuel lifecycle basis. Decarbonisation of our maritime sector will support this Government's missions: driving the uptake of clean fuels and energy, helping to make Britain a clean energy superpower, seizing the green growth opportunities which will help to kick-start economic growth, and realising the co-benefits that reducing emissions can have for health, supporting our health mission, in line with our plan for change. It is conservatively estimated that the decarbonisation of the UK maritime sector could support £130 million to £180 million of gross value added (GVA) and around 1,400 to 2,100 jobs in the UK on average in each year between now and 2050. This is in respect to the provision of on-board technologies, fuel storage and engines alone. The investments required on land to support the decarbonisation of the sector, including the production of zero and near-zero GHG emission fuels and energy are also expected to further drive growth in the UK, and deliver energy security.

This ambitious, but credible and evidence-based maritime decarbonisation strategy is based on a state-of-the-art maritime emissions model, representing a significant step change in our ability to estimate the emissions from the UK maritime sector. Responses from the two calls for evidence will also inform the development of the maritime emissions model as we look to increase our understanding of how to decarbonise maritime.

Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy

The maritime decarbonisation strategy outlines this Government's vision for how the maritime sector can decarbonise. The strategy sets new goals for domestic maritime emissions, aiming for zero fuel lifecycle GHG emissions by 2050, with at least a 30% reduction by 2030 and an 80% reduction by 2040, relative to 2008 levels. These interim goals are aligned with the level of highest ambition of the 2023 International Maritime Organisation GHG strategy, allowing us to take pragmatic action domestically while continuing to push for high ambition internationally.

These goals highlight our commitment to decarbonising the maritime sector and will provide the industry with the certainty it needs to invest, playing its part in kick-starting economic growth and making Britain a clean energy superpower.

The strategy will cover five key policies to drive decarbonisation from now to 2050:

Fuel regulation. Alongside a fuel standard being developed at the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), we will, subject to consultation next year, introduce domestic fuel regulations to drive the uptake of zero and near-zero GHG emission fuels and energy sources.

Emissions pricing. The UK emissions trading scheme (ETS) will be expanded to include UK domestic maritime GHG emissions from 2026. At the IMO, we are also continuing to push for emissions pricing through a global shipping levy, introduced from 2027.

Ports and emissions at berth. We are considering further action to reduce emissions at berth and are launching a call for evidence to inform this work alongside the maritime decarbonisation strategy.

Smaller vessels and targeted subsectors. We need to reduce emissions from the whole fleet over time, including smaller vessels. To build our understanding, we are launching a call for evidence

to begin this policy development. We are aware that while this will be challenging for some subsectors—such as fishing vessels—there are others that could move quickly, such as offshore wind vessels.

Energy efficiency. We will support the IMO review of short-term measures to further incentivise energy efficiency and explore domestic energy efficiency measures.

This strategy continues to build on the innovation and expertise developed through our research and development programme UK SHORE, which, as well as accelerating the commercialisation of the future fuels and technologies necessary, positions the UK as a leader in clean maritime development and drives investment into clean maritime technologies. Supporting this will be the Maritime and Coastguard Agency's new UK maritime innovation hub, which will encourage innovation and research and development, and support economic growth by helping innovators bring new technologies to safe commercial use in the sector.

"Net zero ports" Call for Evidence

This publication will collect evidence to support the Government's consideration of an at-berth emissions requirement in the maritime decarbonisation strategy. It looks at the role of ports in enabling shipping to decarbonise and reduce shipping's wider environmental impacts. This includes providing new infrastructure and aims to capture evidence on the future electricity demand at ports, recognising this is a shared asset to enable ports, shipping and port tenants to decarbonise and capture new commercial and economic opportunities.

The publication also looks at the progress ports are making in decarbonising their own operations and how Government could potentially galvanise the sector to decarbonise. We focus on whether ports are planning to decarbonise their own operations, their goals and what they have included in their strategies, including wider environmental considerations.

"Decarbonising smaller vessels" Call for Evidence

This call evidence will provide Government with essential information and data to help decarbonise and reduce the environmental impacts of vessels under 400 GT. It asks questions on the costs of these vessels, when the new technologies will be ready, what infrastructure will be required and where these vessels are likely to be built. It seeks to identify which subsectors have a clear decarbonisation pathway and may be able to move quickly. This call for evidence represents a balance between ambition and deliverability, recognising that some subsectors such as fishing will need more time, and that this is the start of a conversation with them. This means we will have a stronger evidence base to make informed policy decisions in the future.

Next steps

Following the publication of the maritime decarbonisation strategy, and the two calls for evidence, we will continue to work with the sector to deliver the domestic decarbonisation goals and to reduce wider environmental impacts. We will collect and analyse the responses from the calls for evidence to inform our next steps and will publish a consultation on future UK fuels regulation. Furthermore, we will continue to champion ambitious action at the IMO to drive the global maritime sector towards zero emissions and deliver the IMO GHG 2023 strategy.

Written Corrections

Tuesday 25 March 2025

Ministerial Correction

SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Draft Electronic Communications (Networks and Services) (Designated Vendor Directions) (Penalties) Order 2025

The following extract is from the Third Delegated Legislation Committee on the Draft Electronic Communications (Networks and Services) (Designated Vendor Directions) (Penalties) Order 2025 on 19 March 2025.

The Minister for Data Protection and Telecoms (Chris Bryant): ...First, there are presently no rules enabling the Secretary of State to decide what “turnover” means in relation to potential non-compliance with a designated vendor direction, such as that on the use of Huawei services. The order corrects that so that it is established and laid down in statute what those provisions are.

Secondly, the order changes the term “provider” to the term “person” because the 2003 and 2021 Acts are not consistent one with another.

[Official Report, Third Delegated Legislation Committee, 19 March 2025; c. 3.]

Written correction submitted by the Minister for Data Protection and Telecoms, the hon. Member for Rhondda and Ogmore (Chris Bryant):

The Minister for Data Protection and Telecoms (Chris Bryant): ...First, there are presently no **unambiguously applicable** rules enabling the Secretary of State to decide what “turnover” means in relation to potential non-compliance with a designated vendor direction, such as that on the use of Huawei services. The order corrects that so that it is established and laid down in statute what those provisions are.

Secondly, the order changes the terms “notified provider” and “provider” to the term “person” because the **Electronic Communications (Networks and Services) (Penalties) (Rules for Calculation of Turnover) Order 2003 (S.I. 2003/2712) and the 2021 Act** are not consistent with one another.

Other Corrections

SARAH SMITH

Crime and Policing Bill

The following extract is from the Second Reading of the Crime and Policing Bill on 10 March 2025.

Sarah Smith: Crime in Hyndburn and Haslingden is currently out of control. Robbery has skyrocketed in my constituency by 75% in the past year, which is far worse than the already shocking 17% increase that we have seen across Lancashire. Shoplifting has soared by 70%, which, again, is significantly worse than the 23% rise across the county. Those numbers are not just statistics; they represent victims—business owners whose livelihoods are threatened, families who feel unsafe and communities torn apart by lawlessness. Indeed, just last week local businesses in Accrington saw around 10 break-ins. Almost half of my constituents—44%—will experience violent crime.

[Official Report, 10 March 2025; Vol. 763, c. 714.]

Written correction submitted by the hon. Member for Hyndburn (Sarah Smith):

Sarah Smith: Crime in Hyndburn and Haslingden is currently out of control. Robbery has skyrocketed in my constituency by 75% in the past year, which is far worse than the already shocking 17% increase that we have seen across Lancashire. Shoplifting has soared by 70%, which, again, is significantly worse than the 23% rise across the county. Those numbers are not just statistics; they represent victims—business owners whose livelihoods are threatened, families who feel unsafe and communities torn apart by lawlessness. Indeed, just last week local businesses in Accrington saw around 10 break-ins, **and 44 in every 1,000 of my constituents will experience violent crime.**

ORAL ANSWERS

Tuesday 25 March 2025

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE	761	HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE—continued	
Access to NHS Dental Services.....	763	Mental Health Act: Family Support.....	775
Cancer Care: West of England.....	770	NHS Waiting Lists.....	772
Community Hospitals.....	761	Nursing Career Progression: Inequalities.....	771
Community Pharmacy.....	773	Special Educational and Disability Needs.....	776
Dualling the A66.....	914	Topical Questions.....	777
Independent Review of Data, Statistics and Research on Sex and Gender.....	768	Women's Health Services.....	767

WRITTEN STATEMENTS

Tuesday 25 March 2025

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
EDUCATION	29WS	SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY ..	31WS
Higher Education: Protecting Public Money.....	29WS	Broadband Industry Commitments: Telegraph Poles.....	31WS
HOUSING, COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT	30WS	TRANSPORT	32WS
Social and Affordable Housing Capital Investment.....	30WS	Maritime Decarbonisation Strategy.....	32WS

WRITTEN CORRECTIONS

Tuesday 25 March 2025

	<i>Col. No.</i>		<i>Col. No.</i>
MINISTERIAL CORRECTION	3WC	OTHER CORRECTIONS	4WC
Science, Innovation and Technology.....	3WC	Sarah Smith.....	4WC
Draft Electronic Communications (Networks and Services) (Designated Vendor Directions) (Penalties) Order 2025	3WC	Crime and Policing Bill.....	4WC

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**not later than
Tuesday 1 April 2025**

STRICT ADHERENCE TO THIS ARRANGEMENT GREATLY FACILITATES THE
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CONTENTS

Tuesday 25 March 2025

Oral Answers to Questions [Col. 761] [see index inside back page]

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Asylum Hotels and Illegal Channel Crossings [Col. 785]

Answer to urgent question—(Dame Angela Eagle)

Arm's-Length Bodies (Accountability to Parliament [Col. 799])

Bill presented, and read the First time

Regulators (Growth Objective) [Col. 800]

*Motion for leave to bring in a Bill—(Luke Murphy)—agreed to
Bill presented, and read the First time*

National Insurance Contributions (Secondary Class 1 Contributions) Bill [Col. 803]

Lords message considered

Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers and Private Schools) Bill (changed to Non-Domestic Rating (Multipliers) Bill) [Col. 832]

Lords amendments considered

Great British Energy Bill [Col. 869]

Lords amendments considered

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Bill [Col. 892]

Lords amendments considered

Terms and Conditions of Employment [Col. 898]

Motion—(Justin Madders)—agreed to

Petition [Col. 914]

Veterinary Products in Waterways [Col. 916]

Debate on motion for Adjournment

Westminster Hall

Horticulture Trade between Great Britain and Northern Ireland [Col. 289WH]

Nutrition for Growth Summit [Col. 297WH]

Seriously Ill Children: Financial Support for Parents [Col. 320WH]

Construction Standards: New Build Homes [Col. 327WH]

General debates

Written Statements [Col. 29WS]

Written Corrections [Col. 3WC]

Ministerial correction

Other correction
