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HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

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Abbreviation	Party/Group
CB	Cross Bench
Con	Conservative
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
GP	Green Party
Ind Lab	Independent Labour
Ind LD	Independent Liberal Democrat
Ind SD	Independent Social Democrat
Ind UU	Independent Ulster Unionist
Lab	Labour
Lab Co-op	Labour and Co-operative Party
LD	Liberal Democrat
LD Ind	Liberal Democrat Independent
Non-afl	Non-affiliated
PC	Plaid Cymru
UKIP	UK Independence Party
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party

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House of Lords

Monday 22 July 2019

2.30 pm

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Ely.

Retirement of a Member: Baroness Gould of Potternewton Announcement

2.36 pm

The Senior Deputy Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith): My Lords, I should like to notify the House of the retirement, with effect from today, of the noble Baroness, Lady Gould of Potternewton, pursuant to Section 1 of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014. On behalf of the House, I thank the noble Baroness for her much-valued service to the House.

Mental Health: Weight and Shape-related Bullying Question

2.37 pm

Asked by **Baroness Bull**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact of weight- and shape-related bullying, criticism and teasing on long-term mental health.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford) (Con): My Lords, bullying in all its forms can have a serious effect on mental health. Children who are exposed to frequent, persistent bullying are at a higher risk of developing mental health problems; exposure to bullying is also associated with elevated rates of anxiety, depression, self-harm and suicidal thoughts, which can last into adulthood. The Government are providing more than £2.8 million of funding up to 2020 to support schools in tackling bullying.

Baroness Bull (CB): My Lords, weight-related teasing is a form of weight bias, the consequences of which can include depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, substance abuse, eating disorders, obesity and suicidality. Weight bias is on the increase and is prevalent across the population. Research shows that even health professionals are not immune to negative stereotypes that connect character and capability with weight. Is the Minister confident that adequate social policies are in place to address and reduce the incidence of weight bias? Does she believe that there is sufficient provision in the law to protect all of us, young and old, from discrimination on the basis of size and shape?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The noble Baroness has a record of raising this important issue. The Government recognise that poor body image is not only a common problem but is associated with

mental ill health. Approximately 70% of adolescent girls and 45% of adolescent boys want to change their body, weight or shape. As she rightly points out, in the most extreme cases, that can lead to eating disorders, depression or even feeling suicidal. The Government have delivered a broad programme of body image work over the past six years. We believe that more work can be done but we are working hard to make sure that we expand our eating disorder community care work for children and young people over the next few years. I welcome continuing the debate to see what more can be done.

Baroness Wheeler (Lab): My Lords, the latest Barnardo's report, *Overcoming Poverty of Hope*, showed that 69% of young people,

"feel they will have worse 'overall happiness and mental health' compared to their parents' generation",

with one young person saying that social media is "massive for mental health" because of the,

"unrealistically high expectations of body image and lifestyles".

On top of that, the report found that,

"young people with additional life challenges, such as young carers and care leavers are more susceptible to the negative impacts of social media as they are more likely to experience social isolation".

What are the Government doing to work with mental health charities, such as YoungMinds, and young carers to address this situation?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The noble Baroness is right that children exposed to persistent bullying risk experiencing these problems. This is related to the experience of face-to-face bullying, but exposure on social media can also cause the problem. That is why the Department for Education is providing over £2.8 million of funding between September 2016 and 2020 to four anti-bullying organisations—Internet Matters, the Diana Award, Anti-Bullying Alliance and the Anne Frank Trust—to support schools to tackle bullying. Of course, all schools must have in place an anti-bullying policy, which Ofsted regulates.

Baroness Chisholm of Owlpen (Con): My Lords, we have already heard from noble Lords how important this problem is, but of course it is partly the responsibility of the Department of Health. I ask my noble friend whether we are also talking cross-departmentally. Surely schools have a role to play here, so are teachers being taught about the problems this can bring? Is DCMS being taught about online bullying, et cetera?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: My noble friend is quite right. As I have already pointed out, DfE-funded anti-bullying work is ongoing. Work is also increasing to join up the provision for young people through the children and young people Green Paper, which will put in place early intervention provision to make sure that young people do not have to wait until they are ill before they can get support. This problem needs to be challenged right across government, which is why we have also brought in the online harms White Paper to make sure that social media companies play their part.

Lord Laming (CB): My Lords, does the Minister agree that in recent years there has been a marked reduction in mental health counselling services for young people? Can the Minister tell us anything encouraging about the redevelopment of specialist mental health services for young people?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: The noble Lord is absolutely right that we must make sure we invest in the services needed to respond to the increasing reports of mental ill health in young people. That is why we have focused on increasing mental health funding. I am pleased to report that the amount spent on mental health will be £12 billion in the next year and that all CCGs will meet the mental health investment standard. We are also investing in particular in suicide prevention over the next three years—£25 million to support local suicide prevention plans to make sure that local authorities are able to have a multiagency suicide prevention response, which I think the noble Lord will agree is extremely important.

The Lord Bishop of Ely: My Lords, the Children's Society has done quite a bit of research into the profile of those involved in bullying. Many have had very unhappy lives. Does the Minister agree that it would be a good idea, in policy formation, if we spent more time talking to the children themselves and getting their case put more fully before us? The Children's Society advocates that the Government systematically measure children's well-being and use this to inform policy-making. Does the Minister accept the potential merits of measuring children's well-being?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: As usual, the right reverend Prelate raises an important point. The fundamental principle of using lived experience to develop policy is an important principle within the Department of Health and across government. Most particularly, the experience of young people—those who are bullied and those who are bullying—should be taken into account. This is the only way we will get to the bottom of this problem and stamp it out once and for all.

Baroness Brinton (LD): My Lords, as the co-chair of the APPG on Bullying, I have seen the reports that other noble Lords have referred to. It is good that more investment is going into mental health in the NHS, but schools still need front-line support for many bullied children. Over half of children report that bullying about their size and body image is the leading cause. What can the Government do to ensure that there really is access to front-line services for children in school?

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: As I have said, we are making sure that we bring the investment into the front line with this £2.8 million. In addition to that, all schools are legally required to have behaviour policies with measures to prevent all forms of bullying. They have the freedom to develop their own anti-bullying strategies to make sure that they are appropriate to their environment, but they are held to account by

Ofsted. This is at the forefront of the Department for Education's guidance to schools on how to prevent and respond to bullying as part of their overall behaviour policy.

Housing: Accessibility

Question

2.44 pm

Asked by **Baroness Campbell of Surbiton**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the case for mandating M4(2) of Schedule 1 to the Building Regulations 2010 to ensure that future houses are accessible and adaptable.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and Wales Office (Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth) (Con): My Lords, on 25 June the Prime Minister announced that we will consult on mandating higher accessibility standards for new housing. New planning guidance was published on 26 June to support councils to put clear policies in place for addressing the housing needs of older and disabled people.

Baroness Campbell of Surbiton (CB): My Lords, I thank the Minister for his reply, but he will be aware of alarming research published last month by the housing association Habinteg, which revealed that the inaccessible housing crisis for disabled people is rising quite rapidly, largely because only 1% of new homes being built will be suitable for wheelchair users to live in. This is unacceptable. I am aware that the Government are going to consult on this issue, but we simply cannot wait another year or more for tangible action. Will the Minister meet me to discuss this latest research with Habinteg and to talk about what can be done now and in the very short term to alleviate the crisis?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, first, I thank the noble Baroness for all the exemplary work she does in campaigning on this issue. I am very happy to meet her to discuss this further. She will know that we have brought forward consultation on M4(2) ahead of the consultation on the wider Part M in regard to accessibility, precisely because this is so important. We are looking at it ahead of other issues concerned with Part M and value the work that Habinteg does as a valued partner on this.

Lord Shipley (LD): My Lords, I remind the House of my registered interests. I also remind the Minister that 45 of the 322 local plans still refer to older accessible housing standards, putting planning requirements at risk of challenge. Given the importance of this issue, will the Minister urge local planning authorities to update their plans to ensure that they are compliant with the updated post-October 2015 access standards very soon?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the noble Lord is quite right to address that issue. He will understand that the Statement by the Prime Minister on 25 June dealt specifically with the planning aspects of this and the guidance in relation to accessibility

following the Neighbourhood Planning Act, reminding local authorities of the responsibility and providing this guidance to ensure that they comply with the law.

Lord Dubs (Lab): My Lords, does the Minister agree that it is a matter not just of new houses but of existing houses that are going through a process of extensive refurbishment? Could it also be made mandatory that, in those instances, adequate attention is paid to access for disabled people?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, the noble Lord is quite right on that point. Obviously, wherever planning is required, it will have to be compliant with the statement and guidance that the Prime Minister activated on 26 June. He also raises the further problem of potential retrofitting at some stage for homes that do not yet comply with the new standard, which applies only to new builds.

Lord Porter of Spalding (Con): My Lords, I remind those on the Benches opposite that in 30 years' time most properties will still be the ones we are currently living in and not new builds. Does the Minister think it is time that the Treasury and whoever moves in this Thursday with his boxes look at taking the VAT off retrospectively fitting homes to make them fit for life?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, I thank my noble friend for that question. I had better be very careful about advice to the Treasury; when I was getting a briefing on this issue, my officials told me I could undertake to meet a particular Member, or at least my successor could. I asked them what they had heard; they said they had not heard anything, and I am taking that at face value. The noble Lord is right that there is a continuing issue that will need to be addressed. There is a range of properties that will not meet these new standards, which apply just to M1, but that, as it relates to funding, is a matter for the Treasury.

Baroness Greengross (CB): My Lords, as a long-term supporter of lifetime homes, I first visited Rowntree's New Earswick estate in York 25 years ago. There is some good news, because all its homes have been built as lifetime homes since then. With our rising longevity and ageing population, it is common sense that new homes should be built to be more accessible and adaptable, but that is not happening as much as it should. The report that only 32% of local authorities comply with this is evidence of that. The All-Party Group for Ageing and Older People, which I co-chair, published a report this month on how to get more accessible and decent housing for older people. I suggest that the Minister treats this as a priority and follows the report's recommendations.

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, I thank the noble Baroness: all that she does in this area is very much noted. I will certainly look at the report. Obviously, this is an issue that concerns all of us. It is worth saying that this is not just about disabled people, important though that issue is. It is about all of us as we age; hence its importance.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe (Con): My noble friend will know that I am very keen on good models of behaviour and codes of practice. Is it possible for the Government or the universities to construct model homes that show developers, including small developers, how they can build accessible, safe and attractive homes—and lead the way in areas such as energy conservation, and therefore reduce people's bills?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, I thank my noble friend. It is indeed possible, and modelling is being produced for us on a range of issues. It is important, as my noble friend said, that we look at that in terms of energy conservation and ensuring that we have lifetime standard homes and improved accessibility. These things are happening.

Lord Best (CB): My Lords, I take this opportunity to thank the outgoing Prime Minister for a number of important reversals of unwise policies and the introduction of some much better policies, including taking the cap off local authorities' borrowing to build new council housing and find more money for social housing. However, does the Minister agree that we have taken a step backwards in relation to accessibility and adaptability in allowing what are called permitted development rights for developers to produce incredibly small—indeed, even windowless—flats in conversions of existing buildings? Can we not get on top of that as well?

Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth: My Lords, I thank the noble Lord for all that he does and for his compliment to the Prime Minister on the important action on accessibility and planning in this area. I agree with him: he is absolutely right in his point about permitted development and possible loopholes. I am very happy to meet the noble Lord to discuss that further.

Biodiversity Duty: Public Authorities *Question*

2.52 pm

Asked by Baroness Parminter

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans, if any, they have to strengthen the public authorities' biodiversity duty.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Gardiner of Kimble) (Con): My Lords, we must ensure that biodiversity is at the heart of improving the environment. The forthcoming environment Bill provides an opportunity to do more for biodiversity. We will introduce mandatory net gain and a new statutory body to hold government and other public authorities to account. We want the biodiversity duty to underpin these, and we are actively considering how we will work with public authorities to enhance the natural environment.

Baroness Parminter (LD): I thank the Secretary of State for his speech last week, though I note that he said "I want to" rather than "We will" introduce a

[BARONESS PARMINTER]

biodiversity duty. If other government departments scupper the inclusion of a stronger biodiversity duty in the environment Bill, how will the Government respond to the biodiversity crisis that we face, so powerfully outlined in recent UN reports?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, this has to be not only across government but across the whole of civic society and public authorities if we are to enhance the environment. I have plenty of examples of where other government departments are working very constructively and successfully, whether it is the MoD, the MoJ, HMRC, DWP, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission, Natural England or county councils; all of them are working very strongly on biodiversity. We have clearly got to do more, but I reassure the noble Baroness that this has to be across government because that is the only way we will actually enhance the environment.

The Countess of Mar (CB): My Lords, I was a member of the House of Lords Select Committee on the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. In our report, we supported strengthening the biodiversity duty. We also recommended that it was combined with a reporting duty. Will the Minister say what plans the Government have for improving the transparency of the way in which the duty is carried out?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, the noble Countess is right that, as the Government implement, with others, our 25-year environment plan, we will build on existing reporting mechanisms to drive further improvement. Some of the priorities set out, including the condition of our protected sites and the creation and restoration of wildlife-rich habitats, are already under a reporting duty, but we will work on how we can take forward an enhanced reporting mechanism.

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Lab): My Lords, the UK is now among the most nature-depleted nations in the world, so it was good to hear the Secretary of State say last week that he wants to strengthen the duty of public authorities not just to conserve but to enhance nature. Will the Minister pass on the message that that will be a hollow commitment if it is not backed by the resources and energy that local authorities will need to carry out those duties effectively? What are the Government doing to work on a cross-departmental basis to deliver that?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, the environment Bill—obviously, this is a second Session piece of legislation—is designed to plot a course precisely to restore and enhance nature and the environment and to do many other things but particularly to introduce a pioneering new system of green governance. It is clearly essential that we enhance nature. That is why species such as the chough and the bittern are recovering and there are a number of reintroductions, such as the

short-haired bumble bee. We are working on a number of species, but we need to improve habitats across the board.

Baroness McIntosh of Pickering (Con): My Lords, does my noble friend agree that ash tree dieback has caused great devastation to self-planting trees? Many of them are on property owned by local authorities. Will my noble friend confirm that it will be a biodiversity duty of local authorities to remove such trees, and has his department made an estimate of the cost of such removal?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, my noble friend is right to highlight the biodiversity costs of losing ash trees. It is why, with research, we have found the most tolerant strains. We will be planting a large plantation of the most tolerant strains next year so that we can ensure that ash retains its important part in our ecosystems. We have also produced a toolkit and we are working with local authorities as, clearly, not only is health and safety involved but we want to ensure that the most tolerant trees are conserved. A lot of work is being done on that. For instance, I commend Devon County Council for its policy that, for every tree that is felled, three are being planted. That is a message for everyone.

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (GP): My Lords, one disastrous tactic being used that really damages biodiversity is the concept of biodiversity offsetting. What happens is that we lose ancient, well-established areas that are biodiversity rich and create new areas that are not. “One tree out, three in” sounds great, but if that one tree is 100 years old and the three are only 10 years old, that is not so great. Will the Government commit to not using the tactic of biodiversity offsetting?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: It is very important to retain veteran trees wherever we can because they are vital to our ecosystems. Obviously, if they are dangerous because they are beside roads or whatever, we have to be practical, but we want to plant a lot of new trees and we also want to have protections for our veteran trees and our wonderful landscape. Enhancing the environment is not only the intent of the environment Bill but the direction of travel for all of us.

Baroness Scott of Needham Market (LD): My Lords, the Select Committee to which the noble Countess referred a moment ago heard evidence that fewer than one-third of planning authorities have access to a trained ecologist. I suspect that that is part of the reason why previous questioners’ issues are coming forward. Has the Minister done any work since that report was published to ascertain how we are going to get the right quality of ecological advice if we are to deliver the outcomes which he would like to see?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, that is why we are working not only with Natural England but with local authorities. In terms of the biodiversity net gain proposals, the developer and the local planning officer clearly need to work together to ensure that the local planning officer knows precisely what is meant by “net gain”. This is work in progress.

Lord Marlesford (Con): My Lords, does my noble friend agree that one problem is that the big developers can outgun the planners, and the planners are not always of very good quality? For example, in the beautiful medieval town of Framlingham in Suffolk, which I know rather well, there are two big developments. One is excellent and is by Hopkins Homes; the other is by Persimmon and is an absolute disgrace—it should never have been allowed and the developer has got away with everything.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, I passed through that great town only on Friday, so I identify with what my noble friend says on the matter. That is precisely why we are going to mandate biodiversity net gain. We need to work with all developers—domestic and commercial—to ensure that there are habitats for wildlife enhancement and that we leave those habitats in a better state than they were pre-development.

Textiles and Clothing Sectors: Environmental Sustainability *Question*

3 pm

Asked by Baroness Jones of Whitchurch

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch to ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to improve the environmental sustainability of the textiles and clothing sectors.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Gardiner of Kimble) (Con): My Lords, we are working with WRAP and the industry through the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan to reduce the industry's carbon emissions, water usage and waste. Recently we launched a £4.7 million grant scheme to support innovation in plastic and textile recycling. We are also undertaking the necessary research to develop an extended producer responsibility scheme for textiles. To drive the market towards durable, repairable and recyclable products, we are developing proposals on regulatory standards and labels.

Baroness Jones of Whitchurch (Lab): I thank the Minister for that reply, but does he share my concern about the huge environmental impact of throwaway fashion trends? In the UK, we buy more clothes per person than in any other country in Europe—five times what we bought in the 1980s—and we have created 1.3 million tonnes of waste. At the same time, textile production creates 1.2 billion tonnes of carbon every year—more than aviation and shipping combined. What are the Government doing to educate consumers to act more sustainably and wear their clothes for longer, and why do they not make textile producers pay for the environmental cost of materials that cannot be reused, repaired or recycled?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, that is precisely why it is very important that the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan, which includes 60% of those involved in

the clothing industry in this country, bears fruit. There has already been an 11.9% drop in carbon per tonne and a 17.7% drop in water per tonne of clothing. We need to ensure that that is our direction of travel, and it is why I mentioned labelling. Clearly, most consumers want to do the right thing. I find fast fashion a strange concept, in so far as I am not a good example of it. I think we should use clothes for longer and repair them, and I am in the market for knowing where my shirts can be repaired.

Lord Kirkhope of Harrogate (Con): My Lords, for many years I had the privilege of representing Yorkshire as an MEP, including the wonderful city of Bradford, which is also well represented in this Chamber. I was disappointed by the way the textile industry was reduced over time, but I am encouraged by my noble friend's remarks, particularly as the most sustainable fibre available in the textile industry is wool, as I am sure he will agree. As we look ahead, and as the sheep industry is in need of more assistance, does he accept that this Government and future Governments should encourage the use of wool? Finally, will he commend with me the work of Bradford College, which is currently carrying out research into this very matter?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, I am a great fan of wool and of pastoral farming. When I was at the Hampton Court flower show, I saw the latest compost made, without the need for peat, from bracken and wool; that great product has many important qualities. I am delighted that Bradford is leading the way but we also need behaviour change. I was intrigued to discover that if we lower temperatures in our washing, we will reduce the CO₂ emissions quite considerably. There are a lot of things we can all do to play our part.

Baroness Benjamin (LD): My Lords, when I was young, my mother decided we should move to Beckenham in Kent because we would get the best healthcare, the best education and the best jumble sales. The dress I am wearing is over 50 years old; I bought it in a charity shop. It was made in Britain of high-quality material—that is what you call recycling and sustainability. Should the Government not encourage the fashion industry, both retailers and customers, to invest in high-quality British-made clothes, perhaps by considering a levy on cheap, throwaway garments made in sweatshops abroad, which end up in landfill?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, we must work to ensure that the worst of the waste hierarchy, landfill, is not where our clothes go. I have to say that it cannot be many years ago that the noble Baroness moved to Beckenham; certainly, we need to pay more attention to words such as “reuse” and “second-hand” over fast fashion; I find the ridiculous number of clothes that are used only once absurd. We need to bear down on this. It is about consumer behaviour as well as industry behaving responsibly. We want to work to extend that responsibility, for that very reason.

Baroness Meacher (CB): My Lords, we need action on textiles, yes, but we will never rescue this planet unless we repair the huge damage already done. Will

[BARONESS MEACHER]

the Minister meet me to discuss the urgent need for government funding for the remarkable Centre for Climate Repair, run by Sir David King? It is developing a scientific method to reverse the melting of the ice caps and the damage to ocean surfaces, to name just two of its workstreams. Without these developments, we will not succeed.

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: I would be honoured and intrigued to meet the noble Baroness with whoever she suggests. The reason I say this is that science and innovation will help us enormously—investment in them will help us across the piece.

Baroness McIntosh of Hudnall (Lab): My Lords, I declare an interest as my son is an educator and campaigner for sustainable practice in the fashion industry. Is the Minister aware of the initiative recently launched in France, supported and spearheaded by the President—a “fashion pact”, which is currently engaging high-end retailers and brands to change their practices to reduce the impact of this industry on the environment? In what ways does he think the incoming Government—of which I very much hope he will be a member—will be able to ensure that, once we have left the European Union, we do not lose such an initiative, which will keep us aligned with our partners and friends in Europe?

Lord Gardiner of Kimble: My Lords, whatever happens with our arrangements, we should have the ambition in this country to be absolutely world-leading. We were the creators of the Industrial Revolution; we now need to play our part in dealing with some of the issues which that great success produced for us and for the world. Sustainability of textiles is important. Yes, we should learn from the French example—and from all examples from around the world about how we become more sustainable as a planet, creating a more circular economy and a more successful life for future generations.

Egypt: Suspension of Flights

Private Notice Question

3.08 pm

Asked by Baroness Randerson

To ask Her Majesty’s Government what is their response to the decision by some airlines to suspend flights to Cairo, Egypt, as a security precaution.

Baroness Randerson (LD): My Lords, I beg leave to ask a Question of which I have given private notice.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Transport (Baroness Vere of Norbiton) (Con): My Lords, the decision by British Airways to suspend flights to Cairo for seven days is an operational matter for the airline concerned. The airline has stated that this is a precautionary measure. The Government take

security very seriously and remain in close contact with all UK airlines in relation to security matters that could affect their operations.

Baroness Randerson: My Lords, there is undoubtedly some confusion about the situation, not least among the responses of airlines. BA and Lufthansa suspended all flights to Cairo on Saturday—although Lufthansa resumed flights on Sunday—whereas Air France and EgyptAir flights have continued normally. Meanwhile the Egyptian aviation Minister has expressed to the British ambassador his dismay at BA’s response, and the Foreign Office advice still does not warn against air travel to Cairo, although it continues to warn against travel to Sharm el-Sheikh. I realise that the Minister cannot discuss in this Chamber the details of security issues, but could she clarify exactly what the Foreign Office advice is about flights to Cairo? She will appreciate that it is holiday season and many people are anxious about this. Why is only BA responding in this way?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: This is an operational matter for BA. It has taken the measures it has as a precaution, and it is up to it to decide how it operates. I am happy to confirm to the noble Baroness the travel advice currently on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website, which has not substantively changed. While it does not advise against travel to or from Cairo Airport, it reminds visitors that:

“Terrorists in Egypt likely maintain the intent and capability to target aviation. The greatest threat is on the Sinai Peninsula where Daesh operate with greater freedom, but terrorists are active in Mainland Egypt, including Cairo”.

Lord Rosser (Lab): In the light of the Government’s answer—that it is British Airways’ own decision to do this, based, presumably, on its information and intelligence—have the Government contacted British Airways to ask what information it has that has led it to this decision?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I am reluctant to go into great detail about security matters but I can assure the noble Lord that the Government remain in close contact with all UK airlines about security matters that could affect their operations. We are also in contact with our partners around the world, as appropriate.

Lord Tebbit (Con): My Lords, is it not reasonable that the airline concerned, which has the first responsibility for the passengers it carries and the crews it employs, should be the organisation that we trust to take a sensible precautionary decision? I am sure that the noble Lords and Baronesses asking these questions from the other side of the House would have an awful lot to say if we were to lose an aircraft or any crew members or passengers because of a terrorism problem on that route.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I thank my noble friend for his observation; I know that he speaks with great experience. It is entirely reasonable for individual airlines

to make appropriate operational decisions. In the case of British Airways, it has taken the decision that it has as a precautionary measure.

Lord Rosser: I do not wish to upset the noble Lord, Lord Tebbit, but I do not think that I have challenged the right of British Airways to make this decision or said that it may not be an entirely sensible one. But clearly, if the Government have some idea as to why BA has made this decision, why are they not advising other airlines flying direct from Britain to Cairo to take similar action in respect of their flights?

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: I am sure the noble Lord will understand that I cannot go into much further detail about the security information, where it might have come from and who might have had it, whether that is airlines or nation states. Suffice it to say that we maintain a good and open relationship with all UK airlines and they are able to make their own operational decisions.

Baroness Randerson: Will the Minister clarify whether the Government are warning people of danger in flying to Cairo or not? The information she read out from the Foreign Office website appears to be a middle way, which is what caused me to ask the Question in the first place. There is a lack of clarity. I am not questioning the Government's decision, but it is their role to provide clarity and certainty, if necessary on a strongly precautionary basis on issues of this kind.

Baroness Vere of Norbiton: In 2018, 415,000 people visited Egypt and the vast majority of those visits were absolutely trouble-free. The Government keep all travel advice on their website up to date and as I mentioned, the advice has not substantively changed. It is the Government's duty to provide advice to their citizens, so that they can make the decision for themselves.

Northern Ireland (Executive Formation etc.) Bill

Commons Amendment

3.15 pm

Motion A

Moved by **Lord Duncan of Springbank**

That this House do disagree with the Commons in their Amendment 1A.

Commons Amendment 1A to Lords Amendment 1

1A: At end insert—

“(2C) If, as a result of Parliament standing prorogued or adjourned, a Minister of the Crown cannot comply with the obligations in subsection (2A) or (2B), a proclamation under the Meeting of Parliament Act 1797 (c. 127) shall require Parliament to meet on a specified day within the period within which compliance with subsection (2B) is required and to meet on the five following days (other than Saturdays, Sundays or a day which is a bank holiday in the United Kingdom or in any part of the United Kingdom) to allow for compliance with subsection (2B).”

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Northern Ireland Office and Scotland Office (Lord Duncan of Springbank) (Con): My Lords, the other place has chosen to accept the amendment from the noble Lord, Lord Anderson, requiring that fortnightly reports under Clause 3 be subject to Motions and debate in both Houses. That amendment has been further amended. The further amendment seeks to require that if Parliament stood prorogued or adjourned at any point when a debate might be expected under the terms of the noble Lord's amendment, a proclamation would have to be made requiring Parliament to meet within the five-day period and for the following five days.

The Government's position has been to oppose amendments which amount to procedural gambits in this area. Amendment 1A has little to do with Northern Ireland. This Bill is about enabling an Executive to be reformed and Clause 3 is concerned with ensuring that Parliament can be kept up to date on progress towards that aim. It is disappointing that the other place has chosen to take the issue of restoring devolved government to Northern Ireland and to misuse that as a wedge to manufacture debates around Brexit, drawing on a precedent designed for entirely different circumstances under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.

This amendment seeks to take this Bill and the vital and sensitive issue of re-establishing an Executive and use it as an opportunity to create highly unusual procedural requirements here at Westminster to address UK-wide Brexit issues. That is not the message our Parliament should send to the people of Northern Ireland about the importance we accord to devolution there. The Government urge the House not to agree with the amendment from the other place. I beg to move the Motion in my name.

Viscount Hailsham (Con): I rise briefly to support the amendment passed in the House of Commons last Thursday by a majority of 41 and thus express my strong opposition to the Motion of disagreement moved by my noble friend Lord Duncan. In doing so, I say to your Lordships that I make no personal criticism of my noble friend; he always conducts himself with considerable dignity in this place and I know he is always listened to with great respect.

Last Monday, and on previous occasions, I expressed my strong opposition to Brexit. It is my belief that this is a matter that should be decided by the House of Commons through a meaningful vote and not by Ministers alone. I do not intend to repeat the detail of those arguments today and will confine myself to three points.

First, in the debates last week, some of your Lordships suggested that it was constitutionally improper for this House, an unelected Chamber, to pass the amendment then under consideration and subsequently accepted by the Commons. We were told by one of my noble friends that, by acting in such a way, we were putting the very future of this House in jeopardy; doubtless some of those who held such views will troop through the Government Lobby today. Keeping that in mind, it is truly bizarre that the opponents of the Commons amendment, the Government themselves, are now asking us—the unelected House—to frustrate a decision made

[VISCOUNT HAILSHAM]

by the elected House with a very substantial majority. The positions adopted by the Government last week and this are inconsistent and cannot sensibly be reconciled. To those who are about to do it, I say that to stand on one's head in such circumstances is not credible, comfortable or dignified.

Secondly, I have said that I believe Brexit was an extraordinary act of national self-harm that was not supported by plausible assumptions or credible evidence. On Thursday last week, the country received the expert opinion of the Office for Budget Responsibility. Its conclusion is that, on any of the credible assumptions, a no-deal Brexit will cause Britain very serious economic damage. This is not Project Fear; it is a professional assessment of the likely outcome of a no-deal Brexit. It must surely be the subject of serious parliamentary consideration before any decision is taken to leave the European Union, whether on 31 October or some other date. Prorogation to prevent that consideration would be unpardonable.

Thirdly and lastly, the amendment in the Commons that we are now discussing is prompted largely by the well-founded anxiety that Mr Johnson—the likely next Prime Minister—might seek to suspend the sitting of Parliament to prevent the Commons challenging and perhaps overriding the decisions of Ministers. Last Thursday, in the debate in the House of Commons, Mr Johnson could have provided the appropriate reassurance. He was in the House. I am sure that the Speaker would have called him. Mr Johnson could have said that upon his honour he would do no such thing. He could have written to my noble friend the Minister, copied to all of us, giving such an assurance. He could indeed have used his well-remunerated pen to craft an article in those terms, though had he done so I would have liked to have inspected his computer to see whether another and quite different version was to be seen on the screen. But he has done none of those things. Quite the contrary: Mr Johnson voted against the cross-party amendment passed and now being discussed, and in his article in today's *Daily Telegraph* he ignored the position completely.

Your Lordships are entitled to assume that such a constitutional outrage is indeed within the contemplation of Mr Johnson. Given that, this House—indeed, all of those who respect parliamentary government—must take every proper step to prevent such a disgraceful act happening. The Commons amendment now before the House is one such measure. Your Lordships should affirm it and reject the Motion moved by my noble friend.

Lord Tebbit (Con): My Lords, last week, after a similar harangue from my noble friend, I described these manoeuvrings as a “dog's dinner”. A dog's dinner it was, a dog's dinner it is, and a dog's dinner is no better for being served cold a second time. We should, as my noble friend the Minister advised us, reject this.

Lord Newby (LD): My Lords, early on in the Brexit process the right honourable Kenneth Clarke MP said that we were entering an Alice in Wonderland world. This amendment takes us further down the rabbit hole

because it invokes an obscure bit of legislation from 1797 that had a completely different purpose in mind. But we need to remind ourselves why the Commons passed this and why we should support the Commons. It did so because it did not trust the incoming Prime Minister to behave in a constitutionally proper manner. It was not just remainiacs such as my colleagues in the Commons who behaved in this way; it was the 17 Conservative Members who voted for this amendment and the slew of Cabinet Ministers who abstained on it. These are the people who know Boris Johnson much better than I do—much better than most of us do—and they had formed a judgment that he was not to be trusted. That is why they voted the way they did and it is why we should support them.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords, I rise briefly to respond to at least one of the things that my noble friend Lord Hailsham said. He has talked about constitutional outrage but it seems to me that the purpose of this House is to preserve our constitution and our conventions, and that the purpose of the Cross Benches is not to behave in a political or partisan manner. For a fast-tracked Bill such as this, which has not followed the normal timetable of our procedures, to be used as a Christmas tree in this way to fight the ongoing battle between—to use the term of the noble Lord, Lord Newby—the remainiacs and the British people, who voted overwhelmingly to leave—

Noble Lords: Oh!

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean: I am sorry—17.4 million people is pretty overwhelming when it came in the biggest democratic exercise that we have ever had. It stands in stark contrast to the 8% which the Liberals managed to get in the general election. It is the duty of this House to preserve our constitution, which depends on respecting our conventions. This amendment is quite improper. It is a piece of chicanery, added to a Bill which is being fast-tracked, on a subject which has nothing whatever to do with that Bill. It flies in the face of the speeches that we hear over and over again, particularly from the Liberal Benches, about the importance of respecting devolution and the ability of the devolved Assemblies to carry out their purposes. I very much support my noble friend the Minister in asking the House to reject this amendment.

As for the sophistry that came from my noble friend Lord Hailsham, he argued that it would be wrong for us to overturn an amendment which had come from the Commons. That is absolute sophistry because we all know what is going on here: a minority of people in the House of Commons are trying to frustrate the wishes of the British people.

Viscount Hailsham: They had a majority of 41.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean: The majority was for delivering the result of the referendum, which was passed by both Houses. That is what the British people expect to happen, so I have great pleasure in supporting my noble friend the Minister in asking us to reject the amendment.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, the British people did not vote for a no-deal exit from the European Union. All I would say to my noble friend Lord Forsyth is that when he talks about sophists, it takes one to recognise one. The truth of the matter—I have tried to be scrupulous in this—is that if the Commons rejects a House of Lords amendment, most of us in this House do not vote again. We accept the will of the elected House. The will of the elected House on this occasion is clear and emphatic. It has given this provision a majority and we should not fly in the face of that.

Baroness Deech (CB): My Lords, I have two simple questions which I hope can be clarified by those who are in favour of remain. First, how on earth can this amendment from the Commons prevent a Dissolution of Parliament if there is a call for an election? There is no way that Parliament could be re-summoned if an election were called in the early autumn and the period of Dissolution covered October. Secondly, the amendment from the Commons misses the point. We could meet and talk right through August, some have said, and right through September and October, but unless something is done to remove the date of 31 October, the default position is that we leave on 31 October. There is nothing that this Parliament can do about it because any attempt to postpone that date rests in the hands of the European Union. We are not sovereign in that respect. Only if the European Union agreed to an extension could that default position of 31 October be removed; therefore, the amendment coming from the Commons is pretty pointless.

Baroness Butler-Sloss (CB): My Lords, I will make two short points. First, Northern Ireland is as affected as the rest of the United Kingdom if we crash out on 31 October. Secondly, this is not an issue between leavers and remainers; it is an issue of whether we crash out or leave the European Union with a deal. It is important not to muddy the waters over leavers and remainers, when this is a separate and terribly important issue.

3.30 pm

Lord Elton (Con): While my noble friend Lord Cormack's words are fresh in your Lordships' ears, I remind the House of what happened in 2005, when the then Labour Government sent a Bill providing for the incarceration of suspected terrorists for 90 days without access to the law. This House sat from 2.30 pm on a Thursday until 7.31 pm on Friday night without ceasing to vote down amendments put by the House of Commons.

Lord Empey (UUP): My Lords, it is hard to believe we are discussing the Bill on our agenda, which is the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation) Bill. It seems to have been omitted from people's minds. I am sure noble Lords have read the debate in the House of Commons last Thursday in *Hansard*. The House of Commons devoted one hour to all the amendments passed in this House and the other clauses in the Bill. Apart from passing references and signals of annoyance from Northern Ireland Members, the amendments and substantive issues dealt with in the Bill and added to it were not even referred to.

I hope I am wrong, but the indications I have are that the unintended consequences from the initial Commons amendments to the Bill will make the formation of an Executive more difficult. That greatly saddens me. I hope I am wrong and that the parties surprise us and produce something that we all welcome. However, on paper, and from looking at social media and other comments, it seems we have created the most ridiculous position we could possibly have imagined. One of the red lines of Sinn Féin, which has been holding back an Executive, is to ensure abortion and same-sex marriage are applied in Northern Ireland. Leaving aside the nitty-gritty of that argument, we have contrived to ensure with the Bill that, should an Executive be formed, those two propositions will not take effect. That is what we have done: we have put an obstacle in the way of agreement. I do not believe for one minute that the proposers of the original amendments in the House of Commons had that as their intention. They were trying to regularise the legislation which, incidentally, they have signally failed to do, because the proposals in the Bill now are not the same as those that apply to the rest of the United Kingdom.

Leaving that to one side, this is the first time I have seen what should have been straightforward legislation completely distorted, in a way that not only makes the objective of the legislation more difficult, but has added matters that will cause us trouble in the future. I do not want to see us leaving the European Union with no deal. I am long enough in the tooth to know the implications of that but, if we as a country are serious about negotiating an agreement with our EU partners, we have no idea how to go about it.

Lord Bruce of Bennachie (LD): My Lords, on same-sex marriage and abortion, the reality is that this House was implementing the express will of the Commons and improving the workability of those amendments. This issue has come from the Commons in response to an amendment that we passed back to them. I echo the noble Baroness in saying that to suggest that this has nothing to do with the people of Northern Ireland could not be further from the truth. A no-deal Brexit would be disastrous for Britain and catastrophic for Ireland, so we have every reason to support the amendment and reject the Minister's amendment to it.

Lord Green of Deddington (CB): My Lords, what lies behind this issue is whether a future Prime Minister will have a credible threat of no deal. I do not want no deal, but I believe that, unless he has that threat, he will do no better than his predecessor.

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, this is not about a no-deal Brexit; it is about the Prorogation of Parliament and importance of the issues before us in relation to Northern Ireland. The only issues before us in the amendment proposed by the Minister are constitutional. Despite my disagreement with him today, it is appropriate from the outset to say that he has been a great asset to the House and the Government in how he has dealt with this legislation, which has been complex and difficult at times.

[BARONESS SMITH OF BASILDON]

Your Lordships' House is always concerned with constitutional issues. Two arose in last week's legislation. It is to his eternal shame and my horror that I often find myself in agreement with the noble Lord, Lord Forsyth, on constitutional matters. On this issue, I partly agree with him but also part company with him. We are in extraordinary times. It should be quite unnecessary to have in any Bill something that says that a Prime Minister should not prorogue Parliament to get legislation through or to stop something happening. It should be a matter of course that we had sufficient trust in any Prime Minister that such an amendment would not be necessary.

Last week, this House agreed by 272 votes to 169 a cross-party amendment that there should be a clause in this Bill that required Parliament to be sitting to receive and debate the report on Northern Ireland that we had agreed to. We acknowledged also that the secondary purpose behind that amendment was related to the strong opposition that we believe exists in both Houses to the Prorogation of Parliament to force through or enable a no-deal Brexit, or any kind of Brexit, without Parliament sitting. Why was that so important?

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean: I am most grateful to the noble Baroness for giving way; I am just following her argument, which is that the powers of a Prime Minister to prorogue Parliament should be limited because it might result in a no-deal Brexit. Why would she not extend that to the powers of a Prime Minister to call a general election? If a general election were called which lasted three weeks and 31 October was within it, we would have left the European Union. Is she not on very thin ice here?

Baroness Smith of Basildon: I do not think that I am; I shall tell the noble Lord why. Patience is a great virtue, because I was about to come on to it.

The die is now cast. At 5 pm today, the ballot on who is to be the next leader of the Conservative Party and therefore the next Prime Minister will close. Neither candidate rules out no deal—that is a slightly separate issue. However, only one of them—the one most likely to win, Boris Johnson—has not ruled out shutting down Parliament in order for it not to take a view on crashing out of the EU. It may be that a no-deal Brexit is exactly what happens; I do not know—I am worried sick about it like most other people, but I do not know whether that will happen. But what I do know and firmly believe is that if any Prime Minister wants to take this country down that road they should stand at the Dispatch Box in front of their Parliament and say so as it happens.

Only Boris Johnson has not ruled out a no-deal Brexit. I find that deeply shocking. He is behaving more like a medieval monarch than a Prime Minister-in-waiting. King Boris might have a good ring to it, but he should remember Charles I.

As always, it is a matter for the House of Commons whether it accepts our amendments or not. Both Houses know that and respect that, yet this Government have always found it easiest, when the House of Lords disagrees with them, to dress it up as a disagreement

between the House of Lords and the House of Commons. We saw that on tax credits and the Strathclyde report. Let us be absolutely clear today what we, the House of Lords, did in passing that amendment last week. We gave the House of Commons an opportunity, if it so wished, to insert a no-Prorogation clause into the Bill for the interests of Northern Ireland and on Brexit. The MPs did not just welcome the principle that we put forward; they felt that they should go further, be more explicit, clearer and put it beyond any doubt that, even if in recess, adjourned or prorogued, Parliament must be recalled. I think the public would expect Parliament to be here.

The noble Lord, Lord Empey, said there was no debate in the House of Commons. I listened to that debate. It was obviously shorter, because it was on ping-pong and just on our amendments, but this was referred to on a number of occasions through the debate. There was strong support, as was evidenced in the vote. So we support the amendment from the House of Commons and we disagree with the Government in disagreeing with it.

Lord Duncan of Springbank: My Lords, I thank all noble Lords for their brevity today. Last week was quite an odyssey, so I am very grateful for that. I listened with interest to the noble Lord, Lord Newby, who described this situation as being very much like Alice in Wonderland. It is not: it is like *Through the Looking-Glass*, and we have an interesting point to consider. A quote from Humpty Dumpty springs to mind:

“‘When I use a word’, Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean—neither more nor less’. ‘The question is’, said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things’. ‘The question is’, said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master — that’s all’”.

We now find ourselves in a debate that is no longer about Northern Ireland; we have departed from that considerably. Those who say that Northern Ireland is just as affected are, of course, quite right, but this Bill is about the talks in Northern Ireland: we should not lose sight of that.

What I am most concerned about are the words of the noble Lord, Lord Empey, who says that the very fact we are discussing this in this way may have an impact upon the talks. There may be unintended consequences of words meaning what we choose them to mean here but being heard in Northern Ireland in quite a different way. The real risk we face today is that last week we passed an amendment from the noble Lord, Lord Anderson, with some majority, to the House of Commons. What has come back to us is something significantly different: we have now moved beyond the idea of enabling the House of Commons to discuss these matters, to royal proclamations. We have gone beyond the notion of where we stand, to what we think we now ought to be able to control, and all this because we are anticipating what is in the mind of one of the candidates for the leadership of my party: that is all we are doing. Again, I come back to the point that this is about Northern Ireland's talks process. We are here because we need extra time; because the talks have made progress but not enough progress. What we have done instead is conflate the

talks in Northern Ireland, which have been challenging and have not gone at the pace I would have liked, with Brexit in all its manifest glory.

I am reminded of the law we are invoking today, dating back to 1797. The noble Lord, Lord West, is not in his place, but were he here he would remind us that in 1797 Great Britain won a great naval victory. Admiral Lord Duncan, a Member of this place at one time, secured a great victory at the Battle of Camperdown. Camperdown Park in Dundee takes its name from that noble battle. But 1797 is perhaps not a precedent we should be drawing upon just now: this Bill is primarily about restoring the talks in Northern Ireland. Instead we are attaching to it the desire of this place to frustrate the potential ambitions of one of the candidates in a leadership contest. I repeat, not in any way anticipating a call from either of the candidates, that it is important to stress that it would be presumptive of either of them to declare what they would do were they to be Prime Minister, because neither of them is Prime Minister. It is important that we keep focused, as we do today, on what the Bill is about.

Lord Framlingham (Con): Am I right in thinking that this amendment originally was put down in the Commons, but the Speaker in the Commons did not accept it, as he did not think that it was appropriate? Then your Lordships' House, in its wisdom, put it down, because we do not have those kinds of rules, so anybody can put amendments down here, and that has allowed the Commons to get at it by a totally different route. If that is not a ruse, I do not know what is.

Lord Duncan of Springbank: My noble friend brings an important point to the discussion at this late stage.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: Would the Minister accept that it was completely within the remit of the House of Commons to vote that down if it had wished to do so?

Lord Duncan of Springbank: Absolutely. Yet we find ourselves, once again, returning to where we began the journey—an Executive formation extension Bill, which now has a new bauble dangling upon it.

I have discovered in my two years in Northern Ireland how much I care about that place. This is an unfortunate hijacking of what we need to be able to ensure in Northern Ireland. But the will of this House will determine that. I believe that I have done all I can to suggest why we should indeed reject the amendment from the other place, but it will be for your Lordships to decide upon that matter. I commend this Motion to the House.

3.46 pm

Division on Motion A

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 Hussein-Ece, B.
 Irvine of Lairg, L.
 Janke, B.
 Janvrin, L.
 Jay of Ewelme, L.
 Jolly, B.
 Jones of Cheltenham, L.
 Jones of Moulsecoomb, B.
 Jones of Whitchurch, B.
 Jones, L.
 Kennedy of Cradley, B.
 Kennedy of Southwark, L.
 Kerr of Kinlochard, L.
 Kinnock of Holyhead, B.
 Kinnock, L.
 Kirkhope of Harrogate, L.
 Knight of Weymouth, L.
 Lane-Fox of Soho, B.
 Lawrence of Clarendon, B.
 Layard, L.
 Lea of Crondall, L.
 Lee of Trafford, L.
 Lennie, L.
 Levy, L.
 Liddell of Coatdyke, B.
 Liddle, L.
 Lipsey, L.
 Lister of Burterset, B.
 Lisvane, L.
 Livermore, L.
 Low of Dalston, L.
 Ludford, B.
 MacKenzie of Culkein, L.
 Mackenzie of Framwellgate,
 L.
 Macpherson of Earl's Court,
 L.
 Mandelson, L.
 Mar, C.
 Marks of Henley-on-Thames,
 L.

Masham of Ilton, B.
 Massey of Darwen, B.
 McAvoy, L. [Teller]
 McDonagh, B.
 McIntosh of Hudnall, B.
 McIntosh of Pickering, B.
 McNally, L.
 McNicol of West Kilbride, L.
 Meacher, B.
 Monks, L.
 Moonie, L.
 Morgan of Drefelin, B.
 Morgan of Huyton, B.
 Morgan, L.
 Morris of Handsworth, L.
 Morris of Yardley, B.
 Murphy of Torfaen, L.
 Newby, L.
 Northover, B.
 Nye, B.
 O'Neill of Bengarve, B.
 O'Neill of Clackmannan, L.
 Osamor, B.
 Palmer of Childs Hill, L.
 Parminter, B.
 Patel, L.
 Paul, L.
 Pendry, L.
 Pinnock, B.
 Pitkeathley, B.
 Ponsonby of Shulbrede, L.
 Primarolo, B.
 Prosser, B.
 Quin, B.
 Radice, L.
 Ramsay of Cartvale, B.
 Ramsbotham, L.
 Randerson, B.
 Ravensdale, L.
 Razzall, L.
 Redesdale, L.
 Rees of Ludlow, L.
 Rennard, L.
 Roberts of Llandudno, L.
 Robertson of Port Ellen, L.
 Rodgers of Quarry Bank, L.
 Rooker, L.
 Rosser, L.
 Russell of Liverpool, L.
 Sandwich, E.
 Scott of Needham Market, B.
 Scriven, L.

Sherlock, B.
 Shipley, L.
 Shutt of Greetland, L.
 Simon, V.
 Singh of Wimbledon, L.
 Smith of Basildon, B.
 Smith of Leigh, L.
 Smith of Newnham, B.
 Snape, L.
 Soley, L.
 Somerset, D.
 St John of Bletso, L.
 Stern, B.
 Stone of Blackheath, L.
 Stoneham of Droxford, L.
 Strasburger, L.
 Stunell, L.
 Suttie, B.
 Taylor of Bolton, B.
 Taylor of Goss Moor, L.
 Thomas of Winchester, B.
 Thornhill, B.
 Tomlinson, L.
 Tonge, B.
 Tope, L.
 Touhig, L.
 Triesman, L.
 Truscott, L.
 Tunnicliffe, L. [Teller]
 Tyler of Enfield, B.
 Tyler, L.
 Tyrie, L.
 Uddin, B.
 Vaux of Harrowden, L.
 Wallace of Saltaire, L.
 Wallace of Tankerness, L.
 Warsi, B.
 Warwick of Undercliffe, B.
 Watkins of Tavistock, B.
 Watson of Invergowrie, L.
 Watts, L.
 Waverley, V.
 Wheeler, B.
 Whitaker, B.
 Whitty, L.
 Willis of Knaresborough, L.
 Wills, L.
 Worthington, B.
 Wrigglesworth, L.
 Young of Norwood Green, L.
 Young of Old Scone, B.

Commons Amendment 1A agreed.

Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Bill

Committee

4.03 pm

Clause 1: "The Parliamentary building works"

Amendment 1

Moved by Baroness Wheeler

1: Clause 1, page 2, line 1, leave out from "Westminster" to end of line 2 and insert "at the earliest opportunity that its work and democratic and constitutional functions can reasonably be delivered in the restored Palace."

Baroness Wheeler (Lab): My Lords, it is with great pleasure that I open the Committee stage of this Bill. My noble friend Lady Smith—who, as the House will know, was a member of the original Joint Committee

and spoke with her usual eloquence and depth at Second Reading on behalf of these Benches—unfortunately has other commitments and cannot be here until later but is very much hoping to join us as soon as possible. Meanwhile, my noble friend Lord McNicol and I are holding the fort.

I am moving Amendment 1 and speaking to Amendment 16, both of which are in my noble friend's name. It is right that we start today with amendments to Clauses 1 and 2 that aim to ensure and reiterate that the core purpose of the restoration and renewal programme must be to enable the Houses of Parliament to continue to serve as the UK's primary legislative and democratic institution.

Clause 2 lists areas to which the sponsor body must have regard, but the work of Parliament, legislation and the representative democratic function is not referred to anywhere in the Bill. As my noble friend Lady Smith said at Second Reading,

“That is a serious omission. At no point should the sponsor body ... lose sight of that”.—[*Official Report*, 8/7/19; col. 1675.]

Our amendments seek to remedy this. The House will be aware that, as this project progresses, it is vital that we bring the public and Parliament with us. We must make both aware that the works are imperative not only to preserve this historic building for future generations but to ensure that this country can long benefit from its constitutional role.

By stressing the significance of the works for the sanctity of democracy, we can better demonstrate that the costs and work involved are vital and necessary, and we help address and dissuade notions that this is only for the benefit of parliamentarians. Safeguarding Parliament's role in our constitution is of vital benefit to everyone in the UK. Through these amendments, this House can do more than send this message; we can ensure that this principle is at the forefront of consideration for the sponsor body as works progress.

Amendment 16 would legislate that the sponsor body must always take regard of the primary democratic and constitutional functions of Parliament during the project. Amendment 1, meanwhile, would ensure that while the decant takes place the aim of the works will be to facilitate both Houses' return so that their democratic and constitutional functions can be upheld and continued.

The importance of including in the Bill the broad principle that the works must never lose sight of the fact that they are taking place to maintain Parliament as a place of democracy was underlined by noble Lords from across the House at Second Reading. I hope that the Government will agree and bring forward proposals on Report to ensure that this principle is incorporated into the Bill. I beg to move.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness (LD): My Lords, I am happy to speak in support of the amendment that has just been so ably moved by the noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler. It is important we remember that the principal functions of this place are its constitutional, legislative and scrutiny functions. That should not be forgotten. That said, in many of the debates we will have in Committee, we will remember many of the other things that happen in this place. I was going to say it is a village; it is probably larger than that in terms of the

number of people who work here. However, at the end of the day, if it were not for the democratic and constitutional functions that take place, most of that other work would not materialise.

Although it is not one I signed, possibly through omission rather than as a deliberate act, the words “at the earliest opportunity” in Amendment 1 are important, because there is an urgency in this: both in starting now and, when the works start, in getting back in as soon as possible. Throughout the whole process, it is important that we try to maintain the pace. We will come later to an amendment I have tabled about timelines. We all know from large public works that there is often a tendency to delay, but I hope that once we get out it will not be very long until we get back in.

Lord Adonis (Lab): My Lords, any amendment which improves the Bill is obviously a good thing, but I was not clear from what my noble friend said how this amendment does so. It is not clear to me how the words,

“as soon as is reasonably practicable”,

and,

“at the earliest opportunity that its work and democratic and constitutional functions can reasonably be delivered in the restored Palace”,

are in any way different. Could my noble friend answer that when she responds?

The Lord Privy Seal (Baroness Evans of Bowes Park) (Con): My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler, for moving the amendments in the name of the noble Baroness, Lady Smith. I am also grateful to the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace of Tankerness. The Government entirely agree that it is important for the sponsor body and delivery authority to ensure that the R&R works enhance and protect the work of Parliament. This focus is reflected in the fact that the Bill requires that the majority of the members on the board of the sponsor body are parliamentarians.

As part of its strategic vision for the programme, the shadow sponsor body has been clear that restoration and renewal must deliver a building that supports Parliament's core function as a working legislature both now and in the future, using high-quality design and technology. This includes facilitating any procedural changes that may be requested by either House.

When drafting the Bill, the Government have been careful not to prescribe either what Parliament does or its procedures, as these are clearly a matter for Parliament itself. We are concerned by the reference to the “democratic and constitutional functions” of Parliament in this amendment, as we are mindful of potential legal challenges in respect of the exercise of the powers contained in the Bill. For instance, we must be careful not to unintentionally invite the courts to consider matters that are the preserve of Parliament, such as the question of what the “democratic and constitutional functions” of Parliament are. Doing so could call into question the separation between the courts and Parliament.

Noble Lords will know that the *Companion* explains that the principle of control by Parliament of its affairs, free from interference by the courts, is often

[BARONESS EVANS OF BOWES PARK] called “exclusive cognisance”. We are concerned that the inclusion of this wording in the Bill could be seen as Parliament waiving the exclusive cognisance of the House, and so we have reservations about the wording of the amendment.

The best way to ensure that the R&R works enhance and protect the democratic and constitutional role of Parliament is to ensure that Parliament has a final say on the plans for a restored and renewed Palace. The Bill sets out very clearly that the works cannot commence until Members of both Houses have approved the delivery authority’s proposal for the design, cost and timing of those works in the outline business case. This will enable parliamentarians to determine whether the designs for the restored Palace and decant enable Parliament to carry out its democratic and constitutional functions. Significant changes to the design, timing or cost will also have to go back to Parliament for agreement. For these reasons, we are confident that the sponsor body will ensure that the parliamentary buildings works enhance and protect the work, and democratic and constitutional functions, of the Houses of Parliament.

Obviously, this is a matter for noble Lords to consider, but as I have set out, we have some legal concerns. I hope that I have reassured the noble Baroness and the noble and learned Lord that the principle behind the amendment will be central to the work of the sponsor body and the delivery authority. I am sure that the parliamentary authorities would be happy to provide further advice on this if needed. I hope that, on that basis, the noble Baroness will withdraw her amendment.

Baroness Wheeler: I thank the noble Baroness for her comments. After today, I will look at the legal and constitutional issues that she raised. I am very grateful for her reassurances about accepting the principle. If we feel that we need to reinforce that, we will come back on Report.

In answer to my noble friend Lord Adonis, the “earliest possible opportunity” reference will be taken up in later amendments and so we will respond to that in due course.

I thank in particular the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, for his contribution. With that, I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 1 withdrawn.

Amendment 2

Moved by Lord Cormack

2: Clause 1, page 2, line 2, at end insert—

“() If a planning application is submitted to a responsible planning authority for works immediately adjacent to the Palace of Westminster, the Sponsor Body must—

- (a) determine whether these works might impede the Parliamentary building works in any significant way; and
- (b) if they determine that they may impede the Parliamentary building works, issue a notice to that effect to the responsible planning authority.”

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, in moving this amendment I say at the outset that I am extremely grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and my noble friend Lord King of Bridgwater for adding their names to it.

I have tabled this amendment for two reasons. First, I hope that all your Lordships agree that we want to protect and enhance this building and want it to emerge from the restoration and renewal project even more magnificent than it is at the moment. One of the greatest buildings in the world, and the greatest symbol of democracy in the world, it is at the heart of the world heritage site which encompasses the Abbey, St Margaret’s and the immediate environs.

The immediate environs include Victoria Tower Gardens. Last week, we were all exalted in a letter from my noble friend Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth to love our parks—indeed, he told us that it was Love Parks Week. I do love our parks and do not imagine that a single one of your Lordships does not love our parks. There is nothing more wonderful than to walk through St James’s Park, Green Park and Hyde Park and up to Kensington Gardens; it is a wonderful country walk in the middle of the greatest city in the world. They are great parks not only because of the way they are laid out, but in size. Adjacent to the Palace of Westminster is a much smaller park, but one that gives great enjoyment to those who use it. It is used on daily basis by residents, office workers, children and others. It was carefully laid out in the last three decades of the 19th century and contains the magnificent statue of the Burghers of Calais, the statue of Mrs Pankhurst and the memorial to Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, one of the great advocates of the cause that led to the abolition of, first, the slave trade and then slavery in 1833. That is something of which this country, and this Parliament in particular, should be extremely proud.

4.15 pm

When we embark on this great programme of restoration and renewal, we have to have regard for our environs. Noble Lords will have read the amendment. There is an application for a major building project in Victoria Palace Gardens for a cause which I believe every noble Lord thinks is a great cause: to have another national memorial to commemorate the Holocaust. I tread very carefully because I like to think that no one could ever accuse me of being a Holocaust denier—one of those episodes in recent world history that has done more to deface the name of humanity than perhaps any other. Nor, as the founder chairman for the campaign for the release of Soviet Jewry, would I ever wish to be accused of having any anti-Semitic feelings. I hope that would be said for everyone who expresses a concern about building this particular memorial in this particular place.

I would like to see another national memorial, and it ought to attract people in considerable numbers. It is a memorial that should not be in any way inconvenienced by security measures additional to those which any public building or memorial in London, regrettably, has to rely upon. It should also be of easy access so that when people come on pilgrimage, as I hope and

believe they will, to stand gently and quietly to remember or to instruct the young, they will be able to come and go easily and freely. On any account, building a major national memorial immediately adjacent to Parliament on Victoria Palace Gardens would mean that those criteria are not easily fulfilled. That is why I hope that the board we are establishing through the Bill will look most carefully.

Moreover, if we are to have the full decant, it is important that each House of Parliament has a reasonable temporary home that is easy to access and close to other parliamentary facilities. I know it has been mentioned that the favourite destination for your Lordships' House is the QEII Centre. I have always felt that there are many objections to that, not least the difficulty of parking. I also believe that to have to cross the road to go there is not necessarily conducive to the close contact between the two Houses which is an essential part of our constitutional and democratic structure. If the Commons is to have a Chamber built within or near Richmond House—I know that there are significant concerns on that front too, but I will leave that aside for the moment—having something on the same side of the road as a temporary structure for your Lordships and immediately opposite Millbank House and the offices that many of us occupy might be a sensible move. I say “might”, as it is something that the body that we are setting up ought to be able to take carefully into account. However, if a memorial is to be built there, that will be ruled out.

I do not intend to divide the House today. I have said many times before that I believe that our convention—it is not a rule—that we do not vote in Committee is wise, as it gives us a chance to reflect on what the Government say and it gives the Government the chance also to reflect. I believe that we will deal with this as first business when we return in September, so we have several weeks in which to reflect and consider.

Lord Adonis: Can the noble Lord tell us where he proposes that the memorial should be moved to?

Lord Cormack: There are many places where it could go. It could go to one of the great London parks, but the Imperial War Museum, which has offered a site and has adequate parking, would seem an admirable destination. It already has galleries that graphically and movingly describe the Holocaust, so that is a possibility. This afternoon I am simply saying to your Lordships that it is very important that we look at this carefully and without prejudice.

To those of my noble friends who are strongly in support of the Holocaust memorial, I say: please remember that those of us who have reservations are not against having a memorial; we are not Holocaust deniers or in any sense opposed to the Jewish community, which has given so much to our country over the last three and a half centuries since the Jews were readmitted by Oliver Cromwell in 1652. I speak as one who lives in a city—Lincoln—that had the second largest Jewish community in the country in the Middle Ages, and we honour that. Indeed, at the moment, together with

Jewish colleagues and others I am planning a great exhibition to commemorate that, to be held in two or three years' time in Lincoln.

Therefore, it is not a question of a Holocaust memorial being something that we do not want. We do want it but this is not the place, and it is certainly important that all aspects are considered carefully by the body that the Bill establishes. I beg to move.

Baroness Deech (CB): My Lords, I am pleased to add my name to this amendment. In this most significant work for parliamentarians and indeed for the whole nation, our concerns are not only for this building and our parliamentary work, and not only for the future and the public, but for safety, security, access and the environment now and in future centuries. Quite apart from the changes in methods of working that will be taken into consideration in refurbishing this place, major concerns affect the surrounding areas. We have many more tourists and many more protests—peaceful and otherwise—here and in Parliament Square; there are more visitors, including dignitaries requiring protected access; and, above all, we are painfully aware of the vulnerability and magnetic attraction of this area to terrorists. Protestors could include parties interested in the Middle East, and environmental activists because of the underground excavation, destruction of trees and loss of green space inherent in the Victoria Tower Gardens plan.

This brings me to the concerns I have for those gardens adjacent to Black Rod's Garden and the parking exit for our cars. Your Lordships will have heard that there is a plan to have a Holocaust memorial and learning centre in those gardens, which has not yet received planning permission. In the meantime, there has been more than one security analysis of the implications of a very large memorial and museum with concomitant visitors. It has been estimated that there will be 1 million visitors per year and 11 coaches delivering and taking away visitors every day.

The amendment in the names of the noble Lords, Lord Cormack and Lord King, and myself is designed to take account of the implications of this. The proposal to build on this site has avoided addressing security considerations in any detail, failing the tests set out in paragraph 95a of the National Planning Policy Framework of 2019. There will be potentially long queues of visitors waiting for security checks—the touted 20-second check will clearly be insufficient—next to children playing in the playground and the usual park visitors. Presumably, they too will have to undergo security checks because they are close by, whether intending to visit the memorial or not.

The principal threat comes from jihadi-inspired terrorists, as evidenced by the atrocities that have occurred in Europe recently, targeted against Jews and Jewish-associated buildings. The proximity of the planned memorial to Parliament, with national and international news media constantly in attendance, will make it a high-value target for those who wish to promote their evil aims with publicity. There have been many other criminal activities levelled against Jewish targets of which many of us are, frankly, fearful, and a great deal of private and public money is already spent on protection. We also have the extreme right-wing groups, white

[BARONESS DEECH]

supremacists and neo-Nazis, and protestors of all sorts—bearing in mind that the memorial may also include victims of LGBT persecution, and of the Rwandan, Armenian and other massacres—who will see this location as the focus for their action.

Alongside is Millbank, a busy road with limited parking. It is difficult to see where the coachloads of visitors would be able to disembark. I envisage more anti-terrorist vehicle barriers and pavement restrictions at the southern end of the Parliamentary Estate, as well as presumably more concrete blocks, barriers and bollards to protect against a suicide vehicle crash; it would be easy enough to drive into the park with this intent, rather as happened in the attack here in March 2017. At the very least, the footpath in Millbank will have to be narrowed and security patrols will be required night and day. Graffiti and desecration of memorials are all too common, as we saw with the Bomber Command memorial and even the Cenotaph in London. There will be large queues of people waiting to enter, which provide a soft target for extremists. Objects such as bricks, and worse, could easily be thrown from across the road, or could be dropped into the well area at the entrance to the learning centre, causing disruption.

Building a memorial will require large areas around to be closed for a time, with excavation equipment and building materials, at more or less the same time that these buildings are being prepared for repair. How will the park be managed at night, and cleared, and what will the light pollution be? Our amendment refers mildly to avoiding impediments; other amendments refer to the whole of the Parliamentary Estate and the broadest meaning of access. They all deserve support, but this one is the most urgent, in that the damage to security may occur very soon. We need to protect the Parliamentary Estate and its immediate vicinity. I stand here to assure noble Lords that it is not anti-Semitic to oppose this design, in this location, as has been suggested; far from it. The trouble is that, if the plan is steamrollered through as a political football—if I may mix my metaphors—it will for ever be tainted with opposition. To build a Holocaust memorial we must do so with reverence, affection, respect and acceptance. If it has to be forced through, it is contrary to the very objectives for which it is designed.

The other argument that may well be raised is: “Such a memorial has to be right next door to Parliament to remind us that democracy must and should protect against genocide”. Sadly, democracy has not proved in the past to protect against genocide. One need only instance in our current age Yugoslavia and Myanmar, and of course Germany had a form of democracy in the 1930s. Genocide comes from ethnic and religious hatred and from ideology. That is something that you combat only by educating people, not by putting up a memorial in a small park. For those reasons, I support the amendment and I hope that others will too.

4.30 pm

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords, I support the amendment, although I am not sure that it goes quite far enough. I agree with everything that the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, said.

I declare an interest in that, every day when I come here, I walk through those gardens. A number of times I have seen them being dug up and changed. There is a beautiful play area for children at one end that has been dug up and changed at least two or three times and there have been various other changes, while the visitor centre has taken away a fantastic view of the building. One might argue that that has a great purpose and it is very welcome to bring more children here, but I think that the point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, about the pressure of people, parking and security is really important.

We are not a planning committee but we have a duty to protect Parliament. I have been associated with these Chambers and Parliament generally for some 36 years—

Lord King of Bridgwater (Con): One of the new boys.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean: One of the new boys indeed. I hope that, like me, my noble friend Lord King comes here every day and is filled with wonder and a sense of, “How on earth have I managed to get here?” It is a very special place and it is important that in the process of renewal we do not lose what we have.

We are talking not just about the building but about the environment and the immediate environs, as my noble friend Lord Cormack said. I see that park in winter, spring and summer. I see the children in their playgrounds, I see the office workers having their picnics, I see the lovers on the benches behaving quite properly, I see people doing interviews in front of that wonderful view of the tower, and it has enormous value. If we are to have 10 years of construction and disruption in this place, what on earth would possess us to add to that by having another major project, not even on the surface but underground?

We have seen the presentations and sketches of what it would look like and, frankly, I do not think it would enhance the beauty, simplicity and value of that space, which is also very much valued by tourists. I support the amendment but I hope that, at a later stage, we will have one that does more than just make this point in the way that this one does—that we have an amendment that actually makes it clear to those responsible for this project that it is not just about the park; it is about Parliament as a whole and preserving the precious heritage that we are all privileged to have the responsibility for.

I welcome and totally support everything that the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, said. My noble friend is rightly keen to argue that we want a very successful Holocaust memorial project. I think the venue that he described would be a far better one; it would involve less controversy and, I venture to suggest, it would be possible to achieve rather more quickly than will be the case given the controversy and the difficulties that we have. I support the amendment.

Lord Carlile of Berriew (CB): My Lords, I support the amendment that was moved so clearly and eloquently by the noble Lord, Lord Cormack. I agree entirely with the other things that have been said so far.

Over a mere 36 years in association with this Palace, I have quite often gone into those gardens for moments of deliberation and relaxation. The reason why I do so is that they contain one of the most wonderful public sculptures in the world, “The Burghers of Calais”. It is a much better location for that casting of the statue than you find, for example, in Calais. It is a sculpture of international moment and very much part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site. With the other two memorials that the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, referred to, there seems to be quite enough for small gardens of that size, particularly when there is another site for the Holocaust memorial available for sure on the much more capacious site of the Imperial War Museum—I will speak about that in a moment.

I am very committed to the erection of a Holocaust memorial. My sister Renata and I share a father but not a mother. We do not share a mother because her mother died in Auschwitz-Birkenau in 1944. A framed copy of her death certificate hangs on the wall of my sister’s house in the Midlands. It does not tell the entire truth. It says she died of smallpox, when she was almost certainly murdered because she had smallpox. These events are very important to us as a family. We believe Renata’s and my paternal grandparents died in Auschwitz-Birkenau. We do not know exactly how, but it was probably by being taken straight from the train to the gas ovens.

I suspect that many people in your Lordships’ House have been to Auschwitz-Birkenau. I am afraid once was enough for me—I shall not go again. Anybody who has been there will realise how momentous, vile and treacherous those events were and what effect they have on those families, whether they be religious or secular—I am not a religious person at all. This is the history of many people in this country and indeed quite a lot of people in your Lordships’ House and the other place.

I regard this memorial as an absolute necessity, but what does it need? I have been to Holocaust memorials around the world when I have been able to. Yad Vashem is an extraordinary memorial, set in a great space. Last year, I went to the new Holocaust memorial in Warsaw, Poland. Poland has a mixed reputation for its attitude to Jews, even since the Second World War. However, if your Lordships have not been there, I have to tell you that the new memorial in Warsaw is a sensational place. It dominates a big square. You can walk around it and through it; you can go to restaurants in the streets around it. The whole of that area has been created and recreated to accommodate that memorial.

In my view, a memorial to the Holocaust needs room to view, room to breathe, room to reflect and room to police. The site for the memorial in Victoria Tower Gardens certainly does not have the room to police. The road between Lambeth Bridge and the Palace of Westminster is often closed to traffic when important events are taking place here, or on the not insignificant number of occasions when there is a suspicion of a raised terrorist threat level. It would be a sitting target for terrorists and would not be difficult to access. It would not be possible to create a ring of steel around it, which can be done on a big site in a careful, considerate and not particularly obvious way.

A memorial such as this should have space—as at Auschwitz, which is on a huge site—for coaches to bring and set down older schoolchildren who are learning about modern history, including the history of the Holocaust. There should be space for them to be corralled in an appropriate way, with time to listen to their teachers. They should be able to see the light of day. I do not understand the desire for an underground memorial. To be able to understand what happened to these people, you need light. The children’s memorial at Yad Vashem, which is a hall of mirrors with candles, is based on seeing light, not being in a subterranean space. I say to your Lordships, with the feeling I hope I have shown, because I believe in this proposition—

Lord Pickles (Con): Will the noble Lord give way?

Lord Carlile of Berriew: In a moment—this is not the appropriate place. I venture that anyone who has great experience in local government, such as the noble Lord who I am about to give way to, should be of a similar view.

Lord Pickles: I was merely going to point out to the noble Lord that the memorial is indeed on the surface. The learning centre is below ground. It is important for us to be accurate in our objections.

Lord Carlile of Berriew: Part of the memorial—the visible part—is on the surface; the rest is underground. Yes it is a learning centre, but if one goes to look at other monuments with learning centres, they are not concealed below the ground. I do not know of any other Holocaust memorial—

Lord Pickles: Berlin!

Lord Carlile of Berriew: I am not going to give way again; the noble Lord can make a speech if he wants to. This is not the House of Commons. In my view, the placing of the learning centre underground compounds the points I am trying to make. This site could be put on a much bigger estate. It could be more open, visible and more easily policed. Those are the main reasons why I support the amendment.

Baroness Flather (CB): My Lords, a lot has been said and I agree with such obvious and logical reasons that have been given. It is very difficult not to, but I want to add my views. I was brought up a Hindu—am I not allowed to speak?

Noble Lords: Yes, of course.

Baroness Flather: Somebody was muttering. I was brought up a Hindu. Personally, I have never understood why there is such a lot of prejudice against the Jews, in Europe and in other countries. They are very clever people. They believe in education and achievement. Why is it that people do not really feel the same about Jews as everybody else?

I have stood up to speak because when I learned about the Holocaust it had a very deep effect on me. I have become an atheist as a result, because I could not

[BARONESS FLATHER]

accept that 6 million people could be killed like vermin and nothing happened for them. If nothing happened for them, what do I need God for? I am sure not many people think like that, but it is how I feel. I am going to Auschwitz-Birkenau in August. Of course, somebody said, “You must go to Birkenau; it was a factory”. Silly me, I thought it was a factory making something. It was a factory killing people in the most careful and planned way, just killing people. I cannot believe that we are living in this century.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Non-Afl): My Lords, there is another amendment in this group in my name, but I am afraid it is nothing to do with the Holocaust memorial, so forgive me for changing the topic. It is about co-ordination of major programmes and projects.

At Second Reading I raised the need for clarity on responsibility and accountability for all the major programmes of work ongoing at the Palace. As we know, we currently have the roof works, there is the masonry project and Big Ben, and soon to start will be the Northern Estate. My concern is the scope for confusion and the potential for all manner of things to go wrong if there is not a single body responsible for all these separate programmes to make sure they are co-ordinated properly.

Clause 1(1) makes provision for the sponsor body and the delivery authority to be responsible for building works beyond the restoration and renewal project itself. Since the Second Reading debate, I was pleased to receive a letter from the noble Earl confirming that responsibility for the Northern Estate will soon transfer to the sponsor body, so one of those major projects will now be within the remit of this new body. That is very welcome. I have also learned since Second Reading that within the House authorities, Strategic Estates is responsible for the other projects which are expected to be completed before the decant.

None the less, I have tabled my amendment because of the scope for things to go wrong when these big works eventually commence. I would like some reassurance from the noble Earl, or from the noble Baroness the Leader of the House, that the Strategic Estates team has a formal responsibility for proper engagement with the sponsor body on all these projects; and that if there is any question that responsibility should shift to the sponsor body in the best interests of the future of the Palace of Westminster in the round, it will be considered swiftly. I would also be grateful if the Minister could let us know to whom Strategic Estates is accountable. If there was to be any change in responsibility for those major projects which could impact on the restoration and renewal project itself, which decision-making body would make that decision?

4.45 pm

Lord Polak (Con): My Lords, I would like to bring us back to my noble friend Lord Cormack’s amendment. I have great respect for my noble friend, who sits beside me and advises me on the procedures of this House; perhaps he is not doing such a great job, but I thank him for that. The noble Lord, Lord Carlile,

talked about some Holocaust memorials that he has been to, but for me the most iconic one is the one right in the centre of Berlin. If your Lordships have not been to that one, I urge you to go because the memorial is all above ground, while its learning centre is entirely underground.

Lord Carlile of Berriew: I have been to the site in Berlin. Does the noble Lord not agree that it is on a much bigger footprint than is postulated for Victoria Tower Gardens? It is a rectangular site, occupying a great space, which is very different from what is proposed here.

Lord Polak: I will come on to the actual footprint of the site in a minute, if I may.

The noble Baroness, Lady Deech, raised the issue of security. I just pose the question: what does it say about our society that a Holocaust memorial is deemed a security risk? That is the sort of society we now live in, which is very concerning to me. I also take issue a little with noble Lords using this sort of amendment to the Bill to raise objections to the establishment of the memorial on that site. I know that I am northern and I like people to be straightforward. If this amendment were about just objecting to the site of a memorial, I would have preferred its wording to be clear and unequivocal in saying so. I do not know of any Jewish communal event or building that has been stopped or withdrawn because of security concerns. Thank God that in this country, measures are always put in place by successive Governments and successive leaders of the police, whether it be the Met Police here or the police in Manchester and other areas. They have always shown support and understanding by working closely with the CST—the Community Security Trust.

This reminds me of when I was the education director of the Board of Deputies back in the 1980s. I remember questioning the then president of the board, Lord Janner—he was not Lord Janner then but was subsequently made a Peer. I asked him what would happen if somebody were to daub the stone in the Dell in Hyde Park? What would happen if somebody came and put something on it, a swastika or whatever? I remember that his words to me were: “Stuart, you’ll roll up your sleeves and we’ll clean it up”. Those are important words, because it would be a great shame and sadness if a memorial such as this did not happen because we were worried that it could cause problems. I am not an expert, but surely Westminster is a heavily policed part of town, so why would a memorial at this site be an additional risk to the place we are in?

I do not want to pre-empt the words of the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, but I hope a memorial in the learning centre will stand next to Parliament as a reminder to all throughout the nation of our responsibility to remain vigilant against intolerance and bigotry. Setting history’s worst example of the disintegration of democratic values against the greatest emblem of Britain’s aspirations for democracy will stand as a permanent reminder of the responsibility of citizens and politicians, in a democracy, to be vigilant and responsive whenever and wherever those values are threatened. The trustees have ensured, and will ensure, that all precautions are met and the relevant people consulted.

The memorial will require just 7.5% of Victoria Tower Gardens—that leaves 92.5% untouched—and, as a result, the drainage, planting and gardens will be improved. Existing paths will be replaced, the playgrounds enhanced and there will be a new café. There will be many reasons to love the park. Members of the public should be able to go about their daily lives and that includes visiting all high-profile places in Westminster.

Lord Adonis: My Lords, I have played no part in previous deliberations on the location of the Holocaust memorial. I have listened to the discussions very much for the first time. I say at the outset that I understand some of the points that the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, has made. I also strongly identify with the points that the noble Lord, Lord Polak, has made. What is unacceptable about this amendment is that something as big as the location of the Holocaust memorial is not being decided by a planning authority, but by a back-door route as an amendment to this legislation. This is a national memorial at the heart of London.

By the way, it has taken a long time to set this up. It should have been set up a generation ago, but, as this is a national memorial, it is of such importance that Parliament should decide, and on an express vote. If this is still unresolved—and, from listening to the debate, perhaps the Leader will tell us that it is more resolved than appears—there should be a procedure for Parliament to decide on the location, on a positive vote of both Houses, taking account of all the issues, including those which have been raised on security and accessibility, and on the aesthetic elements by the noble Lord, Lord Carlile. What he said about the Berlin memorial was interesting. This is a hugely important decision that the nation should take, from looking at what other nations have done with their memorials and how ours matches up.

If I have understood the situation correctly, construction is not going to start imminently. It sounds unlikely, given the other work that is going to happen on the site. Perhaps the noble Lord will correct me but, if that is the case, Parliament should decide what happens with this memorial. We should not leave it to Westminster City Council, by using an amendment to the Bill in this indirect way.

Baroness Scott of Needham Market (LD): My Lords, I am participating in this debate as one of the four Members of your Lordships' House on the shadow sponsor body. I speak from that perspective, but I am not speaking for them. I hope that distinction is clear. I am certainly not commenting on the location, or desirability or otherwise, of the Holocaust memorial. I want to reflect on what this debate shows about the extent of the powers of the shadow sponsor body. As far as I can tell, there is no real master plan for the whole world heritage site. Decisions are made in a slightly piecemeal way, involving major players such as the city council and so on, but in so far as there is co-ordination between them, it has always been the authorities of both Houses of Parliament who do it. If under this amendment that locus was taken away from

the parliamentary authorities and handed to the shadow sponsor board, I suggest your Lordships would need to reflect on that.

The role of the shadow sponsor body is, fundamentally, to do what Parliament instructs. Therefore, if Parliament wanted us to take on this role, we would obey. However, as a parliamentarian, I would be quite nervous about handing over an important contribution to the overall planning process to the shadow sponsor body, which has been set up for an entirely different purpose: delivering the restoration and renewal of the fabric of this building.

The noble Lord, Lord Cormack, is a thoughtful person who might take away that point and reflect on it, because it is entirely possible for the thrust of his arguments to be fulfilled, but perhaps not by the shadow sponsor body. In many ways, the amendment tabled and spoken to by the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, is another example—it will not be the only one today—of an interesting relationship between the work of the sponsor body and that of the parliamentary authorities. For me, as both a member of that body and a parliamentarian, what is important is clarity. It is less about who exactly is doing what than being absolutely clear about who is doing it, so that, as decisions are made, we know how they have been made and by whom. The lines between some responsibilities are a little blurred, which makes it quite difficult for us.

We need to be careful not to use this Bill in a way that muddies those waters and makes it less clear where such responsibilities lie. At the end of the day, the shadow sponsor body and the sponsor body when it becomes substantive have their role to play, but the parliamentary authorities and Members of Parliament will also continue to have theirs.

Lord Berkeley (Lab): My Lords, the noble Baroness said that the sponsor board was set up to manage the renewal of the Parliament building, but Clause 1(3)—we have talked about it many times—covers all the buildings that Parliament might sit in, even temporarily. I think that the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, is concerned about the possible management roles of, and interaction between, the different organisations, as are many of us. It would be useful if the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, could clarify that.

Baroness Scott of Needham Market: I am very pleased to. This is something of a moving picture. When the shadow sponsor body was first set up, it was not envisaged that it would have management of the Northern Estate programme, which has emerged. The Bill provides a framework in which Parliament could decide—to be honest—to ask the shadow sponsor body to do anything it liked, but just because it can does not mean that it should. There has to be reflection always on whether a particular task really sits within the skills and parameters of the sponsor body, which is why I have some concerns about the amendment effectively asking the shadow sponsor body to engage in the planning process on behalf of Parliament. If Parliament wants that, we will do it, but I am a little nervous about it and think that role sits more comfortably with the House authorities.

Baroness Altmann (Con): Amendment 2 is in the name of my noble friend Lord Cormack, for whom I have enormous affection and respect. This Bill, on the restoration and renewal of Parliament, is hugely important; we all know that this project must be pursued. However, I would like to give an alternative perspective.

The memorial that is the subject of this amendment is not, as far as I envisage it, about war. Suggesting that it might be more appropriately sited in the Imperial War Museum suggests that it is about something other than what I believe it is intended for. The memorial is about democracy and the horrible consequences of the disintegration of democratic values. The site for this memorial was specifically chosen for its historical, emotional and political significance and is a reminder of the government-approved murders of millions of innocent citizens. It will symbolise our country's commitment to remembering the men, women and children, whether they were Roma, gays, disabled people or Jews, who were murdered just because of who they were, not for anything they had done wrong.

5 pm

I declare an interest, as my father was born in Vienna and my mother in Berlin. Both fled here in the 1930s while most of our family was killed in concentration camps. I am enormously grateful to this country for providing a safe haven for them. I am also grateful for the work carried out by so many people, including noble friends on these Benches and others outside Parliament, who wish to build a lasting memorial to the horrendous consequences, the damage that can be done, when democracy crumbles. The current trend towards Holocaust denial—

Baroness Deech: Can the noble Baroness explain how, while democracy has spread across Europe since the Second World War, and Holocaust memorials, hundreds of them, have gone up in Europe and America, anti-Semitism and extremism are on the rise? They are not achieving their purpose. It is a worthy gesture but it needs much more thought.

Baroness Altmann: I understand the noble Baroness's concerns, but I do not think there is a causal connection between memorials sited in other places and the aims of this particular memorial, and what it is intended to symbolise. The trend towards Holocaust denial, revisionism and the rise of anti-Semitism and intolerance, even permeating, it seems, mainstream political discourse in this country and elsewhere, is a frightening reminder of the very reason why the memorial should be built precisely where it is currently planned. As we have heard in your Lordships' House today, the memorial has many opponents and I understand the concerns raised, but I urge noble Lords to consider the fundamentally important reasons for it to be sited next to our Parliament.

Baroness Scott of Needham Market: Would the noble Baroness and other noble Lords accept that this is not fundamentally a debate about the desirability or the location of this? I genuinely recognise all the

passions that people feel, but this amendment is about the extent to which the shadow sponsor body should act to engage with the planning authority.

Baroness Altmann: I understand the point being made, but I think it is important that alternative views are expressed, having heard so many noble Lords who have put their perspective very powerfully. Of course, the noble Baroness is right—

Lord Adonis: I strongly encourage the noble Baroness to continue with her remarks, because the objections of the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, to this location ranged far wider than the text of the amendment, which says that the sponsor body should have regard to whether the works,

“may impede the Parliamentary building works”.

The noble Lord's objections about security and desirability, and the other objections raised, ranged far wider. I think it is completely inappropriate that this amendment should be the means of deciding where the Holocaust memorial goes.

Baroness Altmann: I strongly endorse the remarks of the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, and respectfully request that I put some alternative views to the House. I take the noble Baroness's point that this is about the renovation and restoration of this Parliament, but this amendment having been put down, I think it is important that the House hears a range of views. Otherwise, an amendment of this nature, which would undermine the important purpose that is intended for a site right next to our Parliament, may pass automatically.

As my noble friend Lord Polak said, the project would take up just 7.5% of Victoria Tower Gardens, and it is intended to offer substantial improvements to the gardens. It will link the existing memorials to historic battles against injustice, and the Buxton memorial to the abolition of slavery will be preserved. The project provides for new pathways and playgrounds and has carefully looked at protecting the trees in the gardens.

I am hugely grateful to the Government and my party for approving the construction of this memorial, and that it will be situated in such a powerfully symbolic location. I hope that the concerns of noble Lords, which have been carefully and respectfully expressed, can be overcome with further discussions about the plans already in place and the careful consideration of the design, which is intended to avoid disruption. Disruption is inevitable whenever restoration is carried out, as will be the case with the restoration of Parliament, or, if one is building a Holocaust memorial and museum on any other site. However, I understand also the concerns of local residents, and that there are strong reservations.

I urge noble Lords to consider whether this particular amendment to this particular Bill is addressing the correct issue at the correct time, and whether we should have a broader consideration of the merits of the Holocaust memorial as it is currently proposed.

Lord Pickles: My Lords, it is a pleasure to follow my noble friend. The noble Baroness opposite will like this, because I want to speak to the amendment itself.

Among the traditions and conventions of this House is a long-standing one that we do not impose retrospective legislation, and I know that my noble friend Lord Cormack has not attempted to do so. The result of that is that the existing planning application, which went in earlier this year, would not be affected by this amendment. Therefore, it matters not whether my noble friend wants to press it to a vote or wait until after the summer holidays, when the decision may well have been made, because this will not affect the decision regarding the location of the memorial learning centre one jot or iota.

The noble Lord, Lord Adonis, wanted an explanation of where we are. A planning application has been submitted to Westminster City Council, which is going about this in a diligent and thorough way. It has some experience, because most of the larger developments that government wants are within this area, so there is probably not a city council within the country better placed to do this. We could well have taken the decision to place this memorial and learning centre by a resolution of the House, overturning the planning of Westminster City Council. However, I have a soft spot and a lot of respect for local government. The noble Baroness, Lady Deech, read out the National Planning Policy Framework; I like that, because I helped to write the section that she read out. It is important that, whether you are the Prime Minister, the Queen or some massively important person in the City, you are still subject to town and country planning. I found the experience of working alongside Westminster City Council useful, and I anticipate that we are likely to get a decision in early September.

My noble friend is the epitome of civilisation and reasonableness; absolutely nobody would feel that he was anti-Semitic. I did feel a number of times that my noble friend was carefully carving a paper tiger in order that it be destroyed, but let me be clear: you can object to this location without being anti-Semitic in any way. My noble friend spoiled it a little when he said that he wanted to preserve all the grass, the dicky birds and flowers but then said that actually, it would be quite a good place for us to build a temporary Chamber over the top. I suppose that the flowers and the dicky birds could then go take a hike.

This site was announced in January 2016. I know that the announcement was made in secret—it was made by the Prime Minister on the Floor of the House of Commons, so one would not necessarily expect everyone to know about it, but I would expect Members of this House to know. Not only was the site announced; we then announced an international competition, and all the top architects in the world put in a bid. We had an exhibition in Westminster Hall, which Members of this House could have looked at; they could even have submitted a card saying whether they liked the design. It was then selected by a jury, which included the Chief Rabbi and Holocaust survivors. Two international architects with experience in Holocaust architecture were selected.

I understand that my honourable friend Lord Forsyth, who is no longer in his place—no doubt he is a busy man—said that he does not like the design. Fair enough: not everybody likes it, but it won an international

competition. It has been selected to appear at the international design centre. It is regarded as a thoroughly intelligent piece of work.

Baroness Deech: My Lords—

Lord Pickles: I will of course give way in a moment, but as I said, this is not the House of Commons; I will come to you in a moment.

Even the people who put together the landscape have just won the competition to landscape the trees and grassland surrounding the Eiffel Tower. The French are notoriously picky about design, and I cannot help but feel that we have managed to get the best. I give way to the honourable lady, Baroness Deech.

Baroness Deech: I just wondered whether the noble Lord would remind the House that the winning design is identical to the one that the two architects produced for a competition in Ottawa, which they lost. The Ottawa setting was huge and concrete. They simply brought the same design over to London, hardly tweaking it.

Lord Pickles: I have no idea whether that is true and—I hope that the honourable Lady will not mind me being blunt—I do not care. It was a winning design. It is an attractive design. I know that she does not like it but, frankly, I prefer the choice of a competition and an international jury to her particular whims.

We are almost following a standard. The honourable Lady mentioned Ottawa. Ottawa and Washington went through—

Baroness Barran (Con): I remind the noble Lord that it is “the noble Baroness”, not “the honourable Lady”. We address our fellow Peers as the noble Lord or Baroness, rather than the honourable.

Lord Pickles: I thank the noble Baroness. That is very helpful.

Ottawa and Washington went through exactly the same process. They said, “We don’t want it here. We think it’s a marvellous thing but we don’t want it in this particular location. Just put it somewhere else”. They then produced a security assessment saying that it somehow adds to insecurity. We have worked closely with the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure, and the Metropolitan Police. This morning, my office checked with them to see whether the security report produced by Mr Adrian Tudway changed their assessment in any way; their answer was no. I must say, Mr Tudway is a remarkably honest person. In his assessment, he says:

“I assess the risk of such an attack as falling within the ‘moderate’ band (using Low, Moderate, or High Risk)”. That seems extremely sensible to me.

5.15 pm

I do not know an awful lot about security; I just take advice. We have had the advantage of the Community Security Trust offering advice on this issue. It says:

[LORD PICKLES]

“We look at the threats, we mitigate as best we can and then we lead our lives as we have every right to do. Police and Government and everyone else takes exactly the same approach. Further to the above, I dislike, on a point of principle, the notion that anti-Jewish terrorism means that we cannot have Jewish things in public as easily as we can have other things. Then there is the fact that the memorial would be in such a heavily policed part of town anyway. I’m not entirely sure why the memorial would be at such additional risk, relative to other parts of Westminster, so as to render it unfeasible on security grounds, whereas everything else in Westminster is basically fine and within acceptable risk levels”.

Lord Carlile of Berriew: I am listening to the noble Lord’s cogent speech with great interest. Should he not have started by declaring his interest as co-chair of the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation Advisory Board?

Lord Pickles: The noble Lord is absolutely right. I apologise to the House; I forgot that I was in the Lords, not the Commons. I should say that I am co-chair of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation and vice-president of the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust; I am also on the commission for Auschwitz, the concentration camp in Poland. All those posts are unpaid. I also attend other events. If I have left anything out, I apologise to the noble Lord.

Why this location? We have heard suggestions from other noble Lords as to why it is appropriate. There are two reasons. First, we want the people who have visited the learning centre, and listened to the lessons of the Holocaust and the genocide, to leave, look towards the Victoria and Elizabeth Towers and these two Chambers, and recognise that Parliament is the final bastion—the final protection against tyranny. Secondly, we want people working in this Chamber and in the other place to understand that they always have a choice: they can protect or they can oppress. It was a compliant legislature that introduced the Nuremberg laws. I look forward, in the not-too-distant future, to taking my noble friend Lord Cormack, the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and other Members on an exclusive guided tour of the new memorial. When it is finished, I am sure that the honourable gentleman will feel that we have done him and this place proud.

Lord King of Bridgwater: My Lords, I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, who speaks with great authority on this matter. As he rightly declared, he is deeply involved in and knows an enormous amount about what is proposed. But I pick him up on one point he made. Whether or not the application here is out of time for this amendment, I would have thought that nobody in your Lordships’ House would disagree that both this amendment and that of the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, are eminently sensible. It must certainly be right that the sponsor body takes an interest and is informed, as this long restoration and renewal process goes on, of any issues we need to know about; the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, made that point.

There are so many different angles. I will instance one that has not been mentioned at all, about what comes into Victoria Tower Gardens. I happened to be talking to one of the officers of the House, who got

very excited about the issue of lying in state. I do not want to anticipate any unfortunate events that may take place at a very senior level in our country, but at some stage there will be a lying-in-state. Anyone familiar with the problems of lying in state in this Parliament, when the queue goes all the way down the back, through Victoria Tower Gardens and over Lambeth Bridge, will ask where on earth the people are going to go. This is just one illustration of the peculiarities and requirements of the extraordinary site on which we stand.

I criticise my noble friend Lord Cormack over one point. He spelled out what he was looking to see from the restoration and renewal of these great parliamentary buildings. We see a forecast of 37 degrees on Thursday, but I saw absolutely no mention in the new proposal of the importance of brilliant air conditioning throughout the Houses of Parliament.

I am a strong supporter of the Holocaust memorial; I was a strong supporter when it was originally proposed. What was not proposed at the same time was that it would be combined with the learning centre. That introduced an entirely new dimension, of course. When the proposal was originally put forward—I understand that the Prime Minister and the noble Lord, Lord Feldman, were involved at one stage—there were three alternative locations for the learning centre that were not Victoria Tower Gardens. The memorial, like other memorials, was to be in Victoria Tower Gardens.

The issue I see arising is that we have had a clear statement about how little space this will take up—the figure given was 7.5%—but it has to be built first. It may be 7.5% when the work is finished. I was surprised that my noble friend Lord Pickles did not seem to think that the learning centre was underground.

Lord Pickles: It is.

Lord King of Bridgwater: There was an intervention that I thought suggested not. If I have got that wrong, I apologise.

It is going to be a massive construction process. I asked my noble friend Lord Pickles—he will not mind my mentioning this—how long he thinks this will take; two years, possibly. Anybody familiar with construction projects in London—I have been, and am at present, quite closely involved with some—knows the likelihood of any construction project in London finishing on time. Your Lordships should come with me to Crossrail and see the problems; the noble Lord, Lord Berkeley, knows better than anybody that this is a major problem. While the construction is going on, how much space will it take up? I asked earlier what happens to all the spoil they dig out. It will all go out by barge. That is a new dimension, but it is implicit recognition of the traffic problems that this might cause.

This is an incredibly difficult issue to talk about, because all sorts of allegations are made about anti-Semitism. I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, on his most moving speech, which seemed to me to completely knock on the head the suggestion that anybody who has a concern about this must be implicitly anti-Semitic. I recall the letter written to the *Times* by

the noble Lord and 10 other colleagues, all Jewish Peers, including the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, expressing their concerns about what will happen.

It is obviously going to be a major construction project which will give rise to concern over traffic—about which we have complaints enough at the moment—will deprive a significant area of London's smallest park of its utility and will go on for some time. I hope those words will echo around Westminster Council. I am not sure whether they will echo around the Secretary of State whose application it is—it will presumably be referred to him subsequently—but it is an unfortunate decision and we will have to see what comes out of it.

My noble friend Lord Polak made the point that we have had terrorism and we do not expect any more problems. However, given the news today about the ISIS attacks and the killing of the Taliban, the idea that ISIS/Daesh has gone away is wrong. Having lived through Borough Market and Westminster Bridge, and having seen the new threats of one kind or another, I must warn your Lordships, from my experience of having dealt with terrorism for too much of my life, that this is a completely new dimension. We never had suicide bombers in Northern Ireland but we will have them aplenty—it is what happened in Kabul today. Given the complete confusion in the whole of the Middle East area, the activities of the different groups and the unfortunate involvement of Israel—a democratic state in the middle of that appallingly unstable and dangerous area—your Lordships will not be surprised to hear me say that, as the hatred, threats and the various problems in the world continue to grow, there is no prospect of a calmer, more peaceful world emerging. In those circumstances we need to move with great care to ensure that we do not increase the risks of more danger.

We know all too well—it is a political point—that the police are finding it hard to cope with the present number of threats, difficulties and disruptions they face. This will not make their lives any easier and, in many cases, the challenges will be even more dangerous.

I add my voice to that of my noble friend Lord Cormack and, although it may be a bit late, I hope the House and the sponsor body will look carefully at the implications of this development as the hugely demanding task of restoring and renewing our Parliament is carried forward.

Baroness Wheeler: My Lords, I will make a brief intervention before the Minister responds. The broad sentiment behind Amendments 2 and 21A to ensure that consideration is given to how other constructions could impact on the restoration and renewal programme is fully acknowledged by us. I listened with interest to the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Cormack. I am also a great fan of Victoria Tower Gardens. I particularly enjoy walking through it and seeing “The Burghers of Calais” and the anti-slavery memorial.

However, while I am obviously moved by the contributions of noble Lords on the Holocaust memorial and the Holocaust itself, I am not in a position to comment on this today—I have not been involved in it—but my noble friend Lady Smith has been involved in discussions with noble Lords from all sides of the House.

As the House noted at Second Reading, the Government have chosen not to hand planning issues to the delivery body, as had previously been suggested—my noble friend Lord Adonis raised this point—but none the less it is helpful for this House to consider whether there is a place for the sponsor body to advise on such issues. The comments of the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, raised important issues in relation to this and I look forward to the Minister's response.

On Amendment 21A, tabled by the noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, the issue of the parliamentary relationship agreement including provision for corporate officers to inform and consult the sponsor body on nearby works is important. The noble Baroness raised a number of important issues and I look forward to the Minister's response.

5.30 pm

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: My Lords, I thank all noble Lords who contributed to this debate and my noble friend Lord Cormack for tabling his amendment. Like the noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler, I understand the sentiment behind it and agree that, if planning applications for works adjacent to the Palace were submitted, the sponsor body would clearly need to seek guidance on whether those works might impede the R&R programme and, if necessary, raise objections. Prior to the appointment of the shadow sponsor body, under the House authorities the R&R programme has held annual conferences for neighbours such as Westminster City Council, the GLA, Transport for London, Westminster Abbey and the Metropolitan Police. The sponsor body plans to continue these conferences, in order to update partners on the progress of the R&R programme. Close engagement will continue.

Clause 2(2)(b) already places a duty on the sponsor body to make strategic decisions relating to the carrying out of parliamentary building works, and this would include responding to planning applications that may impede the works. Therefore, while we recognise the importance of the principle behind this amendment, given that this is something that the sponsor body already has the power to do in the relevant circumstances, I do not believe it needs to be prescribed in the Bill.

A number of noble Lords, including my noble friends Lord Cormack, Lord Forsyth and Lord King, the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, and the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, raised particular concerns around the Holocaust memorial project planned to be located in Victoria Tower Gardens, which is run by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. I assure noble Lords that, before deciding on Victoria Tower Gardens, the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation, an advisory board to the MHCLG which has cross-party support and is co-chaired by my noble friend Lord Pickles and Ed Balls, conducted an extensive search for possible locations and considered almost 50 sites in central London. Visibility, accessibility, availability and affordability were taken into account during this detailed process. The foundation identified Victoria Tower Gardens as a potential site for the memorial and, following investigations into its feasibility, recommended it to the Government in January 2016 as the best choice.

[BARONESS EVANS OF BOWES PARK]

My noble friends Lord Cormack and Lord Forsyth, and the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, raised the possibility of the Holocaust memorial being situated at the Imperial War Museum. Noble Lords will certainly be aware that that was carefully considered along with, as I said, many other locations. However, Victoria Tower Gardens was identified as the site capable of meeting the Government's aspiration for the new national memorial.

A key factor in choosing the location was the visibility it afforded to the memorial. As my noble friends Lord Polak and Lord Pickles said, in the shadow of Parliament, the memorial will encourage visitors to learn about the challenging decisions that our leaders had to make in the lead up to, during and in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

My noble friends Lord Cormack, Lord King, Lord Forsyth and Lord Polak, and the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, all touched on the important issue of security. We are fully aware of the security implications associated with the environs of the Palace of Westminster and are in regular contact with representatives of the Parliamentary Security Department, the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure and the Metropolitan Police. We have been advised on physical and operational security measures to mitigate risks and are confident that the proposed site would be secure. Queuing visitors will be confined to the paths immediately adjacent to the memorial itself, and all visitors will require a pre-booked ticket.

Moreover, as my noble friend Lady Altmann said, the planned design will lead to improvements in Victoria Tower Gardens. The vast majority of the public space will be retained and improved, with more accessible seating and a new boardwalk along the embankment.

The noble Lord, Lord Adonis, and my noble friend Lord King asked about the timetable for the project. As my noble friend Lord Pickles outlined, subject to planning permission, work on the site is expected to begin in 2020, with the Holocaust memorial opening in late 2022; that is well before the R&R programme works will commence. A detailed delivery plan has been developed and robust project management arrangements are in place to ensure that it remains on track, with engagement with specialist contractors throughout the course of the works.

Lord Berkeley: The noble Lord, Lord King, mentioned the construction time and suggested that it might be longer. He also suggested that the contractors would need quite a lot of the garden for temporary works while they build the memorial. Has the Minister any idea of whether any of the garden will be able to remain open during the construction phase?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I am afraid that because this project does not relate specifically to the R&R programme, I do not have that information. But I am sure I will be able to find out and will write to the noble Lord.

My noble friend Lord Cormack raised the issue of the decant. We will come to that in a later group so, if it is okay with noble Lords, I will now turn to the amendment tabled by my noble friend Lady Stowell.

Lord Polak: For the record, I forgot to mention that I am a trustee of the Holocaust Memorial Charitable Trust. I apologise for not saying that at the beginning of my contribution.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: My noble friend's amendment would obligate the House authorities to consult the sponsor body about major works to the Parliamentary Estate which sit outside of R&R, if they are likely to have an impact on delivering the programme. Noble Lords will be aware that the Strategic Estates team is a bicameral service, accountable to the clerks of both Houses and to the relevant domestic committees. In the case of this House, those are the Services Committee, the Finance Committee and ultimately the commission. At present, the shadow sponsor body sits within the House authorities and under the Strategic Estates team, which means that both parties have a head start in looking ahead and being aware of what ongoing projects might have an impact on R&R.

My noble friend's amendment is to Clause 6, which concerns the parliamentary relationship agreement that the House authorities and the sponsor body will have to sign once the sponsor body is formed on a statutory basis. This agreement will set out the arrangements to hand over the Palace for decant and to hand it back once the Palace has been restored. It will also cover issues relating to staff transfers, insurance, security and the control of data, among other matters.

In the light of its purpose, we consider that this agreement is the natural place for the House authorities and the sponsor body to determine how they will keep each other informed about ongoing estate works which might affect the R&R programme and provide the clarity that the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Needham Market, rightly said was important. As this agreement already has to cover "consultation and co-operation" between the sponsor body and the corporate officers of the House, we do not think it is necessary to prescribe in this Bill what that consultation and co-operation should cover.

Ian Ailles and the two clerks currently co-ordinate estates projects through the Parliamentary Estate and public realm oversight group. Once the sponsor body is established, if Parliament and the sponsor body wish for this group to continue to play a co-ordinating role, it would then need to be covered by the parliamentary relationship agreement. In addition, if, over the course of the R&R programme, it became apparent that there was support for current separate House authority estates programmes such as the archives project to fall under R&R, the Bill makes provision for this under Clause 1.

Adding another project to R&R could happen but only with the agreement of the commissions of both Houses, the sponsor body and the delivery authority. As was discussed during this debate, that is precisely the process that is currently being followed to integrate the Northern Estate programme, which includes Richmond House, into the R&R programme. The reason it was not included from the beginning is that the NEP predates important decisions on R&R.

I hope that my response reassures my noble friend, and I ask that he withdraw his amendment.

Lord King of Bridgwater: My noble friend kindly offered to write to the noble Lord, Lord Berkeley. Will she confirm that she will put a copy of that letter in the Library?

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I am happy to do so.

Lord Adonis: I take it from what the Leader and the noble Lord, Lord Pickles, have said that these decisions are beyond the point of no return. That being the case, is not this debate a complete waste of time?

Lord Cormack: My Lords, my noble friend does not appear to be answering the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, and has asked me to withdraw my amendment. I made it quite plain when I moved it that I rather honour the convention in your Lordships' House that we do not divide in Committee and I have no intention of seeking to do so. However, I would like to say two or three things.

First, it is very important indeed that any application relating to the immediate environs of the Palace of Westminster, and that could conceivably impinge upon what we are going to do, should at least be looked at by the body we are formally establishing in this Bill. That is very important, and I may well seek to move an amendment when we come to Report. If I was so minded, I would want to consult the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Needham Market, before doing so.

On the subject of the Holocaust memorial, it is important that the Committee has been able to debate this extremely important adjacent development. In responding, my noble friend the Leader of the House indicated that it is almost a *fait accompli*, but I gently remind her that the planning authority has yet to determine, and I certainly hope that it will take most carefully into account not only the powerful speeches of my noble friends who have so strongly supported this, but those of us who have perfectly reasonable, legitimate concerns about the effect it may have. I am particularly grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Deech, for what she said, and to my noble friend Lord King and the noble Lord, Lord Carlile, for his moving and powerful speech. These are not arguments that should be lightly dismissed or cast aside, and it is entirely legitimate that those of us in this House and in the other place should have views. If they diverge sharply from those equally sincere views held by my noble friends Lord Pickles, Lord Polak and Lady Altmann, that is what democracy is all about. We cannot always agree on everything, as we have demonstrated quite successfully over the past three years. With that, I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 2 withdrawn.

Amendment 2A

Moved by Lord Berkeley

2A: Clause 1, page 2, line 2, at end insert—

“(4) The Sponsor Body must ensure that the first works carried out as part of the Parliamentary building works are to ensure that all buildings undergoing works are provided with—

- (a) a fully automatic fire alarm system achieving BS5839 L1/P1 standard; and

- (b) a fully automatic water mist suppression system.

- (5) Exceptions to the requirement under subsection (4)(a) may be justified only on grounds of practical feasibility and must be given prior approval by the Sponsor Body.

- (6) If, for reasons of practical feasibility, the requirement under subsection (4)(b) cannot be delivered, the Sponsor Body must approve an alternative fire suppression solution before further works may commence.”

Lord Berkeley: My Lords, I shall speak to Amendments 2A, 2B and 16A, which are all in my name. These are all about fire. We have had several debates in your Lordships' House about the risk of fire in this building. As we saw at Notre Dame in Paris a few weeks ago when the roof caught fire, there are issues about how we protect roofs and the building both when it is in use and when there are contractors on site. Many noble Lords will have seen the results of fires. I think the Queen has had bad fires in two palaces during her long reign, and we have had two fires in Glasgow and in many other places. Having spent quite a lot of time looking at fire prevention and the consequences in the Channel Tunnel and other long tunnels and in other buildings, I suppose that fire is of great concern to me. I am very grateful to two officers of the House, John Bradbury and Malcolm McBride, who have helped me and discussed the issues and the problems with me. I am also grateful to Stewart Kidd, who is a past secretary-general of the British Automatic Fire Sprinkler Association.

When we come to fire, three separate issues need to be discussed: detection; evacuation of people; and suppression—that is, how to put the fire out. I think the authorities in your Lordships' House and the other place have made progress in detection. There are certainly very good systems in the basement, and I know that they are doing some things to detect fire in the roof. I will come to evacuation later. It is fine to have a fire detected, but if you are not going to let the building burn to the ground, you have to suppress the fire before it goes too far. I know we have good procedures in this House when the contractors are working on the roof, and I am sure they are very well policed, but there is still a risk. Given the special nature of this building and that, as the noble Lord, Lord Forsyth, said earlier, our job is to protect Parliament, we have to take these issues extremely seriously. That is why I put these amendments down. They are probing amendments, and I hope to carry on discussing the various issues in the amendments with Ministers, the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, and other people after this debate.

5.45 pm

The first thing that needs to be done, when any works are done in a building such as this, is to put in a fire alarm detection system and a water mist suppression system. That is covered in Amendment 2A. People will say that it is impossible—it should have been done by now, but it has not been—and within the constraints of the Bill it is no good asking for it now because we have not started the work. Putting them in now, or at least as soon as we can, will at least mean that the building will be protected during the construction. It would be temporary pipework and perhaps some extra

[LORD BERKELEY]

wiring, and it might be expensive, but it would be quite expensive—and a complete disaster—if this building caught fire.

We have had a discussion about whether it would be possible to put a water mist system into Westminster Hall. As we all know, it has a very big span and it is the most iconic building in the Palace. I am advised that a water mist system could be put in in Westminster Hall with the present technology. Therefore, I do not think that it should be dismissed out of hand. It would need to be in the roof space and a proper study would need to be undertaken, but if it is possible to do it—it needs a certain amount of compartmentalisation as well—it should be considered because it would be a great shame, and even a disaster, if the roof of Westminster Hall caught fire, given its age and iconic nature.

It would be very easy for experts to say that the things suggested in Amendment 2A cannot be done, are not feasible or are too expensive. I believe that one proposal for putting detection systems into part of this building was rejected by the Treasury as being too expensive. I do not think that the Treasury should be the judge of what it costs to preserve this building. New subsections (5) and (6) proposed in Amendment 2A require that the sponsor body must be given very good reasons for exceptions, and it must be able to suggest alternatives.

Amendment 2B comes under the second part of “detection—evacuation—suppression”, and that is evacuation. We have had several helpful meetings with noble Lords and Ministers on this question, and I was struck by comments made at the last meeting by the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, from the point of view of wheelchair users. She said that there are times when she cannot get through the doors of this building and that she sometimes got stuck, which meant that she could not vote in a Division because she could not get there. We have to consider very carefully that, after having moved out into a nice new or converted building, we will all be quite used to having loos and lifts that are accessible for disabled people, committee rooms with loudspeakers and microphones so that you can generally hear what is said—which is not the case here at the moment—and offices that we have similar access to. Therefore, when we come back here—if we do—we will expect the same things, and I do not think that many noble Lords will be happy if we do not have them.

It is lovely having an office in the main building, as I do, even if it is at the far end. It is Room S3/3 and is accessed by two narrow staircases with no fire escape, but we love it. However, we will not be prepared to come back here if most of the rooms are not accessible to people with wheelchairs and the lifts are all over the place. The lifts will need to be much bigger. If we accept all that—the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, will probably be in charge of all this by then—I suspect that we will need to demolish many walls, floors, and staircases outside the main buildings in order to get that access. It is something that we need to think about.

One thing that I talked to the fire experts about was evacuation. I asked them about the Committee Corridor, which has half-hour fire-resistant doors between the

Lords end and the Commons end. At the Lords end, there are seven, eight or maybe nine committee rooms, each of which can take 100 people. Therefore, 900 people might have to get out in the event of a fire at the other end. There are two narrow staircases to get people down to the ground floor. Noble Lords will know that the Labour Party had a meeting there this afternoon and we had to come down to vote. There were under 100 of us in that room and we all got down in time to vote, but multiplying that number by nine suggests that the size of the staircases will need to be looked at very carefully.

One of the fire experts said to me that they had not been able to persuade the House authorities—which might include the noble Baroness the Leader—to have a real live evacuation test with members of the public. There is a great difference between having members of the public do it and having volunteers, who are often young and healthy and move quite fast. We did the same thing when we trialled evacuation from the Channel Tunnel. We had an expert who could model the movement of people alongside the movement of a fire. That has not often been done, but he did it in connection with the airplane that crashed at East Midlands Airport about 10 years ago and he got within 10% accuracy of who would and would not die. It is terribly important that this is modelled using real live people—the kind of people we get in the committee rooms—and not volunteers, and that it is done at a very early stage before any design work is done on the refurbished building.

Finally, Amendment 16A is just an attempt to remind us all that there will be those who say, “Don’t put a water spray or mist system in this building. It’s a special building and it might affect the fabric and the pictures”. I remind your Lordships that, if this building catches fire, that too will affect the pictures and the fabric, because, as we all know, much of this building, including the roof, is timber. Therefore, it is good to listen to the experts in heritage, but the most important thing is to make sure that this building is preserved. I beg to move.

Baroness Scott of Needham Market: My Lords, I start by reminding the Committee that the shadow sponsor body sets six key strategic priorities in its publication about restoration and renewal produced in the spring—I know that everyone will have read it avidly and memorised it. The very first point in the very first block of priorities concerns fire—the risk of fire in the restored Palace and also during the restoration. Therefore, it is very much in the minds of the sponsor body, as your Lordships would expect.

The noble Lord’s point about evacuation was very interesting. My initial thought was that it really was not anything to do with the shadow sponsor body. It is an operational matter and something that we ought to do. Most of us, ever since being at school, have experienced fire drills. I thought I would be saying that this was a matter for the House, but the noble Lord made a more fundamental point about how much we do not know about how people use this place. One thing that the shadow sponsor body has found in its work is that people do not necessarily react as you would expect

them to, so it is a very real point. However, I stand by my initial view that it is for the House authorities and not the shadow sponsor body to sort out the evacuation drill.

I hope that the noble Lord wants not to put on the face of the Bill a specific and technical response to fire but, rather, to probe whether we are taking it seriously. Having said that I am not speaking on behalf of the sponsor body, I know that we would be very keen to work with the noble Lord on this matter. Your Lordships will be aware that we have done a lot of work with Members on disability access issues, for example, and will be doing so on other matters, so I am very happy to talk to him about that.

His question about fire and heritage gives rise to a fundamental point, which is that noble Lords have many different priorities. Some say that heritage takes precedence and others say that accessibility does. I think that making something a number one priority above everything else on the face of the Bill would probably make life quite difficult later. There will be a point when the House has to make these decisions. The shadow sponsor body, working with the designers, will put forward a whole range of propositions but it will be for the House to work through what it chooses to prioritise. Therefore, putting things on the face of the Bill that constrain that prioritisation could mean that Parliament has fewer choices when it comes to make a decision.

Lord Stunell (LD): I do not want to comment on this from the point of view of a member of the sponsor body, because I certainly am not. I was a member of the Joint Committee that reviewed the legislation but I am not speaking from that point of view either. I am speaking as somebody who, in his professional life before entering the world of politics, supervised construction projects. Indeed, I was supervising a project when the people adapting the sprinkler system with welding equipment set fire to the roof and the building burned down. Therefore, I am very well apprised of the risks and I think that the noble Lord has done us all a favour by raising them in the way that he has.

I want to comment in particular on the specific technical solution that the noble Lord has put forward. I think he will recognise that this project's construction phase will last for at least another 10 and probably 15 years. Mist sprinkling had not even been invented 10 or 15 years ago, so we need to be very well aware that what technology will deliver now might be completely different from what it is appropriate to deliver later. Therefore, I very much hope that he will make allowances for the specific point that my noble friend has raised and ensure that, whatever discussions take place, we do not lock ourselves into a technical solution that becomes outdated and irrelevant.

6 pm

Lord McNicol of West Kilbride (Lab): My Lords, I rise briefly to support the comments and amendments—Amendments 2A, 2B and 16A—of my noble friend Lord Berkeley. The House was made particularly alive to the vulnerability of the estate to fire by the recent incident at Notre-Dame, which happened during the

restoration work, as we all know. Fortunately, in many respects, there are provisions currently in place within your Lordships' House and across the Palace to protect the buildings and, we hope, reduce and mitigate the risks of anything similar happening. Not least, staff are employed to patrol the estate and we have all seen the developments and changes with the fire doors and other advances.

The technological advances and changes over the last decade commented on by my noble friend are something we need to be kept aware of. For the safety of the 8,000 people who work here, the 1 million or so who visit annually and, as has been touched on, the precious heritage of the building, it is imperative that we take any and all further steps necessary to ensure the utmost protection. As he touched on, steps must also be taken to ensure that evacuation procedures are up to scratch in the event of fire. One thing I have noticed as a new Member here is that some of the stairs do not stop at the level above or below, which I find a bit bizarre. Also—I am sure there is a very good reason—I have never heard a fire alarm or test within the building. I am sure it is because I have not been here at the right times, but during the hours of sitting I have never heard a test done on a fire alarm.

In recent years, I understand there have been two major royal palace fires. In each incident, the evacuation procedures meant that not a single individual was seriously injured. Should a fire take place in the royal Palace of Westminster, it will be a far greater challenge to protect all those in the building because of its size and nature. It will be useful for the House to consider what exact provisions will be necessary. I look forward to the Minister's response to the amendments.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Berkeley, for tabling these amendments on fire safety and for his continued interest in this extremely important subject, and I thank all noble Lords who have contributed to the debate.

I assure noble Lords that fire safety is recognised as being of paramount importance. As the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Needham Market, said, it is very much on the mind and agenda of the sponsor body. It was good to hear that from somebody on that body, which had far more weight than my saying it on her behalf. One of the reasons these works are urgent is because of the alarming number of fires that have been caught just in time around the Palace. This is why we have 24-hour fire-safety patrols, and, more importantly, why full decant is required as soon as possible.

As the noble Lord, Lord Berkeley, said, the tragic fire of Notre-Dame was a stark reminder to us all of the risks to this historic building. There is no doubt that the best way to avoid a similar incident here is to get on with the job of protecting the thousands of people working here and the millions who come to visit, as the noble Lord, Lord McNicol, rightly said. The Bill is clear that the sponsor body must have regard to,

“the need to ensure that those works are carried out with a view to ensuring the safety and security of people who work in Parliament and of members of the public”.

[BARONESS EVANS OF BOWES PARK]

Clearly, this will require the sponsor body and delivery authority to ensure that the Palace is as safe as reasonably practicable from the risk of fire during construction and subsequently in service. Indeed, as the noble Baroness, said, one of the key themes highlighted by the shadow sponsor body is for its vision of the programme to,

“ensure high standards of health, safety and wellbeing and provide appropriate protection for the building and those in it”.

Under the Bill, the sponsor body will be required to lay detailed proposals before Parliament for approval, and the Motion passed by both Houses last year requires that those proposals must include measures to ensure fire safety, among other factors. Clause 7 specifies that no Palace restoration works, other than preparatory works, may be carried out before the sponsor body has obtained parliamentary approval of these proposals. It defines these “preparatory works” as,

“initial design works, and ... other works that do not affect the continued functioning of the Palace of Westminster for the purposes of either House of Parliament”.

As noble Lords will be aware, and indeed as the noble Lord said, the current work carried out by the Strategic Estates team to keep this place functioning is operated during restricted timeframes in order for the business of Parliament not to be affected. For example, the ongoing work on the cast iron roof programme can be conducted only when the House is not sitting and work must be stopped immediately if a complaint is made on grounds of noise by an MP or Peer. This sort of example highlights the need for swift progress to be made in decanting both Houses so that the sponsor body and delivery authority can get on with R&R, including the installation of the necessary fire-detection and prevention measures.

The Bill requires at Clause 6 that Parliament and the sponsor body enter into a parliamentary relationship agreement, which will contain commitments around the safety of the Palace, including mitigating fire risks. The noble Lord, Lord Berkeley, spoke on 25 April and at Second Reading on his understandable concerns about the fire safety of the Palace prior to the works beginning. Until the Palace is handed over to the sponsor body, the House authorities remain responsible for fire safety and have put in place a number of measures to protect the Palace and the roofs, as he mentioned, in particular.

As the noble Lord will be aware, Parliament’s fire safety strategy sets out particular requirements that will need to be considered as part of restoration and renewal. This includes the installation of a full water mist or water sprinkler system, although, as the noble Lords, Lord Stunell and Lord McNicol, said, we also need to ensure that we are fleet of foot with respect to technological advances. Already, the current fire safety improvement project has installed a water mist system throughout the basement, and it is operational. This was following lessons learned from the devastating fire at Glasgow School of Art, where the sprinklers had been installed but not turned on.

In addition, fire safety improvement works include having automatic smoke detection systems in most of the roof spaces across the Palace, and coverage of the

remaining spaces will happen by December this year. The House authorities have also compartmentalised the roof space and extended the regular fire safety patrols to include the roofs. In the Palace more generally, as the noble Lord, Lord Berkeley, said, there are now more than 700 fire doors in operation and strict requirements for all contractors to abide by the highest fire safety standards. I can reassure all noble Lords that those high fire safety standards will continue to apply throughout the works. In his amendment, the noble Lord, Lord Berkeley, makes a specific point about

the fully automatic fire alarm system achieving the L1/P1 standard. I am aware that this level of detection is already written into Parliament’s fire safety strategy requirements.

Turning to his amendment regarding evacuation of the Palace, and the observations of the noble Lord, Lord McNicol, at present, the fire risk management team carries out evacuation drills of all parliamentary buildings once a year; the Palace itself is evacuated twice a year. However, I accept his comment that it has proved difficult to stage these evacuations while the House is sitting. There have been previous evacuation trials involving volunteers in the Chambers and Committee Rooms; we will obviously continue to work to make sure that we do the best we can in this regard and, if there is more that can be done, we will look into it. Furthermore, it is expected that as part of the design works for R&R, the principal designers will use specific computer software to model evacuation routes, capacity and timings.

I cannot stress enough the importance that we place on fire safety. I hope the noble Lord will recognise that in the answers I have given. I fully support the principle of his amendments but, in light also of the comments from the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, we do not believe they need to be, or should be, included in the Bill. This is an extremely important issue and something that will be covered in the parliamentary relationship agreement, which we believe is a more appropriate vehicle for this kind of information. I hope that, in the light of my comments, the noble Lord is to a degree reassured. I assure him that we will continue to have this as our highest priority.

Lord Berkeley: My Lords, I am grateful to the Minister for her comprehensive response. I am much more reassured than I was before, but not totally reassured. I will keep watching this. I am grateful to noble Lords who have spoken, including the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, for putting me right on one or two things. That has been useful. I am also grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Stunell, who has had first-hand experience in this area.

I said that my amendments were probing, and of course one should not put particular technological solutions in a Bill like this because things might move on, as noble Lords have said. The key point is to have a debate about these issues and for the Government to be aware of them.

Corners can still be cut in any building. I recall that when I was first in your Lordships’ House, a long time ago, I had locked myself out of my house and so slept

here, in the family room downstairs. I had a very comfortable night but in the morning I went to see the then Black Rod and said, “You said you patrolled everything once an hour”. He said, “We must have patrolled the family room”, but I said, “Well, the door squeaks so I would have heard it. I just don’t believe you”. People cut corners; that is human nature. So, in addition to the patrols, detection and suppression is vital.

I pay tribute to the work that is going on to get into this. We have to keep going and make sure that as work moves forward these issues are taken into account, as well as the evacuation. I am grateful to all noble Lords who have spoken and beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 2A withdrawn.

Amendment 2B not moved.

Clause 1 agreed.

Clause 2: The Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body

Amendment 3

Moved by Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

3: Clause 2, page 2, line 17, leave out from “Authority” to end of line 21 and insert “, when considering the award of a contract in respect of the carrying out of the Parliamentary building works, to have regard to—

- (i) the prospective contractor’s policy relating to corporate social responsibility, and
- (ii) the prospective contractor’s policies and procedures relating to employment (including in relation to the blacklisting of employees);”

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: My Lords, I shall speak to the two amendment in my name and that in the name of the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett. Noble Lords will be aware that an amendment was tabled by Chris Matheson on Report in the other place imposing a duty on the sponsor body to require the delivery authority, when allocating contracts for construction and related work, to have regard to the company’s policies on corporate social responsibility, including those relating to the blacklisting of employees or potential employees from employment. This was opposed by the Government due to existing legislation on blacklisting, and because we considered it more appropriate for these matters to form part of the programme delivery agreement between the sponsor body and delivery authority. The amendment was passed but had defects—namely, that policies on blacklisting are employment policies, not, strictly speaking, matters of corporate social responsibility. We are therefore tabling this amendment in order for the spirit of the original amendment to remain in the Bill while ensuring that it is appropriately drafted.

This amendment will ensure that there is a duty on the sponsor body to require the delivery authority, when considering the award of a contract in respect of the carrying out of the parliamentary building works, to have regard to the prospective contractor’s policy

relating to corporate social responsibility and its policies and procedures relating to employment, including in relation to the blacklisting of employees. We have worked with colleagues in the other place on this amendment and they are content with this change of wording.

The second amendment in my name relates to the reporting of contracts and fulfils a government commitment made in the other place. On Report in the Commons, MPs debated an amendment requiring the sponsor body,

“to undertake, and publish, an annual audit of the companies that have been awarded contracts for the Parliamentary building works, with a view to establishing their size and geographical location”,

which was tabled by Meg Hillier. It was clear that such an amendment commanded support on all sides, and the Government agreed to bring an amendment on the reporting of the awarding of contracts to your Lordships’ House. Schedule 1 of the Bill already requires that the sponsor body must prepare and publish a report once a year on the carrying out and progress of the parliamentary building works. The amendment requires that that report includes information about persons to whom contracts for carrying out the works have been awarded, particularly their size and the areas in which they operate. We believe that the amendment fulfils the spirit of the amendment debated in the other place while being appropriately drafted and included at the proper place in the Bill. Again, in proposing this amendment we have worked with colleagues in the other place who are supportive of the wording. I hope noble Lords will support both amendments in my name.

Finally, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, for tabling his amendment on ensuring that R&R provides opportunities for businesses across the UK. The Government have always sought to encourage the shadow sponsor body to give thought to how the delivery authority will engage with SMEs and businesses across the UK in restoring the Palace of Westminster. That is already happening on other projects on the Parliamentary Estate, such as the work on the restoration of Elizabeth Tower. The shadow sponsor body is committed to creating economic opportunities across the UK, and, once it is established in statute, we expect to continue this commitment. Once the R&R programme is under way, parliamentary committees will no doubt want to scrutinise the work of the sponsor body and the delivery authority, including what opportunities have been created across the regions.

6.15 pm

Nevertheless, an amendment tabled by Neil Gray was passed on Report in the other place requiring the sponsor body, in exercising its functions, to have regard to the need to ensure that economic benefits of the parliamentary building works are delivered across the nations and regions of the UK in terms of contracts for works, and in any other way that the sponsor body considers appropriate. This is a parliamentary project, and we accepted the will of the other place to include an amendment in the Bill on that principle. However, we identified some concerns with the amendment relating to procurement law. In particular, when developing its

[BARONESS EVANS OF BOWES PARK]

procurement strategy and assessing bids, it would not be lawful for the delivery authority to factor in the geographical location of companies, which could expose it to legal challenge. The Government therefore committed to support the drafting and tabling of this alternative amendment, which addresses those concerns.

This amendment places in the Bill the provision that the sponsor body, in exercising its functions, must have regard to the need to ensure that opportunities to secure economic and other benefits of the parliamentary building works are available in all areas of the UK. We believe that the amendment retains the spirit of the amendment passed in the other place while adhering to public procurement law, so I hope noble Lords will support it. I beg to move.

Lord Blunkett (Lab): My Lords, I shall speak to Amendment 9. I am grateful for the understanding and commitments made by the Leader of the House, and that we have consensus. In the light of that and the fact that we have taken a very long time on the first clause of the Bill, and in order not to hold people up, I shall be incredibly brief.

I think there has been a real collaborative effort to put together the jigsaw that is before us in relation to this proposition. As the noble Baroness, Lady Byford—to whom I am grateful for her support on this and other aspects of the Bill—knows, we considered this at some length in the Joint Committee scrutinising the Bill. There is unanimity because we all want this to be seen as a national project benefiting the nation as a whole. I shall come to other arguments later on other amendments, but on this one we have anonymity—I am sorry, I mean unanimity, although we might have anonymity as well if we carry on too late tonight; no one will know what we have debated.

My own area benefited originally from the stone for this building. A lot of the stone came from South Yorkshire and adjoining areas. Big Ben at the moment is being constructed with a mechanism from the north, from the city of Sheffield, and I think we can make this a real economic win-win. We need to because very big infrastructure projects, including the one that I am associated with in relation to skills and employment for the Heathrow expansion, need to be seen to reach out for gross domestic product, for GVA and for productivity. We have a terrible gap on all three of those in our country, comparing London and the south-east with the rest of the UK. If we can make a small contribution with this substantial investment of public money, we will all benefit from it.

Baroness Byford (Con): My Lords, I will just say a few words. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, for his comments. The Joint Committee went into quite a bit of discussion about the fact that this should be a UK project, not a London and the south-east project. I am grateful to my noble friend the Leader of the House for responding to the way in which the debates went in the Commons and for coming up with the proposed amendments, because that is a great benefit to us. Corporate and social responsibility is extremely important in this day and age. It is so easy to just say,

“Well, yes”, but not actually do it, so spelling this out in the Bill will make a huge difference.

The other thing that we talked about in the Joint Committee was the opportunities this would give for young apprentices and those who are retraining, who are necessarily young people, to learn skills and take part in a project of this size and complexity. I am very grateful that we will be able to encourage small and medium-sized enterprises to be involved in this project. I will not repeat everything that the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, has said, but I am very happy to support this amendment and I thank the Leader of the House for bringing forward the amendments that she has spoken to already.

Lord Adonis: My Lords, I was slightly surprised to hear the noble Baroness’s remark that this is a UK project, not a London and south-east one. The overwhelming majority of the work and the employees will be located in London and the south-east. Saying that that is not the case does not make it not the case. It is the case. This is an issue we will address later. By virtue of the fact that Parliament is located in Westminster, the temporary premises will be in Westminster, and all the refurbishment works will take place in Westminster, it is a London and south-east project. We might as well admit that completely frankly. Some weasel words about it being open and promoting the interests and knowledge of the rest of the United Kingdom do not, I am afraid, amount to anything at all when the overwhelming focus of Parliament before, during and after this work will be on London and the south-east.

Baroness Byford: I appreciate the noble Lord’s comments. It would be a great mistake to say that people from elsewhere who have the skills and opportunities to come here are not able to use them. Is the noble Lord really saying that people who live in London and the Greater London area are the only people who will be involved in this project? If he is, that is a very sad state.

Lord Adonis: I certainly was not saying that; I was simply stating the obvious. The work will be overwhelmingly located in London and the south-east because that is where Parliament is currently located.

Baroness Byford: That is indeed where the work will be done, but it does not have to be done solely by people living in London and the south-east. I suspect there will be quite a few people coming from abroad to work on this project as well. If that is so, I do not see why we cannot have people who live further from London than the 25-mile radius around it.

Lord Shipley (LD): If I can interject in this discussion, there is a real danger that the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, is right, but it does not have to be like that. That is why I am very supportive of Amendments 9 and 27, which are exceedingly important. When the Minister winds up, I would appreciate it if she could comment on Amendment 27 and the annual report to Parliament on “the areas in which” those who have contracts operate.

It seems that the decisions will have been made by then. They are very dependent on the nature of the procurement exercise, which is why Amendment 9 in

the names of the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, and the noble Baroness, Lady Byford, is terribly important. It seeks to insert provisions that,

“opportunities to secure economic or other benefits of the Parliamentary building works are available in all areas of the United Kingdom”,

which implies that the start of the procurement process will be geared to deliver that objective. The Government and those responsible for making the decisions about procurement need to plan this very carefully. It will not be enough for the procurement system simply to take national contractors from a national list, with companies that say they can employ people from all parts of the country. In reality, what will almost certainly happen is that the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, will be proved right because the labour force will come from a narrower part of the UK—London and the south-east. I want to avoid that.

It is important that procurement reaches SMEs, not just big national companies. It needs to get specialist professions such as specialist architects, and get to companies based purely in the regions of England, or based only in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales. It will not be enough for only national contractors to get the lion’s share of the business. I hope the Government will plan to achieve all this in a proactive way. I fully understand the legal position in relation to procurement law, but this is surely about enabling proper competition, not simply relying on a system which does not promote genuine competition. To do that requires competition to be enabled rather than minimised.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness: My Lords, in following on from my noble friend I welcome these amendments. I was very pleased to hear the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, and the noble Baroness, Lady Byford, refer to skills and apprenticeships. I return to a subject which I raised at Second Reading. The noble Baroness, Lady Stowell, and I served on the Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster and will readily remember the evidence we received regarding the importance of skills. However, we are talking about skills in the heritage sector, where there may be a shortage at the moment, and there could well be lead times in training people to deploy those skills when it comes to R&R.

One of the recommendations which the Joint Committee made in paragraph 306 of its report is that,

“market engagement should begin early, and be facilitated by the early establishment of a shadow Sponsor Board and shadow Delivery Authority”.

I understand that we do not have a shadow delivery authority at the moment, but it would be helpful if, in responding to the debate—if not tonight then in writing—the Minister could tell us what steps have already been taken to pursue that market engagement and identify where there might be bottlenecks, and see what could be actively done at the moment to try to ensure that there will be an adequate supply of skilled tradespeople when the time comes to undertake this important work.

Viscount Waverley (CB): My Lords, sometimes competitive tender can breed low bidding rates, and contractors make up their profits through claims. Is the idea to generate negotiated unit prices or have competitive bidding?

Lord Berkeley: My Lords, before the Minister answers, I am a great believer in trying to get as many SMEs to bid as possible, but one has to think about the risks they will be required to take, as well as the conditions of contract and the penalties if it is late. You can imagine one or two big contractors being given the overall responsibility to do this, because they are the only people who can manage the risk. There will be a rush to get this done. Wherever the supply of timber, stone, other materials and expertise comes from, we will have to work very hard if we want to get real SMEs to do this, as so many noble Lords expect. It will not happen unless we work very positively towards it.

Baroness Wheeler: My Lords, I am pleased that this group of amendments is being debated here today to deal with the responsibilities the sponsor body will have, in particular those relating to the contracts to be awarded. I thank the Minister for the Government’s Amendment 3 on the social responsibilities of the sponsor body, which fulfils their promise in the Commons to address the concern raised by my honourable friend Chris Matheson: that contracts have regard to the prospective contractor’s policy on both CSR and employment policies and procedures. The company’s wider attitude to social responsibility has to be a key consideration when awarding contracts.

On employment practices, we welcome the specific reference to companies that have undertaken blacklisting activities which will lead to their exclusion from consideration. This shameful practice has previously seen businesses compile files on thousands of workers, recording details of their political and trade union activities to prevent them gaining employment in their respective trade. Sadly, there is evidence that blacklisting has remained rife in recent years, and this is an important step not least because many construction staff currently working on building sites are employed by businesses which have previously been convicted of such unlawful behaviour. In such a prestigious project as R&R, it is important that Parliament makes a stand and warns businesses that if they neglect their social responsibilities, are not up to scratch on their employment practices or engage in illegal blacklisting, they will not play a role in restoration and renewal projects and will not be awarded contracts.

I fully support my noble friend Lord Blunkett’s Amendment 9. He is right to underline that the economic benefits of the work have to be available in all areas of the UK. This was again a key theme from noble Lords at Second Reading. We must make it clear that this is a project for the whole country and that all the rewards, including for businesses, are felt in all areas. I particularly endorse the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Shipley, and the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, on skills and apprenticeships, which was also a familiar theme at Second Reading.

In summary, government Amendments 26, 27 and 30, placing a duty on the sponsor body to include information on contractors’ size and areas of operation in its annual report, are welcome and will help to provide the transparency and accountability needed. Finally, on employment-related issues and the importance of

[BARONESS WHEELER]

ensuring full staff consultation on the R&R programme and project, at Second Reading my noble friend Lady Smith asked the noble Earl to confirm that there would be full engagement with staff and their representative unions. I would be grateful if the Minister confirmed this and reassured the House that the Government fully recognise its importance.

Baroness Evans of Bowes Park: I am very grateful to all noble Lords who have contributed to this short debate. I am also grateful for the support for these amendments from across the House. A number of noble Lords raised the issue of procurement and contracts. This is the very reason why we are setting up the independent sponsor body and the independent delivery authority, which have the experts and expertise to ensure that SMEs around the country can take advantage of this. We believe that setting up these bodies in a timely manner is exactly the best way to ensure that the benefits of this project are felt around the country, notwithstanding the concerns of the noble Lord, Lord Adonis. We very much look forward to ensuring this project has the buy-in of the regions and workers across the United Kingdom because it will be a fantastic project. I hope we will also see regeneration of skills apprenticeships in key areas. I am very grateful to noble Lords for their support for these amendments.

Amendment 3 agreed.

Motion

Moved by Baroness Barran

That the House do now resume.

Baroness Barran: My Lords, I suggest that Committee begin again not earlier than 7.12 pm. For the benefit of noble Lords not signed up to the dinner hour debate in the name of the noble Lord, Lord McNally, that debate will now be taken tomorrow.

Motion agreed.

House resumed.

The Situation in the Gulf

Statement

6.32 pm

The Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon) (Con): My Lords, with the leave of the House, I shall now repeat a Statement given in the other place on the situation in the Gulf:

“At approximately 4 pm UK time on Friday, Iranian forces intercepted the British-flagged tanker, “Stena Impero”, in the Strait of Hormuz. The ship was surrounded by four fast boats from the Revolutionary Guard, supported by one helicopter. Iranian footage showed masked gunmen in desert camouflage descending from the helicopter on to the deck of the “Stena Impero”.

HMS “Montrose”, a Royal Navy Type 23 frigate currently deployed in the Gulf, tried to come to the tanker’s aid. She repeatedly warned the Iranians by radio that their actions were illegal, but “Montrose” was unable to reach the scene in time. Nine days earlier, she had successfully intercepted an attempt to board another tanker, “British Heritage”, but this time “Montrose” was not given the notice of passage requested, which would have allowed her to reach the scene more quickly. This, however, in no way excuses the illegal actions of the intruders, who took control of “Stena Impero” and compelled her to steer towards the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, where she is now being held.

The tanker had a crew of 23 from various countries, including India, the Philippines, Russia and Latvia. No Britons were on board and there are no reports of any injuries. The vessel’s owners have confirmed that “Stena Impero” was exercising her legal right of transit passage when she was intercepted. She was passing through the Strait of Hormuz in the westbound traffic lane inside Omani territorial waters, in full compliance with international law and the rules of navigation. The tanker’s automatic identification system was switched on and her position was publicly available.

So let us be absolutely clear: under international law Iran had no right to obstruct the ship’s passage, let alone board her. It was therefore an act of state piracy, which the House will have no hesitation in condemning. But even more worryingly, this incident was a flagrant breach of the principle of free navigation on which the global trading system and the world economy ultimately depend. I therefore urge Iran to release the “Stena Impero” and her crew and observe the rules that safeguard commercial shipping and benefit Iran as much as any other country.

Iran has tried to present this as a tit-for-tat incident following the Government of Gibraltar’s action on 4 July to enforce EU sanctions by preventing the Iranian-chartered tanker, “Grace 1”, supplying oil to Syria. But there is simply no comparison between Iran’s illegal seizure of a vessel inside a recognised shipping lane, where the “Stena Impero” had every right to be, and the enforcement of EU sanctions against a tanker that had freely navigated into the waters of a British Overseas Territory.

Since 4 July we have made strenuous efforts to resolve the “Grace 1” issue. On 13 July, I spoke by phone to the Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif, and also made it clear in public that we would be content with the release of “Grace 1” if there were sufficient guarantees the oil would not go to any entities sanctioned by the EU. But instead of responding constructively Iran chose to seize the “Stena Impero”, so we must now take appropriate action to support the safe passage of vessels through the Strait of Hormuz.

As well as speaking again to my Iranian counterpart, I have also spoken this weekend and today to the Foreign Ministers of Oman, the United States, France, Germany, Italy, Finland, Spain and Denmark. COBRA meetings were held this morning and throughout the weekend, and the chargé d’affaires at the Iranian embassy in London was summoned to the Foreign Office on Saturday to receive a formal protest.

I can today update the House on further action we are taking. First, the Department for Transport has raised the security level for British-flagged shipping to level 3, advising against all passage in Iranian waters and, for the moment, in the entire Strait of Hormuz.

Secondly, because freedom of navigation is a vital interest of every nation, we will now seek to put together a European-led maritime protection mission to support safe passage of both crew and cargo in this vital region. We have had constructive discussions with a number of countries in the last 48 hours and will discuss later this week the best way to complement this with recent US proposals in this area. The new force will be focused on free navigation, bearing in mind that one-fifth of the world's oil, a quarter of its liquefied natural gas, and trade worth half a trillion dollars pass through the Strait of Hormuz every year. It will not be part of the US maximum pressure policy on Iran because we remain committed to preserving the Iran nuclear agreement.

Thirdly, while we will seek to establish this mission as quickly as possible, the Government have in the meantime dispatched HMS "Duncan"—a Type 45 destroyer—to take over from HMS "Montrose". She will arrive in the region by 29 July.

Fourthly, we will ask all British-flagged ships to give us notice of any intention to pass through the Strait of Hormuz to enable us to offer the best protection we can. We will then advise them as to the safest way to transit, which may involve travelling in convoy.

Finally, we are strengthening measures to protect ships flying the flags of other countries, but which have British crew on board. About 1,300 ships appear on the UK Ship Register. The combined British Red Ensign fleet is the ninth largest in the world. On an average day, two or three ships belonging to the Red Ensign group pass through the Strait of Hormuz. The Gulf spans an area of nearly 100,000 square miles. HMS "Montrose" covers an operating area of some 19,000 nautical miles. So far, she has escorted 30 merchant vessels through the Strait of Hormuz during 17 separate transits, travelling 4,800 nautical miles in the process. It is of course not possible for the Royal Navy to provide escorts for every single ship or indeed to eliminate the risks of piracy. But those risks can be substantially reduced if commercial shipping companies co-operate fully with the instructions from the Department for Transport, which we strongly encourage them to do. These changes, both short and medium term, are made possible because of the commitment this Government have already made to increase our security presence in the Gulf including the opening, in April last year, of the first permanent British naval facility in the Gulf for over 40 years. This establishment in Bahrain now hosts HMS "Montrose", along with four mine countermeasure vessels and one supply ship.

Finally, let me say this: it is with a heavy heart that we announce this increased international presence in the Gulf, because the focus of our diplomacy has been on de-escalating tensions in the hope that such changes would not be necessary. We do not seek confrontation with Iran and have taken every available opportunity to reduce misunderstanding, while standing by our rock-solid commitment to the international rule of law, which is the foundation of global peace and prosperity.

But we must also react to the world around us as it is, not how we would wish it to be. So if Iran continues on this dangerous path it must accept that the price will be a larger western military presence in the waters along its coastline, not because we wish to increase tensions but simply because freedom of navigation is a principle which Britain and its allies will always defend.

I commend this Statement to the House".

6.41 pm

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement. I listened to the Foreign Secretary in the other place this afternoon; he quite rightly said that we must not conflate the issue of freedom of navigation with the JCPOA. Freedom of navigation is a principle which Britain and its allies will quite rightly always defend. He said that our response will not be part of the US maximum pressure policy on Iran because we remain committed to preserving the Iran nuclear agreement. He had of course warned earlier that the UK risked becoming "enmeshed" in a US conflict with Iran. Can the Minister guarantee today that if there is any danger of that happening, it will be Parliament which has the final say on whether we choose to become enmeshed or to stay out of any conflict altogether?

The Foreign Secretary also stressed, as the Minister did in repeating the Statement, the importance of maintaining dialogue with the Government of Iran. He even expressed a note of optimism this afternoon, in the light of the earlier statement by the Iranian Foreign Minister, which expressed a willingness to reopen negotiations with the US on the nuclear deal. But in a very measured response to an Urgent Question on Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe last Wednesday, the Foreign Office Minister, Dr Murrison, recognised that there are "many Irans", not simply its Government. Focusing on what the Foreign Secretary said this afternoon, what is the Minister's assessment of securing diplomatic contact with all elements in Iran to achieve a settlement to this crisis, bearing in mind that the Revolutionary Guard, which clearly authorised this action, is not the element we are currently talking to?

We know that this is a tit-for-tat reaction. However, I stress that the seizure of the "Grace 1" oil tanker can be no justification for the unacceptable retaliatory action that Iran has taken against the "Stena Impero"; it was unacceptable but predictable. *El Pais* reported that the US Government told the Madrid Government 48 hours in advance that "Grace 1" was headed for the peninsula, which would explain why the Gibraltar Government introduced new legislation 36 hours in advance to shore up the legal basis for the seizure taking place in their waters. So why wait until now for the measures that the Foreign Secretary has announced today? In fact, on 18 June my noble friend Lord West of Spithead asked the Government whether they were absolutely sure that we had enough assets in place, arguing then—on 18 June—that we should be working with our allies to look at taking convoys of ships through. He also argued then that if we did not do anything, we would be culpable. I hope that the Minister can explain why we have waited so long to take the necessary precautionary action.

[LORD COLLINS OF HIGHBURY]

The Foreign Secretary has said of the “Grace 1” that the Government would be happy to see it released, provided there were guarantees that it was to go to a country other than Syria. Would that include a country such as Turkey, even though it has formally lost its US sanctions waiver on oil imports from Iran?

I want to mention what came up in the Urgent Question last week. Just what are we doing to work with our allies? Beyond our E3 partners France and Germany, and the EU, which other allies are we talking to about specific action? This morning I met the second secretary from the Japanese embassy, who confirmed that Japan was actively considering the US request to establish a coalition. What are we doing in terms of talking to those allies such as Japan and, of course, India?

I turn to the international crew of the “Stena Impero”. It was certainly good to see pictures of them earlier in a healthy state, but have the Government spoken to their counterparts from India, Latvia, Russia and the Philippines about co-ordinating action to secure their release?

Finally, there is no doubt that we are all concerned by the dangerous escalation of events in relation to Iran. Can the Minister tell us what is being done through the United Nations to do more to de-escalate the situation and stop this seemingly inevitable descent into conflict, when we have worked so hard to achieve a peaceful settlement?

Baroness Northover (LD): My Lords, I thank the Minister for repeating the Statement. We must always uphold international law and freedom of navigation. This is an extremely dangerous situation. The region is a tinderbox. Many have said that Trump pulled out of the Iran nuclear deal and imposed further sanctions simply because Obama had signed the original deal. The President may not want a war but some of those around him are far more hawkish. That must cause us enormous concern, so can the Minister comment on where these developments leave the European determination to maintain the nuclear deal? Why did the UK decide to play a part in intercepting the Iranian tanker off Gibraltar, and, as mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Collins, why did Gibraltar suddenly put in place sanctions legislation? Who proposed that that was suddenly needed, and why? What role might the US office for foreign asset management have had recently in advising the FCO on sanctions targets?

Can the Minister give us examples of previous incidents where our military or Navy have been used in sanctions enforcement which involved boarding and seizure? If we were to take such an action, what preparations have we already made—the noble Lords, Lord West and Lord Collins, have flagged this up—to protect ships flying under our flag that might then, predictably, be intercepted by the Iranians? Does the Minister agree with his colleague, the Defence Minister Tobias Ellwood, that the Navy is too small for a global role? Is the noble Lord, Lord West, not right to have warned time after time that our Navy is too small?

The position of this ship was publicly available, so what should we think of the UK as a global power when, at only the second attempt at an interception,

a ship sailing under our flag was diverted and detained? Can the Minister say why the Department for Transport has only just raised the security level to 3 for ships sailing under our flag? Why is a European-led maritime protection mission only now being sought? Why was this not done before the “Grace 1” tanker was seized in Gibraltar? How optimistic is he that, in the middle of our battle over Brexit, such a mission will be forthcoming? Does he agree that our sanctions work best as part of multinational efforts, and that unilateral effort makes little sense?

Is it true that we feared American assistance, lest we ended up taking a more aggressive stance than we wished? That seems to be reflected in the statement that we will not be part of the US maximum pressure group. Does the whole situation not show that the UK is likely to be buffeted in the future, if we leave the EU, between a volatile ally and others, and that we are taking Gibraltar down that path? We have been unable to defend a ship sailing under our flag, and today we hear that Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe has been transferred back to an Iranian prison. How are we defending her in this dangerous situation? We are appearing to warn against any passage through the straits, despite the huge value of that trade and the economic impact. Does the Minister not agree that this whole situation shows how vital it is to be part of a global bloc, and that any increase in defence spending will hardly make us a global player to rival the superpowers or, in fact, the EU? Therefore, we must work with everybody to de-escalate the situation and bring about a negotiated resolution, not only to this specific situation, but to the wider crisis affecting Iran and the region.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: My Lords, first, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Collins, and the noble Baroness, Lady Northover, for their support for the main thrust of the Statement. They raised a raft of questions, which I will seek to answer. If I am unable to do so in the time allocated, I will write, because both raised some specific questions.

On the final point made by the noble Baroness, again, the Government’s response demonstrates the importance of working with our European partners. I do not share her belief that that has been sanctioned because we are members of the European Union. We are leading members of NATO. This morning, for example, I attended a briefing with the Baltic and Nordic ambassadors where, again, our co-operation, not just in maritime security but in other areas, was underlined by all the people around that table, not just by me, representing the British Government. It is important that we continue to work, but in a different way once we have left the European Union, and strengthen our co-operation over a raft of different areas. This example of maritime security is one such area.

The noble Lord, Lord Collins, raised various questions about direct engagement with Iran. He is right to mention that the Revolutionary Guard boarded the vessels. We deal with representatives of the Iranian Government at the highest level and, over the weekend, as the Statement said, my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary continued to liaise and discuss with Foreign Minister Zarif.

The noble Lord and the noble Baroness talked about the action and asked: why now and not before? We have taken action, as the Statement indicated. HMS “Montrose” had already intercepted and prevented a similar incursion on “British Heritage” on 10 July. Equally, it has been a twin-track approach. I am sure the noble Lord and the noble Baroness will agree that, with the current backdrop of the region, we have sought to strengthen our diplomatic engagement with Iran, together with our European partners. This reflects the approach we have taken. We have continued to allow space for diplomatic dialogue.

The noble Lord and the noble Baroness mentioned “Grace 1”, which is the Iranian vessel that has been detained. There are some crucial facts. First, “Grace 1” was in Gibraltar’s territorial waters. The British-flagged ship “Stena Impero” was in Omani territorial waters, so the basis for any intervention is very different. Secondly, Iran has acted unlawfully, according to the law of the sea. Iran has acted illegally. Our detention of the ship was on suspicion of cargo being carried by “Grace 1” that was headed for Syria, breaking EU sanctions. I am sure the noble Lord and the noble Baroness have followed the countless attempts we have made to get guarantees from the Iranian Government that would allow the Gibraltar authorities to release “Grace 1”. We had to be given the assurance that it did not contravene the EU sanctions that had been imposed on Syria, but this was not forthcoming. It was disappointing that, while these negotiations were continuing with the Iranian Government directly, this action was taken. Iran describes this as tit for tat; the fact is that detaining the “Stena Impero” was not legal. It acted unlawfully.

The noble Lord, Lord Collins, asked a specific question about Turkey. I will write to him on that. He also raised the crew and our discussions with other countries, on which the noble Baroness also touched. I assure noble Lords that we are in touch, either at ministerial or official level, with all countries with crew on that ship. I understand that India has been in direct contact with the Iranians over its crew members, but we are also engaging with India at official level. I assure noble Lords that, while this is a British-flagged ship, our main concern is the safe return of not just the vessel but all crew members on it. I assure both the noble Baroness and the noble Lord that we are liaising with all parties in this respect.

The noble Baroness also raised the issue of the Department for Transport increasing security only now. I am sure she accepts how, as I alluded to earlier, we have taken the twin-track approach of diplomacy and increasing pressure. I assure the noble Baroness, and the noble Lord, Lord Collins—who both raised these issues—that we have detached this from the JCPOA and the detention of British nationals in Iran. We have not stopped our efforts on these two or three issues and have assured the Iranians that we do not link them in any way. However, the fact that the Iranians have acted in this way does not help the situation or the environment in which we operate.

We continue to work closely with our European colleagues, as on the European initiative on maritime security. We are talking to our French and German

colleagues, as well as other European partners. Of course, we are liaising with the United States, but this initiative will be led by us, together with our European partners. There may be some specific questions I have been unable to answer but, after reviewing them, I will write to both the noble Lord and the noble Baroness.

6.58 pm

Lord Howell of Guildford (Con): My Lords, I thank my noble friend for repeating the Statement and answering these detailed questions thoroughly. I will press him further on two points; first, the seizure of “Grace 1”. Although we may have a completely different view legally—I believe ours is correct—was it appreciated before that was authorised that it would be regarded as piracy by the Iranians and that there was bound to be an attempt to retaliate? Was there diplomatic discussion before the seizure was authorised and were all diplomatic channels exhausted before that action was taken? However we look at it, it was, in effect, throwing a lighted match into an already dangerous sea.

On the statement that the Government will discuss later this week the best way to complement their plans with recent US proposals in this area, can the Minister be a little more explicit about what that involves, given that US policy and objectives at the moment are very different from ours? Beyond the general aim of preserving freedom of navigation on the high seas, which is vital, with what “recent US proposals” will we be co-ordinating?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I thank my noble friend for his questions and comments on the Statement and responses given. On “Grace 1”, the UK Government did a great deal to keep the diplomatic track alive. For example, my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary and the Chief Minister of Gibraltar talked to each other on 13 July. My right honourable friends the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister met the Chief Minister when he visited the UK on 17 July. There was also a meeting between the Chief Minister and Iranian embassy officials. However, the detention of “Grace 1” was based on our belief that the cargo being carried was bound for Syria in defiance of EU sanctions. We have subsequently sought assurances from the Iranian Government.

We were in the midst of those negotiations when we saw this response to the action taken by the Gibraltar authorities. That is why we have deployed assets to the region. HMS “Montrose” and HMS “Duncan”, now going to the region, have been deployed to provide secure passage through the Strait of Hormuz. We have stepped up our efforts following Iran’s actions and will continue to review all elements of our policy regarding our exchanges with Iran, but we keep that diplomatic channel open.

My noble friend asked also about current US proposals. One proposal looks at the current combined taskforce in the region, which goes under the label of CTF 150 and has a mandate specifically to tackle terrorism and the illicit drugs trade. We are proposing an operation around maritime security. We are working on the details of that with our European colleagues.

Lord Hope of Craighead (CB): My Lords, I have two questions for the Minister. First, I think I am right in saying that the pretext offered to begin with for the

[LORD HOPE OF CRAIGHEAD]

arrest of the vessel was that she had been involved in some way in an incident with a fishing boat. Have steps been taken to find out whether there is any truth in that allegation and, if so, what was the result of that investigation?

Secondly, we have all seen the pictures of the way in which the vessel was taken control of by the Iranian forces. What rules of engagement, if any, have been provided for the Royal Navy in deciding how to manage an incident of that kind? It is extremely important for obvious reasons to minimise the risk of armed force being used, but it is extremely difficult to know what the Royal Navy is to do if it finds a vessel of that kind surrounded by small boats and people landing by helicopter on its deck. Can the Minister assure us that some attention will be paid to the rules of engagement and that they will be kept under careful review to minimise the risk of armed conflict at all costs?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: The noble and learned Lord raises two important questions. On the first, when the “Stena Impero” was detained, it was empty. It was in Omani waters and there was no attempt to transcend international maritime boundaries. That is why we believe that the action taken by the Iranians was unlawful.

The noble and learned Lord referred to terms of engagement. We keep them under constant review. I am sure that he will appreciate that we cannot go into their detail, but I can assure him that the Ministry of Defence—which is proud of all our sailors and all our military, whichever force they represent—always acts in accordance with international law and upholds the laws of the sea through UNCLOS. The noble Baroness, Lady Northover, referred earlier to the size of the military and our assets. We will always strive to put diplomatic channels up front, but given the challenges faced by our Navy and the changing nature of our world and our environment, I think that there is a requirement to invest more in our naval assets to ensure that we can provide the protections needed.

Baroness Falkner of Margravine (LD): My Lords, I welcome the commitment given in the Statement that the new force will not be part of the US maximum pressure policy on Iran. That will help to defuse the situation, but I have two brief questions for the Minister. First, he said that we are putting together a European-led maritime protection mission. Can he indicate how long he thinks it will be before the mission is completely operable?

Secondly, the Statement said that HMS “Duncan” is to “take over” from HMS “Montrose”. Does that mean that HMS “Montrose” will be standing down—in other words, we will again be reliant on only one vessel to cover the expanse of the Strait of Hormuz—or that HMS “Duncan” will supplement and augment the work of HMS “Montrose”?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: On the second point, I shall write to the noble Baroness. We are reviewing all our military assets. HMS “Montrose” has been deployed for a while in the region; HMS “Duncan”, on arriving, will immediately take over the operations of HMS “Montrose”.

On how we further bolster military assets, we are looking at that carefully. It is directly linked to the noble Baroness’s first question, on the operability of the current scheme. I can assure her that we are working closely with colleagues, particularly our French and German colleagues, to see how quickly we can make this proposal operational. The noble Baroness will have heard in the Statement the series of steps that we have taken. We continue to work with the maritime industry and are keeping it informed. On the commercial side, I stress again that any ship seeking or planning to navigate the Strait of Hormuz should inform us in advance so that we can provide all appropriate protections. That includes working with our key European partners in the region.

Lord Bates (Con): My Lords, I was initially concerned about the Statement, in particular the contacts made by the Foreign Secretary over the weekend. It mentioned eight countries, with Iran’s Foreign Minister making it nine, but not India. I was significantly more encouraged by my noble friend’s response to the question asked by the noble Lord, Lord Collins. Can he confirm press reports in India that, of the 23 crew, 18 are Indian citizens? If so, does he accept that India is a critical Commonwealth partner for us in resolving this dispute, not only because it has so many of the crew but because of the strong historical and cultural ties between India and Iran and because India is the third largest consumer of oil and one of the largest receivers of gas and oil through the Strait of Hormuz? Could India not be an important partner in mediating a peaceful resolution to this dispute?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I agree with my noble friend. I reassure him that we have reached out to our Indian counterparts as part of wider engagement on this issue. We wish to ensure that anyone who can help de-escalate the current tensions is fully engaged. I agree with my noble friend also on the strength of our relationship with India, historically, currently and into the future, and on the importance of its presence in the region given its bilateral relationship with Iran. For all those reasons, India has an important role to play in de-escalating not just the current crisis but further tensions in that region.

Lord Stoneham of Droxford (LD): My Lords, there is an issue that the Minister has not addressed: incompetence. Everybody in this Chamber thought, when the Iranian tanker was seized, that it was inevitable that Iran would respond in the way it has. It seems to me that the Government were completely distracted and are weak at this moment because of the various negotiations going on over Brexit. It was good to see the good support coming from Germany and France this weekend, but the Government have been incompetent in allowing this to happen with one naval vessel available. What was the action; what discussions took place in COBRA anticipating this would happen? Why did the Government not act to deal with it?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: I am sorry, but I disagree with the noble Lord. The fact is that the Government did act. As I have already said quite succinctly, the fact that we did engage early on, in terms of assets in the region, prevented the impeding of the passage of a

British-flagged commercial vessel, “British Heritage”, on 10 July. If the noble Lord feels that keeping diplomatic channels open is not a valid way of ensuring that we bring tensions down, then I again disagree with him. We have had a dual-track approach on this, ensuring that we can bring tensions down. The deployment of a large number of military assets into the Gulf, particularly around the Strait of Hormuz, which is a very small shipping channel, without fully exhausting diplomatic channels, would have been the wrong way to go about this.

Despite the political backdrop of Brexit, the Government continue to operate. The noble Lord shakes his head: perhaps he is casting doubt on my own efforts. I assure him that as a Minister of State at the Foreign Office, I and many other Ministers from the Ministry of Defence and other colleagues continue to ensure that we represent British interests to the best of our abilities. We will continue to work with Iran to ensure that tensions are decreased, to engage through diplomatic channels and to exercise our right to ensure that any vessel, British flag carrier or otherwise, is provided the protection it needs to ensure it can navigate the Strait of Hormuz. To say that we took our eye off the ball is inaccurate and I do not agree with the noble Lord.

Lord Davies of Stamford (Lab): My Lords, the noble Lord has just listed a series of diplomatic initiatives taken with Iran over the last few days and the last few years and said that Iran had behaved in an unacceptable fashion. Is it not the case that not a single one of those initiatives had any success whatever? It has been a complete and utter blank. To say, “Well, we needed to exhaust diplomatic initiatives before we did anything else”, is simply absurd in the light of the record we are facing today.

The Minister has also made the most momentous revelation today in the House, which is that we have only one frigate in the Gulf and will be able to maintain only one frigate in the Gulf, because when “Montrose” is relieved she will not be replaced. That is an absolutely devastating indictment of this Government’s record in defending our shipping interests around the world. When I was in the MoD we had 17 escorts: I think we now have 13 and the number is going down. It is a quite disgraceful record. My noble friend Lord West is absolutely right about this and it is about time that the Government did something about it.

This is a very troubling, alarming situation. We find ourselves, quite extraordinarily, in a military confrontation with Iran into which we have walked without any idea at all what we were doing. There was no planning at all, no one seems to have given any thought to what the consequences might be of an aggressive enforcement of Syrian sanctions on Syria’s trading partners—not least Iran—and we find ourselves in a shambles. The Government are good at running a shambles, we know that, and this is a particularly dangerous one. In my view, the only thing we can do in these difficult circumstances is to concentrate our naval resources, as far as we can, through the use of the convoy system, but we must urgently build, and not just build, but buy, more escorts for the Royal Navy, with a full range of capability—anti-submarine, surface-to-air and surface-to-surface, because the Minister has revealed today

that gunboats were responsible for this latest incident. The surface-to-air must include a ballistic capability, because the Iranians have ballistics. It is a very worrying situation, and we need to respond with great urgency to deal with it.

Baroness Goldie (Con): My Lords, a number of Back Benchers still want to speak. Will the noble Lord please pose a question?

A noble Lord: He has done.

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: First, suffice it to say that I disagree with the noble Lord. On the issue of our naval assets, I have already said, in response to a question from the noble Baroness, Lady Northover, that I accept that, in the changing environment in which we operate, it is important that we invest more in our defences and in the Navy. Indeed, my right honourable friend the Foreign Secretary also made this point. The noble Lord says that every diplomatic channel has been exhausted. Again, I am very saddened by what he said. I know he has insight and experience, but to my mind it is important that we keep diplomatic channels open: it is only because we have kept diplomatic channels open, working with our European partners, that the JCPOA has continued. While challenges remain on that, we are working with our European partners, through diplomatic channels, to ensure that a mechanism is in place to relieve some of the issues of the sanctions that are felt by the Iranian people.

The noble Lord raised the issue of operations. As I said, we are keeping things under review. I am not going to give chapter and verse from the Dispatch Box on every single movement of every asset of our military, nor would he expect me to do so, with his experience. There was a particular question raised about two of our vessels, which I have answered. We will keep the situation in the Gulf under review. Of course, we are not the only country; we are working in partnership with allies, including our European partners who also have assets in the region. There is one point on which I agree with the noble Lord: in the current climate it is important that we look at providing protection to all commercial vessels passing through the Strait of Hormuz. He suggested a convoy and that seems an inherently sensible proposal. It is being looked at, along with other ways of providing support and security for any vessel passing through there, but we must continue not only to support the vessels but to find a sustainable, peaceful outcome and to place emphasis on diplomatic channels. More than anything else, it is now for Iran to release the vessel “Stena Impero” and ensure that the crew are released. Several nationalities are represented in the crew of this ship, which is owned by the Swedes and flagged by the Brits, and which was in Omani waters. Iran has gone against UNCLOS. It needs to act now and release the vessel.

Viscount Waverley (CB): My Lords, I was particularly pleased to hear the commitment by the Minister to ongoing interaction with the Government in Tehran: that is very helpful. I have two questions. What is felt about where all this is heading? Is there a sense about what messages the Iranians are sending by their actions? If so, what are they, particularly in relation to the JCPOA?

[VISCOUNT WAVERLEY]

It would also be helpful if the Minister would confirm that these are EU-related sanctions. Intriguingly, if Brexit does indeed occur on 31 October, would the Gibraltarians legitimately enforce EU sanctions? What would happen if, on 1 November, we have left the European Union? Would the Gibraltarians be compelled to return the vessel anyway?

Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon: On the final, very practical question, my understanding is that we will be ensuring that there is no gap in enforcing sanctions, but that will require an agreement with our European partners. As I have said repeatedly on this issue of sanctions, it is absolutely inevitable and right that we continue to operate a co-ordinated sanctions strategy with our partners in Europe after we have left the European Union. Not doing so would mean that we would be unable—indeed, our European partners would be unable—to apply sanctions effectively. The noble Viscount asked a very practical question. It is certainly our intention that this will be the process, but it will require agreement between the European Union and the United Kingdom to ensure that there is no gap after we leave the EU.

Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Bill

Committee (Continued)

7.20 pm

Amendment 4

Moved by **Lord Blunkett**

4: Clause 2, page 2, line 26, at end insert—

“() to promote public understanding of, and engagement with, the Restoration and Renewal programme and its objectives.”

Lord Blunkett (Lab): My Lords, I will also speak to Amendments 6 and 10 and will endeavour to be brief. Rather than repeating myself later, I will set out here why it is important that this amendment should be in the Bill. I suspect that I will have a slightly more uphill struggle than on the amendment we debated before the Statement, but I hope not, because I am seeking consensus. Once again, I am deeply grateful for the support of the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, the noble Baroness, Lady Byford, and other noble Lords on this and subsequent amendments.

We have to have some understanding of why it is important to have some essential elements written in the Bill rather than in letters from present or past Leaders of the House, or reassurances from the Dispatch Box. It is patently obvious that nobody knows who the Minister will be from Thursday onwards. I suspect—I have written about this—that there may be an election sooner rather than later, so elected Members in the other House do not really know who will be there. As far as we are concerned, the grim reaper can determine whether we are here or not rather rapidly.

On staff servicing the sponsor body and members of the sponsor body who are not in either of these Houses, it is obvious that going for promotion, or

leaving for another job or another part of the country is part of life. Therefore, the notion that a letter of assurance or a word or two from the Dispatch Box, or even, importantly, the trust we place in existing sponsor body members and staff is not worth the paper it is written on or the emotion it uses. Who knows who will be here by the time we decant and, certainly, by the time we return?

I place on record that none of what I am going to say disparages either the commitment or the appreciation of Ministers or sponsor body members, or Liz Peace and her team; I have nothing but respect for their work, their good offices and their words. However, we need to ensure that the electorate, who are already totally disillusioned with politics and Parliament, feel that this has something to do with them. As we discussed on the consensual amendment on the economic benefits to accrue from the restoration and renewal programme, if we can get them, so on the political gains that can be made: there is the need to gain consent. That is why these amendments endeavour to ensure that the Bill, whoever is in this House and serving on the sponsor body, and the direction they give to the delivery authority, make it absolutely clear what Parliament's will is.

What is Parliament's will? Is it determined by ephemeral Ministers or by a letter that may or may not have been sent months or perhaps years before? Is the will of Parliament to be determined only when the delivery authority eventually comes back with a scheme that, frankly, will not be amendable anyway, because it will have been put together as a package? We may be able to choose whether we have a slightly more or slightly less expensive scheme; I hope that we will go for something more than the lowest common denominator. If we do not, people will be even more aggrieved at the billions we are spending if it is just about electronics and pipework, and a little bit of restoration. These amendments are intended to be a positive way to ensure that the sponsor body is able to understand the will of Parliament, expressed by the Bill, which is, seriously, the only way in which Parliament can reflect the true will of this House and the other place on this prolonged project, and do so with consensus.

It is important that public engagement at every level on these and later amendments supports our intentions—I think that all of us have the same intentions; they cannot be otherwise. I have said to Ministers that if the amendments tonight and subsequent amendments were already in the Bill, would anybody feel that they had to take them out—would there be a move to do so? The argument is that this confines the sponsor body in some way and that it is determinist, preventing it having flexibility in the way it proceeds and what it does. None of the amendments prescribes, because I have deliberately watered them down; none of them is deterministic or confines the sponsor body and the future delivery authority in any way whatever. They reinforce and send a message out to the public that we care about the engagement with them; we want them to understand what is taking place in their name, with their money—to ensure that that reaches out, as Amendment 10 says, to the regions, and that we do so with the support of future generations.

I will say one other thing about the nature of Parliament as well in reaching out and selling the restoration and renewal programme to the public. Does anybody seriously believe that the sponsor body is not inherently part of Parliament? It responds to Parliament, and as we discovered in the Joint Committee, its methodology is very much about the estimates committee and the commission, but it is part of and represented from this House and the other House on the sponsor body. Essentially, it is part of the parliamentary process. However, it cannot simply hand over promoting and communicating the restoration and renewal programme now and in the future to the public. It must have a role in doing so. People have said to me, “This isn’t the role”, but it is in the letters of the former and current Leaders of the House that were sent to the sponsor body and circulated to us all that we do not need to bother putting something in the Bill, because it is the role of Parliament to sell the Bill. If we look at the attendance on the restoration and renewal Bill in this House tonight, or the engagement in the House of Commons, does anybody seriously believe that the 600 or 650 Members of the other House, depending on the boundary changes, will spend their time going out, explaining, engaging and selling this programme to the public? Your Lordships must live in a different world if you believe that, and if you do not, you should support the amendment. I beg to move.

Lord Bethell (Con): My Lords, I speak in support of the amendment and share the views of my friend, the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett.

To me, the principles of this massive investment are that of course it is about the engineering, heritage and security of the House, the comfort of Peers and Members of the House of Commons and their ability to do their jobs, but the most important legacy will be to contribute to the rebuilding of trust between Parliament and the people. It is not uncommon for infrastructure projects of this size to have important secondary benefits without which they can be deemed a failure.

7.30 pm

Delivery of rebuilding of civic trust in our country is a massive focus that needs to be seen more clearly in the Bill. That can be best secured by two major themes. One is through access for the public to the Houses of Parliament. This is an uncomfortable subject, because there are serious considerations about the practicalities and impact on parliamentarians of having more members of the public in and out of the House—and on security arrangements. But given the huge amount of money that we are set to spend, we need to reconcile those two considerations and ensure that members of the public have a much better opportunity to meet their MPs and come to talk to Peers about legislation going through the House to educate themselves about what is going on. I am mainly thinking about schoolchildren having civics lessons to understand what Parliament is up to and observing legislation going through on the issues that they care about. We all feel frustrated that our wonderful Galleries are not more filled, but who can blame people for not coming to watch legislation being passed when it is so uncomfortable, the wait is so long and the experience is so profoundly negative?

Those three things need to be squarely addressed. The way the Bill is written at present puts parliamentarians and their desires very much at the front of the process. That is right in one respect—this is a parliamentary building and parliamentarians will drive the process—but I should like the public to have a much clearer voice.

The noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, spoke very well about the limited expectations we should have for Members of Parliament engaging with their constituents on the difficult and sensitive subject of how billions of pounds will be spent on this building. A consultation process is described in Clause 5:

“The Sponsor Body must prepare a strategy for consulting members of each House of Parliament for the purposes of section 2(3)”.

That is a thoughtful and pragmatic approach, because I am sure that the noble Lord is correct that once we are presented with a difficult plan, it will be very difficult to tweak and change it, because a huge investment in professional services will have gone into it; to try to change the staircase, move things around and put the kitchen on top of the sitting room is, as all householders know very difficult, when you have reached that stage.

It is critical that the public have a voice from the very beginning and that questions of access and education are hard-baked into the project from the very beginning. You can use modern forms of consultation to get a very clear, subtle, deliberative snapshot of what the public might want from a project, although it is very complicated and they may need to have both it and the options explained to them.

We should tweak the amendment to include the public clearly in the consultation process. What would people like to see from a modern, 21st century Parliament? How would they like to meet parliamentarians to discuss constituency matters or legislation? How would they regard matters of security and travel? How would they get to Parliament and how would they like to see their children engaged in education and civic programmes?

If we do not face up to this challenge—if we brush it off and put it in the too-hard-to-try bucket—my fear is that we will invest, say, a billion pounds, trying to get the plan right but it will then be rejected by the public. It will be met with unhappiness and discord. I have seen it happen with infrastructure projects time and again. Then it will be sent back to the drawing board and we will have wasted time and money, whereas, if we grab the nettle at this early stage, take the plunge and listen to what the people want in terms of engaging, accessing and educating themselves on Parliament, we can save a huge amount of the budget, get a better product and save some money at the same time.

Baroness Andrews (Lab): My Lords, I support my noble friend’s amendment. I absolutely agree with everything that has been said. Frankly, it is a no-brainer for the Government not to agree with the amendment. Apart from anything else, if they do not, they will be seen to be offside with common practice these days in restoration projects.

If the House were to come to the Heritage Lottery Fund—I declare my interest as deputy chair of the board—with a proposal for a fairly significant grant, as the House may still do although we could not fund the whole thing, the very least we would expect is a

[BARONESS ANDREWS]

clear strategy. It is not necessarily as simple as consultation; I mean a serious public engagement strategy which would allow us to tell who would actually benefit, how their voices had been collected and heard and how they had been reflected in the proposal. We would not consider proposals which could not provide us with that obvious proof of public benefit.

What we are considering here, for all the reasons we know and which the noble Lord has again spelt out, is a national project of the greatest public benefit that we could conceive of. By not acknowledging that in the Bill or making clear plans to involve and listen to the voice of different communities around the country, we are missing a massive opportunity. We also neglect our public duty.

Lord Adonis (Lab): Did I follow my noble friend correctly in thinking that the lottery might fund parts of the restoration and renewal work? I would strongly deprecate that. This should be paid for by the Treasury.

Baroness Andrews: No, my Lords, I did not say that. I was making a hypothetical case that, were such a grant to be considered—I am not saying that it would be—it would have to satisfy different conditions. Of course I agree that this is a public project for national Treasury funding.

I have now lost my thread completely. This is the second time that my noble friend has interrupted me when I was developing my strategic thinking. I return to the principle. It is extremely important, for all the reasons we know, that this change is owned by the people we are here to serve. It is absurd not to recognise them in the Bill or to give them a voice.

We know how to do this, although it is complicated. At what point do you start involving people? How do you structure it? How do you reach out? How do you collect the voices, as it were? But we do it every day in major and minor projects around the country. It is not a miracle; it is a science.

To take just one example before I close, the National Museum Wales has, I am delighted to say, just won a national museum of the year award. In its redevelopment, which involved a great deal of new building, it involved thousands of people from all manner of excluded groups in the local and national community. The result has been transformational in their and our understanding of what people expect from a national museum.

This is not a museum. We have a much greater duty. But those principles and methodologies can certainly be adopted and followed.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness (LD): My Lords, I support the amendments and the spirit in which they have been moved and spoken to by the noble Lords, Lord Blunkett and Lord Bethell, and the noble Baroness, Lady Andrews.

In my involvement both in the Joint Committee and in taking part in debates, I have been very conscious that we are here as trustees. That has implications not only because we have responsibility—we have to get on with it, because we would not be thanked by the public if we dithered and an accident happened which

destroyed part of this important part of our national heritage—but, as trustees, we are temporary. There are 650 Members of the other place here by election. Those of us who are here are, as the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, said, at the hand of the grim reaper or may choose to take retirement. That makes it important to remember that we are here but there is a great public out there, to whom we owe responsibility. As the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, said, it is important that we try to understand what they want from what is, in fact, their Parliament—a place where they can engage with not only Members of Parliament but Members of your Lordships' House. How can they get their views across? How can we use this place for education, so that we bring up a new generation of citizens who want to take part in the democratic process?

The amendments are directed at engaging the public more in what we are doing at the moment; I suspect that those who know about it are somewhat cynical about it, so an explanation of why a large amount of money is being spent might go a long way. They are also trying to gauge what the public wish to see in how we spend that money. When the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, talked about access and people wanting to talk to their MPs, I reflected on the fact that, when we voted earlier this evening, my noble friend Lord Foster of Bath asked me, if I got a chance when I spoke this evening, to say that he thinks that it would be a good idea to have a coffee shop in the Royal Gallery because it is a large space that is not used for much else, except on historic occasions, but which could clearly be adapted and changed. I rather suspect that, on first hearing, people would say, "Oh, we can't do that", but has anyone ever asked? It would be a good place for that, in the same way that Portcullis House has become a meeting place for discussion and discourse for Members of the House of Commons—you can take people there. That is perhaps worth thinking about if we want to engage the public more.

Baroness Stowell of Beeston (Non-Affl): My Lords, I certainly agree with the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace of Tankerness, that we are trustees, or custodians, of this Palace of Westminster, which ultimately belongs to the public that we exist to serve. Clearly, we need to ensure that, through this programme of works, the Palace that belongs to the public and the people who occupy it are in a position to serve the public better.

I also support the need for public engagement with and consultation on these works. I would counsel one thing, however. During the debate, I have been a little worried by comments about attempts by us to help the public to understand better what this project is all about. At the moment, those of us in positions of great privilege and some power think—too often and mistakenly—that we are the ones with all the information and that we need to impart it and impose it on other people. As has been made clear by other noble Lords in their contributions, we want to understand better what the public expect from their Parliament and reflect on what they want so as to influence how we change.

However, I would go one step further: we must be frank and understand that the process of consulting people is another opportunity for us to show that we

are changing and that we want to serve them better. I want us to ask about what it is that people want to see us change in terms of our behaviour as parliamentarians. If we can understand better what they want from us in terms of how we behave—to show that we take them seriously and listen to them in carrying out our work—we should consider what we need to do differently in terms of how our building is formatted, refurbished and renewed to make sure that we are better placed to show that we are listening and responding, and to give people confidence that that is what this is all about.

Lord Adonis: My Lords, I echo what the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, said about making much better use of the Royal Gallery. I referred to this in my speech at Second Reading. I wish him luck because it will mean taking on the fully entrenched forces of the officialdom of the House, but I will willingly make one last attempt at getting a coffee bar in the Royal Gallery. I will join the noble Lord; perhaps my noble friend the Leader of the Opposition and the noble Earl, Lord Howe, might also commit themselves. It may be that, if all the party leaders and many noble Lords converged on a maximum point of pressure, we could persuade the authorities of the House to act. This might be the moment: if we have a series of speeches on this, a revolutionary change that would make this place far more accessible could be brought about. Part of the problem with the House of Lords is that it is largely inaccessible to the public because the points of entry are so narrow and constrained; it is almost impossible to get here unless you have an appointment with a Peer who meets you. The number of meeting places that are not offices is also limited. Perhaps we will have brought about a revolutionary change by the end of the debate.

I am very sorry for interrupting my noble friend Lady Andrews. I was anxious to interrupt her because, when she mentioned the lottery, I could see the Treasury's eyes gleaming at the prospect of possibly being able to pass on large parts of the cost. It is important that we establish that this is absolutely a public project. If the Victorians could build this extraordinary Palace—Mr Gladstone was very mindful of the public finances—we in this generation can certainly live up to our responsibilities.

7.45 pm

Lord Blunkett: For the record, Mr Gladstone came on to the scene for this particular building a bit late, did he not?

Lord Adonis: Actually, he was Chancellor of the Exchequer when a large part of the work was being carried out. I assure my noble friend that Gladstone took a keen interest in the allocation of the public finances; my noble friend and I can correspond on this matter afterwards.

The amendment moved by my noble friend seems on one level to be a statement of the obvious but, on another level, the fact that it needs to be stated is of some importance in itself. The two changes that he essentially wishes to make are: to enlarge the sponsor body's duties to include promoting to the public the work of R&R; and to add to the sponsor body's duties

consulting not only Members of each House but members of the public. That should not need to be said; it ought to be obvious that that should happen. However, there are two reasons why this is important. First, I do not think that the Government are racing to accept the amendments; I am looking at the noble Earl. If so, there must be some reason why. It is precisely because the actual duties will be expanded in a way that the Government think will be distracting to the sponsor body. Why would the Government regard them in that way? They impose additional duties.

However, those duties—the noble Lord, Lord Bethell, was completely right about this—are exactly what we would and should expect of the sponsor body in two respects. First, it is a matter of self-interest: the body is going to spend a lot of money—the figure of £4 billion has been touted before but, from my intimate knowledge of how infrastructure projects go, I think that we can safely assume that it will be significantly larger. When the inevitable controversy comes, as it will, about the cost, overruns, delays and everything else, the sponsor body, your Lordships and the other House of Parliament need the ultimate protection possible, which must surely come from having engaged with the public and having proper public promotion and displays. Westminster Hall needs to be full of displays about the work that will be undertaken and we need the visitor centre to do the same. That is important. Secondly, part of the justification for the spending on this work is that it will enhance public access significantly.

To extend the point about what happens at the end of restoration and renewal, not having proper citizenship education is part of the problem. My noble friend Lord Blunkett has done more than any other Minister—in history, I would venture to suggest—to put citizenship at the core of what we teach in schools. It is hugely important. However, we still do not pay nearly enough attention to it. In particular, we do not make visiting Parliament, engaging with parliamentary institutions and meeting parliamentarians a systematic part of secondary school education, as it should be. Since the Germans' massive renovation of the Bundestag's beautiful old buildings in Berlin—at the behest of British architects, as it happens—they have had comprehensive programmes for schools and schoolchildren proactively to visit Berlin, tour the German Parliament and meet their parliamentarians. We do not do that here. Even with all the expansion we are talking about, the creation of a visitor centre and all that, it all depends on people wanting to come here, whereas we should be proactively engaging. This problem goes to the wider issue: the further one goes from London, the more disengaged people feel from their Parliamentary institutions, not least because they hardly have any contact with what goes on here. Their schools are much less likely to come here.

I am struck when I meet school parties—some I show around; many I just meet when I am walking around the Palace—and ask where they come from. They disproportionately come from London and the area immediately around. Why? Because if you have to proactively seek to come here and cover expenses and things of that kind, it will particularly be private schools—we come back to this issue—who will come here. We have to end this. We are now in a massive

[LORD ADONIS]

Brexit crisis because of the massive alienation between a large part of our people and our parliamentary institutions.

Lord Bethell: The noble Lord makes the point well, but I think he is too limited in his analysis of the problem. It is not just that schoolchildren do not understand the parliamentary democracy they live in. They do not see for themselves the opportunities that lie in the Civil Service and other forms of public service. There is a massive disengagement between schools and universities and the whole ethos of public service. There is a good argument that that kind of personal contact with Parliament would do a huge amount to invigorate a sense of public service that is missing at the moment, particularly in the schools to which he refers—schools outside London and non-grammar, non-independent schools.

Lord Adonis: My Lords, I agree with every word the noble Lord has just said.

What I would like to see in this Bill—as noble Lords know, I always try to push things to extremes—is a duty on the sponsor body to see that, once the restoration and renewal work is completed, there are facilities and arrangements in place for every schoolchild in the country, during the course of their secondary education, to visit the Houses of Parliament, have a tour and get the opportunity to see the work we do.

Baroness Byford (Con): I have to take the noble Lord to task on engagement in schools north of the south—if you see what I mean. Not enough of us take part in the Lord Speaker's outreach programme, but many do, and I assure the noble Lord that the majority of schools I go to are not private but state schools, and they engage through citizenship. They are often either GCSE-level or sixth-form level—I have been to a couple of primary schools as well—but they do come down. With this project we have a chance to enlarge on that, but I would hate people following this debate to think that we do not engage already. On the whole—I cannot speak for others—I have been to state schools, certainly not private schools.

Lord Adonis: My Lords, I commend the noble Baroness on her work. I did not say that we do not engage at all; I said that we do not engage nearly enough. The overwhelming majority of state secondary school pupils across England do not have any engagement, will not have come here on a visit and will not have met their parliamentarians. We should take that as a criticism of us—this institution—because it is.

My noble friend Lord Blunkett is pushing the door further—which he does so brilliantly on these occasions—so that we at least recognise in the Bill that the public exist and that the promotion of public engagement should be a duty on the sponsor body. These amendments seem entirely uncontroversial, unless the noble Earl is going to argue that they are distracting to the work of the sponsor body. If he does, I hope that at the very least he will agree to consider that issue further. If they are distracting, we are admitting that engaging with the wider public is a distraction to the work of the very body and the restoration and renewal programme that should seek to serve this wider public interest.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, I had not intended to take part in this debate—I have an amendment a little later—but it seems to me that we are touching on an extremely important subject. I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, for tabling these amendments. Following on from what the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, has just said, we need to make some practical suggestions. I entirely agree with him when he says we must have exhibitions in Westminster Hall—of course we must; people must know what we are doing—but we need to take them out to the country. I would like to see an exhibition on our restoration and renewal programme in every town and city hall in the country. It is not impossible—indeed, it would be very easy to do it—and modern technology makes it easy to simulate, project, let people have virtual reality shows and all the rest of it. We ought to go to every town and city in the country, so that whether it is Lincoln, where I live, or Wolverhampton, the city next to the constituency I represented for 40 years, people should be able to go and see.

There should be a follow-up, of course, and the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, is right that we should get as many schoolchildren as possible, because it should be part of the citizenship education of every child in this country to come to Parliament. Citizenship is a Cinderella subject; it is badly neglected in many schools. They pay lip service to it, but do not engage in the way they should.

I go further, because I believe we should also endeavour to ensure that people in every university in the country know what we are doing. After all, it is from the universities of this country that most elected parliamentarians—and, indeed, most appointed parliamentarians—in the future will come. If we are to engage in a proper way, we need to do it systematically, practically and with concrete suggestions such as those I am putting forward. Whether it is part of the renewal body's remit to draw up that programme or whether it wishes to set up some committee of both Houses to discuss the practicalities, that detail is a little further down the line, but that it should be done is very important. Indeed, it must be done.

We are embarking on an enormously expensive exercise. I believe it is totally justified. Democracy is beyond price, and this is the greatest secular building in our country, but it belongs to everyone. This is the people's Palace—the people's Parliament. They should know what is being done, why and how. After all, at the end of the day they are paying for it. I would like to see a practical programme drawn up, and nobody would be better able to direct and help in that than the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett. If he wanted to get a few like-minded souls around him, I for one would very happily be involved.

Lord Berkeley (Lab): I will just correct the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, because he said this place belongs to everyone. With respect, it does not. We were talking about having a coffee bar in the Royal Gallery—which is a wonderful idea—but a few years ago I asked if I could have a concert there in aid of a charity. I asked Black Rod—not the present Black Rod, of course—who was in charge of the room. He said, “No, you can't”. I asked, “Why?”. He said, “It belongs to Her Majesty and

she won't allow it". I asked, "Who advises Her Majesty?". He said, "I do, and I shall advise her not to". I asked, "Why is that?". He said, "It'll wear the floor out". It was one of the stupidest reasons. In planning, building regulations and everything else, this is technically a royal Palace. We have to sort all these things out before we end up finding we cannot do something because of some idea that has been around here ever since the place was built.

8 pm

Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb (GP): My Lords, I support all the amendments in this group and some of the later ones, particularly those in the names of the noble Lords, Lord Blunkett and Lord Bethell, and the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Basildon. I was sad that I was not able to take part in the Second Reading but I hope to make up for it now.

For me, the pertinent questions are: who is the restoration and renewal project for, and what is it intended to achieve? The Bill is incredibly unambitious. It is designed to keep things roughly as they are—or, in some cases, exactly as they are—to serve those people who currently occupy the building, whether MPs, Peers or staff. I love the idea of a coffee bar in the Royal Gallery—it might warm it up—because it is almost unusable at most times of the year. However, it is only partly right if we look to MPs, Peers and staff for what is appropriate for the future.

Public engagement has to be at the heart of the project. If we do not engage the public properly, they will not see this as a good use of money. We are talking about billions of pounds of public funds from the Treasury and it must not look like an upgrade for our offices; it has to look like part of the national fabric. We must therefore involve the public in renewing the heart of our democracy.

It is a fundamental principle of our parliamentary democracy that no Parliament can bind its successors in law, and yet this Bill will do exactly that. This building will be set in stone for decades. It will take a decade to start the work and a decade to complete it and in that time we will not take into account the fact that our society is moving on. The public can be more radical than we are. We tend to get stuck in mud with our processes. We have a new clock, a new system with the Lord Speaker and so on, but these changes have been incredibly slow. Public engagement will suggest more radical things than we do here.

Once the building is done, there will be no opportunities for moving on, changing our systems or doing anything new or perhaps more democratic. Whether it is introducing an elected Chamber, electronic voting or whatever, it will be much harder because people will say, "We cannot do that because we have just spent billions on recreating what we had before. It will not fit and we cannot spend any more money". This country has undergone massive constitutional changes over the past couple of decades and it is illogical to persist in the way we are going when society is moving on. We cannot afford to be blinkered about what is happening around us. For these reasons, the amendments of the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, are essential. The sponsor body must have as one of its central purposes the duty

to ensure that its work accommodates future concerns, changes and political developments. If it does not do that, it will be seen as a huge waste of money.

I would go even further with public engagement and say that we should parallel the sponsor body's work on restoring and renewing the building with establishing a citizens' assembly, which is what Theresa May should have done with Brexit. Such an assembly could offer a way in which to restore and renew our whole political system. A Government with vision past the next few months would breathe life into a new era of citizenship and change public engagement for the better. This place is not a museum but a working building, and we have to accept that work sometimes changes.

These amendments are vital. I regret that they have been watered down—I would have supported the unwatered-down version—but I will support them at any further point in our work.

Lord Norton of Louth (Con): My Lords, I add my support to the amendments, which are important. I also endorse everything that has been said about citizenship and education, and the role that the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, has played in that.

The Bill is unfortunately titled. The title is somewhat misleading because it places the emphasis on restoration and renewal of a physical entity—the Palace—rather than the restoration and renewal of Parliament as an institution. That should be at the heart of informing the debate as we go forward because we have to configure the Parliament in order to fulfil the functions that both Houses fulfil.

In its recent report the Liaison Committee endorsed the view that we have a number of functions which are not confined to the legislative-Executive relationship but encompass as well the legislative-public relationship. We should see this through the prism of not only the relationship between Parliament and government but the relationship between Parliament and those outside who the institution serves. I endorse the point that we are trustees. We need to look at it in that perspective and consider how we can configure or reconfigure space to fulfil those functions. That should be the driving force. We should look at it dynamically in terms of our functions, not as some fixed physical entity.

Reinforcing that—this point has been touched upon—is the context in which the discussion is taking place: how people outside see the institution, which, at the moment, is not positive. The recent audit of political engagement by the Hansard Society tracked the extent to which there is dissatisfaction with the way our system works. The proportion of respondents who feel that the system of governing needs a great deal of improvement stands at 72%—the highest level it has been in the audit series. The level of distrust has been a change of kind and not only extent. By that I mean that people used to distrust MPs; now they distrust the House of Commons. That is a challenge that we have to face up to and address. We have to see it in that context.

We need to think about how we relate to those outside the House in the way that has been stressed, and I agree with most of what has been said. That encompasses

[LORD NORTON OF LOUTH]

not only seeking to educate but, as has been stressed, engaging with people outside Parliament—not only in terms of restoration and renewal but how we craft an institution that can continuously engage with people outside.

The noble Baroness who has just spoken seems to think that we are going to be stuck with whatever the fixture is. However, one can anticipate that and have flexible space that is adaptable to needs as they change over time. In that context we need to anticipate and address the, if you like, known knowns and think about the known unknowns and the extent to which the Palace may be configured on that basis.

We need to configure space so that we can enable greater interaction between Members and those making representations and, as been stressed, those who wish to be present for proceedings. I endorse what the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, said. It reinforces my point about not just seeing the Palace as a fixed body but that dynamic of how we relate to people outside, creating space here for that purpose and thinking about how we can configure it in such a way as to engage with those outside who cannot come here as well.

I wholly endorse what has been said. It is important that it is in the Bill, for the reasons that have been given. It should be at the forefront of what we are doing. My noble friend Lord Bethell referred to it basically as a secondary function, for reasons I understand, but we should stress it as a primary function in terms of what this institution is about. That has to be at the forefront throughout the work that is undertaken and, for those reasons, I endorse the amendments.

Lord McNicol of West Kilbride (Lab): My Lords, I support the amendments of my noble friends Lord Blunkett and Lady Smith and that of the noble Lord, Lord Bethell.

A number of themes have emerged from the discussions over the past 50 minutes. The amendments were eloquently outlined by my noble friend Lord Blunkett and that set the tone for the rest of the debate on group five. There has not been a voice against the amendments and I would not like to be in the noble Earl's place in trying to respond across the House.

The noble Lord, Lord Bethell, touched on the rebuilding of civic trust. He is absolutely correct. There is a misconception about the restoration and renewal project among those outside who do not know much about it that it is about us improving the place for the benefit of parliamentarians and spending large amounts of money in doing so. We all know that it is actually about maintaining the heart of our democracy and the benefits it brings as a centre of education and heritage.

A number of noble Lords spoke about education. I have been in the House only for a year and one thing I went straight into was working with the education and schools engagement team. For those who have not had that opportunity, I highly recommend it. The noble Lord, Lord Cormack, talked about reaching out to all secondary schools, but some of the most engaging conversations I have had have been with primary school children. My noble friend Lord Adonis is correct that not enough schools are coming into the House,

and we should encourage that more. We should use this as an opportunity to reach out further; the sponsor body should have the ability to do that and should hold it at the forefront of its mind when thinking about what the Palace should look like once we go through this process. It should think about engagement with education and schools. That would be to all of our benefit.

There are other organisations across civil society, including the trade unions. To go right back, the Joint Committee's recommendation was that the sponsor body should,

“promote public engagement and public understanding of Parliament”.

When this was in its infancy and being pulled together, there was talk of a public understanding of Parliament.

We all know what happens with large infrastructure projects—and this will be a large infrastructure project. Too often, sometimes for unforeseen reasons, they overrun in time and expenditure. Parliament will not have the time to do the work on this—there is a lot of other work that Parliament needs to do—so putting it in the Bill and adding it as a responsibility for the sponsor body will help us to deal with some of those issues. If we do not get out there and tell the story of restoration and renewal, we could see many of the criticisms and problems that have arisen with other large infrastructure projects.

To touch on another amendment, we should ensure that businesses across the UK benefit from the economic advantages that the project will bring. Some of the contracts should go out across the UK, and that should remain at the forefront of the sponsor body's mind.

If my noble friend Lord Adonis gets his wish and we end up with a coffee shop in the Royal Gallery, I am more than happy to help out as the first barista. I support the amendments.

The Minister of State, Ministry of Defence (Earl Howe)

(Con): My Lords, I am most grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, and my noble friend Lord Bethell for tabling these amendments. As has been clearly explained, they seek to require the sponsor body to promote public understanding of and engagement with the restoration and renewal programme. The amendments would also require the sponsor body to have regard to these matters and to develop a strategy for consulting the public.

The first thing for me to say is this: the public will absolutely and undoubtedly want to understand how the restoration and renewal of the Palace is progressing and what it means for them. That is exactly why the shadow sponsor body is already engaging with the public on the restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster. It is doing that because one of its main strategic priorities is to:

“Open up the Houses of Parliament, improve access and encourage a wider participation in the work of Parliament”.

Those are exactly the things that noble Lords have been advocating. That priority is not just about filling the Public Gallery. It is very much about securing public buy-in to the work of Parliament, and you cannot do that without making the public aware of the biggest thing to happen to this building for 180 years: the R&R programme.

8.15 pm

As part of its remit, the shadow sponsor body recently appointed its external relations director and will shortly be considering a public engagement strategy. This is being developed in consultation with both Houses, so as to deliver on the Bill's requirement for the sponsor body to have regard to the need for improved visitor access and education facilities in the future. The shadow sponsor body has also established an engagement group, chaired by a member of its board, to oversee these activities. These appointments and ways of working are not temporary bursts or window dressing: they are outward and visible signs of how the sponsor body means to proceed in the future. We can be quite sure it will continue this essential work of engaging with the public.

Given what the sponsor body is doing and the clear remit under which it is operating, I question whether it is necessary to amend the Bill. Indeed, placing a duty in primary legislation on the sponsor body to engage and consult with the public on R&R, which I appreciate the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, regards as benign, may easily bring about what most of us want to avoid: being over-prescriptive about the way the sponsor body is made to undertake its work. If we do that, we risk saying to it that there is something quite distinct called public engagement that should be ranked *pari passu* with its essential task, which is, first, to agree designs for the outline business case and then to deliver R&R. Public engagement is integral to those things. It is not something that we should imply or state is a separate task, so in that sense we would risk distracting the sponsor body from its principal task. The sponsor body will have the chance to engage innovatively with the wider public about R&R, and the shadow body has already set about doing that, but it is for the sponsor body and delivery authority to decide how best to do it as part of its main tasks. We must trust the sponsor body to determine how best to undertake the restoration and renewal works and how it will engage with the wider public on it.

Let us not forget—indeed, we were reminded of it earlier—that Parliament's engagement with the public is already happening. Yes, we need to do more, and I will come on to that in a second. The UK Parliament's education and engagement service engaged more than 2.2 million people in 2018-19, of whom approximately 1.4 million were engaged face to face. This was spread across the UK with, on average, 21 engagement activities per constituency and around two-thirds of visiting schools receiving support for their travel. The quality of this engagement is reflected in the feedback from participants, 94% of whom gave a rating of "good" or "excellent". One of the House of Lords' strategic aims is to, "promote public understanding of the House of Lords and engagement with its work".

As part of this, the House contributes 30% towards the bicameral parliamentary outreach team. This bicameral service engages with the public through inviting schools to visit Parliament and the education centre, live-streaming questions with Mr Speaker and the Lord Speaker and providing online resources for schools to teach important principles relating to our democracy. In the year to mid-April 2018, the education service welcomed some 70,226 school visitors.

Lord Berkeley: I am a bit confused because the Minister said that accepting my noble friend's amendment would divert the sponsor body's activity from the main activity, which is to build a new Palace, but he also said that it is doing it anyway. If it is doing it anyway, the amendment is surely all right.

Earl Howe: The point I was seeking to make is that if you set out in the Bill something that looks quite distinct and separate from the main task that the sponsor body has before it, you risk distracting it. What we are saying to the sponsor body is, "Yes, public engagement is vital, you are already doing it, so you should do it in the best way you can because you know best how to deliver R&R". That is the position I come from. Therefore, there is no need to change the wording of the Bill. We should not be frightened of leaving the Bill as it is because we know that the sponsor body has its heart in the right place in a way that reflects exactly what noble Lords have been talking about this evening.

The restoration and renewal of the Palace should increase the number of visitors and see that visitors have an even better experience. I absolutely agree that R&R also provides the opportunity to re-engage the public in how democracy functions in the UK. The programme will develop better educational facilities, and it has been suggested that the additional chamber in Richmond House can be used to engage schoolchildren in our democratic process. That would be added value from the R&R process.

I just want to say something about building in a statutory duty to consult. I have talked about the need to avoid being over-prescriptive but, over and above that, the Government are concerned that placing a statutory duty on the sponsor body to consult the public, as prescribed in the amendments tabled by my noble friend Lord Bethell, is a particularly onerous requirement. Public engagement, as I have said, is essential for the works to succeed, but a duty to consult, I would strongly argue, would divert resource and time from the essential job at hand, which is to formulate proposals on the design, cost and timing of the works for parliamentary approval.

I turn briefly to Amendment 6, tabled by the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, requiring the sponsor body to have regard to non-cashable benefits when assessing whether the programme delivers value for money. Clause 2(4) (b) to (h) contains a wide range of non-monetary benefits to which the sponsor body must have regard. They include safety and security, the environment, accessibility, educational facilities and the spread of opportunities to secure economic or other benefits across the UK. These benefits, which are, of course, important, have got to be balanced against the need to ensure that the works represent good value for money, as required under Clause 2(4)(a).

Value for money is core to the programme, and we consider that that has to remain explicit in the Bill. If we go on adding other non-monetary matters to Clause 2(4)(a), we run the distinct risk of watering down the explicit imperative of achieving value for money for the works, which is something that the Bill as drafted ensures the sponsor body must have regard to. Therefore, I think that the amendment of the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, would be detrimental to the Bill.

Lord Blunkett: I thank all noble Lords for their contributions and their support. I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Jones, that one reason that I have worded things as I have was spelled out by the noble Lord, Lord Norton, in respect of the original Long Title and the scope of the Bill—to ensure that my amendments are in scope.

I shall just say what I said at the beginning. I am very keen to gain consensus on this so that when we come back on Report people will have had a chance to think about whether they really are against it, using the argument that it is already being done so we do not need to do it. Apart from the fact that I have a long-standing and historic commitment to engagement, participation, democracy and citizenship, I tabled these amendments because the Joint Committee—the noble Baroness, Lady Byford, will be able to confirm this—examined this issue in detail and came up with the proposition that we should enhance the Bill by encouraging public engagement and democratic participation, which is the core of what our democracy is all about. This is the heart of our democracy, and we were concerned about the pushback against the proposal.

I discovered that there was an original sponsor body mission statement—it is in the text of the interviews with the Joint Committee—that included public engagement and it was taken out, so noble Lords will understand my suspicion about what is going on here. I really do not understand who is advising and pushing the Government against these amendments, but I will withdraw on this occasion on the grounds that we will be back in September.

I recall the occasions when my noble friends Lady Blackstone and Lord Rooker and my noble and learned friends Lady Scotland and Lord Falconer came to me in the eight years when I was in government saying, “We’ve got a problem in the House of Lords”. I asked, “What’s that?”. They said, “Our own side is in favour of the amendments being moved by the other side and we’re likely to lose. What shall we do? Shall we come to an agreement and do this gracefully or shall we go down fighting on something that we didn’t intend to fight about in the first place?” We are all in agreement are we not? Everyone has said tonight that this is a good thing that the sponsor body is doing, but the Government still feel that they have to oppose putting it in the Bill. I just say to the Government: please, over August have a good holiday and let us come back and agree a few things.

Amendment 4 withdrawn.

Amendments 5 and 6 not moved.

Amendment 7

Moved by Lord Blunkett

7: Clause 2, page 2, line 45, leave out sub-paragraph (ii) and insert—

“(ii) (after completion of those works) all parts of the Palace of Westminster used by people working in it or open to people visiting it,”

Lord Blunkett: Amendment 7 is grouped with Amendment 17, which would insert a new clause into the Bill. I will be brief, as we have been over this

issue tonight. There is a really important message to the world out there, as we said a moment ago, and it is on accessibility. We discussed this briefly at Second Reading. It is a question not of access to but of access within the building for staff, parliamentarians and, where appropriate, visitors. The message should be that we are going to make this an exemplar project, learning from what has been done at some of the most historic features in the world and building on them, and learning from what is happening with the development of new technology to enable access for people with particular disabilities, possibly in a way that was not true even a few years ago.

I shall not overegg the point—I shall be very brief. It is crucial that those who carry out this project, including the designers, the delivery authority and the companies that are taken on to do the work, are absolutely clear that we are intent on making as much as possible of this place easily accessible and usable for people with a whole range of disabilities. To do otherwise would be betrayal.

I have been approached very gently—people are very gentle with me these days because I am getting to the point where they do not have to knock me about in the way that they used to. They have been telling me that rooms 6/12, 6/13, 15/28, 15/79, 8/95, 8/96 and 15/22—noble Lords will notice that we are going backwards in terms of age here—are not very accessible. There are rooms in a couple of turrets with stairs that make it impossible for a wheelchair to get up there. I accept all that. The interesting thing about being approached and nudged about how difficult it is, is that it displays the mentality with which people approach these issues. They approach them from the point of view—they have been told, presumably—of how difficult they will be. That is why I want these amendments in the Bill; if they are not accepted by the Government, I will want them to be voted on in September. I am determined that we will send a message from all parts of this House that we are going to make everything we can accessible.

8.30 pm

Of course, there will be turrets that are not accessible. I would not take my dog into an operating theatre. I would not become a commis chef around the corner and take my dog into the kitchen. There has to be a degree of common sense and give and take, but people tell me there are places in the subterranean parts of this House that will never be accessible—actually, they will. When we have ripped out the wiring, the pipework and all the rubbish, we will be liberating quite a lot of space. There is nothing down there to do with heritage, although there will be a bit of archaeological digging, which, as I understand it, might dig up more than we are bargaining for.

Tonight, I just want to put on record that, yes, there are 1,100 rooms and, apparently, 65 levels—I presume they mean steps as there are certainly not 65 floors in this place—but they will be accessible.

Baroness Scott of Needham Market (LD): If I may help with that, there are apparently 65 changes of level; so, not 65 steps but 65 places where the levels in the House change. I do not know whether that helps.

Lord Blunkett: I am grateful to the noble Baroness; until I was nudged along, I did not know anything about this. I am enlightened by it, and it is all the more reason why we should have absolute clarity that we are going to tackle the issue. I will give noble Lords one example: there are steps currently that are completely unusable by certain members of staff and parliamentarians. The problem looks really difficult but perhaps, without damaging the heritage, you could put in a moving staircase that is accessible only by people with a particular card to activate. This will be possible in the 20 years it will take before we come back into this place. This is what I said at Second Reading. We are fighting the “mind-forg’d manacles” that William Blake referred to. We have to put these aside and use a bit of common sense. If noble Lords do not like the amendments, they should come back with something that meets the requirement. I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, that I have every faith in the sponsor body as it stands at the moment, but, as I said earlier, people will not be there. I am trying to future-proof what we do. If we do not do it for people with disabilities, we are not doing it for ourselves. I beg to move.

Baroness Byford: My Lords, I want to follow the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, because I have added my name to his second amendment. In the Joint Committee, we had long discussions about the whole question of access, particularly, as the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, has said, about access within the building once one gets in. I want to support the noble Lord in his desire to get something written into the Bill with regard to disability. We had long discussions in Committee about this. It is a matter not just of people getting into this building but, once they are in the building, of how they get around it. The figure quoted in one of the briefings we had is that currently only about 12% of this building is accessible to people with a disability. As the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, has indicated, there will be rooms in this building that will not be accessible after renewal and I am sure that is probably right. I think it falls on the sponsor body itself to decide what is an acceptable percentage: if it is 12% now, are we talking about 25% or 30% eventually?

The other thing that we had a long conversation about was how people come into the building in the first place. The Cromwell Green entrance is totally inadequate for our needs now. It sometimes takes people an hour to get in, and if it is raining it is pretty miserable. Access to the building needs to be looked at as well.

I will not pre-empt the contribution from the noble Lord, Lord Stunell, but it is not just those with physical disabilities who have difficulty accessing the building—those in wheelchairs or like the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, have difficulty in getting around. There are also people with hearing disabilities, but I will leave that issue to the noble Lord, Lord Stunell.

There are many ways in which this building could be made much more friendly and supportive of people so that we could use everyone’s skills that otherwise would not be included. I am very happy to have put my name to this amendment. I hope that my noble friend the Minister will be more supportive of this one than of some of the others. When I broke my ankle last year, as I reflected at Second Reading, that made

me realise the true difficulty of getting around this building; I think there are something like 90 different staircases, and many of the lifts are not accessible. If I can go further, some of the ladies’ and gentlemen’s facilities are totally inadequate for those with disabilities. This is an opportunity to put those basic needs right.

My questions for the shadow sponsor body are: where are your priorities going to come in this? In view of where you are going, what way can you see of achieving that while recognising that some of the building will not, I suspect, be suitable for getting the sort of access that most of us would like to see? I am hoping that my noble friend will be more encouraging later. I am very pleased to support these amendments.

Lord Berkeley: My Lords, I spoke about some of these issues in response to an earlier amendment. All I will say is that the amendment asks for a report on the building being fully accessible, which I support, but to achieve that and the things that my noble friend and the noble Baroness, Lady Byford, have mentioned—including lifts, toilets and other areas that are currently inaccessible—will involve some massive works in this building and they will be very expensive. They will also reduce the amount of space available for other things, but I am sure that they have to happen.

My Amendment 17A proposes that the same criteria that my noble friend has put in Amendment 17 in respect of this building when we come back are also applied to the temporary accommodation that we might have in the QEII or wherever.

Lord Stunell (LD): My Lords, to some extent my contribution has been prefigured, and I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Byford, for that. I strongly support everything that the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, has said. I particularly want to pick out his phrase about making this an exemplar project.

In the many discussions that I have had over the years about making this place accessible to people with physical deficiencies, if you want to put it that way, or disabilities—I speak as someone who is not profoundly deaf but is quite deaf and certainly needs his hearing aids—all too often the attitude and the response have been grudging, a sort of reluctant admission that under the Disability Discrimination Act they have a duty to do it, but it is certainly not one undertaken with great joy.

I would have thought that this building—as we are a national Parliament and representatives of a democracy that in other aspects is trying to promote civilised values around the world, and here I am thinking of the work of our international development department, our Foreign Office, God bless them, and others, where we are constantly saying that we set an example—should surely set an example when it comes to access for those of limited mobility or with some other disability.

I want to put a word in for my noble friends Lady Brinton and Lady Thomas of Winchester, who, as noble Lords will know, make their way around this building in electric wheelchairs. This brings into focus the fact that our different priorities are in conflict. A whole lot of additional fire doors have been put in, which make it virtually impossible for those two noble Members to proceed around the building other than

[LORD STUNELL]

with an assistant to open and close the doors. Various arrangements have been put in place for the doors to be left open during sitting hours and so on, but for all sorts of reasons—some might say bureaucratic reasons—those commitments do not always work.

Each of my noble friends has personal stories about the problems they have had of being trapped behind those doors waiting for somebody to come and open them. There are challenges, but there are solutions. One can imagine that in 10 or 15 years' time, it will be entirely feasible for every door and every electric wheelchair in this building to be fitted with a transponder, and for the doors to open when a wheelchair approaches. However, the idea of anybody thinking of or implementing that seems a very long way away.

As for deafness, I am inclined to say: do not get me started. Can we at least make sure that the new provision complies with existing law? This building does not comply with existing law and, although people have wriggled and squiggled when they have talked to me about how they believe they have put in place various so-called first aid measures to make it okay, it all comes down to the person with the disability fitting into a system which, frankly, does not work or deliver. We certainly need to make sure we have standards that comply with existing legislation.

We need to consider what standards we as a legislature will impose upon employers and other public buildings when we get to 2035. Will our standards for them have risen? If so, can we make sure that we design our standards to do that as well? In fact, I would go further than that and say we ought to set outstanding standards and aim to be best in class for a public building in the United Kingdom—and why not best in class throughout the world? We need to see what that would mean and how we would make it work, rather than reluctantly dragging this along behind us and seeing what we can get away with.

This debate fits somewhere in between the debate we have already had on public engagement and the one we are going to have on future-proofing. I will just make the point that if you exclude or do not engage with people with disabilities, you are not doing the job that we set out to achieve in the first set of debates. I will not use all my ammunition on future-proofing at this point, but when we get to those amendments, it is worth remembering that not just the standards but the expectations of people in 20 years' time will not be lower than they are now. If we are not achieving current standards now, simply doing things the same way in the revised, upgraded building will not do it.

I strongly support what the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, said. He has much more experience than I do of both being a guerrilla and sitting at the big desk taking the decisions. In so far as I can give him any support from either of those dimensions, I shall certainly do so.

Lord Norton of Louth: My Lords, I very much support these amendments. My noble friend Lady Byford and the noble Lord, Lord Stunell, have picked up on the importance of catering for not just those with physical disabilities but those with non-physical disabilities, which are not always visible and which we are therefore not aware of.

I want to make one point, because if I do not, I suspect nobody else will. At the moment, there are parts of the Palace which are difficult, indeed inaccessible, for anybody who suffers from acrophobia—a severe fear of heights. There are real difficulties. I am conscious that architects do not take that into account when designing new buildings. Some buildings are extremely problematic. I want to put that on record because I suspect otherwise nobody else will, but it needs to be taken into account.

8.45 pm

Baroness Wheeler (Lab): My Lords, we fully support the amendments from my noble friend Lord Blunkett, which would place a duty on the sponsor body to ensure that all parts of the completed buildings used by people working in them, or open to the public visiting, are accessible, and on the delivery authority to publish a report on how it will ensure that the restored Palace of Westminster is fully accessible to MPs, Peers, visitors and staff with disabilities. My noble friend Lord Berkeley is absolutely right to highlight with his Amendment 17A the importance of provisions for disability access in temporary buildings under the project.

The Government's response to the Joint Committee promises that,

“the works to the infrastructure of the Palace of Westminster will ensure that the Palace is more accessible for those with disabilities”.

We welcome the shadow sponsor body's commitment to ensuring that improving access will form part of the vision and strategy, and to aim for access for everyone. However, the term “more accessible” must have the definition and clarity of what actually needs to be achieved as set out in these amendments. My noble friend Lord Blunkett is right to seek a firm commitment in the Bill on what this vision and aim must cover and will mean in practice, and to make sure that the Bill requires the relevant bodies to have a legal obligation to ensure access for those living with disabilities. Of course, there are already obligations in statute, such as the Equality Act, but the Bill needs to make it clear that this is a core intention behind the restoration.

At Second Reading, my noble friend Lady Smith asked the noble Earl to explain the remit of the disability sub-committee proposed by the Government during the passage of the Bill in the Commons. Can the Minister provide any further information on this, or undertake to write to noble Lords on the proposed committee's work and role?

I would like to raise the important issue of how the R&R programme will interface and communicate with our parliamentary committee structures. The noble Baroness, Lady Scott, referred to this at Second Reading. I would be grateful if the Minister responded to this point. I serve on the Services Committee, which has a special meeting in early September with the R&R team. The committee has been very careful to ensure that the current extensive parliamentary works programme always has a view to what is proposed as part of R&R.

On disabilities, the committee was told at its last meeting by one of the R&R team leaders that currently only 12% of the Palace has compliant step-free access. The noble Baroness, Lady Byford, mentioned this. The potential for replacing non-compliant lifts in their

current locations is limited and when combined with local interventions such as ramps would increase the accessible area only to around 30%. Initial investigations indicate that providing an exemplary level of non-discriminatory access for people with disabilities and limited mobility would require the complete re-provision of lifts throughout the Palace. This is just one aspect of the scale of the challenge the sponsor body has to, and must, deal with.

Baroness Barran (Con): My Lords, I express my gratitude to the noble Lords, Lord Blunkett and Lord Berkeley, and my noble friend Lady Byford for tabling these amendments. The Government are grateful for the opportunity to work with the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, to bring forward his Amendment 7 today and its improvements to Clause 2(4)(e).

The Bill currently provides that the sponsor body must have regard to the need to ensure that any place in which either House of Parliament is located while the parliamentary building works are carried out, and the Palace of Westminster after the works are complete, are accessible to people with disabilities. It is also already part of the shadow sponsor body's vision to provide exemplary standards of access for everyone to a restored and renewed Palace—a far cry from the 12% referred to by my noble friend Lady Byford and the noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler. However, we have welcomed the opportunity to work with the noble Lord further on this very important issue.

The Government support this amendment, which specifies that:

“In exercising its functions, the Sponsor Body must have regard to ... the need to ensure that ... (after completion of those works) all parts of the Palace of Westminster used by people working in it or open to people visiting it ... are accessible to people with disabilities”.

In the words of the noble Lord, this is to make exemplary standards of access for everyone, a phrase also used in the vision document for the sponsor body. We consider that this amendment strikes the right balance between ensuring that the sponsor body has regard to the need to make the Palace as accessible as possible for people with disabilities and operating within the parameters of existing legislation, as noted by the noble Lord, Lord Stunell.

To be clear, as several noble Lords mentioned, some parts of the Palace are likely to remain inaccessible. In particular, in the less-visited extremities of the Palace of Westminster the provision of step-free access is unlikely to be practicable. However, Amendment 7 will give members of the public with a disability access to the parts of the Palace they need to access, and parliamentarians, staff and contractors access to the areas they use. In response to the question about how much more of the Palace will be available—which I think was originally asked by the noble Baroness, Lady Smith—I undertake to write to the noble Baroness, Lady Wheeler, on that point and on the point about committee scrutiny, if I may.

Turning to Amendments 17 and 17A on reporting, I must express some reservations. We believe that these amendments reflect concern about the degree of commitment to ensuring disabled access. Given our agreement to Amendment 7, we believe that these

amendments are no longer necessary. Amendment 17 would require the delivery authority to lay a report before both Houses, setting out what steps it will take to ensure that the restored Palace of Westminster is fully accessible for people with disabilities. Amendment 17A would require that report to cover any building used temporarily by Parliament during the works, as the noble Lord explained.

As I have already set out, the Government agree that these works are an opportunity to make the Palace more accessible for people with disabilities. That is why the Bill requires the decant locations to be accessible for people with disabilities, and I have just outlined our support for the noble Lord's Amendment 7 to strengthen that commitment. The Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster said in its report in 2016 that the two decant locations were recommended not only for their locality and legacy benefits, but for the opportunities they present for greater accessibility. Indeed, it was a key recommendation that:

“All temporary accommodation should be designed with accessibility in mind, and make suitable provision for Members, staff and visitors with a disability”.

Under the Bill, the sponsor body and delivery authority will need to formulate proposals relating to the design, cost and timings of the works. This will form the outline business case, which must be approved by Parliament before the substantive works can proceed. It will include proposals on how the programme intends to make the Palace and the decant locations accessible for people with disabilities, in line with the spirit of Amendment 7. In formulating these proposals, the sponsor body will need to consult parliamentarians. This consultation will be an opportunity for Members to feed in what they feel is required on disabled access, as well as on other important areas such as safety and security, environmental sustainability and value for money. We are concerned that such a report on the specific issue of disabled access alone could reduce clarity and accountability in governance.

Noble Lords will appreciate that a balance needs to be struck between several factors in restoring the Palace. In considering access for people with disabilities, the sponsor body and delivery authority will need to comply with any legal obligations, such as those under the Equality Act 2010 and planning law, given that this is a grade 1 listed building. Any proposals put forward to Parliament for approval will also need to balance the various requirements for the programme, including those specified under Clause 2(4). For the programme to be truly independent of Parliament, the sponsor body must have the freedom to make those judgments. We are concerned that the report prescribed by these amendments could override these other requirements and blur the lines of accountability for different elements of the project. For the reasons outlined above, the Government support Amendment 7 relating to disability access, but have reservations on Amendments 17 and 17A relating to disabled access reporting. I hope noble Lords agree not to press those two amendments.

Lord Blunkett: My Lords, my mother told me never to look a gift horse in the mouth. I never quite understood what that meant—especially in my case.

[LORD BLUNKETT]

Anyway, I am grateful to the noble Baroness and am happy not to move Amendment 17 and to agree Amendment 7, on which we now have consensus.

Amendment 7 agreed.

Amendment 8

Moved by Earl Howe

8: Clause 2, page 3, line 5, at end insert—

“(ga) the special architectural, archaeological and historical significance of the Palace of Westminster;”

Earl Howe: My Lords, I beg to move Amendment 8 in the name of my noble friend Lady Evans of Bowes Park. Noble Lords will be aware that Members in the other place considered an amendment that proposed that the sponsor body should have regard to the need to conserve and sustain the outstanding architectural and historical significance of the Palace of Westminster, including the outstanding universal value of the world heritage site.

There is no disagreement on the Government’s part about the sentiment underlying this. We agree that the works undertaken during R&R will need to ensure that the architectural, archaeological and historical significance of the Palace of Westminster is preserved for future generations. Originally, as I explained at Second Reading, we were of the view that the best way of achieving this was through the existing planning processes, which will be legally bound to safeguard the grade 1 listed status of the building. We have also been cautious about the idea of including the UNESCO heritage status of the Palace of Westminster in the Bill, given that this designation also covers Westminster Abbey and St Margaret’s Church.

Nevertheless, we recognise that there is support in both Houses for the Bill to specify that the sponsor body should have regard to heritage. Because of that, the Government committed in the other place to bring forward an amendment on heritage in Committee. We have therefore tabled this amendment, which we consider strikes the right balance between the preservation and protection of the Palace’s heritage, and the need to deliver the renovations and accessibility modifications that would improve the functionality of the Palace.

The Government have been grateful for the opportunity to discuss this approach with a number of noble Lords, including my noble friends Lord Inglewood and Lord Cormack, the noble Baronesses, Lady Scott of Needham Market and Lady Andrews, and the noble Earl, Lord Devon. I am genuinely pleased that all the noble Lords we engaged with supported the drafting.

The purpose of the restoration and renewal programme is to secure the Palace, and restore and renew it for future generations. The heritage of the Palace is central to this, so this amendment will set into the Bill a duty on the sponsor body to have regard to the special architectural, archaeological and historical significance of the Palace of Westminster. This is one of a number of matters for the sponsor body to have regard to, so will need to be considered alongside others, such as disabled access. In that sense, it seeks to ensure that the Bill strikes the balance between restoring the Palace of Westminster and renewing it. I beg to move.

9 pm

Lord Cormack: My Lords, my Amendment 11 is grouped with the amendment just moved by my noble friend Lord Howe. Having had conversation with him, for which I am extremely grateful, I am perfectly content with the wording that he has referred to.

However, I want to draw to your Lordships’ attention—briefly but forcefully, I hope—one thing that worries me very much. While we sit here, one of the most historic parts of the Palace of Westminster is crumbling. If I asked one of your Lordships to go and get a handful of dust, you might think that I was referring to Evelyn Waugh and go to the Library, but you can get a handful of dust by going to the cloister.

Some of your Lordships may not be familiar with the cloisters, mainly because, until very recently, they were not very good offices for a number of Members of the other place. They are adjacent to the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft. They were damaged by, but mainly escaped, the fire of 1834. They were damaged again in an air raid in 1940. Both those unfortunate incidents were followed by restorations—after the fire by that of Barry and after the air raid by that of Scott—and both those restorations were meticulous.

The cloisters date back to the reign of Henry VIII—1520 or thereabouts. They are among the finest cloisters in the country. If you go to them now and if you are proud of this great Palace, you will feel ashamed. I was there just 10 days ago and took a friend who was an architectural historian. I will be going again very shortly, taking the chairman of Historic England, because there is real concern. That is not only because the fabric is in such a parlous state and because this is one of the most historic parts of the Palace of Westminster but because there are no current plans to begin restoration. It is even suggested that nothing much can happen until after restoration and renewal is complete. That would be a total scandal. It would be a terrible neglect of one of the most historic parts of the fabric of the Palace of Westminster.

I am grateful to my noble friend Lord Howe for our conversation. I am grateful for the recognition signified by the amendment to the Bill that he has moved, but that is only the beginning and it is not enough. If we are to be serious about restoring and renewing this great Palace, that commitment has to extend to every part of it. I am glad to see the noble Baroness, Lady Andrews, in her place, because she was an exemplary chairman of English Heritage before it was changed—where English Heritage looks after the properties and Historic England looks after the rest. She will know that what I am saying is right. It is tremendously important that the danger—I am not using the wrong word—facing the cloisters at the moment is dealt with as quickly as possible.

This ought to be one of the true jewels in the Palace. It is of enormous architectural and historic importance because, in the Oratory Chapel in January 1649, the death warrant of Charles I was signed: one of the most seminal moments in our history and in the evolution of our parliamentary democracy and constitutional monarchy. We should be making more of it. It was an office for a few Members of Parliament; it is now disfigured and defaced by radiators, and the

stone is crumbling. If we are going to mean what we say about restoration and renewal, we must restore this extremely important part of this great Palace of Westminster and, I suggest, make it available to members of the public to see it.

I use this as an example to underline the need for my noble friend's amendment. It must become an integral part of the Bill, but that is just the beginning. I would like to hear from my noble friend, when he winds up this brief debate, that he will go and have a look himself and that he will do all he can. I hope that the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Needham Market, will also go and have a look, because we need to put it right. I do not have to beg to move, because I am merely tagged on to my noble friend's amendment, but I draw it to noble Lords' attention with sadness but determination. It is a determination that I hope noble Lords will share.

Baroness Andrews: My Lords, I shall be very brief. First, I thank the Government most warmly for the amendment they have brought forward. It is an exemplary amendment: it has none of the conditions attached that I thought might have been tempting. It is a simple, elegant and comprehensive statement of what it is we must take care of and it has the right balance of technical and emotive language. So I am very grateful and I can say that Historic England, with which I still have a continuing connection, is extremely pleased and grateful to the Government for this. The noble Lord, Lord Cormack, is absolutely right.

We heard a very powerful speech at Second Reading from the noble Earl, Lord Devon, which warned us, essentially, not to be completely obsessed by the simple presentation of a Victorian building. He was absolutely right, but very much of the medieval Palace—in fact most of it—has disappeared and the cloisters are the most significant part of the archaeology and architecture left, so we should have a special care for them. I am not entirely certain whether they are designated as being at risk. I am very glad that the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, is meeting the chair of Historic England, because we can get very good guidance as to what to do. In my experience, you can always do urgent conservation and repairs, so I see no reason why that should not happen before R&R starts properly, let alone before it finishes, because, frankly, there will be nothing left if it is the stone itself that is so fragile. I would be very interested to know what comes of that meeting, and so, I suspect, will many Members of the House: maybe we can follow that up informally, or maybe through the estates department of the House, to make sure that we know that action is being taken.

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, I shall speak relatively briefly, I hope, on this issue. I welcome Amendment 8 in the name of the noble Baroness, Lady Evans, and I thank the Minister for his comments. My noble friend Lady Andrews spoke at Second Reading, as did other noble Lords, about the historical significance this building has, and I am pleased that that has led to the amendment today to ensure that a duty is placed on the sponsor body to have regard to, “the special architectural, archaeological and historical significance of the Palace of Westminster”. The amendment addresses the concerns felt across the whole House and we welcome it.

On the amendment in the name of the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, in a sense, what he is saying is the very basis of the restoration and renewal programme. I said before that we all recognise that there is that line to be trod between the necessary changes to the building and preserving its historical fabric. The whole basis of this programme is that, while we recognise the historical and archaeological implications of the building, we adapt it for modern use. He made a point in his amendment about us returning to the building. If we were not going to return to the building, we could just have a museum and patch everything up as it is now. However, because we are returning to the building, we need to have those types of adaptations and improvements. The only reason so many of our historic buildings have survived is because they have been adapted to modern use. If you go back to history, the reason why we have so many old buildings is because they have been kept in use and modernised over many years. I am also pleased that the noble Lord, Lord Cormack, makes reference to the building's status as part of the UNESCO world heritage site, as that is an important distinction to make. The point of his amendment, which is well made, is covered in Amendment 8, so we are grateful to the Minister and the Government for bringing it forward.

Earl Howe: My Lords, I am extremely grateful to all noble Lords who have taken part in this short debate and for their welcome of the wording of the amendment before us. It resolves very neatly the concerns raised by many noble Lords and indeed many Members of the other place, and I am genuinely glad that noble Lords feel that it is entirely appropriate.

I hope that I can briefly give some words of comfort to my noble friend Lord Cormack and the noble Baroness, Lady Andrews, on their perfectly understandable concerns about the condition of the medieval cloisters. First, I assure them that Cloister Court is part of the Palace of Westminster. That point is material, because it means that it will be included in the restoration and renewal works. Furthermore, however, the House authorities are planning some exterior conservation works in Cloister Court before restoration and renewal begins. Following that, the whole Palace, including both the external and internal spaces of Cloister Court, are in scope for the restoration and renewal works. With those words, I hope that my noble friend in particular will be at least partly reassured on his concerns.

Amendment 8 agreed.

Amendments 9 to 11 not moved.

Amendment 12

Moved by Lord Blunkett

12: Clause 2, page 3, line 9, at end insert—

“() the need to ensure that the Parliamentary building works facilitate future developments in remote connectivity for the purposes of outreach and parliamentary engagement.”

Lord Blunkett: My Lords, I will speak also to Amendment 13. I thank the noble Baronesses, Lady Stowell of Beeston and Lady Byford, for their

support in this. Without delaying the House, because we have been over quite a lot of this ground, this is about future-proofing and future connectivity: the way in which we foresee in the future the important element of building in the way in which we will be able to provide for this institution to be literally in the 21st century. I do not want to overegg this, because we have gone over some of the ground about participation and democracy, but it is important that the sponsor body has as one of its key elements the way in which the House can be prepared for any substantial constitutional and parliamentary reform in the future. It does not interfere in any way with the other elements we have discussed over the last five hours, but it would ensure that there was a clear remit which, again, the delivery authority would understand as well. I beg to move.

9.15 pm

Lord Stunell: My Lords, I support the amendments moved by the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett. Future-proofing is the end of some of our previous discussions, so a great deal of the ground has been covered in one way or another. We need to future proof against possible constitutional developments, developments in public expectation and changes in technology. These two amendments cover that very well.

I draw the Committee's attention to the fact that whenever we talk about constitutional change, a whole lot of people freeze and say, "We don't want to build in constitutional changes with this; that would be pre-empting another process". I point out that over the timescale of this project, a lot of constitutional change will take place, independent of repair, restoration and renewal, and we need to ensure that, at the end of it, we do not have a building that does not accommodate the changes that will have been made.

If we wind the clock back 20 years, there was no Westminster Hall debating chamber in the other place. It is now a very important part of the other place, and I would not mind guessing that in 20 years' time it will be seen as even more important. In this debate we have talked already about a more profitable use for the Royal Gallery—not necessarily financially profitable but how we might use it.

If we spend five or, perhaps, 10 years in the QEII, I have little doubt that our procedures will adapt to that building in ways which people will be reluctant to give up when they come back to this building—whether it is a simple thing, such as somewhere to plug in your iPad when you are sitting on the Benches, or something else that we have not even imagined. All these things need to be clearly in the minds of the sponsor body and the delivery authority.

It might be said that we should not be offloading this responsibility on to the sponsor body. I agree with that, but the alternative is that this House and the other place confront the questions of constitutional reform themselves. My imaginative capacity is insufficient to see how that would happen. I think that the reality will be that the sponsor body will come back to this House and the other place and will say, "We can do this, or we can do that". Then we might find that we are at last engaged in the kind of thinking that, at the moment, everyone shies away from.

Baroness Byford: My Lords, my name is added to Amendment 12. In the Joint Committee, we said that it was easier to see what restoration was about, but the renewal part exercised quite a bit of our time. In other words: what sort of Parliament did we want and what sort of involvement with democracy did we want? We have talked about the outreach programme and the educational facilities, and I shall not anticipate my noble friend Lord Bethell in moving his amendments. I felt surprised at that stage that not enough thought had been given to renewal and its opportunities. I have no qualms about mentioning that again when the noble Baroness, Lady Scott, is in her place, because I know that she is well aware of the hopes that the shadow body has—but the Bill does not place enough emphasis on that.

The noble Lord, Lord Stunell, spoke about technology. In 10 or 20 years' time, we will be able to communicate in a totally different way from the way we do now. We talked about the outreach programme run by the Lord Speaker, where individual Peers go out to schools and schools come here. With modern communications, that can be done virtually; there is enormous scope for us to relate to the general public in a totally different way. I will say no more on that because we had good discussions earlier—but I will say that it would be a shame to miss the opportunities in the Bill, and I support the amendments in this group.

Lord Bethell: My Lords, I also support the excellent amendments in the name of the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett. There are two amendments in my name in this group. They are practical, nitty-gritty measures, but I hope that they will not be brushed off for that reason, because they are important. The noble Lord, Lord Stunell, put it very well in his comments: engagement on R&R will not happen until the options are fully understood and one gets the feeling that one is making informed choices.

It is imperative that those options are clear from the outset, and we do not know what the options on educational facilities and participatory democracy are at the moment. I am hopeful for the Wallace/Adonis café—I look forward to drinking my latte there—but that anecdote has become a metaphor for our vision. There is simply no information or a clear, thoughtful prognosis on what could be done with the building. There is talk of glass ceilings over the courtyards and someone tells me that we can clear out the ground floor, but I have no practical knowledge of whether these things are at all possible. My amendments would apply to the Bill after Clause 4, but they address Clause 2(2)(b), which commands the sponsor body to, "make strategic decisions relating to the carrying out of the Parliamentary building works".

To do that, it is absolutely imperative that the body has, at least in outline, an idea of what could be done to further the educational facilities and participatory democracy.

We are talking about intellectual leadership here. I know that the Bill is largely about the administrative structures of the bodies involved, but other considerations are also important. We talked about culture and hard-baking public consultation into the way in which this project conducts its business. I have found that, in

major infrastructure projects, the intellectual leadership is often—and quite rightly—with the engineers and project managers, whose thoughts are dominated by the practical considerations of budgets, timetables, M&E, air conditioning and the physical practicalities of getting the job done. Here, we are talking about something that is softer but still important. If we leave the intellectual leadership of this project to the people who govern the practicalities, these important considerations will not be baked into the project at an early stage.

Noble Lords will be familiar with me urging for major investment in public consultation. However, to carry out that consultation, you have to understand a little about what kinds of practical options there are for enhancing the educational facilities and access to the House. That is why it is worth while investing in the budget for the right professional services to put together a clear report on the options in these two areas. I strongly recommend that they be written into the Bill.

Lord Norton of Louth: My Lords, I will speak briefly. I have no problem with Amendment 12—the lead amendment—or Amendment 18 in the name of my noble friend Lord Bethell, but I am afraid that I have my doubts about Amendments 13, 14 and 19. I think that they will place a burden on the sponsor body with which it will not be able to cope, because it would have to decide what it understood by “major political and constitutional reforms” before any reforms have taken place.

Coming back to my earlier comments, we need an adaptable space that can be fitted with changes that Parliament itself may wish to make to meet the demands made of it and to engage with those outside it. As Amendment 13 stands, there is a problem with referring to, “major political and constitutional reforms”,

without stipulating what one means by that. Similarly, in that amendment and my noble friend’s, there is a reference to, “inclusive participatory democracy”. If that is going to stay in the Bill, the definitions section will have to be amended to explain what that actually means for the benefit of the sponsor body.

So I think there are problems with the stipulations in these amendments. I understand where my noble friend the Minister will be coming from in responding to them. A lot more work would need to be done; otherwise, the danger is that the amendments will confuse rather than clarify.

Lord McNicol of West Kilbride: My Lords, I rise to support the amendments before us, especially the amendment moved by my noble friend Lord Blunkett. I am speaking on behalf of my noble friend Lady Smith on Amendment 14 and will touch on Amendments 18 and 19.

The amendments in this group broadly consider different aspects of the future Parliamentary Estate. I turn first to Amendment 12, which deals with remote connectivity. This House earlier discussed the wider issue of engagement, and I believe there is a consensus—nearly full consensus—that prior, during and after the work we must consult as much as necessary. Future technology should be considered, introduced to the

estate where possible and accommodated into the future arrangements if this can be to the benefit of maintaining engagement with the wider community and public.

Amendment 14, in the name of my noble friend Lady Smith, relates to the need for a modern working environment for parliamentary staff. More than 8,000 people work on the estate, and present conditions for many of the staff are insufficient. The sponsor body must have regard for this and factor in the opportunity to improve working conditions during the programme. It should consult with trade unions and other organisations about working conditions.

Finally, Amendments 13 and 19 focus on participatory democracy, while Amendment 18 relates to the educational provision on the estate. Parliament should and can be an inspiring place and offer incredible opportunities to learn about how democracy works. We heard earlier from the noble Lord, Lord Forsyth, who talked about this being a very special place and still feeling awe, even after spending three decades in the other place and this place. We feel it when we bring visitors and guests in here. There is an opportunity through this process to expand on that and to open that opportunity up to more people.

My noble friend Lord Blunkett and the noble Lord, Lord Stunell, talked about future-proofing, and the noble Lord, Lord Norton, touched on issues relating to Amendment 13. My understanding and reading of the amendment are that it talks about the capability and ability to absorb and deal with future changes. It really just opens up the possibility; it does not force or drive any future constitutional changes but just deals with allowing us and the body to deal with the capabilities of any future changes.

9.30 pm

Baroness Barran: I thank the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, and my noble friend Lord Bethell for tabling these amendments on education, outreach, modernising the Palace as a workplace and democratic renewal. As the amendments cover a wide range of issues, I shall respond to them individually.

The amendments of the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, would require the sponsor body to have regard to the need to ensure that the works facilitate future outreach activities, are capable of accommodating future constitutional reforms and promote participatory democracy through the works. The Government agree with the noble Lord that the works should be sufficiently flexible to accommodate any future reforms in either House, be they political or constitutional, and facilitate opportunities for outreach and engagement.

The nature of the work will itself present excellent opportunities. For example, some have suggested this could be a legacy use of the Commons decant chamber, as Richmond House will be incorporated into the permanent Parliamentary Estate and will have flexibility built in to enable a range of legacy uses.

It is a matter for both Houses to determine any reforms to their procedures, and it will be important for the programme to facilitate rather than impede such developments. The shadow sponsor body has explicitly stated that part of its vision is that the programme will,

[BARONESS BARRAN]

“Help facilitate any procedural changes that may be requested by either House”.

Any future procedural changes will not necessarily be contingent on the restoration work.

Under the Bill, the sponsor body has a duty to determine the strategic objectives of the works and to make strategic decisions relating to those works. The sponsor body is required to consult parliamentarians on the strategic objectives of those works. These are matters which should be properly considered at that stage, alongside other considerations raised by Members of both Houses, in order for the sponsor body to assess what should be the overall priorities for the programme rather than these being on the face of the Bill; then the outline business case will set out how the priorities will be realised.

As my noble friend Lord Howe has explained, work is already being undertaken by the shadow sponsor board to develop a public engagement strategy. This is being developed in consultation with both Houses in order to deliver on the Bill’s requirement for the programme to deliver facilities for education and for visitors in future. It is part of the shadow sponsor body’s vision to help Parliament to connect people with the past, present and future of parliamentary democracy through engagement with its rich heritage.

The shadow sponsor body has agreed a goal to:

“Help facilitate any procedural changes that may be requested by either House”,

as part of its functionality and design strategic theme, which commits the programme to:

“Deliver a building which supports Parliament’s core function as a working legislature, both now and in the future using high-quality design and technology”.

The shadow sponsor body has also stated in its vision to ensure the building enables public engagement with the proceedings and wider activities of the two Houses. This strategic approach was also endorsed by the Commissions of both Houses in May of this year.

I turn now to the amendment tabled by the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Basildon, which would require the sponsor body to have regard to the need to create a modern working environment within the Palace of Westminster. The Government agree that the works must take into account not only the requirements of parliamentarians but, as the noble Lord, Lord McNicol, said, of all the staff who work within the Palace, ensuring that their needs and requirements are properly taken into account. As I noted in my earlier remarks in relation to the amendment of the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, the shadow sponsor body has, as part of the functionality and design strategic theme, a commitment to deliver a building which supports the core function of Parliament as a working legislature, both now and in the future using high-quality design and technology. The shadow sponsor body has already identified this as a key priority for the works. As part of its vision for the programme, the shadow sponsor body is committed that the restored Palace will have a,

“flexible, effective and enjoyable working environment”—

something I am sure all your Lordships are looking forward to.

In turn, this will clearly require the sponsor body to engage with staff. This work is already under way. In late 2018 and early 2019, the shadow sponsor body distributed a questionnaire to all who work in both Houses—Members and staff—complemented by supplementary engagement with teams who have infrequent access to computers. The results of the questionnaire have been considered by the shadow sponsor body and will be communicated to all parliamentarians and their staff in the autumn via the internal newsletter and the parliamentary intranet. The shadow sponsor body has hosted workshops with House staff on current ways of working and been in dialogue with the unions representing Members’ staff—MAPSA, Unite and the NUJ—as well as with the HR teams in both Houses who lead on discussions with staff trade unions. I hope that the noble Baroness and the noble and learned Lord, in whose names the amendment stands, will agree that the fundamental points raised in the amendment are captured in the priorities of the sponsor body in relation to the nature of the working environment and the consultation with staff that needs to underpin it.

Finally, turning to my noble friend Lord Bethell’s amendments on reporting, I must express some reservations. These amendments would require the delivery authority to lay a report before both Houses setting out what steps it will take to ensure that the restored Palace of Westminster provides educational programmes for schoolchildren and opportunities for participatory democracy. The Government agree that these works are an opportunity to build a restored Parliament which provides better educational facilities and opportunities for the public to engage more in the work that we do. Under the Bill, the sponsor body must have regard to the need to provide educational and other facilities. The Bill already provides that the sponsor body and the delivery authority must enter into a programme delivery agreement, which contains, “provision about the review of the Delivery Authority’s activities by the Sponsor Body”.

A variety of reports will be requested and produced by the delivery authority with regards to the review of its actions by the sponsor body. While this amendment deals with one possible example of such reports, the shadow sponsor body’s preference is to define these in the programme delivery agreement rather than in the Bill.

Under the Bill, the delivery authority will need to formulate proposals relating to the design, cost and timing of the works which reflect the priorities set by the sponsor body. This will form the outline business case, which must be approved by Parliament before the substantive works can proceed. Given the duties placed on the sponsor body in the Bill, we expect that this will include proposals on how the programme intends to develop educational facilities.

As my noble friend will be aware, we strengthened this provision in the Bill in the Commons so that the provision of education facilities is a need rather than being desirable. Furthermore, as part of the shadow sponsor body’s vision for the programme, it is committed to a restored Palace that encourages,

“wider participation in the work of Parliament”.

We are mindful that a balance needs to be struck between a number of factors when restoring the Palace. Any proposals that are put forward to Parliament for approval will also need to balance the various requirements for the programme, including those specified under Clause 2(4). For the programme to be truly independent of Parliament, the sponsor body must have the freedom to make those judgments through thoughtful and creative assessments of the options. Just as in the case of Amendment 13 from the noble Lord, Lord Blunkett, we are concerned that the reports prescribed by these amendments could override these other requirements and risk reducing the clarity of accountability for the works undertaken.

For these reasons we must express reservations about the amendments, but we encourage the noble Lord and others to feed in their views to the sponsor body's consultation which will be launched once it is established in statute. I hope that on that basis the noble Lord will consider withdrawing the amendment.

Lord Blunkett: My Lords, it is getting even later. I am very grateful for the contributions and for the Minister's response. I think we will return to some of this on Report. I shall reflect on what has been said. I want to pick up two things. The noble Baroness, Lady Byford, rightly drew attention to the fact that the Joint Committee was exercised about the almost dismissive nature of the renewal, as opposed to the restoration, element. That is what has driven me to table my amendments. I am sure my noble friend Lady Smith will reflect on whether she wishes to come back on some of the broader issues.

The noble Lord, Lord Norton, and I first met 50 years ago this October when we took up our places as undergraduates in the same department of the same university. I am always as prepared to listen to him and reflect as I was in the seminars in those days, so I will reflect on his comments in relation to Amendment 13. I shall not move the remaining amendment in my name, but I ask the Minister, as I did earlier, whether over the summer we may reflect on how we can achieve the goals that I think most people set out this evening in a way that ensures that we are a participatory democracy with connectivity in exactly the way that the Senior Deputy Speaker has been endeavouring to spell out in the work of modernising our committees and connecting with the world outside. I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 12 withdrawn.

Amendments 13 to 16A not moved.

Clause 2, as amended, agreed.

Clauses 3 and 4 agreed.

Amendments 17 to 19 not moved.

Clause 5: Consultation strategy

Amendment 20 not moved.

Amendment 21

Moved by Lord Wallace of Tankerness

21: Clause 5, page 4, line 33, at end insert—

“() Any strategy or revised strategy published under this section must include the Sponsor Body's best estimate of the timeline for the Palace restoration works, including likely dates for the decant of each House and the estimated date of completion.”

Lord Wallace of Tankerness: My Lords, I promise to be as brief as I can. This is a probing amendment that I do not seek to push further. Clause 5 is about consultation strategy. It indicates that the sponsor body must prepare a strategy for consulting Members of each House of Parliament and must keep that strategy under review and revise it where appropriate. The purpose of my amendment is to require that the strategy or any revised strategy which is published under this section includes the sponsor body's best estimate of the timeline for the Palace restoration works, including likely dates for the decants of each House and, when they have taken place, the estimated date of completion.

In one of the earlier debates, the noble Lord, Lord McNicol, talked about large infrastructure projects and the many that have run over budget or over time. Clearly if we are trying to engage the public and keep them on side, that can often be the thing that makes them less receptive to a major project. Therefore, it is important that we ensure that there is some focus on the timeline so that the public are well aware of the likely dates. If there is any reason—there might be a very good reason—why things fall behind schedule, it is important that people know why and that a proper explanation is offered.

9.45 pm

I specifically want to refer to issues that were raised at Second Reading in the other place and in the report of the Joint Committee, which looked at the draft Bill in relation to works on the Northern Estate. We heard today and at Second Reading that the intention is that the works relating to the Northern Estate project will be brought within the ambit of the sponsor body. The chair of the Joint Committee on the draft Bill, Dame Caroline Spelman, said at Second Reading:

“The main reason for the delay is the chosen plan for the decanting of Parliament to a replacement building on the site of the present Richmond House. Because Richmond House is a listed building, it will be more difficult to demolish and rebuild it under planning law. The Committee took the view ... that under the Bill as it stands, Parliament is not taking separate planning powers to itself for this purpose”,

which I think many in your Lordships' Chamber will agree with,

“but will be subject to the same planning regime ... We were told, however, that the demolition and rebuilding of Richmond House would cause some delays, as there would inevitably be strong objections from those who value its heritage”.—[*Official Report*, Commons, 21/5/19; col. 654.]

It would be very useful for this House to be updated on where the Government think we are on the planning application with regard to Richmond House. What progress has been made, and what assessment has been made of any likely objections and of whether there

[LORD WALLACE OF TANKERNESS]

could be such matters as judicial review? Clearly, that could lead to a serious delay. Indeed, paragraph 160 of the report of the Joint Committee looking at the draft Bill says:

“Although it would be possible to work around the loss of this land”—

the Ministry of Defence car park land, which I will come back to—

“because of the need to move access arrangements and dismantle and rebuild accommodation as the works developed, there would be significant extra costs—we were told in the region of £350 million—and delay (possibly resulting in decant being postponed for several years, until 2028)”.

That is quite a serious delay and cost. Therefore, it is not unreasonable that, if these delays and associated costs creep up on us, we know what is happening, why it is happening and what is being done to address it. Indeed, it would be interesting to hear whether the issue of the Ministry of Defence car park has been sorted out.

I conclude by referring to the final sentence of paragraph 161 of the Joint Committee report:

“we note that our inquiry appears to have had a role in bringing the ‘Ministry of Defence car park’ problem to the notice of Members of both Houses and others, which underlines the role of select committees in facilitating, as well as hindering, projects”.

My hope is that if the sponsor body has a responsibility or duty to report on any delays and why they are taking place, it will help to focus minds and do some good. It will be able to show that this project has the priorities and makes the progress that I think we wish to see. I beg to move.

Lord Berkeley: My Lords, I fully support the amendment, although I would go one step further. The noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, has rightly identified the planning problems that could occur with Richmond House. I suspect that there will be equal problems with the design of the temporary Chamber for our friends down the other end—the colour of the carpet, the comfort of the Benches and so on. However, the same problems will occur when we start thinking about what this place will look like when we come back. We have been speaking about it all evening but I am referring to the kind of facilities that we want, how much it will cost and what changes there will be. No doubt that will cause delays as well, if only because the Treasury will say that the costs are too high or something like that.

I agree with the noble and learned Lord’s amendment. There should be very regular reports—maybe every six months—on the timescale of the decant and, subsequently, on the refurbishment of this place. But, if he considers bringing it back on Report, he should add something about cost. We are not very good at maintaining costs for things; he knows my views on Crossrail and HS2. Whoever is to blame, we are very good at hiding the real costs or results of programmes for several years then suddenly shocking Parliament and the public. Crossrail was on time and on budget until this time last year; now it is several years late and we do not yet know what the budget is going to be as we have not been told. People must have known about these things, as relating to HS2, several years before the problem occurred.

I hope that we will not have the same problem here. We need to be honest and transparent and set an example with respect to the changes that we have made. I hope the Minister can give us some kind of commitment that such honesty and transparency, and regular updates, will be features of rebuilding this place. It will be very difficult; there will be many changes and probably cost-overruns, which is not surprising when you are working in a building like this, but let us at least know what is going on, in good time.

Lord Adonis: My Lords, I will be brief: the situation is worse than that described by my noble friend Lord Berkeley, if I can deepen his gloom. With HS2 and Crossrail, with which I was deeply familiar, by the time we came to publishing legislation we knew what the project was going to be. The project was defined; indeed, at the second stage of the HS2 Bill, which had just been agreed by the House of Commons, we knew within a few metres what the line and specification of works would be and so on. We have a defined project—it has just proved much more expensive and problematic to deliver than was conceived. The problem we face with the parliamentary rebuilding work is that we are setting up the sponsor body before we have a defined project.

There is a very good reason for that: we are literally starting from scratch and trying to decide the best way forward, and this probably is the best way forward. I have views on whether we should consider other options—we will come to that in a while—but we are currently at such an early stage of the work that we do not have the faintest clue what the costs will be. We do not have a project description; all we have is a few back-of-the-envelope, broad objectives, a very old costing on the basis of them and a few timelines plucked out of a hat. We also have the potential for massive controversy, which we can already see, about the nature of the decant, where we will go, what we will come back to and so on.

What the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, is proposing—that there should be best estimates for the timeline at the point at which the strategy is published—is perfectly sensible. There is also another reason why it should be done: it is my view that we are at such an early stage of planning, and the issues involved in the restoration and renewal of the Houses of Parliament are so great—because of the wider context referred to earlier by the noble Lord, Lord Norton, of big questions about the future of our parliamentary democracy—that I do not believe it is sensible to be closing down significant options at this stage; we are at such a preliminary stage in devising what the project will be. I am sorry to keep making this point but, since we will be returning to it in September, I am very anxious to keep it open: we should include the question of where the decant should be—there is very good reason to propose that it should not be somewhere immediately adjacent to the Houses of Parliament but could be in another part of the United Kingdom—and where the ultimate Parliament will be.

I agree with what the noble and learned Lord said. On the basis of my knowledge of big infrastructure projects and the stage we are at currently, it is very plausible that there could be three or four years’ delay

before the decant starts. If the decant does not start until 2028, we will not move back here until between 2038 and 2040. To put some context on this, phase 2 of HS2 is currently scheduled to open in 2032. So, relatively speaking, it is going to take much longer to complete the restoration and renewal of Parliament than to build a 330-mile high-speed line, which is the biggest single infrastructure project in the world outside the Republic of China. Keeping a few options open at this stage is sensible in terms of planning. We should take advantage of the situation at the moment to think a bit more broadly about where we intend our parliamentary democracy to go over the 100 to 150 years ahead, and in doing so demonstrate the same vision that our Victorian forebears showed when they designed these Houses of Parliament to be the centre of an imperial legislature in the 1840s.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: My Lords, I feel that we have already segued into later debates. With due respect to my noble friend, I have to challenge his “back of an envelope” assessment. If he comes to my office, I will show him a huge amount of paperwork—documents that some of us have worked on over the last couple of years. If it was all on the back of an envelope, the envelope would be enormous.

We have gone a little wider than the amendment by the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, but I do think he is on to something. I understand that the question of the Ministry of Defence and the car park has now been resolved—but, I suspect, given the extra cost that would have been involved had it not been resolved, that public attention might well have encouraged them to move a little more quickly than they did. Again, we come back to what we are really talking about here: engagement, information and openness. The more that we can say what is intended to be done, the greater will be our ability to monitor the project.

In most large projects that I know, there is some slippage. Noble Lords are right that this project is at a relatively early stage, but quite a lot of planning has gone into it already. We do not need to say, “This will happen on 3 January 2022”, but it should be possible to have an idea of a timeframe for when certain things are likely to happen. That would help with public engagement and the engagement of colleagues around the House.

Earl Howe: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, for his amendment on the important issue of decant and its timeline. His amendment would require the sponsor body to provide its best estimate for the timeline of the Palace restoration works when consulting parliamentarians.

As noble Lords are aware, the full decant, restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster is scheduled to take place from the mid-2020s until the mid-2030s. I absolutely recognise that noble Lords are seeking further clarity on those dates. It is very much my hope, and that of the Government, that the work will be completed expeditiously and that we will move back to the Palace as swiftly as possible afterwards. Under the Bill, the delivery authority is required to formulate proposals for the works, including the timing of those works. This will form the outline business case, the OBC, which Parliament will need to approve before the

substantive works commence. If for any reason the timings change significantly, the sponsor body will need to come back to Parliament for further approval. It is at that stage—the presentation of the OBC—that the timing of the works will become clear.

The Government have of course thought about requiring the sponsor body to provide its assessment of timings at the consultation stage, even if it is just a best estimate. The trouble with that is that the sponsor body at that stage will still be in the process of formulating the OBC, and any forecast timings will be at best a very rough estimation. I argue that this would risk setting expectations prematurely. Those expectations would then inevitably need to be revised when the sponsor body placed its proposals before Parliament prior to approval.

I shall give a simple illustration of that. We have had a wide-ranging and interesting debate on what noble Lords would like to see from a restored Palace. Those aspects of the plan are not the sort of thing that can be nailed down a priori. They are therefore bound to affect the length of time that the works will take.

Furthermore, one essential first step for R&R is the works to Richmond House, which the noble and learned Lord mentioned, to enable the decant from the other place. The timing of those works will inevitably affect the start time for R&R—so clearly we would not want to decant before those works had happened. The noble and learned Lord asked where we were in the planning process for Richmond House. All I can say is that the Northern Estate programme is currently consulting the public on its plans for Richmond House. We expect it to make a formal planning application to Westminster City Council by this autumn.

10 pm

Regarding the MoD car park, as I made clear at Second Reading, my understanding is that good progress has been made between the Ministry of Defence and Parliament on the use of the car park. I believe that no serious material issues are still outstanding on that front.

To sum up, while I have considerable sympathy with the noble and learned Lord’s desire for clarity on the R&R timescale at the point when parliamentarians are being asked for their views on it, I believe that this is an unrealistic aim, for the reasons I have given. I am sure that the sponsor body will be as helpful as it can to parliamentarians at the consultation stage, but, with the best will in the world, the precise timescale of the works at that juncture will be subject to too many “what ifs”.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness: My Lords, I am very grateful to those who have taken part in this debate and indicated some support for the general approach I was taking. I am very grateful to the Minister for his response and thank him specifically for his update on the planning in relation to Richmond House—although I think it was very clear, or at least implicit in what he said, that there are still possibilities of that taking time. There is the possibility of a challenge if Westminster City Council were to give positive approval. So it is quite clear that there could be some factors that could delay decant.

[LORD WALLACE OF TANKERNESS]

As the debate unfolded, it seemed that there was some support for having some kind of reporting back to Parliament. I note and understand the point the noble Earl made that if we do it at the consultation stage it could raise expectations, and that the appropriate point would be after the outline business case had been made. He said that if there was a material change, the sponsor body might have to come back. I will reflect and consult with others on whether we want to put something in the Bill on that, rather than just leaving it open-ended about what would be a material change. We may want to do something that would require the sponsor body to continue to update us after the initial approval of the outline business case.

Lord Adonis: I thank the noble and learned Lord for giving way. To some extent, this debate is unreal, because there are already dates out there. We have been debating the dates of 2025 for the decant and 2035 for moving in. At every stage of the preparation of the plans, the questions that will be asked are, “Are you sticking to the 2025 date or not? If not, when is it moving to and how long will it be before you get back?”. The idea that the sponsor body—with its chair and chief exec—will be able to avoid publishing and giving its view on this issue is entirely unreal.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness: The noble Lord makes an important point. When I was on the Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster, our expectation was that we might decant in 2023, but it is now clear that that is no longer the case. Dates have been put out there. We need to maintain public confidence in the project, in terms of not only time but cost. Having been one of the first Members of the Scottish Parliament, I recall well what that can mean in relation to building a parliamentary building. To maintain public confidence, it is important that explanations are given. Often things are no fault of anyone—they are just circumstance—but often it helps to explain what the circumstances are. Therefore, it might merit considering whether we can come back to this at a later stage. In the meantime, I beg leave to withdraw this amendment.

Amendment 21 withdrawn.

Clause 5 agreed.

Clause 6: Relationship between the Sponsor Body and Parliament

Amendment 21A not moved.

Amendment 22

Moved by Lord Wallace of Tankerness

22: Clause 6, page 5, line 6, at end insert—

“() The Sponsor Body shall nominate from among its members a member of the House of Commons and a member of the House of Lords who shall be the principal spokesperson for the Sponsor Body in their respective House.”

Lord Wallace of Tankerness: My Lords, the purpose of this amendment is that the sponsor body should nominate from among its members a Member of the House of Commons and of the House of Lords to be its principal spokespersons in their respective Houses.

This was considered by the Joint Committee looking at the Bill. It thought it a worthwhile thing to do but said that it should not be in primary legislation. Indeed, I would not necessarily want to press the amendment, but this is a useful opportunity for us to be updated on where we are and on the thinking on how we will report back to this House and the Commons on the sponsor body’s work.

As I understand it, the Leader of the House of Commons and the noble Baroness, Lady Evans, wrote to the shadow sponsor body with the Joint Committee’s findings and asked specifically about the importance of having a political figurehead for the programme. It replied:

“We note that analogous arrangements already exist in both Houses, with the spokespeople for each Commission responding to oral and written questions”,

and it anticipated that the sponsor body would,

“be invited to consider and agree its preferred approach to the appointment of spokespeople in the autumn, ahead of its transition to the substantive stage”.

It occurred to me on more than one occasion this evening that it might have been helpful if we had a spokesperson from the shadow sponsor body to tell us where it had got to on various things. My noble friend Lady Scott of Needham Market, who has had to leave, has sought to do that in a personal capacity. I am not criticising the fact that it has not happened—we are still at a shadow sponsor body level—but one can foresee situations where issues will arise. It would be helpful to have someone at Oral Questions, answering Written Questions or debates in your Lordships’ House, or making Statements and reporting back, just as the Senior Deputy Speaker comes to the Dispatch Box to present reports and respond to them.

I understand that the question of how we deal with this issue might have gone, or is going, to the Procedure Committee. The purpose of the amendment is to get on the record how the House anticipates it might deal with it, so that we can have somebody who comes to your Lordships’ House—and for that matter to the House of Commons—to update us and, to some extent, to be the face of the sponsor body and to answer for it. I beg to move.

Lord Bethell: My Lords, I will first say a few words in support of the excellent amendment from the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace. It makes complete sense to have someone in the Chamber who is able to explain to us the proceedings and progress of the project whom we can question. To have that in the Bill makes sense. I would welcome the Minister’s comments on how that could be achieved.

My amendments have a different purpose, which is to get the voice of the public on the sponsor body from the outset. There is some flexibility in its current composition, described in Part 1 of Schedule 1: the sponsor body will have between seven and 13 members, between three and five of whom will be external members, including a chair. Between four and eight will be Members of Parliament. Members of Parliament or Peers will be in the majority, which makes sense. But there is not much room in those numbers for somebody who could perhaps represent the public and champion issues such as access and education. One of

them will need to be a chair, whose focus will be on driving the project forward and managing the sponsor body itself. I imagine one might be a leading person from the construction industry, and another might have major project experience or heritage experience. That is why I would like to ask the Minister how the voice of the public could be best represented at a very high level from the beginning, when the brief for this project is being decided and the strategy formulated.

In many ways, there are fewer concerns about the delivery authority. It will have nine members, who will be more broadly recruited, with only two executive directors and the rest non-executive directors. It is really the sponsor body where I detect a bottleneck. It would be extremely helpful if the Minister explained how it could be tweaked to give more access to a voice from the public.

Lord Adonis: My Lords, the amendment from the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, is sensible because it is not otherwise clear in the Bill how the sponsor body will interact with the two Houses of Parliament. Under Schedule 1, there will be a chair who is specifically required not to be a Member of either House of Parliament; then there will be between four and eight persons among the membership who will be Members of this House or the House of Commons. By virtue of the fact that they are here, people will expect them to give accounts of what is happening, but they will have no formal standing. They will not formally represent the sponsor body and it is not clear, for example, how one would put questions to that body.

If we are not careful—this comes back to the 19th-century experience—in order to interact, people will want to get at the chair and the chief exec, who are not Members of either House. A Select Committee will be set up so that it can call them before it and interact with them. However, it would be more sensible if Members of the two Houses of Parliament are required to be members of the sponsor body. It could be rather like the way we interact with the Church Commissioners; I cannot remember whether it is the Second Church Estates Commissioner who is a Member of one House or who represents the Church Commissioners here. Is it the Bishops? Anyway, it is possible to interact directly with them. Having a similar relationship would be perfectly sensible, given how important this body and its parliamentary work will be over more than a decade.

The noble and learned Lord said that he did not intend to press his amendment; what he is actually doing may come from his experience of the work in Holyrood. He may be anticipating exactly the problems and issues we will have. It is as well to get this right in the Bill, rather than having to make significant adjustments and take what might be avoiding action, such as setting up a special committee to interact with the sponsor body because we have no provision for the body itself to have a direct relationship with the two Houses of Parliament.

Lord McNicol of West Kilbride: My Lords, Amendment 22 brings our attention to the relationship between the sponsor body and both Houses. The sponsor

body must remain engaged with the wider Parliament throughout the work. The noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace, made a number of points in this regard.

Amendments 24 and 25 seek to create within the body a new champion for education and a champion for participatory democracy, as touched on by the noble Lord, Lord Bethell. The benefits of Parliament for educational and participative democracy purposes are well established and were discussed earlier, so I have no need to go back over them. I hope that the sponsor body will agree to promote both these aspects.

Meanwhile, Amendment 28 in the name of my noble friend Lady Smith would introduce the idea of a report to ensure that the Palace is maintained beyond the works. This is an attempt to look to the future and ensure that the Estate cannot fall into its current level of disrepair. The can has been kicked down the road for far too long and work must begin as soon as it has been agreed, but there would be great benefit in reporting on how these works will preserve the long-term future. Be it in a separate account or as part of the pre-existing reporting arrangements, this issue should be given consideration.

Earl Howe: My Lords, I thank the noble and learned Lord, Lord Wallace of Tankerness, my noble friend Lord Bethell and the noble Lord, Lord McNicol, for these amendments, which, as they have explained, are about placing further duties on the sponsor body, namely: appointing spokespersons for that body in each House; appointing champions for particular purposes; and to underpin maintenance planning. The amendments are grouped to reflect the fact that they relate to the relationship between Parliament and the sponsor body. I am sure that we can all identify with the arguments advanced for these amendments and I will address each in turn.

The amendment in the name of the noble and learned Lord would require the sponsor body to nominate spokespeople for both Houses. The Government agree that it may well be necessary to have political figureheads on the sponsor body. However, we come back to the question of how prescriptive we should be in the Bill. The Government's view is that it is for the sponsor body to determine the role of its parliamentary Members, whether acting as political figureheads or spokespersons, or answering Parliamentary Questions, and that we should not prescribe these things in the Bill.

Having said that, I reassure the noble and learned Lord that the chair of the shadow sponsor body will be invited to consider and agree its preferred approach to the appointment of spokespeople in the autumn, ahead of its transition to the substantive stage. I am sure they will be receptive to that idea. Apart from responding to Parliamentary Questions, subject to procedural discussions within both Houses, the possibility could also be explored of the spokespeople making Written Statements and moving resolutions to agree the outline business case required by the Bill.

10.15 pm

The amendments in the name of my noble friend Lord Bethell would require the sponsor body to appoint from its membership champions for promoting effective

[EARL HOWE]

education for children and participatory democracy. These things should be thought about seriously. It will not have escaped my noble friend's notice that it is a part of the sponsor body's vision for R&R to,

"transform the Houses of Parliament to be fit for the future as the working home for our Parliamentary democracy".

As part of that the sponsor has committed to:

"Reconnect people from across the UK with their Parliament through improved education and visitor facilities, physical and digital access",

and,

"Ensure the building enables public engagement with the proceedings and wider activities of the two Houses".

This strikes a balance between how the sponsor body will contribute to these important issues through the works, while recognising that the two Houses will continue to lead on public engagement in the work of Parliament. The shadow sponsor body will work collaboratively on these areas with Parliament's participation service.

The amendment in the name of the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, but spoken to by the noble Lord, Lord McNicol, would require the sponsor body to prepare a report on the long-term detailed maintenance plan, so that a substantial programme of R&R can be avoided in the future. I agree with him that we should ensure that we do not find ourselves in this situation again, whereby drastic action is required to ensure that the Palace of Westminster is fit to serve as the home of the UK Parliament. The shadow sponsor body is also clear in its vision for the work that it must:

"Deliver a refurbishment programme that minimises but also facilitates future maintenance and improvement".

All these suggestions, from the noble and learned Lord, my noble friend and the noble Lord, Lord McNicol, are extremely thoughtful, so the question is how best to take them forward. The suggestion I make is that all would be better placed within the parliamentary relationship agreement—PRA. This agreement will be entered into by the sponsor body and, the corporate officers of the House of Commons and of the House of Lords, and relate to the relationship between the sponsor body and the two Houses of Parliament.

The PRA will be a fluid agreement and open to change throughout the works. It will provide clarity on who is responsible for the buildings during the works, and other such matters, as appropriate. These will include provisions on matters such as the handover, contractor occupation and hand-back of the Palace of Westminster, including the allocation of risks and liabilities between the corporate officers and the sponsor body, and related matters such as insurance. The PRA could also include provisions for there to be parliamentary spokespeople from the sponsor body, and for champions. There is no reason why the hand-back arrangements, for example, should not contain a set of recommendations for the future maintenance of the Palace over the longer term.

I really do think that provisions of this nature, which are essentially matters of practical implementation, would be better served within the PRA than in the Bill itself. In framing that agreement, it will be for the sponsor body and corporate officers of both Houses to agree

what is covered. For these reasons, the Government's formal advice to the Committee is to express reservations about these amendments.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness: Again, I am grateful to noble Lords who have taken part in this debate, and particularly to the Minister for his reply. All the amendments in this group raise important issues. The Minister made a valid argument about how we might use the parliamentary relationship agreement to deal with some of them. As I indicated, provision for how the sponsor body would report to Parliament need not necessarily be in the Bill; the amendment was an opportunity to get an idea of current thinking. I was not reassured by the Minister saying that it would be put back into the court of the chair of the sponsor body, but no doubt that can be worked through and may well be the subject of a Written Parliamentary Question later in the year—it will be interesting to see who answers it. I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 22 withdrawn.

Clause 6 agreed.

Clauses 7 to 15 agreed.

Schedule 1: The Parliamentary Works Sponsor Body

Amendment 23

Moved by Lord Stunell

23: Schedule 1, page 11, line 25, leave out paragraph (b)

Lord Stunell: My Lords, debates today have probably added £1 billion to the total cost of R&R. When we look at we have said about disability, constitutional changes, public engagement and future-proofing, I think that we can forget £4 billion and start to look at £5 billion. All that is in square brackets anyway.

This legislation is not a money Bill; if it were, we would not be discussing it. It is a governance Bill, but how we arrange the governance affects how much money is spent. For example, the opaque governance of the process leading up to this Bill reaching your Lordships' House has already cost us money, because it could perfectly well have come at least a year and probably 18 months sooner, which would have saved money. If it is hard to see how, perhaps I may say that the index of consumer price inflation in the last year was 1.9% and the index of construction price inflation was 2.8%—more or less 1% greater. That 1% leads to the whole project's expenditure falling one year later than it would have done, which has cost us £40 million on a £4 billion project—probably £50 million—simply by starting a year later than we needed to. That is before we have a plan or a project on the table. My amendment is intended to enable us to avoid unnecessary delay and cost, and to learn from that story and the lessons of Crossrail.

Once upon a time when this project was first floated, the governance model in this Bill was advocated and supported because it was going to follow the magnificent models of UK construction projects where we had at last cracked the problem and, as seen with the Olympics and Crossrail, we could now deliver on time and

on budget. We still say that, except we leave out the phrase “and Crossrail”; we only say, “the magnificent example of the Olympics”. What Crossrail illustrated is that once you have a delay you automatically and unavoidably have cost increases. That is not only because it costs money to take longer; it costs even more money to try to catch up.

My amendment is designed to save the large amounts of public money which come from delay in taking decisions about how the project should proceed. A project of £4 billion intended to take eight years is going to spend, on average, £500 million each year. That is not a trivial sum in anybody’s counting and certainly not in the Treasury’s counting. The year’s delay will not cost you all the £500 million but it will probably, à la Crossrail, cost you two-thirds—£300 million, say, will be the cost of holding things back for a year, for one reason or another. So the current way we are going to decide whether we can afford something goes something like this: the sponsor body develops a programme, signs it off and passes it to the delivery authority, which gets the design work and the tendering going and then reports back to the delivery authority, which reports back to the sponsor body, which sends it to the estimates commission, which at that point consults the Treasury. The Bill says it “must have regard to” the information or advice it gets from the Treasury. In fact, three of the Bill’s 15 clauses relate to having to have regard to the Treasury’s advice.

Whatever might be said in some idyllic constitutional theory about parliamentary supremacy, the actual tap is turned on and off by the Treasury. That is no surprise and certainly it is the reality of this piece of legislation. The point is that at least a year, and probably 18 months to two years, after the sponsor body has commissioned the work to be done, the Treasury will say, “Oh, no, sorry, that is not in scope, we cannot afford that. Spread it over 10 years, drop all the stuff about getting into the turrets, never mind Lord Stunell and hearing, let us just have it like it was in the old building and cut costs”. We will still have the delays. Incidentally, it will be very difficult to save as much by cutting things out of the design as it will cost to have the delays—which, of course, is another Crossrail story as well.

What we have is a system where we know it will be the Treasury taking the decision on whether the money is going to be spent, but instead of asking before we start, “Can we have the money to do this?”, we are going to wait until we have done everything and then the Treasury is going to say no. Amendment 23 simply short-circuits that in a very simple way. It says that it is permissible to have a Minister of the Crown on the sponsor body. It does not require that there shall be, and it is therefore still a matter of choice as to whether such a person is appointed or not. What that means is that, at the start of the process and not at the end, the Treasury would be saying what can and cannot be spent. In terms of parliamentary accountability and lots of other things, people will say, “That is completely wrong”, but the Government’s fingerprints are going to be on this and they are going to do their best to wipe their fingerprints off it, which they will be well able to do if they present it in anonymous advice to the estimates commission two years after the process began and the delays will be there.

My amendment allows the Government to find a way of being more transparent about taking the inevitable decisions that the Treasury will make and putting those in the public domain at the earliest moment. I know that I do not have too many friends on this, but I have given the House an option, which it does not need to exercise but which in five, 10 or 15 years’ time, a future Administration and the future House will be very grateful for, so that they can indeed save any more delays than those that will by then already have accumulated. I beg to move.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: My Lords, I listened carefully to the noble Lord, Lord Stunell. If I understand his argument correctly, he seems to be expressing a lack of confidence that Her Majesty’s Treasury will come up with the money and deliver on the funding at the end of the project, and to avoid that he is suggesting putting it on the committee that is deciding what the project should do and what money should be requested.

I understand why the noble Lord made his arguments, and, as I said, I listened carefully, but I am not persuaded by them. This is a parliamentary project, not a government project—that is an important distinction to make. There are times when I suspect that there may be battles between Parliament and government on this, although I hope not. I hope that in bringing forward the Bill, government is showing its intention to recognise that the work has to be done and paid for.

10.30 pm

The Minister made the point in his letter that the Treasury’s role should be,

“an external party looking inwards with the ability to scrutinise the annual funding through the estimates process”.

To have a Treasury Minister on the board—I do not think the noble Lord was talking about any other Minister—could compromise that role, blurring the lines of accountability. As a Treasury Minister, they would have collective decision-making responsibility for decisions taken by the sponsor body, which could lead to conflicting comments on the estimates as well.

I understand the concerns the noble Lord raises, but this is not the way to address it. We would not support the amendment.

Baroness Barran: I am grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Stunell, for tabling his amendment, which, as he explained, would allow a government Minister to become a member of the sponsor body. I also thank the noble Baroness the Leader of the Opposition for reinforcing the point that this is a parliamentary project and that we need to make that clear at all times.

I understand from the noble Lord’s speech at Second Reading that his key concern was about the potential lack of transparency around the Treasury’s advice on the estimates of expenditure, which in turn could lead to delays, waste and extra cost, as well as the need for Treasury buy-in to the project. The noble Lord has again articulated these points clearly tonight. He also stole the next part of my notes when he explained exactly how the process worked. However, I should add—I did not catch the noble Lord saying this, so I hope he will forgive me if I missed it—that the estimate is laid after it has been reviewed by the estimates commission and there has been consultation with the

[BARONESS BARRAN]

Treasury. The estimate is then laid before the other place for approval, including any comments made by the Treasury. I am advised that this is more transparent than the current estimates process for the funding of Parliament. To be clear to the House, this provides the opportunity for the Treasury to comment on the annual estimate, but it does not provide it with a veto. Furthermore, in terms of approval for the parliamentary building works, the Treasury is not given a role in respect of the outline business case. That is exclusively a matter for Parliament.

At Second Reading and again tonight, the noble Lord argued that a Treasury Minister could sit on the sponsor body, as recommended by the Joint Committee that examined the Bill. The role of the Treasury in this project is as an external party looking inwards, with the ability to review and advise upon the sponsor body's annual estimates. The Treasury's comments on the annual estimate will be laid before Parliament with the estimate. Therefore, the advice of the Treasury will be available when the House of Commons considers the estimate, and that provides for a clear role for the Treasury. The sponsor body and Parliament will therefore have transparent access to the Treasury's views on the value for money and affordability of the project, which I hope addresses the noble Lord's concerns around the transparency and the timeliness of that advice. Our view remains that, if a Treasury Minister was a member of the sponsor body, it would compromise that and could restrict the Treasury from being able objectively to assess the sponsor body's annual estimates. In the light of these arguments, I hope that the noble Lord will consider withdrawing his amendment.

Lord Stunell: I thank the Minister very much for her reply and the noble Baroness, Lady Smith, for her words of comment on the amendment. She asked whether I trust the Treasury. If I replied yes to that, I would be the only person in this House who did. The Treasury rightly considers itself the guardian of the nation's purse. In my experience, from both inside the system and looking at it from the outside, it is very rare for the Treasury to say, "Why don't you take more money? Why don't you speed up this project?" I think we can all anticipate that the role of the Treasury in this is to be the gatekeeper of money. It sees that role as reducing the flow of money, particularly if Members of both Houses argue the case for hospitals, schools, aircraft carriers and goodness knows what else, at the expense of this self-serving project for Members. You can see the national newspapers and media joining in that school.

The idea of someone turning the tap off is real. The only question is whether we have a system where we turn it off at the end of a long process, thus wasting a lot of money and time, or whether we turn it off at the beginning, so that we know we have to take 20 years, not 10 years, because we can spend only £300 million a year, not £500 million a year—as the case may be—in which case, we can design the project on a completely different timescale and get efficiencies that way.

The Minister said that the Treasury's advice will be published. Yes, it certainly would be, but the question is whether the estimates would have been trimmed as a

result of the advice given and the dialogue that goes on. The estimates commission "must have regard" to any advice that it receives from the Treasury. If the Treasury says, "You can spend only £400 million", and the estimates commission is being invited by the sponsor body to spend £600 million, it is not statutorily in its power to put the £600 million figure on the table in front of Parliament, because it "must have regard" to any advice. The Minister may say that that is incorrect, in which case I should like to have that on record.

I will not pursue this tonight, not just because of the time but because I have no one here who agrees with me. I just say that I think that this is a problem that will come back to haunt us, and I may yet say something at the next stage of the Bill. With that, I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 23 withdrawn.

Amendments 24 and 25 not moved.

Amendments 26 and 27

Moved by Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

26: Schedule 1, page 19, line 9, after "prepare" insert "and lay before Parliament"

27: Schedule 1, page 19, line 11, at end insert—

"(1A) A report under this paragraph must in particular include information about persons to whom contracts in respect of the carrying out of the Parliamentary building works have been awarded, in particular—

(a) their size, and

(b) the areas in which they operate."

Amendments 26 and 27 agreed.

Amendment 28 not moved.

Amendment 29

Moved by Baroness Quin

29: Schedule 1, page 19, line 11, at end insert—

"() The Sponsor Body must prepare and publish a report giving an assessment of relocating the Houses of Parliament for the duration of the Parliamentary building works to a location outside of London.

() The Sponsor Body must make arrangements for the report to be laid before and debated by both Houses of Parliament."

Baroness Quin (Lab): My Lords, Amendment 29 is in my name and those of my noble friend Lord Adonis and the noble Lord, Lord Kerlake. I did not speak at Second Reading as, owing to previous commitments, I knew that I could not be present for the opening and closing of the debate, but I attended for a good part of it and followed it closely. As we know, one of the frustrations of our work is that we often do not know business long enough in advance to prevent such diary clashes. I was struck by some of the speeches at Second Reading: in particular those of my noble friend Lady Andrews and the noble Baroness, Lady Scott of Needham Market, who both showed me that the building I had worked in for so many years as a

Member of either this House or the other House was in such a dramatic state of dereliction and decay and just how huge the task facing us is.

A colleague and friend, looking at this amendment, said, “Is this the Geordie amendment, then?” As much as I would like Parliament to be based in Newcastle or Gateshead, the amendment is much less ambitious. It asks simply that the sponsor body prepare and publish a report giving an assessment of relocating the Houses of Parliament for the duration of the parliamentary building works to a location outside London; and that the sponsor body must make arrangements for the report to be laid before and debated by both Houses of Parliament. That seems a very reasonable amendment, particularly as the study would be prepared concurrently with all the other things being done and therefore not involve delaying the timetable further. Although the idea of relocating Parliament outside London in the way proposed has been mentioned before and some have talked about the cost of doing so, as far as I am aware, no official work on such an option or the cost of doing so has yet been produced.

At Second Reading, my noble friends Lord Adonis and Lord Foulkes spoke of the desirability of locating Parliament outside London; by doing so, they spoke effectively against overcentralisation and overconcentration in our capital city. Both my noble friends and I know that the idea of relocating Parliament, either temporarily or permanently, has been around for a long time. Indeed, in her Second Reading speech, my noble friend Lady Smith of Basildon reminded us of ideas from the 1960s, such as for a new, permanent capital called “Elizabetha” to be built on land between Harrogate and York. Even as a schoolgirl, I remember that idea giving rise to a lot of excited comments in local newspapers in and around Tyneside as a result.

For the avoidance of doubt, I should make it clear that I am emphatically not in favour of building on that attractive landscape and I am not proposing the Elizabetha solution. Even the name “Elizabetha” for such a new capital reminded me of that hugely entertaining book by Bill Bryson, *Down Under*; noble Lords may know of it. Bryson describes the debates that went on in Australia over the construction of the new capital, Canberra, as the seat of Parliament and the occasionally ludicrous names that were suggested, such as “Sydmeladperbrisho”—I think that noble Lords get the point—or, even more weirdly, “Thirstyville”; I can just imagine the comments in the press about MPs and Peers moving there.

I also looked at some of the *Hansard* entries from the time when the Elizabetha idea was put forward. Some Members in the other place spoke in favour of Parliament being established north of the Trent—it seemed like a good idea to me—midway between Tameside and Clydeside. However, some of those debates make for depressing reading. For example, that oft-controversial MP Willie Hamilton bemoaned that our building here was not built and not equipped for a 20th-century role. Here we are, saying rather similar things, except that we are now in the 21st century. Through my amendment, I hope simply to look at out-of-London options; for example, looking at either

using existing buildings outside London or at what new facilities that might be suitable could be found outside the capital.

Lord Wallace of Tankerness: I am interested in what the noble Baroness says. Does she accept that, if you take the United Kingdom from the top of Shetland to Land’s End, the midpoint falls round about Dundee? Would she favour that option? It would make my journey shorter.

Baroness Quin: I would, yes, partly because there is a direct train from my local station—Alnmouth—to Dundee.

There is much that I could say but the hour is late so I will truncate my comments. I noticed that, in response to my noble friend Lord Adonis at Second Reading, my noble friend Lady Smith talked of concerns about the costs of relocation. She also mentioned the European Parliament’s different centres of activity. As a former MEP, I am conscious of the European Parliament’s travelling circus—although, in its defence, the Parliament is sadly unable to take or address that decision because, by treaty, the member states must agree unanimously on a seat for the Parliament; they have so far failed to do so, which is both costly and wearing for all those involved. However, I am not suggesting anything like the European Parliament arrangements in my amendment.

In response to my noble friend at Second Reading, the noble Earl, Lord Howe, said that,

“in October 2012, the House of Commons Commission, and at that time the House Committee in the Lords ... ruled out the option of constructing a brand new building away from Westminster and no further analysis will be undertaken of this option”.—[*Official Report*, 8/7/19; col. 1682.]

Those remarks are not relevant to this amendment, however, because nothing in this amendment calls for either a brand-new building or permanent relocation. I note that the noble Earl also said, in response to a question from my noble friend Lord Foulkes, that he would make some information available to my noble friend and other noble Lords who spoke at Second Reading, about past debates and decisions on this subject. Obviously, since I did not speak at Second Reading, I have not received that information, but I would be grateful to see it before Report.

Finally, I know that my noble friend Lady Smith of Basildon is very supportive of the idea that all regions and nations should benefit from the restoration and renewal project. Indeed, there has been a general welcome across the House for that approach. However, as noble Lords will appreciate, that is somewhat separate and does not in any way negate the issue raised in my amendment.

In conclusion, this is a modest amendment asking merely that the sponsor body prepare a report about the costings of a temporary relocation outside London and report back to Parliament. Given that that body has to come back to Parliament in any case with a number of other estimates, it would be perfectly feasible for us to ask the sponsor body to undertake this study. What I and my co-signatories are asking for is reasonable and feasible, and I hope—even at this late hour—that the amendment finds some favour this evening.

10.45 pm

Lord Haselhurst (Con): My Lords, I am afraid I do not agree that this is a modest amendment. It is a totally irrelevant amendment that is in no way helpful to making progress on the basic question of the restoration and renewal of the Palace of Westminster.

We go back a long way in examining what we should do about the state of this building. At various stages, reports have been received from consultants saying how much needed to be done; the commission has retreated from that in view of its cost; two more years on, another consultant's report has been sought; and on and on as things have clearly got worse. Finally, by the narrowest of margins we came to the point where we decided that, no, we were not going to relocate; we were going to decant and get this iconic building restored to meet the needs of Parliament in the 21st century. Now we are starting once again trying to look backwards. What is the point of getting another estimate for relocating somewhere else, unless it is to compare the cost of that with the cost of what is now proposed for the restoration of this building?

Secondly, I believe that the British public has been persuaded—I pay tribute to those involved in putting the case—that this is necessary expenditure. They have been willing to contemplate the likely sum of money involved in achieving the end of restoring this building. In their view it is an iconic building—and now we have the idea of going somewhere else. What would we do with this building except make sure it had to be restored? We would not allow it to crumble, so this is extra expense on top.

There is also the fact that we are a Government in Parliament—so how can we continue in the way we have traditionally done if there is to be a huge geographical separation between the Government and the legislature?

In my view, the whole thing is madness. Having spent far too long worrying and arguing about what we should do, and having so far achieved the assent of the public to this enterprise, I regard it as an absolute farce that we should now start wasting even trivial sums of money looking again at the costings of alternatives. We have delayed far too long. We are now resolved to move forward. It is quite right that we should think of all the considerations involved in that, but to start looking back at this stage is futile, absurd and irrelevant, and should be abandoned immediately.

Lord Norton of Louth: My Lords, I agree with my noble friend in opposing the amendment. This is not an imposition we should place on the sponsor body.

I start with a technical point, because the amendment is deficient in that it says:

“The Sponsor Body must make arrangements for the report to be laid before and debated by both Houses of Parliament”.

We can impose a duty on the sponsor body to lay a report before Parliament; we cannot give power to the sponsor body to make arrangements for debates in either House of Parliament.

I would link the substance of the amendment to our earlier discussions and relate it to a point that has not been raised and which leads me to be somewhat surprised that the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, is supporting this amendment. If we have a temporary Parliament

elsewhere, it is not only the cost of relocating Parliament, the cost of relocating parliamentary staff, the cost of relocating government so that it is near Parliament and the cost imposed on all those bodies that are in London because they want to make representations to government and Parliament and who would have to move, but, in relation to what we were discussing earlier, Parliament needs to be accessible to the people. They need to be able to come here. We need their visits and they have to be able to come and watch what is going on. They can do that because London is at the centre of the transport infrastructure—it is easier to get to London.

Where else in the country will you be able to create a transport infrastructure in the time available for this temporary relocation so that schoolchildren and any member of the public who wants to come and observe Parliament can do so? It will be extraordinarily difficult—indeed, impossible. London has the convenience that enables us to fulfil that particular function. The proposal is not feasible and it is not a burden that we should impose on the sponsor body, because it has far too much to do already.

Lord Adonis: My Lords, I am surprised that, as a resident of Hull, the noble Lord thinks that London should be the centre of everyone's attention in transport infrastructure.

Lord Norton of Louth: I did not say it should be; I said it is. That is the reality.

Lord Adonis: That does not need to be the case. Depending where you choose to locate your temporary Parliament, it could have good transport connections. I understand that we are talking about 2028 or 2029 for the move. That will be after the first phase of HS2 is opened in 2025, which will make a dramatic change to the economic geography of this country. I am trying to persuade my good friend the Mayor of West Midlands, Andy Street, to rename Birmingham International as “UK Central” because that is where it will be in terms of accessibility. It will be more readily accessible to most parts of England in terms of proximity than will London when HS2 is opened. The noble Lord has set out an old way of thinking which does not take account of the other changes that are taking place.

To bring Parliament closer to a large part of the country in the interim period is desirable, as we are going to have to move out anyway. The noble Lord, Lord Haselhurst, asked what is going to happen afterwards. The plan is that we would move back here. However, there will have to be an interim which will incur huge expense. The doing up of the QEII Centre and Richmond House and all the associated facilities will involve massive expense.

The suggestion in the amendment is well worth looking at. It would not involve any delay. I know the noble Lord is anxious that the sins of the past—ceaseless delay—are put right, but there will be no delay. It would involve the presentation of an assessment of the option alongside the presentation of the plans. Clause 7(2) provides that no work can take place until specific parliamentary approval is given. It states:

“No Palace restoration works, other than preparatory works, may be carried out before the Sponsor Body has obtained Parliamentary approval for ... Delivery Authority proposals in respect of those works, and ... funding, up to an amount specified in the approval resolution, in respect of phase two works”—and it sets out elaborate provisions thereafter.

So there would be no further delay. Other work would be carried out alongside it; it keeps an option open; and it takes account of changing circumstances, including the dramatic improvement of the transport infrastructure which will make other locations accessible. It also meets the wider concerns which most of us share—the reason this issue is so live—that Parliament is too remote from the people, and not having all of the centres of government and parliamentary authority located in London would be one way of distributing power more evenly across the United Kingdom.

My own view is that this is a good idea whose time may not quite have come—it certainly has not come at 10.55 pm, a few days before Parliament adjourns for the Summer Recess, with 10 Members present in the House. But its time may be coming and, in the context of wider debates that will take place on constitutional reform in the light of Brexit—including what might well be a decisive move towards a federal United Kingdom in the not too distant future—may come soon. Therefore, making preparations to assess it now is sensible.

I am reasonably laid back about it because of the timeframe for the work. We will not, in any event, have the presentation of the full costed plan to which Parliament can give approval for two years, as we were told at the beginning of Second Reading by the Leader—but I suspect it could be longer than that before we even get the plan. We may not move to decanting into the temporary facilities for the best part of a decade, and it could be the best part of two decades before the work is finished. I suspect, therefore, that what is needed at the moment—as I am anxious to do and as my noble friend did in her very able speech—is to plant the idea in the public mind. In particular, we should encourage political leaders outside London—who are already starting to be interested in this idea—to begin to develop it further. The context of this may change dramatically in the years ahead.

Lord Norton of Louth: As noble Lords have said, the reason for the delay is the complexity of having to adapt the estate here, which just emphasises the difficulty of creating or finding space elsewhere where we can do what we are seeking to do here.

Lord Adonis: In many ways, it is actually much easier to do it if you are building on a greenfield site next to a major transport interchange such as Birmingham International, where the National Exhibition Centre is. That would be much simpler than the hugely complex, difficult and historic estate here. I wrestled with exactly the same argument on the question of whether we should upgrade a 200-year-old railway line to provide additional rail capacity between our major cities or build a completely new line. Often, building completely new is a good thing.

This is a debate that will run for the next few years, and we have done a good job of planting the idea. I strongly encourage my friends and colleagues who are

mayors of the major cities and city regions in the Midlands and the north to advance this idea further. I am sorry to disappoint the noble Lord, Lord Haselhurst, but I suspect that he has not heard the last of this, by any means. Whatever decision is taken in this Bill, we will return to this, because it is a fundamental issue about the governance of the United Kingdom, alongside what will be a £5 billion, £10 billion or £15 billion investment—who knows what the final figure will be?—in the future of Parliament. I do not think that we will be able to keep these big strategic issues off the agenda.

Lord Berkeley: My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend on this amendment because it has started a debate which I have supported for a long time. Maybe she should have gone one step further. We are talking about a report on the temporary relocation of Parliament outside London, but if you are going to build a new temporary Parliament, be it in Richmond House or outside London, there is a cost attached, and I suspect that the cost would be not very different either way. The work in Richmond House will not be prefab but extremely glossy, expensive and difficult, as it so often is with building in a capital city. And we can forget for the moment what will be done in the QEII—although I suspect it will be lovely. There is actually an argument for building something somewhere outside London, as my noble friend Lord Adonis said, and staying there.

This place has to be refurbished because, as many noble Lords have said, it is in a bad state, but it could be used for educational purposes and conferences. That is what they do in Hungary: they built a parliament in Budapest—almost mirrored on this place—and the architect got a second prize for doing it. Hungary now has a parliament with a single chamber and the other half, which I have been to, is used as a conference and education centre. It is a lovely building and it works really well. If we really wanted to maintain a link with this place, we could still use it for the State Opening of Parliament and then go and do our work somewhere else. There are a lot of options.

11 pm

All the amendment does is ask for this project to be costed properly so that we can have a debate about it. My noble friend said it is not going to delay things. I hope that we can do this and then debate over the next few years whether we go somewhere permanently or temporarily, what the cost will be and what the benefits will be to the region. My noble friend and I do not always agree on HS2, but we certainly agree on transport and the need to have somewhere with good transport in the middle which would work fine. I support the amendment.

Baroness Smith of Basildon: My Lords, I always have a sense of déjà vu when discussing this issue. I am grateful to my noble friends Lord Adonis and Lady Quin for contacting me prior to the debate. My noble friend Lady Quin’s amendment is somewhat different from those we have seen before. It is not about relocating Parliament but about a temporary relocation while the works are being undertaken. I have listened carefully to what has been raised today, and I wonder whether

[BARONESS SMITH OF BASILDON]

we are almost having two separate discussions. There is a challenge with this project so that all nations and regions of the UK feel engaged with it. I might have made a slightly different argument in pushing for this.

We face three things as a country: economic inequality, democratic disengagement and a loss of confidence in the political system. They have been raised at different times when talking about this issue. However, I am not convinced that moving Parliament necessarily addresses them. Having said that, the proposal before us today is about the restoration and renewal of this building to provide a home for a 21st-century Parliament. My noble friend Lady Quin referred to the comments I made at Second Reading about the administrative capital and the plans to build it on the Yorkshire moors. Other countries have done that. That is a completely separate issue from what is facing us today, which is the restoration and renewal of this building. There is nothing that says that in future, if as a nation we want to take that decision, we could not do so, but we would have to accept that the cost would make the cost of restoration and renewal pale into insignificance because Parliament does not exist in a vacuum. It exists as part of a system involving government, civil society, business and the Civil Service. I have always taken the view that we need to keep those elements of governance of the country together and have those communications.

A huge challenge to this programme is to address the issue of benefiting the regions. The noble Lord, Lord Bethell, in particular, has some interesting ideas and I hope the Government will pursue them and will be a little more positive than they have been to date on engaging young people and others throughout the country. However, issues of confidence in the political system cannot be addressed by this programme. The costs would be greater than if we have to do the work here. However, there is nothing to stop Parliament at any time looking at creating a new administrative capital if that is what it wishes to do, but I do not think this Bill is the right place to address that. If there had been new arguments that could have persuaded me otherwise, I would have been happy to take them on board, but I am still not persuaded that this programme is the right time to be looking at a different site, even temporarily.

Earl Howe: My Lords, I am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Quin, and the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, for their amendment, which brings us back to the vexed issue of decant. The amendment would require the sponsor body to prepare, publish and lay before Parliament a report giving an assessment of relocating the Houses of Parliament, for the duration of the parliamentary building works, to a location outside London.

As noble Lords will be aware, the Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster suggested that the Commons should decant to the Northern Estate, including Richmond House, and the Lords should decant to the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre. I can only underline the words of my noble friend Lord Haselhurst: those recommendations were based on substantial analysis of where Parliament could be relocated during R&R. This included a pre-feasibility study commissioned by Parliament in 2012. Just to clarify what I said at

Second Reading, that study looked into the preliminary business case for R&R and considered whether Parliament should decant and, if so, whether it should be to a location outside Westminster, whether temporarily or permanently. It concluded that because the,

“geographical proximity of Parliament to Government is of significance ... substantial additional costs would be incurred”.

On the back of the pre-feasibility study, the House authorities commissioned the independent options appraisal. This was scrutinised by the Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster, which considered the various options for R&R. In its report the committee noted that it had considered the proposal to temporarily relocate Parliament during R&R. It concluded, as was well summarised by my noble friend Lord Norton of Louth, that,

“the option of temporarily locating Parliament outside London during the works, while attractive in many ways, carries an unacceptable burden of cost and inconvenience, which would otherwise be avoided”.

It reached that decision as Parliament currently owns a number of buildings around the Palace of Westminster, such as the Northern Estate and Millbank House. These buildings provide both office space for Members and many committee and meeting rooms. If Parliament were to relocate during R&R, it would mean abandoning these buildings, thereby increasing the costs associated with decant.

I listened with care to the noble Baroness the Leader of the Opposition. In its report, the Joint Committee brought our attention to the evidence of the noble Lord, Lord Butler of Brockwell, who served as Cabinet Secretary and head of the Civil Service for a decade. He described how he had,

“no doubt in saying that Parliament needs ready access to Ministers and vice versa. Departments also need ready access to Ministers and vice versa. It is an old-fashioned syllogism. The three need to be closely co-ordinated if Government is to work properly”.

I hope to convey that there has already been substantial work to assess whether the permanent or temporary location of Parliament should be outside London. On the back of that work, the matter was decided by Parliament in the Motions passed in 2018. Furthermore, contrary to the noble Lord, Lord Adonis, I have concerns that the noble Baroness’s amendment, however well intentioned, might seriously delay progress on R&R. Significant work has already been undertaken to identify the decant locations and to formulate designs for the Northern Estate. If we were to decide to decant to somewhere else at this stage, we would need to start the process all over again.

I just do not think that we should go back and unpick the clear decision taken last year or the substantial work that has already been undertaken. To do so risks delaying this important, and urgent, project. Many of us would say that the work is already overdue. We absolutely must secure the Palace of Westminster—a grade I listed building, part of a UNESCO world heritage site and the home of UK democracy—for future generations. I am sure that I do not need to remind noble Lords of the problems that this building faces. Falling masonry, sewage leaks and the alarming number of fires caught just in time all demonstrate the pressing need to pass this Bill and get on with the job. We simply do not have time to delay.

So, for the reasons I have set out, I am afraid that the Government must express significant reservations about this amendment.

Baroness Quin: My Lords, I thank all Members who have taken part in this short debate. To describe it kindly, I would say there have been mixed reactions, with some thinking the amendment far from modest and quite over the top, and my noble friend Lord Berkeley feeling it did not go far enough. The issues raised will not go away. We need to think imaginatively about how we rebalance our country to tackle overcentralisation and overconcentration. I will reflect on what has been said but, in the meantime, I beg leave to withdraw the amendment.

Amendment 29 withdrawn.

Amendment 30

Moved by Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

30: Schedule 1, page 19, line 12, at end insert “in whatever way the Sponsor Body considers appropriate”

Amendment 30 agreed.

Schedule 1, as amended, agreed.

Schedules 2 to 4 agreed.

House resumed.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 11.11 pm.

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