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PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
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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

Thursday 6 February 2020

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Southwark.

Introduction: The Lord Bishop of Blackburn

11.06 am

Julian Tudor, Lord Bishop of Blackburn, was introduced and took the oath, supported by the Bishop of Carlisle and the Bishop of St Albans, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

Oaths and Affirmations

11.09 am

Baroness Hogg took the oath, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

International Development: Freedom of Religion or Belief Question

11.09 am

Asked by Lord Suri

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure the protection of the right to freedom of religion or belief in their international development plans.

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Baroness Sugg) (Con): My Lords, we remain deeply concerned by violations of freedom of religion or belief. Her Majesty's Government are protecting these rights by raising individual cases, highlighting discriminatory legislation and funding targeted programme work. Last year we launched the John Bunyan fund and announced funding through a UK Aid Connect programme for a consortium led by the Institute of Development Studies to address the key challenges in building these freedoms. DfID's use of country context analysis has increased the extent to which religious dynamics are factored into our country programmes.

Lord Suri (Con): I thank my noble friend for her response. In Myanmar, years of unaddressed violations of freedom of religion or belief against Rohingya Muslims led to enormous and costly humanitarian disaster. The Department for International Development responded admirably to this crisis but it seems it has still not learned the lesson that, in certain countries, prioritising FoRB can save not only lives but taxpayers' money by helping to prevent humanitarian disasters before they emerge. Can the Minister assure your Lordships' House that specific plans for the promotion

of FoRB have been included in DfID country strategies for all countries with significant conflict due to religious tensions?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, I agree with my noble friend that prioritising freedom of religion or belief can save lives and prevent humanitarian disasters before they emerge. Through DfID's building stability framework, our programmes aim to tackle the drivers of instability that can create an environment for conflict and humanitarian disasters. When considering our programme, we undertake a full analysis of a country's politics, society, state and economy to identify the most significant problems hindering development. That includes the role of freedom of religion and belief.

Lord Singh of Wimbledon (CB): My Lords, freedom of belief is so central to Sikhism that Guru Tegh Bahadur gave his life defending the rights of those of a different religion to worship in the manner of their choice. Yet inexplicably, the BBC tried to stop me speaking about this incident, which carries a significance in Sikhism comparable to that of Easter. The *Times* condemned it and asked for the director-general to apologise. Does the Minister agree that it would add to the clout and voice of the Government if they too condemned such acts of censorship?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, I agree with the noble Lord that it is important that the Government step up and call out such issues when we see them arise. We are working to protect the right to freedom of belief in individual cases. We have also recently appointed Rehman Chishti as our Special Envoy on Freedom of Religion or Belief. DfID funds two posts in the FCO to work on that. We are stepping up our advocacy of freedom of religion or belief through our diplomatic network.

Lord Anderson of Swansea (Lab): My Lords, apart from the grants, which the Minister mentioned, are there any circumstances in which our aid will be reduced or postponed as a result of gross religious persecution, which, as the recent Open Doors report shows, is increasing throughout the world? Can she give specific examples of this? If not, it is clearly inconsistent with the Government's acceptance of the Bishop of Truro's report and the declared policy on human rights generally.

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, withdrawal of our overseas aid will obviously affect the persecuted minorities and the very poor, whom we are aiming to help. The noble Lord refers to the Bishop of Truro's report, which was commissioned by the previous Foreign Secretary. That sets out a number of challenges to us to implement new programmes and procedures. We have accepted those recommendations in full and are implementing them.

The Lord Bishop of Southwark: My Lords, following the previous supplementary question, I understand that in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office there is a champion for promoting freedom of religious belief at director-general level. In the light of the report just mentioned, commissioned by the previous Foreign

[THE LORD BISHOP OF SOUTHWARK]

Secretary, will the Minister consider appointing a similar champion to influence policy formation at the most senior level in her department?

Baroness Sugg: The right reverend Prelate is right that the Foreign Office has a director-general-level freedom of belief champion, the FCO's chief operating officer, in that case. DfID has a director-level champion on all aspects of faith and belief, who promotes freedom of religion and belief through seminars, blogs and training.

Baroness Hussein-Ece (LD): My Lords, the United Nations took a stand in June that it would withhold support, beyond life-saving assistance, to the Rohingya camps in Myanmar, which the United Nations described as entrenching apartheid and encouraging isolation. It has been reported that the United Kingdom broke ranks with the United Nations and will keep funding those closed Rohingya camps in Myanmar, despite fears that they entrench those conditions. Will the Minister clarify the United Kingdom's position on those camps?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, the UK remains deeply concerned by the plight of the Rohingya and other ethnic groups in Myanmar. I saw the situation for myself on a recent visit to Bangladesh and Myanmar and saw the good work that both UK aid and the UN are doing in those camps. I am not aware of the situation that the noble Baroness raises, but I will go back, look into it and write to her.

Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne (Con): My Lords, is the noble Baroness aware of the acute suffering of the Yazidi people, particularly girls and women, simply because of their beliefs? Will she be willing to say—I am sure she will—that freedom of belief encompasses the Yazidi faith as well as everybody else's, and that their suffering should never have happened?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, I entirely agree with my noble friend and thank her for highlighting the plight of the Yazidis. The UK has played a crucial role in galvanising international efforts to secure justice for the Yazidi people and the many other victims of Daesh crimes in Iraq. That includes leadership in UN Security Council resolutions and support through our aid programmes. I look forward to meeting her guests later: we have some Yazidi ladies visiting us today and I join my noble friend in paying tribute to their incredible courage and resilience in the face of such challenging circumstances.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, I very much welcome the Government's efforts on freedom of religious belief, both in the FCO and in DfID—I am a member of the APPG—but we have to be aware on occasion of false prophets. I heard earlier today that at the National Prayer Breakfast in the United States, President Trump is about to announce an international religious freedom alliance. He has a reputation, does he not, on LGBT rights and women's rights? Can I be

assured that the Government will not fall in step with such false prophets and will resist joining President Trump in such an organisation?

Baroness Sugg: I am afraid I have not seen President Trump's words this morning, but I refer back to the Bishop of Truro's report. We are determined to ensure that we take action in this area. It is an incredibly important, fundamental belief of the UK that we must promote religious freedom overseas, and we will continue to do that through our diplomatic and aid efforts.

Palace of Westminster: Restoration and Renewal *Question*

11.18 am

Asked by Baroness Rawlings

To ask the Senior Deputy Speaker what plans there are to inform Parliament on the next stages of the restoration of the Palace of Westminster.

The Senior Deputy Speaker (Lord McFall of Alcluith): My Lords, the shadow sponsor board and programme delivery team have already been working with staff and Members to understand the functions of the House and capture our requirements for the refurbished Palace. The next stage will be to engage more widely with Members on plans for Lords decant. A strategy for this engagement has now been formalised, with a view to starting in spring 2020.

Baroness Rawlings (Con): My Lords, I thank the Senior Deputy Speaker for his reply. When will the plans for converting the Queen Elizabeth II Centre into a temporary Chamber and accommodation for the House of Lords be made public? Just as importantly, when can we have the information on the cost of the building works needed for the project?

The Senior Deputy Speaker: My Lords, on the costs, today I picked up with my mail a copy of the booklet entitled *Restoration and Renewal Members' FAQs*. It contains 11 sections in total with 77 questions. If I recall correctly, the issue of costs is set out on page 12. Perhaps I may give your Lordships the costs for the House of Lords. From the 2014-15 financial year to the end of quarter 3 of this financial year, the House of Lords had spent £28.2 million on capital costs and £18.4 million on resource costs. As far as the rest of the project is concerned, all that is laid out comprehensively on the same page.

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to the Senior Deputy Speaker for that information. This is a huge project of national importance and it is right that the whole UK should be engaged with it. The point has been made that we must bear down on the costs as much as possible to ensure value for money. However, will he convey a message back to the Government and others involved? Every single time

there is a delay to this project, not only do the project costs increase but the costs of maintaining the building as it rises significantly. Every Member of your Lordships' House will have a story to tell of something that has gone badly wrong and the damage that is done. Indeed, this morning I had an electrician working in my office. For this project to proceed, it has to be mindful of the costs and ensure that there are no further delays because they just increase those costs to the taxpayer.

The Senior Deputy Speaker: I could not agree with the noble Baroness more. This is a timely Question. It was two years ago today that we approved the Motion agreeing with the other place that a full and timely decant was necessary. Restoration and renewal has a long history in which we as Members have been extensively involved. That includes the work undertaken in 2015 and 2016 by the Joint Committee on the Palace of Westminster, which recommended that a full decant would be the best option. In 2018 and 2019, there was pre-legislative scrutiny of the parliamentary buildings Bill, of which there was scrutiny by this House in 2019. The Bill then became the Parliamentary Buildings (Restoration and Renewal) Act 2019. What says it all in terms of the safety of the building is that we have 24 full-time firefighters employed in it—that is the full story. There is an urgency to this project.

Lord Stunell (LD): My Lords, will the Senior Deputy Speaker convey to No. 10 the message that however effective its red herring of York has been in putting us off the scent, and whether your Lordships finish up in York or Exeter or Hendon police college, we still desperately need to see safety and security in this building improved, given that there have been an astonishing seven falls of stone-masonry in 12 months? I emphasise the point that has just been made, which is that every week of delay increases the costs and risks of a catastrophic failure in this building.

The Senior Deputy Speaker: On the noble Lord's point about moving elsewhere, an option to move Parliament out of the Palace to a new purpose-built building was included in the restoration and renewal pre-feasibility study published in 2012. The House of Commons Commission reviewed it in 2012, decided to rule out the option of constructing a new building away from Westminster and agreed that no further analysis of the option would be undertaken. Our House Committee met in October 2012 and took a similar view, and in 2018 both Houses agreed resolutions that affirmed their commitment to the Palace of Westminster being the home for both Houses of Parliament. In light of the media stories over the past few weeks, Liz Peace, the chair of the sponsor board, attended the last meeting of the House of Lords Commission and said that she would write to the Leader of the House of Commons and the Leader of the House of Lords stating that it would proceed with the project until it heard otherwise.

Lord Haselhurst (Con): My Lords, as the security threat shows no sign of diminishing, can the Senior Deputy Speaker assure us that every care will be taken

in arrangements for the safety of Members of both Houses when we are physically separated in the way proposed? Safe access at all times needs to be a priority.

The Senior Deputy Speaker: The consultative committee on security, a joint committee of both Houses of which I and a number of Peers are members, has that subject very much on our agenda. It is a big issue. On the state of the building, there is scaffolding up by my office. It is nothing to do with restoration and renewal; it is to do with masonry falling as I look out of the window.

International Development: Aid Distribution Question

11.25 am

Asked by **Lord Harries of Pentregarth**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what plans they have to ensure that aid is directed by the Department for International Development to the most vulnerable.

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Baroness Sugg) (Con): My Lords, through UK aid we are firmly committed to leaving no one behind and supporting the poorest and most vulnerable. We are global leaders in disability inclusion and gender equality. Our Global Disability Summit in 2018 has driven real change, as has our mission to ensure that girls all across the world access 12 years of quality education. Over half of DfID's funding goes to the most fragile and conflict-affected states, where the poorest are the most vulnerable in the world.

Lord Harries of Pentregarth (CB): I thank the Minister for her Answer. As she will know, our policy sets out four objectives of aid. The first has to do with security and good governance, the last with supporting the most vulnerable and impoverished communities in the world. Will she perhaps consider whether the emphasis in recent years has swung too far from the fourth, helping the most impoverished, to the first? To take one example that happened to catch my eye, in Nigeria the biggest grant went to help elections, with the success of that judged by how many people voted. Meanwhile, Nigeria has 100 million people with no access to sanitation and 60 million with no access to improved drinking water. Will she consider whether it might be better to channel more aid through NGOs working on the ground with local communities, particularly smaller NGOs? This might be a better way of reaching the most vulnerable.

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, on supporting elections, of course it is incredibly important to support democracy and the rule of law around the world, and we will continue to do so. We are committed to spending 0.7% of our gross national income on international development. Of course, we always consider how that money should best be spent and how we can spend it more effectively and efficiently. We will continue to do so in order to support the poorest and most vulnerable.

Lord McConnell of Glenscorrodale (Lab): My Lords, among the most vulnerable groups, of course, are women and girls trafficked from conflict zones or perhaps affected by extreme weather events who suddenly become very vulnerable at short notice. Many of those women and girls end up trying to cross the Mediterranean, either through the Turkey-Greece route or the Libya-Italy route, to safety in Europe. Following our departure from the European Union at the end of last week, can the Government guarantee that they will continue to work with European partners to ensure safer routes for migration and safer outcomes for those many women and girls from across north-east Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere who end up in that situation?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, gender equality is and will continue to be a top development priority. Girls and women across the world are held back by systematic and entrenched inequality and discrimination; the noble Lord raised some specific examples. Despite leaving the European Union, we will of course continue to work with our friends in Europe to ensure that these girls and women are kept safe.

Baroness Manzoor (Con): My Lords, I co-chair the APPG on Nutrition for Growth. As my noble friend will be aware, malnutrition adversely affects young girls, children and women. Will she assure me that the upcoming Tokyo summit will be funded and that we will continue our leadership role in this key area?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, the UK is a leading player in global health and nutrition forms a big part of that. We recently had debates on its importance. We continue to support the Government of Japan in organising the Tokyo summit and we will play a leading role in it.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, the Minister said to the Chamber last week that 90% of the world's most extreme poor would be living in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030. That is why the Government's announcement in August 2018 that the UK would be the largest G7 investor in Africa by 2022 was such a significant target. Without any announcement, that target has been dropped and replaced by language, as the Minister said last week, about being "impactful" or, as in the report of the UK-Africa Investment Summit, an "investor of choice". If global Britain is to mean anything, it must be that our word is our bond to the world's most vulnerable. I ask the Minister a very simple question: why has this target been dropped?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, on climate, we have announced the doubling of our UK international climate finance to help developing countries turn the tide against climate change. We will host COP 26 in Glasgow. Much of that support will be going to African nations that will be badly affected. We held the UK-Africa Investment Summit a couple of weeks ago, which underlines the importance we give to our relationship with Africa, and we will continue to do so.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, turning back to the Question, I recognise what the Minister said about DfID's strategy and responsibility, but we

know that an increasing amount of ODA is going to other departments, in particular to the FCO. Is she satisfied that that increasing amount, which is now approaching 20% of ODA, meets the standards of ensuring that no one is left behind? The noble Lord is absolutely right: this Government sometimes get their priorities wrong.

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, as I said, we are fully committed to the 0.7% target. The noble Lord is right that we spend the majority of our ODA money within DfID, but other departments spend it too, and do very good work in developing countries. It is of course important that DfID works alongside the FCO, BEIS and other departments that spend ODA money to ensure that it is being used to best effect.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, does my noble friend not agree that it is disturbing that a number of Commonwealth countries do not measure up to the standards that we would all wish to see? Particularly since we have separated ourselves from our European partners, can there be more co-ordination with our Commonwealth partners? We must work ever more closely with them and they must measure up to the higher standards.

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, the Commonwealth is an incredibly important partnership for us. We are currently Chair-in-Office after hosting the Heads of Government meeting here in London, and obviously we will be attending the Kigali Heads of Government meeting later this year. I agree with my noble friend that we must use these relationships to promote the values we want to see around the world.

Female Genital Mutilation

Question

11.32 am

Asked by **Baroness Finn**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking to support international efforts to end female genital mutilation.

The Minister of State, Department for International Development (Baroness Sugg) (Con): My Lords, the UK is proud to support the Africa-led movement to end female genital mutilation. Since 2013, DfID programmes have helped more than 10,000 communities pledge to abandon FGM. In 2018, we announced a further £50 million UK aid package to tackle FGM. Today, which marks the International Day of Zero Tolerance for FGM, the Secretary of State has announced funding to the World Health Organization and the United Nations to support affected countries as they address FGM through their health and legal systems.

Baroness Finn (Con): I thank the Minister for her response. In 2013, the UK Government made a very welcome commitment of £35 million to be spent in efforts to end female genital mutilation. However, there

are some genuine concerns that a large proportion of that sum failed to reach women on the front lines, with the result that very little has actually changed. Can my noble friend assure the House that the £50 million to which she referred that DfID promised in 2018, which is again very welcome, will reach the grass-roots activists who have been risking their lives to end this appalling abuse of girls?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, I am very grateful to my noble friend for raising this issue today. FGM is a human rights violation that can result in a lifetime of physiological and emotional suffering. She is absolutely right that supporting grass-roots activists must be key to our approach to ending FGM. The first phase of our support built the Girl Generation, the largest ever global movement, which consists of over 900 grass-roots organisations. Our new programme will continue to support organisations based in affected communities, many of which are led by women and young people working on the front line to end FGM. We will also have a specific fund to support grass-roots activists and youth initiatives, with small grants to lead change in their own communities and to hold their own Governments to account.

Baroness Northover (LD): My Lords, I pay tribute to my noble friend Lady Featherstone for initiating DfID's first and substantial programme in this area to tackle the cultural causes of FGM. I am delighted that DfID is continuing with that incredibly important work. How are the Government engaging with the brave and outspoken individuals and groups in this country that are seeking change? Does the Minister agree that it is vital to engage both with the diaspora here and with leaders and communities in the countries where this practice is still considered to be an honourable one?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, I certainly agree that we cannot end FGM in the UK without tackling it globally. That is why we are supporting the Africa-led movement to end FGM and why we are supporting activists and organisations here in the UK. We have made some good progress here in the UK: we have introduced several protection orders and mandatory reporting for girls. That is all working to help to break the cycle of FGM for good.

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (GP): Following on from that question, does the Minister agree that there are grass-roots activists who have to flee to the UK and seek asylum and refuge here? Is she confident that the Home Office is providing the refuge that it should, both for activists against FGM and for girls at risk of FGM?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, we work closely with the Home Office to ensure that people who are fleeing the practice of FGM are very carefully looked after.

Lord Hamilton of Epsom (Con): May I take odds with my noble friend on the notion that we cannot do anything about FGM here until we have dealt with it

internationally? I do not think that is true at all. The number of convictions that there have been in this country has been minimal, if not non-existent. If we start convicting both the people who have done these surgical operations and the parents who have authorised them, we might be able to stop it here.

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, in order to end FGM, which is what we are all trying to do, we need to tackle it both here in the UK and globally. We have set ourselves the target of ending FGM by 2030; we are making good progress on that, but there is still more to do. My noble friend is right that there have been minimal convictions here in the UK, but we have issued a number of protection orders, which are helping to address the issue.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab Co-op): My Lords, does the Minister agree that our work in this area and other areas in international development has been far more effective since we set up a separate international development department in 1997? Will she be really courageous and tell the Prime Minister this when he is considering the machinery of government?

Baroness Sugg: The noble Lord is tempting me. We are incredibly proud of the work that we do at DfID, but the Government are fully committed to development, as can be seen from the manifesto where we commit to 0.7% and set out a number of priorities such as ending preventable deaths and 12 years of quality education for girls. Regardless of what the Prime Minister decides in his machinery of government changes, the Government will remain committed to international development.

Baroness Jenkin of Kennington (Con): My Lords, the APPG on Population, Development and Reproductive Health is hosting a round table on 2 March for many of the organisations and individuals who are campaigning against this barbaric practice. If my noble friend's diary allows, I extend an invitation to her to join that meeting.

Baroness Sugg: I thank my noble friend for that invitation. I would be delighted to join that meeting. Today, on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, I take this opportunity to praise the efforts of the FGM activists, survivors, leaders and charities here in the UK and around the world. I met many incredible activists last night and will be meeting some more later. This work can be incredibly challenging and traumatic, and they deserve our thanks for working so hard to end FGM globally.

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (Lab): My Lords, to return to what is happening in this country, is the Minister satisfied that teachers and school governors in our schools are being properly trained to look out for the signs of what is happening to young women who may be vulnerable to this appalling practice?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, ensuring that we reflect this in schools is absolutely part of our work domestically. The Department for Education has provided nearly

[BARONESS SUGG]

£2 million for a national programme to improve the response to FGM. We will continue to work with schools to highlight the issue.

Lord Collins of Highbury (Lab): My Lords, the Minister mentioned the efforts through health systems and legal systems to tackle this outrageous crime. However, as we have seen in Egypt only this week, where FGM is prohibited by law, these things still go on. How are we addressing education and changing attitudes to this horrendous crime?

Baroness Sugg: My Lords, sadly we saw the death of a 12 year-old girl in Egypt recently after a medicalised FGM. This shows that it is not a safe practice: there are no health benefits and it is a breach of human rights. We need to address these issues in many ways. We have seen good progress regarding legislative changes. Recently, President Kenyatta of Kenya committed to ending FGM in Kenya by 2022. We must also help to implement that law and support civil society and activists in holding their Governments to account.

Cohabitation Rights Bill [HL]

First Reading

11.40 am

A Bill to provide certain protections for persons who live together or have lived together as a couple; to make provision about the property of deceased persons survived by a cohabitant; and for connected purposes.

The Bill was introduced by Lord Marks of Henley-on-Thames, read a first time and ordered to be printed.

Business of the House

Timing of Debates

11.41 am

Moved by Baroness Evans of Bowes Park

That the debate on the motion in the name of Lord Hunt of Kings Heath set down for today shall be limited to 2¼ hours and that in the name of Lord Browne of Ladyton to 2¾ hours.

Motion agreed.

NHS: Targets

Motion to Take Note

11.41 am

Moved by Lord Hunt of Kings Heath

That this House takes note of the National Health Service's performance in relation to its priority area targets; and the impact of adult social care pressures on patients of the National Health Service, and their safety.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab): My Lords, I welcome this opportunity to debate the current performance of the National Health Service. I declare my membership of the GMC board, my trusteeship of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and my presidency of GS1, the organisation responsible for the "scan for safety" programme. I am very pleased that my noble friend Lady Wilcox will be making her maiden speech in this debate.

I have instituted this debate because I am increasingly worried about the performance of our National Health Service. Despite the heroic efforts of many staff, every key indicator is being missed. Last November saw the worst four-hour wait performance in A&E since figures were first collected in 2010. Two-week waits for GP appointments rose by 13% last year. The target of a maximum wait of 18 weeks for hospital treatment has not been met since 2016. The cancer target of 62 days between urgent referral and first treatment was last met in 2013-14.

I fully accept that these targets are not the only way to judge the NHS, but they reflect overall performance. At the same time, we have seen an increase in the rationing of medicines, and failings in ambulance services and services for people with learning disabilities or mental health issues. The CQC's review of the Mental Health Act today refers to a number of very worrying problems in that area.

Given this, it is a huge tribute to NHS staff that so much care remains of a very high quality. I absolutely acknowledge that. However, the calamitous drop in performance over the past decade is clearly having an impact on patient safety and leading to those longer waits.

I was very struck just before Christmas by the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust advising staff to make "the least unsafe decision" following a huge rise in admissions. Over the new year, the Royal Cornwall Hospitals NHS Trust told its staff to reduce severe overcrowding by discharging patients, despite the obvious risks involved. These are not isolated incidents. What has caused this? Many factors and pressures are at play. The alignment of austerity with workforce shortages, inadequacies of adult social care and a complete failure to factor in the growing older population mean it is little surprise that the NHS is reeling.

If we look at funding, the lowest five-year period of funding growth was between 2010 and 2014, and the past five years have seen little improvement. It is no wonder that the NHS is cash-strapped, in deficit and finding it very hard to invest the resources necessary to prevent hospital admissions. We can see similar trends in the workforce. In March, the Health Foundation highlighted a shortage of more than 100,000 full-time equivalent staff, including more than 40,000 nurses. The GP workforce has continued to stagnate, despite government promises to increase the numbers, and the GMC's 2019 workforce survey showed that one-third of doctors have refused requests to take on additional workloads and one-fifth have reduced their hours. It is part of a vicious cycle in the workforce. Fewer doctors and more patients means that doctors are overworked. They get ill from stress and exhaustion. They decide to cut their hours or just leave the profession, and the remaining workforce feels under even greater pressure.

All of this is happening when social care is in meltdown. In 2018, the House of Lords Economic Affairs Select Committee reported that 1.4 million older people in England had an unmet care need. We know that the number of older people and working-age adults requiring such care is increasing rapidly, yet public funding declined in real terms by 13% between 2001 and 2015. We see a second vicious cycle. The level of unmet need in the system increases, the pressure on unpaid carers grows stronger, the supply of care providers diminishes, the strain on the care workforce continues and the stability of the adult social care market worsens.

What is the Government's response? It seems to be twofold. The attitude of the Secretary of State appears to be to get rid of any target on which the NHS is not delivering, but I remind the Minister that the Royal College of Emergency Medicine has said of A&E that there is

"nothing to indicate that a viable replacement for the four-hour target exists".

I strongly encourage the Government to think again before they agree to change that target.

The second line of the Government's defence is essentially to argue that they are dealing with an unprecedented increase in demand. I am the first to acknowledge that the drivers of change are intensifying and that the NHS is clearly caring for a patient population with more long-term conditions, more comorbidities and increasingly complex needs, but this is not a new problem. The Labour Government of 1997 faced the same demographic challenge, but turned it around through investment in 300,000 more staff, 100 new hospitals and new services such as NHS Direct and walk-in centres. Waiting times came down as dramatically as public satisfaction went up. It can be done.

The Government have their own long-term plan with a new five-year settlement of around 3.4% per annum. However, as the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of London said in the debate on the Queen's Speech, the additional funding is not a bonanza; it will serve only to stabilise NHS services, and the right reverend Prelate knows what she is talking about when it comes to the NHS. Yesterday, the NAO warned that NHS trusts reported a combined deficit of £827 million and clinical commissioning groups reported a £150 million deficit in the financial year ending 31 March 2019. The NAO said that short-term fixes have made some parts of the NHS seriously financially unstable, with trusts in financial difficulty increasingly relying on short-term loans from the Minister's department.

As we look at the funding promised—we will have a Bill on it in your Lordships' House soon—I refer noble Lords to a letter written by NHS leaders to the *Times* on Tuesday, which pointed out that this funding does not include areas crucial to the Government's election promise to provide more hospitals, nurses and GP appointments. The additional funding does not cover investment in buildings and equipment, so there is very little relief for our crumbling infrastructure or money to fund new technology to improve care. We know that the NHS is facing a workforce crisis but the funding does not cover education and training budgets to help with recruitment and retention. Nor does it

offer any relief for public health and social care services, which would, I hope, if properly invested in, keep more people healthy and independent.

Therefore, the question before us is how to turn this around. I am sure that noble Lords will come forward with many ideas in this debate but I would like to propose four key measures. First, we have to plan for the long term—not five but 20 or 30 years ahead. I want to come back to the House of Lords Select Committee report on the long-term sustainability of healthcare. It was published three years ago and chaired by the noble Lord, Lord Patel. The committee said that we have to get away from the short-term fixes that we currently see and have seen in the past. It suggested that we set up an office for health and care sustainability to look at the likely funding and workforce requirements for up to 20 years ahead. Like the Office for Budget Responsibility, which has now been well accepted as giving authoritative, independent advice to government, this body could give advice to government, Ministers and parliamentarians on the likely demands on health and social care over the next 20 years. I believe that would be the start of a much more fundamental way of ensuring that we have a high-quality healthcare service in the future.

Secondly, alongside those kinds of projections, of course we need the commensurate funding. The funding challenge is immense. No one in the health service believes, for instance, that the 3.4% being given will allow them to invest in services for the long-term five-year plan. The money is not there to invest in services to keep people out of hospital; we have a crumbling primary care service because of the pressure from patients coming through the door; and people who work in the health service regard the local plans—the STPs—as a flight of fancy. They have had to publish them and have had to agree the figures with the Government because, if they do not, they will get their heads chopped off. However, Ministers are living in a dream world if they think that these plans will be delivered. Therefore, we have to find a way of funding the health service seriously in the future, but at the moment I see no indication that the Government recognise the scale of the challenge they face.

Thirdly, on the workforce, we need better recruitment and retention, and we need to increase our training numbers, but much of the problem is due to what I am afraid I have come across many times—a bullying and blame culture. It is very off-putting for many staff in the health service. I know that Ministers are concerned about this but it starts with them, their attitude and the way they deal with the health service and the bodies responsible for it. They have to lead from the centre.

Fourthly, we have to find a solution to social care. The Government have promised to come forward with one but, as we know, the last 20 years have seen a failure of nerve and an absence of political consensus. Frankly, at the moment we seem no nearer to a solution. I must acknowledge that it is a wicked problem. However, can we really wash our hands of the pernicious situation in which many people receive no care at all and many face the loss of not just their homes but their savings as the price of their long-term care?

[LORD HUNT OF KINGS HEATH]

In this debate noble Lords will raise many other issues, including improving outcomes, developing a more robust approach to public health, targeting health inequalities, and prioritising mental health and learning disability services. However, at heart, I hope the debate will come back to the issue of performance. The targets were not plucked out of the air. They were chosen because they were a very good proxy for the overall quality and performance of the NHS as a whole. In 1997, we inherited something called the Patient's Charter, which said that there should be a maximum waiting time of 18 months for hospital treatment. The Conservative Government at that point had come nowhere near meeting that target. We turned that around and delivered an 18-week maximum wait. We hit other targets as well. I fear that it will not be too long before we go back to those bad old days if we carry on as we are at the moment. I ask the Government to think seriously about the kind of health service that they want for the public in the future. Based on current trends, I am afraid the situation is deteriorating. I beg to move.

11.55 am

Baroness Pinnock (LD): My Lords, I draw the House's attention to my registered interests as a councillor and a vice-president of the Local Government Association. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, for instigating this important debate. As this is such a wide-ranging issue, I want to concentrate my contribution on adult social care. As the wording of the debate indicates, a significant part of the increasing pressure on the NHS is a direct consequence of the Government's failure to find a solution to the social care funding crisis.

Two years ago, the House of Commons Library produced an excellent briefing paper on adult social care funding in England. The report stated:

"A lack of suitable care services can delay hospital discharge, putting pressure on acute NHS services. Between 2014 and 2016, delays in discharging patients from hospital increased by 37%."

The two main reasons given for this increase—not a surprise to any of us here—were patients waiting for care packages at home or in residential care. The report went on to say that

"the National Audit Office estimates that the gross annual cost to the NHS of treating older patients in hospital who no longer need to receive acute clinical care is in the region of £820 million."

I have no doubt that both of those figures have risen substantially, as so little has been done to alleviate the pressures.

In December last year, Age UK updated its Care in Crisis figures for older people and reported that, in the last five years, there has been a £160 million cut in total public spending on older people's social care, despite rapidly increasing demand; 1.5 million people aged 65 and over do not receive the care and support that they need; and cuts in local authority care services have placed increasing pressure on unpaid carers. Of course, there is also a growing number of young adults with severe disabilities for whom long-term care is provided by local authorities, hence the estimate from the Local Government Association that there will be a £3.6 billion funding gap in four years' time unless there is an immediate and substantial increase in funding.

In summary, we therefore have what is currently described as a perfect storm, although I see nothing at all perfect in this crisis. People are becoming less independent and not receiving the support that they need to retain their independence. When they reach a crisis point—for example, following a preventable fall—and are admitted to hospital, where their care needs are assessed after treatment, there is often no residential care package or home care team to meet their new need. This is a situation where nobody wins: not the elderly person, who has unnecessarily lost a degree of independence; not the NHS, which is unable to transfer such patients to home or community settings; and not public services, whose funding is not being used efficiently and effectively.

What then are the potential changes that could help resolve this? There have been numerous reports and commissions to seek answers to the funding of adult social care. The Prime Minister declared himself committed to solving the problem, yet there were no proposals for reform in the latest Queen's Speech. All we have is a relatively small amount of additional funding and a requirement for council tax payers to find an extra 8% on top of the capped limit over the last four years. This is no more than chicken feed in the face of the challenge.

The human cost is unacceptable; the additional, preventable pressures that are piled on to the NHS are unacceptable; the inability of the Government to propose a solution is unacceptable. The options for the future are clear. The Government have a duty and an electoral mandate to act—and act they must.

12.01 pm

Lord Bates (Con): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, for securing this debate and look forward to hearing the maiden speech of the noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox.

My proposition is that, all things considered, the performance of the NHS in delivering free-at-the-point-of-need healthcare to the people of the United Kingdom is utterly outstanding, and that the credit for that should go to the 1.5 million people who give of their all every day to make it so. Each year in England, 300 million GP appointments, 23 million attendances at A&E and over 10 million operations take place. The NHS in England treats 1 million patients every 36 hours, yet, according to the 2018-19 NHS England annual report, of these hundreds of millions of engagements, just 6,395 complaints and 7,967 concerns were raised by the public through the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman. Most find their treatment to be good or outstanding.

Opinion surveys agree. The NHS comes top of Mintel's list of things about Britain that make us most proud. In 2018, a YouGov poll found that 87% of people were very or fairly proud of the NHS. And it is not just at home: the Commonwealth Fund's latest survey ranked the UK as the best healthcare system in the world for the second successive time, with Sweden ranked sixth and France 10th.

The NHS has come a long way since its formation in 1948. At that time, total government spending on health was £11.4 billion in today's prices; today the

budget stands at £134 billion—12 times higher in real terms. Staffing in 1948 was 144,000; today it is over 1.5 million, a figure which does not include 369,000 GPs, dentists, opticians and temporary staff. The demands on NHS services have changed too, with breakthrough surgical procedures and new drugs. Life expectancy has risen from 68 in 1948 to 80 now. Age is a principal driver of demand for the NHS. Those over 65 require, on average, 2.5 times the NHS resource needed for the average 30 year-old, and those over 85 an average of five times more. The over-85 age group is the fastest-growing age group in the UK and is set to double in size over the next 25 years, hopefully with my help.

All things considered, the NHS is performing extraordinary well, with its productivity growth running at three times that of the rest of the economy, which means that staff are working harder and smarter. Cancer detection and survival rates are increasing while deaths from heart disease are falling, but we cannot expect them to take all the strain. This, after all, is our NHS and we need to work together to ensure that it can meet the challenges of the future. I will make three quick suggestions as to how it can.

First, the NHS should not be used as a political football. The NHS is currently under the stewardship of the Conservatives in England, Labour in Wales, the SNP in Scotland and the power-sharing Executive in Northern Ireland. It has prospered and struggled under Governments of all political parties. Every healthcare system in the world is struggling with advancing science and advancing ages. It would be true political leadership if we could work together to find solutions, rather than blaming each other for mistakes.

Secondly, we need to treat staff in the NHS much better. They are not a vending machine delivering care packages but human beings putting their heart and soul into it. That makes all the difference. Yet clinical negligence claims have increased by 200% over the past 10 years, reaching £2.4 billion of claims in 2018—enough to train 10,000 doctors. Most worryingly, the number of attacks on NHS staff is increasing at an alarming rate, as pointed out by Unison and the *Nursing Times*. They have estimated that the number of violent incidents could be as high as 75,000, or 200 per day.

Thirdly, we all need to take greater personal responsibility for our own health and our use of precious NHS services. Fifteen million GP appointments are missed each year, while hospital admissions for obesity have doubled in just five years. Our NHS is our shared responsibility. If politicians and the public can all play their part to the same standard as our NHS staff demonstrate every single day, our beloved NHS can not only survive but thrive in the future.

12.06 pm

The Lord Bishop of Carlisle: My Lords, this is a very timely debate. I am most grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, for securing it. I also look forward very much to the maiden speech of the noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox. We have already heard many statistics with regard to NHS targets and shall no doubt hear many more. But there seems to be general agreement that one of the biggest problems facing the NHS is what many now call a crisis in social

care, which has been highlighted by this debate and emphasised by the noble Baroness, Lady Pinnock, and to which I will address this contribution.

The crisis consists of several factors—most already mentioned, so I will not repeat them—that lead to delays in discharge, the cancellation of elective operations due to lack of beds and an increase in A&E admissions, including elderly people whose health has suffered as a result of a lack of adequate care. All this is of course immensely costly in time, money and misery, as well as immensely disruptive for an NHS desperately trying to meet its targets. Given that the laudable aims of the NHS long-term plan will never be realised unless we sort out social care, what needs to be done?

I suggest that in the first place we remind ourselves just why this is so important. It is not only because it is vital for an effective NHS but primarily because the hallmark of a civilised society is the way in which it treats its vulnerable members. Recognising the intrinsic value and dignity of every member of our society, we want to offer care and respect to all, and aspire to the best by enhancing rather than just maintaining people's lives. That will involve three fundamental changes. First, and most important, is the proper integration of health and social care. This was one of the main recommendations of the ad hoc Select Committee on the Long-term Sustainability of the NHS, mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, of which I had the privilege to be a member. Although we now have a Department of Health and Social Care, there is still a very long way to go. The root of today's problem was the separation of health and social care and their means of funding, even though they are linked aspects of health and well-being. Secondly, we need proper training, care and status of care workers. We need a professional, motivated and committed workforce who enjoy high esteem, which is not always the case at present. We also need to acknowledge the immense and invaluable contribution of unpaid carers.

Thirdly, social care in this country needs adequate funding. Noble Lords will have seen the seven key principles for that offered by the Health for Care coalition in our briefing note from the NHS Confederation. The need is estimated at an extra £8 billion per annum, which obviously has to come from somewhere. That somewhere is presumably our pockets. Of course, that is one reason why this subject is so politically sensitive. It is also one of the many reasons why we so urgently need the sort of cross-party consensus to which this Government have declared their commitment.

I support calls that have been made for a Select Committee or cross-party group of some kind to be established immediately to produce specific long-term proposals—that expression, “long-term”, has been used several times already in this debate—to break the current deadlock. There are plenty of previous reports on which to draw and although this might look like yet another delay to the long-awaited Green Paper, if it results in decisions and actions, that brief delay will be well worth it. Without it, the situation will only get worse to the detriment of all concerned. As we have already been eloquently reminded, a well-funded and good-quality social care sector is fundamental to a well-performing NHS.

12.11 pm

Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Lab) (Maiden Speech):

My Lords, to begin at the beginning, I thank the doorkeepers who have guided me more than once along different corridors, parliamentary staff who supported my induction, my party colleagues and the Front-Bench team who patiently explained the rules and regulations of this House. I have been shown great kindness and I appreciate the privilege that it is to be here. My parents are no longer here to share this day, but I have a wonderful partner who has always made sure that our life together over 30 years has allowed me the freedom to pursue a political career, which is not always conducive to family life. I will always be grateful to her for her love and support.

A girl from the Rhondda, I attended the Central School of Speech and Drama and then had a teaching career in London and south Wales that lasted almost 35 years. I was an elected member of Newport City Council from 2004, the first woman to lead that council and subsequently the first woman to lead the Welsh Local Government Association. I am immensely proud of the work of local government, running public services day in and day out despite all the difficulties, and working in such ventures as city deals. I now look forward to the future of the ground-breaking collaboration across both countries and both Governments, with the innovative Western Gateway project that stretches from Swindon in the east to Swansea in the west, bringing breadth and depth to the model of economic growth.

I thank my noble friends Lord Hain and Lady Morgan of Ely for supporting me through my introduction on 4 November, the day that marked the 180th anniversary of the Newport Rising at the Westgate Hotel. We owe the Chartists an enormous group debt of gratitude for their immense bravery and sacrifice in fighting for the vote for ordinary people. I was keen to have my introduction on that day and to remember that Newport is indeed the UK's city of democracy.

I am pleased to make my first contribution to the House on the NHS. Wales is the inspirational source for this great institution and I feel entirely comfortable offering personal reflections. But I intend to do this through the prism of well-being and, in particular, as the former leader of Newport City Council, I will concentrate on the crucial impact of social care. Noble Lords will know that the additional NHS funding will be wasted if we do not deal with the continuing and growing problem of social care. I am from that tradition of socialism that seeks workable answers to people's problems. Social care has been subject to a plethora of reports, commissions and solutions. The promised government Green Paper was postponed at least six times and Simon Bottery, a senior fellow at the King's Fund, has described it as the

"zombie of modern policy debate, stumbling unsteadily around in circles."

All Governments of various hues and all political parties have failed our communities on this issue. If we are to solve the problem of what amounts to the most pernicious means test in the welfare state, a new political consensus is required. Genuine attempts by recent political leaders of all hues to do something different blew up in the face of blunt political onslaughts.

The Prime Minister announced in his first speech last August that

"we will fix the crisis in social care once and for all with a clear plan we have prepared to give every older person the dignity and security they deserve".

A fully worked-up plan is desperately needed, not another rough draft. No one doubts the difficulty of delivering a solution. Contextually, those in local government have had to deal with a decade of austerity. I can testify to the day-to-day grind of trying to protect the public realm—which libraries and leisure centres do I cut to protect the looked-after children's budgets? Can we afford to maintain those CCTV cameras and at the same time sustain direct payments for disabled adults and young people?

In Wales, our Welsh Government and Welsh councils resolved to protect social care. We put in place the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 with all attention aimed at supporting those who rightly desire independent living. Furthermore, in Wales, no one who is eligible for care at home is expected to pay more than £90 a week towards it. But I am not claiming that we have solved the problem. Huge efforts are under way to find new funding models, including a common social insurance scheme. A report by the economist Gerry Holtham is looking at an emerging preference from that work for a simpler social care tax in Wales to pay for social care. Indeed, the idea that there is a magic solution that does not involve paying more tax is disingenuous. In a statement to the Assembly just this week, the Health Minister told Assembly Members that the cost of care is expected to grow between £30 million and £300 million by 2023. If the Government seriously want to improve the quality and reach of care, it will require more funding. If Members say they do not want to raise more taxes, they have to identify where the money will come from. Raising money from elsewhere will target other areas for cuts. After a decade of austerity, there is little more that public services can absorb.

Our responsibility as politicians is to tell the truth on this. My plea is simple: let us work together to find a solution. It will not happen overnight and it will cost billions, but it is the greatest political imperative we face since the founding of the NHS over 70 years ago. More delay or failure is not an option for those who need that care.

12.18 pm

Baroness Gale (Lab): My Lords, it is a great pleasure and privilege to follow my noble friend's maiden speech and I congratulate her on it. It will be the first of many such speeches in your Lordships' House that we will all have the pleasure of hearing.

I have followed my noble friend's career over many years and watched her progress both in the Labour Party and in local government. She is a formidable campaigner and a straight talker. She has a no-nonsense approach to whatever she undertakes, as I am sure noble Lords will have noticed in her maiden speech.

Like me, she was born and brought up in the Rhondda Valley, which no doubt gave her a good grounding in local politics. She has a keen interest in education and worked as a teacher in Brixton in south London, was head of drama and media studies at

Hartridge High School in Newport, and head of the performing arts faculty at Hawthorn High School in Pontypridd, with over 35 years' experience in front-line education. She was an external examiner for the WJEC and AQA examination boards for over 25 years and became principal examiner for A-level theatre studies.

She also has an interest in local government, as she mentioned. She has served as a Newport councillor since 2004 and by 2016 she was elected leader of Newport Council—the first woman to hold such a post. Those of us who are involved in Welsh politics will appreciate what an achievement that was: for a woman to be elected leader of a local council.

But it did not stop there. By 2017, my noble friend had been elected leader of the Welsh Local Government Association—again, the first woman to hold such a post. That was even more of an achievement, as the Welsh Local Government Association has been dominated by men for so long—I could say “centuries”, because it feels like that; we waited for so long to get a woman in post. In 2018, my noble friend was invited to become a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, an award granted to individuals whom the RSA judges to have made outstanding achievements in social progress and development.

My noble friend has certainly smashed her way through the glass ceiling of Welsh politics and has been an example and an encouragement to women in Wales. I know that she will continue to be so as she begins her life in your Lordships' House.

I thank my noble friend Lord Hunt for bringing this important debate before us today. I intend to focus on two NHS priority areas that impact people with Parkinson's: mental health and dementia. I declare an interest, as I co-chair the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Parkinson's.

Up to 40% of people with Parkinson's will have depression, and up to 31% of people with the condition will experience anxiety. In 2017, in response to reports from Parkinson's UK information and support staff, the APPG on Parkinson's held an inquiry into the experiences of people with the condition who have anxiety and depression. The inquiry and subsequent report, published in 2018, found that people with Parkinson's wait months, and sometimes years, to see a mental health professional once a problem has been identified; that the difficulty of diagnosing a mental health problem in someone with Parkinson's is compounded by a lack of guidance for health professionals; and that there are complexities in the referral process, as a Parkinson's professional must send an individual back to their GP so that they can refer them on to a mental health professional, which creates further, unnecessary delays. Professionals who presented evidence to the inquiry described communication barriers between departments, difficulties accessing patient notes, and a shortage of mental health professionals with the knowledge and skills to meet the specific needs of people with Parkinson's. The mental health support received through improving access to psychological therapies, or IAPT, is not tailored to the needs of people living with Parkinson's, and specialists such as neuropsychologists and neuro-

psychiatrists are in short supply, leaving many people with Parkinson's accessing IAPT services that are not tailored to their needs.

It is almost two years since the release of our report, and we are yet to see progress on several of the recommendations, which included funding research on effective mental health interventions for people with Parkinson's, training in Parkinson's for talking therapists working in IAPT services, and the publication of data on how mental health services for people with Parkinson's are performing.

Every two years, the UK Parkinson's Excellence Network, started by Parkinson's UK to link up professionals who treat people with the condition, conducts an audit on the quality of Parkinson's services. While the audit is not mandatory, an increasing number of services are taking part to track how they are improving. The results of the 2019 audit were released last week. They showed that, from 2017 to 2019, there was a reduction in the number of people with Parkinson's being reviewed each year by their neurologist or elderly-care consultant, and less than 20% of these services were offering multidisciplinary clinics.

The results around mental health show how improvements are needed in screening and access to referrals. Almost a fifth of Parkinson's services across the UK could not refer psychiatric services. The Excellence Network will now support Parkinson's professionals to deliver an action plan to improve their services ahead of the next audit cycle, which will happen next year. Parkinson's UK is currently interviewing people with Parkinson's-related dementia and their carers about their experience of the health and social care system. Initial findings show that carers are struggling with some of the more distressing symptoms of Parkinson's-related dementia, such as challenging and aggressive behaviour. They also show that NHS support for people with Parkinson's-related dementia drastically reduces after entering a care home, and that social care staff do not generally understand the condition, leaving families and carers to step in and explain how they should provide care.

Acknowledging the importance of social care to an effective NHS, can the Minister say what progress the Government have made towards a future funding solution for social care, so that people with Parkinson's dementia are not continually let down?

12.26 pm

Baroness Masham of Ilton (CB): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, for this debate, which is of the utmost importance. There is nothing more important than the safety of patients. It is thanks to the press and relatives that some of the neglect and horrifying bullying of patients in some hospitals has been highlighted over the years. I hope that the Government agree with me that we need a transparent and open way of reporting concerns. Members of staff, friends and relatives should not be punished and penalised for doing this; perhaps we need another word to replace “whistleblowing”.

It is of great concern that some ambulances have not been able to meet their targets. It is not acceptable that patients have to wait for hours on trolleys in

[BARONESS MASHAM OF ILTON]

corridors. This illustrates the pressure on beds and staff. Recently, a member of my household was admitted to Harrogate District Hospital. One night, a nurse came to him in tears, saying she had 12 patients to look after. She could not give them enough of the care they needed. Well-trained nurses should be a priority if patient safety is to be safeguarded. In Birmingham, some cancer patients having treatment, such as radiotherapy, for their conditions, and who have to travel many miles, can stay free and look after themselves in a hostel—part of the hospital—during the week while having treatment. This alleviates them of the stress and exhaustion of travelling. I hope that this excellent plan can be extended across the country.

I belong to several all-party parliamentary health groups. When taking evidence, there is one overriding similarity: late diagnosis. Many people are told to go home and take paracetamol. This can happen several times. In the end, it can turn out that they have a serious long-term condition. What can the Government do to improve this dangerous problem?

I am president of the Spinal Injuries Association. Many of our members who are patients of the spinal unit at Stoke Mandeville Hospital cannot get appointments or new patients cannot be admitted because non-spinal patients are being placed in the allocated spinal beds. This illustrates the pressure on beds in a busy hospital. It also means that patients with life-threatening injuries, resulting in paralysis, are treated in intensive care beds without specially trained spinal nurses in general hospitals—blocking these beds while waiting for a transfer to a spinal unit.

I end by paying tribute to Brian Gardner, who was a spinal injuries surgeon at Stoke Mandeville. He was an outstanding doctor and always had time for patients and advised GPs on their needs. He died of cancer a few weeks ago. We need more doctors like Brian. He was one of the SIA's advisers and is missed by very many people. He was an excellent communicator. Better communication throughout the NHS is what is needed. If public health, NHS England, social services and voluntary bodies do not work in co-operation, patients will not be safe. I add my congratulations to the maiden speaker for her passionate speech.

12.30 pm

Baroness Pitkeathley (Lab): My Lords, do not be confused, I am not my noble friend Lord Brooke; I am grateful to him for swapping places with me—noble Lords will be hearing from him later.

I am grateful to my noble friend Lord Hunt for securing this debate; nobody knows more about this than he does. I am particularly pleased with the wide range of his topic: we can focus on the performance of the NHS in relation to its targets but also recognise the impact of adult social care pressures on those targets and that performance—I am glad that so many noble Lords who have spoken realise this.

My noble friend draws attention to a whole-system failure, and we can see evidence of that in the shocking statistic that shows how life expectancy in the United Kingdom is falling, contrary to what the noble Lord, Lord Bates, said to us. Life expectancy had been rising

for decades, but has now started to decline, with the elderly, poor and newborn worst affected. Life expectancy for those over 65 has dropped by more than six months. Why? Academics have said that it is a direct result of the austerity measures imposed by the coalition Government in 2010. These cuts, which removed more than £30 billion from welfare payments, housing subsidies and social services, were some of the severest made by any nation after the 2008 financial crisis. They triggered dramatic reductions in social care, meals on wheels, rural transport, health visitors and district nursing services.

Community and voluntary services, which have always been so important in the care of the elderly and isolated especially, suffered similar reductions. If no one visits an isolated older person, no one notices if they have stopped eating or are having trouble moving about. They fall over, are finally discovered, and are then admitted to hospital where they have to be given more serious interventions than would have been the case if services had been available earlier. Then there is difficulty in discharging them because social care services are not available or are inadequate, and so the whole sorry cycle starts again, inevitably leading to shorter lives.

The cancelled operations, the ambulances queuing outside A&E and the patients dying in corridors are in fact a crisis in social care. NHS budgets may have been ring-fenced, but social care has lost £6 billion from its total spend and the 50% rise in elderly people and others stuck in hospital is because there is nowhere for them to go in the community. Thousands of care homes have closed and more than 30,000 places have been lost because providers can no longer afford to operate on the money they receive from the state. Even those homes that keep going—and there are many of high quality—face a constant battle to keep staff, since the starting wage for a care assistant is about £2,000 a year less than you could earn if you went to work in Asda or Aldi.

I mentioned a whole-system failure, and part of that whole system is of course the huge contribution of unpaid carers to our health and social care system—many noble Lords have mentioned this. Noble Lords would expect me to remind them that this contribution is worth £132 billion a year, or the cost of another whole NHS. But let us not forget the cost to the carers themselves, in terms of their own physical and mental health and the financial strain on them, which is not just the extra costs associated with providing care but the loss of future income because of lost earnings and pension provisions. I acknowledge with pleasure the commitment to carers' leave in the gracious Speech, but it is to be unpaid so, frankly, it will not help much.

Your Lordships will be familiar with all the arguments about social care that some of us have been making ad nauseam for many years. I will not call that group the “usual suspects”, but after her wonderful maiden speech today I am delighted to welcome my noble friend Lady Wilcox to that group. We are familiar with reports followed by endless delay and indecision about how to tackle the complete unpredictability of the cost of care so that we pray we will die of cancer quickly rather than dementia slowly.

The Minister will quote the £1.5 billion given to local authorities for adult social care. That is a sticking plaster on an open wound, as I have said before in this House. I urge political consensus, as others have done, but we cannot get away from the fact that a very large chunk of money is required immediately to prevent more deaths in a situation which is surely the most pressing problem facing our nation. I have urged the Government before to be honest and bold about tackling this problem. I do so again. I ask the Minister to confirm that we will have an honest and bold proposal before the end of this year.

12.35 pm

Lord Suri (Con): My Lords, I am grateful for this opportunity to consider opportunities to improve the NHS and get waiting times down. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, for securing the time for us to discuss these issues.

There is little doubt that outcomes in the NHS have been slipping. In particular, NHS England has underperformed on the four-hour accident and emergency waiting time target for some time and November saw the worst performance since records began. Some of the issues driving this are essentially secular and will not simply dissipate. This is in no way due to the NHS staff, who always impress me with their attention and care.

There is a general understanding that the greatest pressure on the NHS is the increased care burden of an ageing society. This comes across in higher numbers of operations, but nowhere more so than in adult social care. Without better social care provision, the elderly will continue to recover in hospital rather than in the community and waiting lists will increase. Adult social care has become a lingering issue that previous Governments have been unwilling or unable to address. When a new funding system was proposed in 2017, the policy had to be walked back within a few days. This underlines the weakness of creating a lasting settlement without some sense of cross-party approach. Indeed, to create institutions that last there needs to be an understanding by all parties that the need must be met, as occurred at the founding of the NHS itself.

It is for this reason that I welcome the second of the Government's points for the forthcoming social care proposals, to

"urgently seek a cross-party consensus in order to bring forward the necessary proposals and legislation".

I hope that all English opposition parties will recognise that this is an existential issue and play a constructive role in shaping a lasting consensus. For many in opposition, this is a real chance to leave a legacy not normally achievable for parties out of power.

The real issue to resolve will be funding a more extensive care system. The sums involved are substantial but the gains must be remembered. Shorter waiting lists, more available beds and fewer unpaid carers will make a large combined contribution and free up some capacity in the public and private sectors. The Government have committed to making sure that nobody will have to sell their home to afford care. This is a sensible first step, but there must be an equitable element to the system.

The Barker commission gave serious thought to making those above pension age pay national insurance contributions and Sir Andrew Dilnot suggested to the Economic Affairs Committee of this House that the current exemption was a "major distortion" in the tax system. The exemption should be reviewed, alongside the current range of pension benefits, which may need to be means tested to deliver additional savings, including the winter fuel allowance.

Ultimately, without increased contributions from the elderly, any new system will be doomed to unsustainability as the proportion of working-age citizens to retirees increases. Other forms of wealth taxation will also need to be explored, including higher capital gains taxes on transfers of wealth. It will not be easy, but I am convinced that with a collegiate attitude and a real effort, a path forward is possible.

12.40 pm

Baroness Crawley (Lab): My Lords, it is good to take part in this debate secured by my noble friend Lord Hunt of Kings Heath, whose commitment to and leadership in the NHS is known to us all. I am also delighted to follow the inspirational maiden speech of my noble friend Lady Wilcox, who I think has cheered us all up.

Speeches about the NHS are inevitably a cross between a love letter and a post-it note. The love letter bit is revisiting everything in one's life that makes one grateful to the NHS, despite all its faults. For me, it is the safe birth of my three beautiful children, two of them twins, born in the brand new John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford in the 1970s, the restoration to rude health of my husband from leukaemia 10 years ago and my mother's care in her final years of dementia.

We all have our personal love letter to the NHS, but we also have the post-it note reminder: never to be complacent about this amazing national service; always to hold the Government to account; and to ask the awkward questions, as my noble friend has asked in his debate today, on performance, safe staffing, budgets and future prospects.

This year, 2020, is Florence Nightingale's bicentenary and has been designated the Year of the Nurse and Midwife by the World Health Organization. In this year, it is right that, in response to the NHS long-term plan, we highlight, as has the Health Foundation, the real difficulty of growing pressure on our services and the widespread pressure of staff shortages.

In our local campaign in Banbury, Oxfordshire, which has been going on for years now, to keep the Horton hospital general and functioning across many departments, time and again the question of not being able to recruit staff—from the UK, Europe or the Commonwealth—has been cited for closing services. How will workplace shortages in both the NHS and the social care system be handled post Brexit under the Government's new immigration strategy?

When it comes to staff pay, the social care sector in this country, in particular, as noble Lords have said, has nothing to be proud of. We cannot continue to run a care system on the cheap with an ageing population, the rising incidence of dementia and the prospect of AI just around the corner—benign or otherwise.

[BARONESS CRAWLEY]

The excellent House of Lords Library briefing for this debate reminds us of the facts when it comes to the targets spoken of by my noble friend. NHS England's performance against the four-hour A&E waiting time target in November 2019 was the worst since the figures started being collected in 2010. The 62-day maximum waiting time target between an urgent GP referral and the first cancer treatment was last met, astonishingly, in 2013-14. Also in November 2019, NHS England was below its operational standards for elective referrals, cancer referrals and treatment waiting times. Had those figures been owned by a Labour Government over the past 10 years, the media would have hounded us out of office. All those targets are now under review, and in that review, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has called on NHS England not to reduce current standards to make them easier to meet. That is a forlorn hope, I fear, but again we call for it today.

I was proud to be a member of a Labour Government who invested record sums in our NHS and the social care system. However, we did not grasp the issue of long-term social care funding and it is now for the Government to step up and turn the Prime Minister's rhetoric into the reality of a properly funded NHS and social care system for the future, free from the threat of a trade deal with the United States and free at the point of use well into this century.

12.46 pm

Lord Stirrup (CB): My Lords, much of the context for this debate is set by the targets that NHS England has laid down for the delivery of its services. There has been much discussion of the appropriateness of these targets, but we can draw some general conclusions from the persistent failure of the NHS to meet them. I suggest that the most important conclusion is that we are looking at a system stressed beyond its capacity to adapt and at serious risk of catastrophic failure. One can cite specific weaknesses and institutional failings, an inadequacy of funding and the need for coherence across the care sector. All are valid points, but they miss the root cause of the extreme stresses in the NHS: there is no proper strategy for the provision of healthcare in England.

I say that because a proper strategy is not just about plans, nor just about resources; it is about balancing ends, ways and means. Part of that balancing act involves deciding on the ends that are achievable within the means available. That is the calculation missing today. We are simply asking too much of the NHS. This is not a problem that can be solved just by looking at the inputs. Healthcare is an inherently ungoverned system of ever-increasing demand and ever-increasing technological opportunities. The recent growth in pressure has already outstripped the new resources promised, but that is not surprising. Left to itself, demand will always exceed supply, wherever we set the level of funding. We have to exercise control over the outputs as well as the inputs. That involves making hard choices and taking political risks, which is why I am rather pessimistic about the likelihood of our grasping this nettle. I do not believe that any of the main

political parties is courageous enough, but we should be under no illusion about the consequences if we fail to rise to the challenge.

The Government will point to their long-term plan and the proposed increases in the numbers of clinical staff. These are indeed welcome, but they are insufficient. The Minister will be aware that morale within the NHS is in a parlous state. Many clinical staff are exhausted, physically by the unrelenting demands placed on them but also, and perhaps more importantly, exhausted mentally because they see no light at the end of the tunnel; indeed, they see no end to the tunnel. They need some sense that the system will be brought into sustainable balance in the reasonably near future, but I fear they are unlikely to receive such reassurance. If that is so, I ask the Minister to respond to some more detailed concerns, which, if addressed, might at least help to stave off an impending collapse of the service.

NHS staff clearly need some immediate relief from the pressures under which they labour today. The *Interim NHS People Plan* has made some proposals in this regard, but a number are as yet neither specific nor quantifiable, so when will a comprehensive and detailed plan of action, with milestones and accountable persons, be available? How will progress on these measures and their impact on NHS morale be assessed and reported?

At present there is a clear lack of adequate or timely maintenance of the NHS infrastructure, which—as we know only too well in this place—only builds up even greater and more expensive problems for the future. What steps are being taken to improve and sustain the fabric of the NHS estate, and how are capital investment and maintenance needs being measured, funded and reported?

The pressures on GPs mean that all too often they are unable to investigate the condition of their patients as thoroughly or deeply as they would like. This can result in them making more referrals than necessary to a secondary care specialist, leading to longer waiting times for all. A little more investment in the primary care end of the spectrum might result in an overall saving of time, money and staff morale, as well as a better service to the patient. Can the Minister say who, if anybody, is making such risk/benefit judgments, especially across the boundaries in the care system, and what power they have to allocate resources in ways that would give effect to such judgments?

The Prime Minister has indicated his intention to seek a consensual way forward on adult social care. My plea, echoing the noble Lord, Lord Bates, is that this be extended to the provision of care more widely, to include the NHS. The Beveridge report and the ensuing legislation to give effect to it were made possible perhaps only by the upheaval and dislocation of a catastrophic world war. I hope we do not have to experience similar turmoil before we can make Beveridge's legacy fit to survive the challenges of the 21st century.

12.51 pm

Lord Turnberg (Non-Affl): My Lords, I am grateful to my noble friend Lord Hunt for getting this debate and setting out the facts in such a devastating way.

I heartily endorse his words. May I also say how much I appreciated the maiden speech of my noble friend Lady Wilcox? It was a breath of fresh air.

When I saw the announcement about this debate, I thought: “Here we go again. We will go around the well-worn track of rising demands from an increasingly ageing population needing more and more expensive treatments, while at the same time we suffer from inadequate staffing levels, poor buildings falling to pieces, lower morale and barely enough money to keep our heads above water.” While many patients seem satisfied, and indeed many—as we have heard—praise the services for acute, one-off care, the long-term sick and disabled are poorly cared for, especially by community services.

Of course, both the NHS and social services need more money. We are still way behind the level of 10 years ago and have some way to go to catch up, but we have to face the fact that if we are to match demand to resources, we will have to be much cleverer and more efficient in how we provide care.

I will talk about just two things that we must do, with or without the additional funding that we desperately need. First, we must find a way of bridging the gap between the way we fund the NHS and the way we fund social care. The current divide is a nightmare of inefficiency.

I will give noble Lords an example. Imagine an elderly gentleman sitting in a bed in a crowded NHS hospital, having been brought in following a fall in which he injured himself. He has been repaired and is ready for home, but he lives alone. There is no one there to look after him as he recovers and no obvious places available in the local care home. It is a weekend, and no one is available in the social care department until Monday. Meanwhile, patients are piling up in the A&E department, waiting for the bed that the current occupant is keen to leave. That is the normal Catch-22 situation in far too many places.

Now imagine another situation in which the hospital trust itself has the budget for social care, employs its own social care staff in the community and funds its own care homes. It does not have to negotiate with any other organisation when it wants to bring in or discharge any of the patients in its community. It simply uses its own resources. It is the integrated, undivided care system that we have long been talking about. I fear it is the one I have been banging on about for ever.

That system has been in operation for some years now in Salford, in the hospital where I happily spent most of my working life, Salford Royal. David Dalton, the then chief executive, gained the confidence of the local authority so that it was happy to hand over the social care budget for the common good of the whole population of Salford—250,000 people. He used it very well. Indeed, the hospital trust now runs Salford’s mental health services and employs a number of GP practices, so that the whole care system works as one. Staff morale is high, as they recognise that they are all involved in providing high-quality, efficient care. I should say that David Dalton took advantage of my having left Salford to undertake all these changes.

So it is possible to run an effective and efficient combined NHS and social care service that works and saves money, but why have we not been able to spread

that system more widely? Of course, much depends on the personalities locally and the confidence they can gain to trust each other, but should the Government not be providing the push and stimulus to combine these services, inadequately funded though they both are? There are likely to be many variations on the theme of integrated services. For really radical change, the Treasury should be changing its funding model and merging these two streams. Meanwhile, will the Minister spend a little time examining what can be done short of that, perhaps even by visiting Salford, where a number of previous Health Secretaries have already been, to see how it can be done and then persuade her colleagues in the department to bestir themselves?

Briefly, my second concern is the care and support of our staff in the community and in care homes. It is no secret that these workers are the lifeblood of care in the community and we rely on them absolutely to look after the huge number of people that I fear society has tended to ignore. Yet these critically important staff are vastly underrated, underappreciated and underpaid. It is a scandal. Of course we should pay them more—at the moment, they would not even reach the lower cap that would allow them entry from the EU—but equally importantly we should provide them with not a voluntary but an obligatory training programme, give them a qualification and offer the possibility of career progression. We certainly need to do more to give them the respect and recognition that they rightly deserve.

12.57 pm

Lord Brooke of Alverthorpe (Lab): My Lords, I am most grateful to my noble friend Lord Hunt for such a great and devastating speech. He has great experience in and insight into the NHS, and he does not lightly make attacks without good foundation behind them.

To the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, I say that we have been here before. In 1997, the health service was in a hell of a mess and the Labour Government were elected to try to put right some of the problems we had with declining public services. It was done. The Blair and Brown Governments reversed the decline, in part by introducing targets, which were very successful indeed in many areas. Regrettably, since 2010, both the coalition Government and the Tory Government, for a variety of reasons, have dismantled some of those targets and we have suffered as a consequence. We argued that it was the wrong thing to do when they took away the target for the time that doctors should see patients. The Government’s cover was that they wanted to extend the availability of surgery from five days to seven days, but of course there were no extra staff to do that. In turn, we said that people would wait longer to see their GPs than they had in the past. Is that true? Yes: everybody is now complaining about the difficulty of accessing a GP of their choice.

We now have the argument about A&E targets. The Government want to abandon them. Why? It is a bit like the five people who have been sent to prison giving the Government cause for a major examination of the funding of the BBC. Whenever we see these changes coming, there is an ulterior agenda behind them. I hope that I am wrong on this and that the Minister will put me right, as I am sure she will.

[LORD BROOKE OF ALVERTHORPE]

Problems have been arising in A&E where the Government could have taken action. Yes, they are trying to deal with more people and yes, more patients are going there who should be going to their GPs rather than to A&E, but also—here I am banging on about my favourite subject, as noble Lords will know—more and more people are going there with alcohol problems. This causes great stress and strain to the staff involved and, in turn, great pressure on the number of beds that they go to afterwards. All the statistics indicate that the issue has got worse since 2010. Only yesterday in the *Times*, there was a report about the rising number of people who have been taken in, particularly from age 45 upwards, who are drinking too much and then putting pressure on the service.

When we look at what the Government have done in this area, it can be argued that they have taken steps that have made matters worse. A regulator was introduced in 2008 to ensure that duties on alcohol went up on an annual basis linked to RPI. What did the next Government do? In 2012, they abandoned that. Year on year, the Government have in fact been freezing duties or, in some cases, even reducing them. Has that helped the case and the numbers of people who are being affected by alcohol? No, it has made matters worse. Statistics show that beer duty has been cut by 18%, spirits and cider duty by 10% and wine duty by the low figure of 2%, so overall, we have lost £1.2 billion a year in income for the Government that could have been going into the NHS because of those changes. So who are the beneficiaries, and why? At the end of the day, the public have to pay for the people who end up in A&E and in hospital.

I hope that the Minister will be prepared to say something about this and the importance of campaigning on the public health side, which we have not mentioned greatly. I believe that changes in lifestyle need to be addressed more seriously than we have done in the past. I know that there is a Green Paper coming on that and I look forward to having a debate on it. In the meantime, urgent action can be taken. Can she persuade the Chancellor in the forthcoming Budget not only to restore the duty calculator linked to RPI but to add 2% to that figure? If she does that, we will start to see fewer people ending up in A&E and fewer people who work in the health service being unhappy, and we will have a healthier and happier community.

1.02 pm

Baroness Watkins of Tavistock (CB): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, for securing this debate. It is a pleasure to follow other noble Lords, who have made very cogent arguments for change, and in particular the maiden speech of the noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox of Newport; it seems like nirvana to think we might have to pay only £90 a week to many people in England.

Clearly we want to reform health and social care to best serve the health and well-being of people in England. I declare my interests as outlined in the register, particularly as a registered nurse, president of the Florence Nightingale Foundation and a former sister in accident and emergency.

At the heart of the issue is whether the NHS should reform the A&E four-hour waiting target a decade after its inception. The national medical director of the NHS considers that a change to the four-hour target and some cancer treatment targets may, based on sound data, serve the population more effectively. I will concentrate on the A&E target and delays to patients' transfer of care from acute hospitals to their own homes, nursing homes and registered care facilities.

The NHS is piloting a new A&E scheme entitled "rapid care measures" with 14 trusts. The new standards include the rapid assessment of all patients in A&E, coupled with faster life-saving treatments for those with the most critical conditions, including sepsis, heart attacks, strokes and acute psychotic episodes. The initial results are promising, with the number of patients spending over 12 hours in A&E falling faster than in control groups. There appears to be broad public support for these measures. It is vital that any change to targets are clinically appropriate and supported by evidence-based healthcare interventions, which the proposed changes reflect.

Therefore, unlike many in this House, I urge the Government to revise the A&E targets in this way and set clinical teams free to work in a more independent, evidence-based approach focused on individual patient need rather than keeping to a four-hour target set in stone. This is likely to enhance staff morale and improve time from attendance to treatment for those most critically ill. It may also reduce the number of people attending A&E for very minor problems as they may have to wait longer than four hours. We know that many people go to A&E for health problems much better suited to community-based services because they have difficulty accessing a GP or community nurse. The need to increase the number of GPs is essential, but so too is developing and enhancing the role of other healthcare practitioners in the community if we are really serious about system redesign in the NHS and social care.

In the US there has been an increasing focus on systematic change associated with the affordable health care Act, which elevated the role of both physicians' assistants and nurse practitioners. I have witnessed the positive effects of the introduction of these roles in Washington State, particularly in supporting people with multiple physical and mental chronic health conditions in community settings. An analysis of US census data published this week shows that the number of nurse practitioners has grown at an unprecedented rate across the USA, from around 91,000 in 2010 to 190,000 in 2019. These practitioners are filling a primary care void, particularly in rural areas. A professor of nursing at Montana State University estimates that there will be two nurse practitioners for every five physicians by 2030, compared to one in five in 2016. Will the Government look at this research and investigate whether one way of improving primary care and reducing A&E visits would be to invest more significantly in a range of advanced roles for community healthcare practitioners?

The Government intend to publish plans to reform the social care system this year. That is essential because it will improve people's lives and, we hope, reduce

delayed transfers of care from hospital to the community. Will the Minister please note my support for altering the four-hour A&E targets in the light of the results from the pilot sites? I urge her to ask the noble Baroness, Lady Harding, to work further on the NHS people plan in the way outlined by the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, and to consider piloting the NHS funding care packages for a fixed period on discharge for those due to leave hospital, in the way so ably outlined by the noble Lord, Lord Turnberg.

1.07 pm

Lord Young of Norwood Green (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Hunt on giving us the opportunity to debate this issue and on his tour de force contribution, giving us the benefit of all his vast experience.

I declare an interest: like many, I am a frequent user of the NHS, which gives you an opportunity to observe first-hand the range and quality of service that you get. I echo my noble friend Lady Crawley in saying that in most cases it is very good. I am also a member of my GP's patient care committee. The practice has nearly 8,000 patients but operates in what is an extended semi-detached house. For the past five years or more we have had plans for a nice brand new medical centre offering a good range of services, but that was suddenly scrapped. Quite apart from the £1 million or so wasted in the planning, you can imagine the frustration and demoralisation in our practice as well as the impact on the local A&E. I would welcome a comment from the Minister on why essential schemes such as this are suddenly scrapped.

I declare another interest: our daughter Laura, an ex-paramedic, is now a trainee advanced clinical practitioner in A&E, working at a local hospital, so I hear some of her first-hand experiences.

I, too, congratulate my noble friend Lady Wilcox on a superb maiden speech that drew on her vast experience in local government. I am sure it was the first of many great contributions.

It is national apprenticeship week. Your Lordships will not be surprised that, as an apprentice ambassador, I will refer to staffing and skills, of which we all know there are vast shortages in the NHS. We should be ashamed of our need to poach highly trained medical staff from countries that desperately need their services. Year after year we fail to train enough people. Worse still, and a great example of the law of unintended consequences, the Government previously decided that they would scrap free training for nurses and introduce a bursary—a really smart idea. That is irony on my part. I am glad to say that they have restored it, but it did not help.

Unfortunately, the NHS cannot make full use of the apprenticeship levy because of the need to find replacement staff for apprentices' study time. Again, I hope the Minister will take away that point to see how to improve that situation. If she wants some good advice, may I suggest that she goes to the Open University, which is heavily involved in nursing apprenticeships?

We are supposedly in the middle of the fourth industrial revolution, yet the use of new technology in the health service is patchy, to say the least. Recently, somebody told me, "We can't even transfer patient

details electronically between hospitals." This is in theory the 21st century, yet we still cannot make use of that technology.

I enjoyed the Panglossian contribution to the debate made by the noble Lord, Lord Bates. We should pay tribute to the good work done by NHS staff in a very challenging day-to-day situation, as he acknowledged. However, all is not for the best in the NHS world, as the Government acknowledge in their funding proposals. May I suggest that the Minister looks across the NHS for examples of best practice? My noble friend Lord Turnberg gave us an example. That is not the only hospital trust that is using that, but why does it not spread? It takes far too long. I predict that a lot of the Government's proposed funding increases will be wasted unless best practice of providing good services and keeping to budgets is looked at. I hope that the Minister will take that as a constructive contribution. It takes far too long for best practice to permeate through the NHS, and unfortunately bad practice can be tolerated with disastrous consequences for far too long, as we heard on the Paterson report. Paying billions in compensation is disastrous. There are examples of no-fault liability schemes that would encourage responsible whistleblowing and save that huge waste of NHS money.

I have come to the end of my time. Again, I thank my noble friend Lord Hunt for the opportunity to contribute to this debate.

1.12 pm

Baroness Brinton (LD): My Lords, I add my thanks and congratulations to the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, for instigating this important debate and, as ever, to noble Lords for their stimulating and informative contributions. I also thank the many organisations that have sent us briefings, starting with the Library. I found the NHS Providers briefings especially helpful. It is instructive how many of those briefings cover the same concerns about the NHS and social care in England that we have reflected upon in this debate.

I echo the comment made by the noble Lord, Lord Bates, about the brilliant staff in the NHS. I want to extend that to staff in the social care sector and its volunteers, carers and patients. In recent years we have asked patients to change how they receive their healthcare, and many have adapted and responded to that well.

When I was chair of education in Cambridgeshire, I was told very clearly by my director that free school meals were a proxy indicator for children in poverty, and this House has on many occasions debated whether it is appropriate to do that and whether it is an effective proxy. As the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, said, NHS targets are a proxy for the NHS and social care performance. Whether we call them targets, access standards or some new fancy name in any government review, the most important thing from the perspective of these Benches is that they should not be scrapped. They act to make our NHS and social care sector think about and change what it is doing to achieve a better outcome.

The 3.6% increase in the NHS is welcome from the Government, but as so many have said, it is not enough. I am pleased that the Secretary of State, in another place last week at the Second Reading of the

[BARONESS BRINTON]

healthcare funding Bill, kept saying that this is a floor, not a cap—we will hold the Government to that. It is only a sticking plaster to get us from total emergency to perhaps being able to manage services. It provides no scope for improvement or for the large changes in technology that I know the current Secretary of State is looking for. Unless the long-term underlying problems are addressed in our health system, we will remain in crisis.

I reflect on why the Conservatives introduced the Patient's Charter in the 1990s. As other noble Lords have said, the NHS was, frankly, in total crisis, with a lack of funding, buildings completely unfit for purpose and a burgeoning crisis in social care, with too many delayed discharges. I remember a story in Cambridgeshire of a woman being taken to Addenbrooke's Hospital in a horse-box after a three-hour wait for an ambulance. The Patient's Charter worked. The Labour Government adapted and developed it further. I echo the many points made from the Labour Benches about the strength of those targets. Although politicians and media hold every Government to account for those targets, I do not believe that anyone thinks that they are simplistic. We understand the complexity of performance that goes on behind that. The problem is that they are consistently being missed. It is not just about lack of performance; it is about lack of resource—not only money but resource.

I really liked the four key points made by the noble Lord, Lord Hunt. I am going to focus my remarks and try to bring in what other noble Lords have said under them. Long-term planning is right. Woe betide us if we think that five years is long-term planning. It needs to be at least 20 years, and probably a quarter of a century. There is so much changing in care. The way that consultants treat people with a long-term condition such as mine has completely changed in the last five years, let alone the last 10 years. Are the resources available, whether they are staff funding or technology, to match those changes as they come? We need to ensure that it is completely fit for purpose.

Many people outside politics say that we should take the NHS away from politicians. I say no. The NHS is such a key part of our public life that the public will always come back to politicians to say, "What are you doing about it?" Let us just say that we need to tackle the issues. The noble Lord, Lord Suri, rather plaintively said that he hoped the opposition parties would come together behind the Government. I gently remind him that, in the Dilnot review, all the parties came together but the Conservatives walked away the moment a decision needed to be made. All the opposition parties will support the Government in ensuring that we work together in the future. We look to them to ensure that we have a proposal that will work.

The noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, talked about having no proper strategy. That is also a problem, but we have covered the myriad areas in the debate this morning. I think that the will is there; I know it is there among the staff, but we need to ensure that this is moved with speed to ensure that everybody understands. When I talk to senior managers in hospitals, I hear about their local strategies. I do not always see the golden thread going back to NHS England.

The noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox, made a wonderful maiden speech. I loved her phrase "not another rough draft". It is just so pertinent. As someone else who went to the Central School of Speech and Drama—I did stage management; she trained as a teacher—I know that, no matter what you did there, you were taught to speak. Other noble Lords commented on the noble Baroness's content; I, as a fellow alumna, congratulate her on the style of her delivery.

The funding challenge has already been covered, but it remains a persistent issue. It is vital that the funding challenge in adult social care is also addressed. We have seen the knock-on effect on the NHS of not getting adult social care right for nearly three decades. I was pleased when it was decided to make the Secretary of State the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, but a title on its own does not do enough. The better care fund started to make progress in these areas, but it was not rolled out and is certainly not consistent.

My noble friend Lady Pinnock, who has considerable expertise in local government, talked about that perfect storm, and she is absolutely right. I welcome the comments from the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle, and the noble Baronesses, Lady Gale and Lady Pitkeathley.

Workforce development is vital. I echo the point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Watkins, about nurse practitioners. If I hear another Member of this House say that nurses do not need to be qualified but just need to know how to care, I will grind my teeth so hard I will not have any left. I rely on my advanced nurse practitioner for advice and support in my condition, and I see nods from other noble Lords around this House. We should be developing them further in primary care because we are not going to resolve the shortage of GPs. That brings me to my other workforce point: we are not training enough doctors and other healthcare professionals. Not just this Government but Government after Government have avoided the expense of developing our doctors, in particular. That is why we continue to need people to come in from elsewhere.

We need to change the culture. The noble Lords, Lord Hunt and Lord Young, spoke about that. It is important that we do not have just little pockets of good practice. I do not understand why there is not a culture of continuous improvement in the NHS. One can go into an organisation and tell it about something wonderful that is happening elsewhere, and it is completely missed. It is more than just talking about each other. It is more than workshops. I know that NHS Improvement and NHSX are beginning to change that, but the culture changes too slowly.

Can the Minister confirm that the Government will not impose 5% cuts anywhere in the Department of Health or in local government because, if other parts of those departments are asked to take further cuts, any increase in baseline budget will become meaningless? They are way beyond saving or cutting to the bone. We are in danger of beheading the very thing the Government say they want to protect. Do the Government have any plans for a long-term strategy of at least two decades? In the meantime, a commission on adult social care is essential, as is further integration.

Let us get together, all parties, all stakeholders, to make this a national priority over the next few months. It is time to make it happen.

1.23 pm

Baroness Thornton (Lab): My Lords, first, I draw the House's attention to my interests in the register. I thank my noble friend Lord Hunt for initiating this debate and all noble Lords who have participated. I particularly want to welcome and congratulate my noble friend Lady Wilcox on her maiden speech, which was a model of its kind. I was delighted when she joined us and I am very much looking forward to working with her in the future. I would also like to add my thanks to the Library, the Royal College of Surgeons, the Alzheimer's Society, Independent Age, Age UK, the NHS Confederation, the Independent Healthcare Providers Network and many others that sent us briefings. I agree with the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, that their analyses of the scale of the challenge and the solutions were remarkably similar.

My noble friend Lord Hunt and other speakers have set the Minister a challenging task in answering this wide-ranging debate, linking as it does priority targets, the impact of failing to deal with adult social care and the implications of that for patients in the context of what happens to primary healthcare, social care, mental health, public health and capital expenditure, which are all linked and interdependent. I agree with my noble friend Lady Crawley about how debates on the health service in the House of Lords are a love letter and a post-it note. My contribution is probably the latter.

The Government must own the effects of 10 years of austerity. They are not a brand new Government, as the Prime Minister would have us believe, but a continuation Conservative Government, and they cannot pretend that the fact that our social care system is completely failing millions of people is a newly acquired responsibility. It is as a result of a deliberate action to starve this sector that we face NHS buildings and infrastructure which are crumbling and a danger to patient safety, that we are nowhere near parity of esteem in mental health in terms of spend or access, that public health is unable to deliver true prevention because of the cuts to local government spending, that parts of the NHS are, as the NAO reported, "seriously financially unstable" and that trusts and CCGs are building up debt.

Thus it is not surprising that, as my noble friend Lord Hunt tells us, the NHS is simply not able to meet the targets which are enshrined in the NHS constitution. While it is welcome that the long-term plan recognises that health and social care go hand in hand, we have yet to see the action and funding which will address the social care challenge. We will soon be discussing the NHS Funding Bill, which some might call window dressing. It is a testimony to a Government who must put into legislation a promise they have made to ensure that they keep it. That is a matter we will be discussing in a few weeks' time, when there will be another opportunity for the Minister to address some of these issues.

I shall not repeat the statistics that noble Lords have adequately outlined, but at present it feels as if we are at a tipping point and the NHS is slipping back

to the years before the last Labour Government, who of course made the historic investment and basically turned around the NHS to leave it in pretty good shape in 2010. However, I agree that we need to look forward, and the Government must make very good use of the resources they are already committing. Any news from the Minister about the likely outcome of the Budget and the spending review would be welcome, and some expansion on the Prime Minister's declared intention to sort out social care would also be welcome. What exactly is his plan?

Given that I have served on a CCG for the past three years, noble Lords will not be surprised to hear that I intend to start by focusing on primary health care and its importance in future plans. I can bear witness to the tireless work of GPs and their commitment, and their staff's commitment, to ensure that all patients receive high-quality care when they need it. I also witness the fact that front-line local healthcare is often under threat from funding being sucked out of the system by huge trusts with the push-me-pull-you funding formula that is still apparent in the system. I am pleased that there is some recognition of that in the long-term plan and that that will be reflected in the next round of NHS England's planning process.

I echo my noble friend Lord Young's story about his GP's surgery. I think the Minister will recognise that, if the workforce and the funding for primary care are not sufficient and stable, the knock-on effect for acute services will be deleterious and significant. Along with the general NHS staffing crisis, there is a GP workforce crisis, and I wonder whether the Minister can update the House on how the delivery of 5,000 additional GPs and 5,000 additional staff in England is going. I am very proud of the work of the past three years in primary care delivery in Camden, with our innovative patient care-led commissioning, and I am very keen for that not to be lost in the latest reorganisation that is now under way. Clinical and lay members on CCGs all over the country are anxious that local primary care should not be lost in the creation of ICSs.

The social care system is broken, as many noble Lords, including my noble friend Lady Pitkeathley, and the noble Lord, Lord Turnberg, said. It is ignoring 1.5 million people with unmet needs, leaving carers to feel alone and unsupported in caring for their loved ones, and it is costing people their life savings. Age UK says that the social care crisis, with delayed discharges from hospital due to a lack of social care, is costing our NHS an eye-watering £500 every minute.

As a Labour and Co-operative Member of your Lordships' House, I will take this opportunity to urge the Minister to look at a new model of social care that uses the principles of co-operation to build on the first-hand knowledge of those who rely on, receive and provide care. I urge her to read the report of yesterday's debate in Westminster Hall, which explored this very positive proposition. It requires commissioning authorities and central government to recognise that co-operation and mutuality could provide some answers in this sector.

Thousands of people's lives have been on pause as a result of underfunded mental health services over the last decade. My noble friend Lady Gale outlined the issues around Parkinson's. There is a desperate need

[BARONESS THORNTON]

for the 19,000 new mental health workers promised in the next year. That is important not only because hundreds of thousands of people need care but because continuing not to resolve this problem has a knock-on effect on primary and secondary healthcare and social care. All these issues are interlinked.

On public health, I will say only that it really is time that there was real recognition that investment in prevention saves billions further down the line, so let us see that that actually happens. Let us not leave public health at the whim of the spending regime in local authorities whose funding has already been cut, because that is completely counterproductive.

On targets, I am concerned that the Government's review of NHS clinical standards, including piloting the introduction of new average waiting times for elective care, is a problem. Does the Minister agree that the introduction of the 18-week target is a worthy achievement that should not be jeopardised by this review? The noble Baroness, Lady Watkins, made some very interesting points about how to reduce the pressures on, and redirect people from, accident and emergency departments through investment in GPs, primary care and minor care. She is absolutely right. However, there also needs to be an incentive to keep accident and emergency departments on their toes. We do not want to slip back to people waiting on trolleys in accident and emergency for 12 hours.

In conclusion, it is completely clear from this debate and from the briefings that we have all received that these wide-ranging issues are interlinked and interdependent. You cannot divorce primary care, mental health, the capital investment required, public health and secondary care from one another. That is why the long-term plan needs to be a longer-term plan and why it needs to take all these issues into account. The spending needs to be integrated so that we do not feed one side of the National Health Service while the other side—social care—puts such pressure on the system that it cannot possibly succeed. I look forward to the Minister's response.

1.33 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford) (Con): My Lords, I thank all noble Lords for an expert and robust debate on a very important issue. In the time available, I shall do my best to respond to as many of the points raised as possible. I particularly thank the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, for, as ever, a robust contribution on a very important issue and for allowing us to have this debate. I also pay tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox, for a formidable maiden speech. It is clear that she has deep personal experience and a straight-talking character, which means that she will make a considerable contribution to this place. I look forward to many future debates and interactions with her on the issues she has raised today and many others.

Like my noble friend Lord Bates, whom I can see in his place and who made an outstanding speech, I start by thanking the hard-working staff in our health and social care services. These services face unprecedented demand, with an ageing population and the challenges

of winter placing a particular strain on them. In that context, the staff are doing a quite extraordinary job. As was mentioned by the noble Baroness, Lady Crawley, we all have our love letters that we can speak of, based on our own experiences. They demonstrate when the staff go far above and beyond to make sure that we come out on the other side in one piece.

I have listened very carefully to the concerns raised today about NHS performance, the pressures on our social care system and the impact on patients. Noble Lords are absolutely right to expect the Government to be restless in pursuing higher quality and in supporting the NHS so that it can be there for each and every one of us when we need it most. Today, I will outline the steps that the Government are taking to help address those concerns and will bring noble Lords up to date as much as possible.

I turn, first, to performance. As I have already mentioned, the NHS and social care system faces unprecedented demand. A number of noble Lords mentioned the figures. I will not go into too much detail as I would like to answer as many specific questions as possible. However, I should like to note that the most recent figures available for December 2019 show that there were over 2 million attendances at A&E—6.5% more than in December 2018. That means attendance by over 70,000 people every day—the highest ever for the month of December. Hospitals have also delivered 2.4 million more operations and almost 13 million more consultant-led out-patient appointments than in 2009-10. That is an extraordinary achievement.

However, I recognise, as was mentioned by the noble Lords, Lord Hunt and Lord Turnberg, the noble Baroness, Lady Pinnock, the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle and many others, that in addition to the pressures on the health service, we are seeing increased demand in the social care system. We must put social care on a sustainable footing, with everyone being treated with dignity and respect. It is one of the biggest challenges that we face as a society. As my noble friend Lord Bates rightly said, we must resist the temptation to treat it as a political football. The Prime Minister has been clear that this Government will deliver on their promises and bring forward a plan for social care this year, as was specifically requested by the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton. I am quite sure that she will hold us to account very firmly on that commitment.

It is expected that there will be 1.5 million more over-75s in the next 10 years and we have to find a way of caring for them. As the noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox, rightly pointed out, there has also been a significant growth in the number of working-age people with disabilities who need care at a younger age. We need a system that gives every person—old and young—the dignity and security that they deserve.

The noble Baroness, Lady Wilcox, was right that these are complex questions which require not only difficult decisions to be made but the establishment of a sustainable settlement that will provide certainty for generations to come. That is why we will seek to build cross-party consensus, but we have been clear on two points: that everyone will have safety and security, and that nobody will be forced to sell their home to pay

for care. The noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, asked me to predict both the Budget and the outcome of these negotiations. I am afraid that I will not be able to do that today but I am very touched by her thought that I would be able to answer those questions immediately at the Dispatch Box. However, I would like to update the House on what we have been doing to try to reduce pressures in the meantime.

To help address the increases in demand, last year we committed to £33.9 billion more funding a year by 2023-24. We are now enshrining that in law, and I know that we will have a significant debate about what that means for the NHS. As my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care announced, this is a significant cash settlement for the NHS, and it means that we are already delivering on our manifesto commitments. We are also committed to delivering 40 new hospitals over the next decade, 50,000 more nurses, 6,000 more doctors in primary care and 50 million more GP appointments. As requested, I will update the House on the specific questions on that.

The noble Baroness, Lady Crawley, asked about the EU workforce. We have been clear that our priority is to ensure that the 181,000 EU staff currently working in the NHS and in social care are not only able to stay but feel welcomed and encouraged to do so. Since the referendum, we are pleased that 7,300 more EU staff are working in the NHS, including 900 more doctors. We are not only working to make sure that they are able to navigate their way through the EU settlement scheme easily and effectively; we will also introduce a new EU visa to make it easier for suitably qualified doctors, nurses and other staff to come and work in the NHS from overseas. We are working across government to make sure that this goes through smoothly.

In addition, a number of Peers, including the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, and the noble Baroness, Lady Watkins, asked how we will go forward with the people plan, which will provide a constructive and holistic approach to our management of the framework for collective action on workforce priorities. This will be published in early 2020. It needs to take fiscal priorities into account, so there are questions around the Budget and the spending review. It will focus on growing and sustaining a well-skilled workforce across the NHS, particularly on creating healthy, inclusive and compassionate cultures. I know that this was raised by a number of Peers, including the noble Lord, Lord Turnberg.

To date, in addition, capital funding amounting to £2.4 billion has been provisionally awarded to over 150 STPs. I know that the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, has raised this on a number of occasions. This investment will modernise and transform NHS buildings and services, which the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, asked about. The money will go towards a range of programmes across the country, including new urgent care centres, integrated care hubs that bring together primary and community services, and new mental health facilities. This money will be spent on upgrading facilities, increasing capacity so that more people can be treated and shifting emphasis towards prevention, making sure that we can deliver on the prevention Green Paper.

My right honourable friend the Prime Minister also announced a further £1.8 billion increase in NHS capital spending, which will deliver on 20 hospital upgrades so that they can come forward as soon as possible. This frees up the NHS to take forward and expand its existing plans for investment in infrastructure, and to unlock the delivery of commitments already made.

We have taken into account the questions about backlog maintenance and equivocal infrastructure asked by the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup. There has been a commitment that this will be taken into account as part of the spending review. It is recognised that, for too long, this has not been undertaken suitably strategically. I hope that that reassures him.

To respond to the noble Baroness, Lady Thornton, we have committed to growing the workforce by more than 600 doctors in general practice. NHS England and HEE are working with the profession to increase the workforce in England. This includes measures to increase recruitment, address reasons why doctors are leaving the profession and encourage them to return to practice. We have discussed this on a number of occasions. I am pleased to report that, last year, HEE recruited the highest numbers of doctors into GP training ever, at 3,540 trainees. We are moving in the right direction.

The noble Baroness, Lady Masham, rightly raised earlier diagnosis. We are committed to making sure that we drive forward on this. It is a crucial part of the long-term plan: as part of prevention, we also want to make sure that we are diagnosing earlier, reducing demand and pressures for patients and clinical trials. This is why we announced funding to replace outdated cancer diagnostics and treatment machines. Some £200 million, consisting of £100 million this year and £100 million next year, will be used to replace MRI and CT scanners or breast cancer screening machines that are more than 10 years old. I know that the Labour Front Bench wanted to be reassured about this so that we can ensure that we get earlier diagnostics and patients on the right care pathways as soon as possible.

The noble Baroness, Lady Gale, asked some specific questions about Parkinson's. I hope to give her some helpful answers. In 2018-19, the NIHR clinical research network supported 323 dementia and neurodegeneration studies, 99 of which were new studies in this area. In addition, to address access to mental health support for people with long-term medical conditions such as Parkinson's, we aim to increase access to psychological therapies for an additional 600,000 people each year by 2020-21. We have committed to ensuring that this will address care for patients, such as those with Parkinson's. I hope that this answers some of the noble Baroness's key questions.

In the short term, NHS England has prioritised funding to support performance for this winter. I know that this was raised by the noble Lord, Lord Hunt. Additional capital and revenue funding was made available to systems and trusts to support staff and bed capacity throughout the winter. This has allowed trusts to increase bed numbers and facilities to support better flow through the system. I am pleased that the NHS has reported that over 1,000 more hospital beds are open this winter than at the same time last year.

[BARONESS BLACKWOOD OF NORTH OXFORD]

In addition, a further £240 million has been provided again this year for adult social care to help reduce delays in patients being discharged from hospital by providing social care support. The noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, was quite right to highlight the value that the better care fund has provided in integrating the links between adult social care and the NHS. She is quite right that this is a relatively short-term solution; we look forward to more sustainable long-term solutions from ICS and others. However, I am very pleased that we committed a total of £6.4 billion to the better care fund in 2019-20 and that further funding is committed for this year.

This is all in addition to winter funding that provided £145 million for hospitals last year and has gone up this year. It has also provided ambulance services with 256 new state-of-the-art vehicles and make-ready hubs, which shorten vehicle turnaround times. I know that the noble Baroness, Lady Masham, was concerned about this.

To support performance, the NHS has continued to focus on longer-term solutions. This means that, as we go on in years, we will not see the same performance challenges, transforming and improving urgent and emergency care services. The priorities are as follows.

The first is to increase the provision of same-day emergency care so that patients are seen quickly and not admitted to hospital overnight if that is unnecessary. We have seen some good progress here, with over 89% of hospitals now providing SDEC for 12 hours a day. Other priorities are: to reduce the number of patients who have unnecessary long lengths of stay of more than 21 days in hospital; to increase the number of urgent treatment centres delivering a standardised level of service to provide patients with an alternative to A&E; to continue to make improvements to the use of GPs at major A&Es, allowing less acutely ill patients to be streamed away from the emergency departments, and to consider the issues raised by the noble Baroness, Lady Watkins, about the higher training of GPs and other practitioners so that patients do not feel the need to go to A&E; and to enhance NHS 111 services so that people calling can receive a clinical assessment and be offered immediate advice.

To respond to the important point made by the noble Lord, Lord Young, about the spreading of best practice across the system, we have brought in very important measures recently—not only NHSX but Getting It Right First Time to support NHS Improvement's work, as well as the Accelerated Access Collaborative to drive innovation and best practice across the system.

I turn to the questions about clinical waiting time standards. This review is being clinically led by Professor Stephen Powis, the national medical director of NHS England, to consider whether improvements can be made to access standards for urgent care, planned care, cancer and mental health treatment. It is not a question of abolishing or removing these waiting time standards.

I will briefly address the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, about the introduction of the four-hour waiting time and the Patient's Charter. Let us remember

that that was 15 years ago. Under this Government, last year, 1.7 million more patients were treated within four hours than in 2010, and hospitals delivered 2.4 million more operations. Let us not forget that, when the Labour Administration left office, over 18,000 people were waiting for more than 52 weeks to start elective treatment. It is now 1,400. I would like for us not to look with rose-tinted glasses and forget some of the challenges being faced then as now.

Regarding the questions on current A&E waiting times, the standard sets out a maximum four-hour wait from arrival to admission, transfer or discharge. The initial clinical review of standards report set out some key reasons why we should consider clinically whether there are better ways to deliver this care. First, the standard does not measure total waiting times or differentiate between severity of conditions. It measures a single point in what is often a complex care pathway, and there is evidence that hospital processes rather than clinical judgment are resulting in admissions or a discharge in the immediate period before a patient breaches the standard—in other words, perverse incentives.

In addition, since the introduction of the waiting time standards 15 years ago, practices in medicine and urgent care have naturally advanced, for example with the introduction of specialist centres for stroke care, urgent treatment centres, NHS 111, trauma centres, heart attack centres and acute stroke units, increased access to and use of tests in A&E and new ambulance standards, as well as the increased use of same-day emergency care to avoid unnecessary overnight admissions. This is all being led by clinicians on the best advice to improve the standard of patient care. Any changes will be reviewed only after full evaluation and clinical advice. I hope that that is reassuring for the House; I am sure that we will be robustly tested on it. I hope that it clears up some of the questions asked and responds to some of the points made by the noble Baroness, Lady Watkins.

I will close so that the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, has time to respond. I close by expressing the hope that I have reassured the House that this Government not only understand the importance of world-class health and social care provision but have made it our number one domestic priority. We are listening to the concerns raised regarding not only the quality of, and access to, NHS care but social care.

The measures I have outlined are helping to ease pressure on the health and social care system and to improve performance. The funding we have committed through legislation is intended to provide the certainty that the NHS needs to deliver the long-term plan and, with it, the world-class service that each and every one of us wants, so that clinicians, patients and the public can have confidence that they will always be able to find the right care at the right time, no matter where they live in the United Kingdom.

Lord Young of Norwood Green: The Minister has given a comprehensive response to a range of questions. Could she answer in writing the question on NHS apprenticeships? I would be grateful.

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford: Yes.

1.52 pm

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath: My Lords, I first thank the Minister for her comprehensive response, and I thank all noble Lords who have taken part in what has been a wide-ranging and excellent debate. I congratulate my noble friend Lady Wilcox on what was, on any count, a brilliant maiden speech. I hope that she will speak many times in your Lordships' House over the coming months.

In such a wide-ranging debate, one cannot do justice to what has been said, but I would identify three core themes. First, on social care, we are united in wanting to see a solution. The Minister is reassuring about the proposals that will come from the Government at some point in the year. I say to her that it is very important that these proposals deal with the now as much as they do with the future; it is now that so much pressure is being felt. I say to the noble Baroness, Lady Brinton, that if she is really looking for a quick solution, she just has to go back: you legislated for Dilnot. Raise the means test cap; implement Dilnot; and put more money into adult social care—that at least would give you a fundamental way to go forward. Your Government legislated for it; this is the remarkable thing about capping the cost of social care for individuals. It is quite remarkable that we are here, still desperately hoping that we will get a solution for the future, when we had it.

Secondly, I echo all noble Lords who have spoken so highly about the work of staff and so many great things happening in the health service. There is no doubt about that. The noble Lord, Lord Bates, referred to the US Commonwealth Fund designation of the NHS as the number one healthcare service in the world. He was right to do so. As he will know, the reason for this is that we came out very highly on cost-effectiveness and access to services. He will also know that we came bottom, with the US, on health outcomes. My concern about the issue of targets is that our continuing failure to meet them will lead to worsening health outcomes in the future.

This brings me to my final point. The Minister referred to the pressures that we are under. These are not going to go away, whether demographic pressures, growing health inequality or the fantastic opportunities of new medicine and treatments, which cost additional money. This is the way that health will go over the next period; it is not until the 2060s that the population demographic will start to change again. At the moment, the health service is reeling under huge pressure. It is simply not sustainable to think that we can go on like this over the next 10, 20 or 30 years. We have to level with the public that, if they want the NHS—and I think they do—they will one way or another have to pay for it.

We cannot run away from the kind of debate that the noble and gallant Lord, Lord Stirrup, said that we ought to have. I go back to what the House of Lords Select Committee on Long-term Sustainability of the NHS said three years ago: that we must face up to the long term to have any hope at all of getting through this and landing the NHS in the excellent shape in which we want it to be. I thank noble Lords for the opportunity to debate this.

Motion agreed.

Cairncross Review

Question for Short Debate

1.56 pm

Asked by **Baroness Kidron**

To ask Her Majesty's Government what steps they are taking in response to *The Cairncross Review: a sustainable future for journalism*.

Lord Bethell (Con): My Lords, I gently remind the House of the three-minute time limit. This is a time-limited debate, and it would be helpful if Members could please stick to that limit.

Baroness Kidron (CB): My Lords, it has been a year since Dame Frances Cairncross published her review, *A Sustainable Future for Journalism*. Cairncross's remit was

“to consider the sustainability of the production and distribution of high-quality journalism, and especially the future of the press”.

The review's six chapters outline: the importance of high-quality journalism to democracy; the rapidly changing market; the plummeting revenues of publishers; the huge power of the online platforms; and the need to protect public interest news. Sadly, the Government's response does not comprehensively answer Dame Frances's nine recommendations, nor does it fully address the two intrinsically linked systemic points that she highlights—notably, the impact of platforms as mediators on the quality of the news and the asymmetry of power between platform and publishers when it comes to revenue.

I declare my interests as set out in the register, particularly as a member of the House of Lords' digital democracy inquiry committee and as chair of the 5Rights Foundation.

The most urgent issue raised repeatedly by Cairncross is how new distribution models for high-quality journalism have eroded revenue. This is a sector being hollowed out before our eyes, with reduced resources to hold institutions to account, as the platform model drives down quality in pursuit of profit. In her introduction, Cairncross points out:

“People read more sources of news online, but spend less time reading it than they did in print. They increasingly skim, scroll or passively absorb news, much of it ‘pushed’ news”,

which is

“based on data analytics and algorithms, the operation of which are often opaque.”

Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google and YouTube measure views, likes and retweets, not the quality of the news they share. Under the guise of being “user first”, they are focused on building algorithms to increase engagement and, with it, their revenues—not on people's understanding of what is happening in the world around them.

A user journey with a diet of financial, entertainment, political and international news as readers made their way from front page to sports page, has been replaced by unbundled news: bite-sized snacks driven by an opaque list of inputs that optimise user engagement; it is often difficult for readers to know or recall the source.

[BARONESS KIDRON]

Disaggregated news driven by commercial concerns necessarily interferes with a user journey based on editorial or public interest values. This business model enables disinformation to masquerade as news. It is not without consequences: the victims are children who get measles, pensioners who give up their savings and individuals who vote on false promises.

Cairncross recommended:

“New codes of conduct to rebalance the relationship between publishers and online platforms”, underpinned by a news quality obligation under regulatory oversight. While the government response has warm words about these codes, it is unclear whether they are to be put on a statutory footing, silent on who will have oversight and offers no timetable. The news quality obligation becomes a vague sense that platforms must “help users identify the reliability and trustworthiness of news sources”,

with allusions to the online harms White Paper. I do not understand why the Government commissioned a review on such an urgent matter, only for us to wait a year to hear that we will wait several more. Can the Minister outline the steps government will take to introduce new, effective codes of conduct and when we will begin to see them enforced? Also, what obstacles does she see to introducing a news quality obligation in response to the review, rather than waiting for an online harms Bill whose effect may not be felt for another couple of years?

As classified and display ads have moved wholesale from publishers to platforms, particularly Google, where targeted advertising is king, the duopoly of Google and Facebook have become eye-wateringly rich and the news sector increasingly poor. Meanwhile, news producers remain at the mercy of news feed algorithms that can, at the whim of a platform, be changed for no transparent reason, giving platforms the power to literally bury the news. Cairncross’s observation that the opaque advertising supply chain is weighted against content creators is not new. It was central to the Communications Committee’s report, *UK Advertising in a Digital Age*; it has been the subject of much complaint by advertisers themselves; and it is well laid out in the interim review from the CMA.

This dysfunctional business model hits the local press the hardest. The *Yorkshire Evening Post* showed its societal value by having local reporters when it broke the story of a child being treated on an NHS hospital floor. The subsequent false discrediting of the story on social media showed the financial value in misinformation. The editor’s plea to the digital democracy committee was that the *Post* needed a fairer share of the value of the content it produces. Without it, it simply cannot continue to put reporters on the front line.

Cairncross recommends an innovation fund, VAT exemption to match offline publishing and allowing local papers charitable status. The first of these is being done by Nesta, the second is being looked at by the Treasury, and the last the Government rejected outright, but at the heart of her recommendations was that the CMA should use its powers to investigate the advertising supply chain to ensure that the market be fair and transparent. Given the unanimity of this view,

and the disproportionate control of the platforms, will the Minister tell the House whether she would like to see—as many of us would—the CMA move to a full market investigation to clean up the advertising supply chain?

Cairncross urged the extension of the Local Democracy Reporting Service but this has been interpreted by the Government as an extension of the BBC local news partnerships, with no additional funding. This is not an adequate response to the crisis in local journalism, nor does it fulfil the Government’s own promise to advocate for voters outside the metropole, whose local interests may be too small to be of financial value in the attention economy of the multinationals. Leaving whole parts of the country out of sight is not sustainable for our democracy.

The review also called for an Ofcom inquiry into the impact of BBC News on the commercial sector. However, I would argue that of greater concern are the recent announcements of large-scale cuts to BBC News. Amid the crisis in the local press, it is simply not the right time to undermine the BBC. In an era of catastrophically low trust, BBC News is uniquely trusted by 79% of the population—a statistic that any platform or politician would beg for.

Finally, the commitment from the Government to support media literacy is hugely welcome. The ability to identify the trustworthiness of a source and to understand the platform’s algorithms, how they impact on what you see and who benefits from your interactions is vital. But I urge the noble Baroness to make clear in her answer that media literacy is no substitute for cleaning up the hostile environment in which the news now sits.

I asked Frances Cairncross to comment on the government response to her review. She said it was “of particular regret that the government rejected out of hand the idea of an Institute of public interest journalism.”

On another occasion, one might underline further the responsibility of the press to uphold their own editorial standards to a greater extent and better fulfil their own public interest role but, for today, I wish to congratulate Dame Frances on categorically making the case for high-quality journalism as a crucial safeguard to democracy.

I look forward to hearing from many knowledgeable colleagues and thank them in advance for their contributions. Since the *Cairncross Review* was published, the news sector has become more fragile, while the platforms’ power has become entrenched. I hope that the Minister—delightfully making her maiden speech in this debate—finds a way of reassuring the House that the Government intend to tackle the systemic issues that Cairncross has identified with the seriousness and urgency they require. I beg to move.

2.05 pm

Lord Knight of Weymouth (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate my friend the noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, on securing the debate and her introduction to it. I must begin by reminding your Lordships that I am also a member of the Select Committee on Democracy and Digital Technologies, and of my entry in the register as a chief officer of Tes Global, which publishes the *TES* magazine, a specialist education publication.

At Tes, we continue to see the value of print, but we have had to build a vibrant digital business behind a great media brand because, of course, journalism has changed. Our journalists see the traffic numbers; they are trained in search engine optimisation; they need video and audio skills. It is no longer enough to be great questioners and writers. While the last big Google algorithm change helpfully puts a premium on authority and trust, our readers are less likely to bother with long-form journalism: 80% of our news traffic is from mobile. Migrating from a print business to a digital one has been costly in investment and revenue. We have had to rapidly evolve. A year ago, we sold the *Times Higher Education*, which had substantially become a data insights business behind its great journalism. Tes is now largely a school software and training business behind a brand of leading education journalism.

This is all fine, but the need to resource costly investigative journalism is a cornerstone of democracy. The Select Committee that I am on would probably not have been formed by your Lordships if it was not for the *Guardian* investing in Carole Cadwalladr's time to investigate Cambridge Analytica. This is at the heart of why the Secretary of State—I very much welcome her to the House—should act more substantially on the excellent Cairncross report.

This was vividly brought home to me last night when looking—I was at home—at the Lords Library briefing on the coronavirus. I will read one paragraph towards the end:

“Since the outbreak of the disease, various organisations and commentators have raised concerns about the spread of disinformation relating to 2019-nCoV. In general, much of the disinformation on the topic has focused on: false cures (for example, drinking bleach); the spread of the disease (that it is a bioweapon); and speculation as to its origin (one suggested cause is 5G). The scale of the problem is such that the WHO has labelled it an ‘infodemic’: an over-abundance of information that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance.”

The lack of authoritative information and the disinformation online is distracting public health officials, to the extent that in Malaysia a Minister has said that it has become a bigger problem than the virus itself. He had to go out and tell people that it did not cause others to walk undead in the streets.

The Minister needs to ask herself: what happens as and when we face a real health emergency here? What of an impoverished BBC, and what happens when the value of the news media shifts in Government? It would then no longer be about malleability in winning elections and referenda but about suddenly needing to win back trust—the lost trust, which becomes something we need as a matter of life and death. We urgently need a national media literacy campaign, like that in Finland, and credible government action on this critical issue.

2.09 pm

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury (LD): My Lords, I join the noble Lord in thanking the noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, for this debate. Its popularity means that we will have to do speed debating, as the noble Lord, Lord Birt, once suggested. We welcome the Government's positive response to supporting Nesta's pilot innovation fund, focused on improving the supply of public interest news, and we welcome that the

Government are considering removing VAT on digital news publications. We on these Benches would like VAT to be removed from all digital publications. Please include e-books as well. Does the Secretary of State not agree?

We welcome the initiative to develop an online media literacy strategy and that the Government accept that social media and news aggregation platforms and companies have a duty of care to co-operate in creating a sustainable environment for news in the digital age. The online harms White Paper is referred to as the vehicle, but where is the Bill? Will the Secretary of State enlighten us on that?

The *Cairncross Review* is concerned about the sustainability of good journalism. Since the Government are intent on getting rid of suggested mechanisms to expose and punish unethical and illegal conduct, and establish incentives for news publishers to produce quality journalism, how do they intend to go forward? The Secretary of State says in her response that:

“At the heart of any thriving democracy is a free and vibrant press.”

None of us here would disagree with that—nor, I am afraid, with her when she continues:

“in this country its future is under threat.”

However, we might disagree about exactly how and why.

This is a turbulent time for the press. Quite apart from the backdrop to the *Cairncross Review* of unprecedented challenges to the future of news provision, buffeted by internet competition that represents on the one hand a financial pincer movement and on the other competitive and often fake news, the cornerstone of our “free and vibrant press” that is public service broadcasting is under attack from the Government. The PM's communications team has banned Ministers from appearing on BBC's “Today” programme, although I noted that the Secretary of State was allowed to take part this morning, if only, in her characteristically gentle way, to threaten the BBC. The Government have boycotted ITV's “Good Morning Britain”, and declined to appear on Channel 4 since before the election. How does that behaviour allow journalists to do what she correctly states is their “vital” purpose; namely, of

“holding power to account and keeping the public informed of local, national and international issues”?

Returning to the BBC, which is under attack when it is needed more than ever, the Secretary of State uttered supportive words, but it is actions that matter. Will she confirm that the BBC's scope and mission will not be changed by the Government before the next charter review, and that she will listen to her noble friend Lord Grade about decriminalisation of the licence fee? The other day, the noble Lord, Lord Puttnam, told us to beware of the slippery slope. Will she listen to him?

2.12 pm

Lord Wakeham (Con): My Lords, I will do my best to keep the speed debating going. It is some time since I was directly involved in the affairs of the press as chairman of the Press Complaints Commission. Back then, the name Google was barely mentioned and Facebook had not even been invented. Times have changed, but one thing remains constant; the crucial importance of a free press in a democracy.

[LORD WAKEHAM]

I have learned for sure over many years that you cannot have a free press unless you have one that is commercially viable. Newspapers have to be able to make profits to survive. That is what is now in jeopardy because the press is under greater commercial pressure than at any time in its history. Newspaper, print and online revenues have more than halved since the last decade as the platforms have taken a bigger and bigger share of the advertising market. That cannot go on.

The *Cairncross Review* lays out the position in grim reality, particularly the fate of the local and regional papers that are the cornerstones of local democracy, and I pay tribute to the analysis that Dame Frances produced. I support most of her recommendations, but one is missing: we must ensure support for the industry as it consolidates, which it surely must.

When I was chairman of the PCC, there was a significant range of publishers, including a large number of independent local publishers. Over the last few years, consolidation has happened so that there are now far fewer. But there is a way to go if newspapers are to survive and the closure of titles is to stop. There must be rationalisation if publishers are to have the strength to take on the competition.

There are two reasons why consolidation is important. First, as happened in the combination of the Trinity Mirror titles and the *Express*, it would allow companies to deliver cost savings in a range of back-office areas. The other area relates to the new reality of competition. Two decades ago, competition was between newspapers—the *Telegraph* and the *Times*, the *Mail* and the *Express* and so forth. But today, the competition is with the giant tech platforms that are vacuuming up the advertising market at an ever-increasing rate. Publishers need the strength to be able to take them on, not each other, and that strength comes from the combined weight of consolidated, strong, successful companies that can do that.

There needs to be a thorough review and reform of the media competition and ownership regime that allows newspaper publishers to reduce costs, increase revenues and invest in the journalism that will allow them to take on the global competition without any impact on media plurality. One of the greatest dangers we all face is where legislation, because of the time it takes to put on to the statute book, lags behind the reality of the market. Our legislation in this area is ages old and I hope that my noble friend will call for swift action when looking at the Cairncross recommendations. It would help so much in saving a free press. If we do not, it may be too late.

2.16 pm

Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho (CB): My Lords, I too thank my noble friend Lady Kidron for her timely debate and draw attention to my interests in the register, including as board director of Twitter and adviser to a bunch of media start-ups, predominantly through Founders Factory. Therefore, noble Lords will see immediately that I am entirely conflicted. On the one hand, I have seen many times the extreme benefits that technology has brought to the vibrant media sector. My dear friend Amelia Gentleman should be name-checked in this Chamber. She single-handedly discovered

the Windrush scandal and would say herself that using Twitter and other mechanisms to reach the people she was trying to interview and to build relationships with them was immensely important to her journalism. But, clearly, as well described by my noble friend, we face a very complex landscape. That is why I will focus my brief remarks on innovation.

I was impressed by the £10 million commitment to innovation, but it is 10 times too little. While it is of course important to defend the old world, we must build a positive future for a new kind of journalism. It does not mean a journalism without integrity, which is not based on investigation or that has no strong local news element. But my reading of the very important work that Dame Frances Cairncross did was that there was a defence of the old, perhaps with a lack of creativity about the building of the new.

We need to put innovation far more deeply at the heart of this sector. I am lucky enough to work with a bunch of start-ups from many different angles. One that I would name check, Serelay, is building an amazing weapon against the spread of misinformation and fake news. Another, Black Ballad, is building long-form journalism for black women in Britain. They are wildly different, but both are going to contribute on the problems and challenges that are described here.

Innovation will help us build a strong and robust sector, but it will also move the sector on. I have very much enjoyed the long-form, slightly different-take journalism started by James Harding, the ex-director of BBC News, at Tortoise. It is not for everybody, but I find myself drawn to it many times. I feel that we need to put more investment into innovation in the sector, both from existing organisations but also through organisations such as Nesta, where feet must be held to the fire to make sure that the investments are meaningful and contributing to the challenges that Dame Frances Cairncross described.

The second mode of innovation comes from companies and media organisations themselves. I was heartened to read about the recent experiment in the *Times*. Noble Lords may raise their eyes to heaven when I link data science and journalism in this Chamber, but surprising results happened. The paper did a long-form project where it looked at all the articles spread out across the web, thinking that volume of content would lead to volume of revenue—but it was wrong. The *Times* has dramatically changed the nature of its journalism by looking at what people are actually reading. Guess what—that was original articles, deep investigative journalism and journalism that was new and interesting. So the paper reorganised its newsroom to reflect that. Innovation is the way that we must build a new future for journalism.

2.19 pm

Lord Lipsey (Lab): My Lords, my favourite newspapers are the *Racing Post* and the *Brecon and Radnor Express*. How do I love thee, *Brecon and Radnor*? Let me give an example. Not so long ago, there was a story that police were asking the public to come forward with information following the theft of a pint of milk from a doorstep in Llandrindod Wells. That may seem a purely trivial thing. I live in Streatham, where we have

been reading about horrible murders and large numbers of police caught up in trying to stop terrorism. That is one reality of our national life. I find it refreshing to be reminded that bits of the country are not like this. There are bits of the country where sensible and sane people mostly go about their legal business so that the police have time to issue appeals for information on the theft of a bottle of milk.

Dame Frances concentrates very much on local and regional newspapers, although I think her terms of reference allowed her to go much wider. I have some sympathy with the dilemma in which she found herself. She is a distinguished, serious journalist—or was, when she worked in the trade. She therefore values serious journalism. That is one side of it. The other side is that she was a journalist on the *Economist*. I was lucky enough to work with her for a while. The *Economist* teaches one that certain doctrines are absolutely unbreakable. One of them is, “Watch out for public subsidy, which usually goes down the drain.” It can have serious side effects and take money out of poor taxpayers’ pockets and put it into those of rich newspaper owners—and she was obviously cautious throughout that she was going to do that.

I am delighted that the Government have accepted most of her recommendations. The question is whether they live up to the task she was set of saving serious journalism, particularly since the Government have turned down out of hand one of her recommendations for an institute for serious journalism—I cannot recall her exact words, but let us call it that. I like the report and agree with the Government that most of its recommendations should be accepted, but I seriously ask whether this is too little, too late.

2.23 pm

Lord Black of Brentwood (Con): My Lords, I declare my interest as deputy chairman of the Telegraph Media Group and my other media interests. I am also a member of the Select Committee on Democracy and Digital Technologies.

Dame Frances’s review was the first time that the Government acknowledged that the sustainability of our media is in jeopardy and that public policymakers needed to do something to help. Her report was welcomed across the industry because it identified practical steps to support the media on its path to fundamental change. The causes of the stress on the sector are straightforward. The news media faces brutal competition on two fronts. On one side are Google and Facebook—70% of UK online advertising spend now flows through this duopoly. This means that they take over £9 billion a year in digital ad revenues while the news media companies that create content for them earn only around £500 million. Then there is competition from the BBC, whose guaranteed £3.8 billion income produces a massive market distortion that makes it challenging to grow subscription businesses.

The Cairncross recommendations are a step in the right direction, but I have two points of concern. One is time: Cairncross was established in 2018, reported in early 2019 and the Government have only just responded at the start of 2020. Most of the recommendations have still to take practical effect. The grim truth is that help is needed now if many local newspapers are to

survive while they bridge the gap between print legacy and digital future. My noble friend understands that. Will she tell us more about the timetable to implementation, particularly on the issue of VAT zero-rating for digital products, which could make a rapid difference to businesses building subscription models, and other financial measures, including tax reliefs, which will give time for the report’s structural measures to take effect?

My second concern is clarity. The Cairncross recommendations are just part of a plethora of other reviews, consultations and policy documents. We have the Furman review, initiatives from the Information Commissioner, reviews by the DCMS on brand safety and the supply chain, an investigation by the CMA, ongoing work from Ofcom, and the online harms White Paper. These are all important pieces of work, but there is real danger that we cannot see the wood for the trees. Too many initiatives from too many separate departments and organisations present a real risk that nothing will end up happening or that it will simply take too long.

Does my noble friend agree that the best way forward is to identify a handful of strategic issues where action to support the industry during its transformation can be taken speedily and preferably without the need for legislation, which will take far too long? I agree entirely with my noble friend Lord Wakeham that a consolidation review of ownership laws must be one of them.

There is speculation that my noble friend does not wish to continue in this role. She would be much missed. If she does move on, will she consider leaving a note in her desk for her successor saying simply, “The media needs your help. Many local newspapers face closure. Other publishers struggle to support high-quality journalism. There is no time to lose if we are to save our democracy. Please act now to help them?”

2.26 pm

Baroness Hollins (CB): My Lords, I am disappointed that the Government have rejected the flagship recommendation from the *Cairncross Review* of an institute of public interest news. It was the only recommendation to promise direct support for public interest news. Its proposed role was to draw together many elements of the other recommendations, including gathering funding from other sectors, the administration of the innovations fund and the management of the local democracy reporters’ scheme.

An institute of public interest news could be established entirely independently of the state, much like the press recognition panel established after the Leveson inquiry. Will the Minister explain the Government’s plans to directly support journalism in the public interest through new organisations and initiatives?

It is significant that nowhere in her report did Dame Frances propose any form of direct support for the three companies, Reach, Newsquest and JPI Media, which dominate the local newspaper sector. These companies own close to 70% of print titles and associated websites. They rely on business models of acquisition, consolidation, and ultimately redundancies and closures, which are seen as destructive of journalism in the sector and have been criticised by the National Union

[BARONESS HOLLINS]

of Journalists, among others. It is evident that these three companies are part of the problem and not part of the solution.

Other government pledges will consider VAT relief for online newspapers. Such a proposal, while having virtues, could disproportionately benefit the companies that own national titles and run successful news media websites—not only those companies that produce public interest journalism and own local titles. Some of the companies that would have most to gain are the very same ones defending extensive phone hacking and other litigation to this day.

Will the Minister explain what protections the Government will put in place to ensure that public subsidies and other support go to the local, independent, public interest-focused news providers that need it and are not diverted to unreformed companies with rather dubious ethical records, which remain the subject of sensitive litigation, including allegations that they covered up wrongdoing and continue to do so?

I end by reminding the House of how I became interested in this subject. First, I gave evidence to the Leveson inquiry as a victim of phone hacking and intrusion that was not in the public interest. Secondly, some of my concerns—quite differently—are about the vulnerable situations that people with learning difficulties, whom I particularly speak up for, find themselves in online through a lack of their own media literacy and adequate support.

2.29 pm

Lord Faulks (Non-Aff): My Lords, I, too, am grateful to the noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, for initiating this debate. I should declare an interest as the chairman from the beginning of this year of IPSO, the Independent Press Standards Organisation, which regulates 1,500 print titles and 11,000 online titles comprising 95% of national daily newspapers—by circulation—and the majority of local and regional newspapers.

IPSO contributes to standards in journalism by two principal methods. It does so, first, by responding to complaints and resolving or adjudicating in them in accordance with the editors' code. It has the power to issue private advisory notices and to initiate standards inquiries in appropriate circumstances. The second principal area of work is in relation to standards. We have published guidance in a number of areas; for example, the reporting of suicide and the reporting of major disasters in the wake of the Kerslake report on the terrorist attack at Manchester Arena.

The Government's response to the *Cairncross Review* defers the treatment of a significant number of issues. We may have to wait for the online harms Bill, the CMA investigation into the relationships between online platforms and digital advertising, and the Furman review.

IPSO believes that the sustainability of high-quality journalism relies significantly on consumers' ability to identify it. It was in this context that IPSO launched its IPSO mark, a visual symbol that can be used by all our member publications to show their commitment to professional standards and to a curated, edited and regulated product. It is something of an irony that there are those who criticise the quality of regulation

in relation to the conventional printed press yet say remarkably little about the need for regulation of the vast quantity of information or so-called news that can be accessed online without any form of regulation or quality assurance.

IPSO is pleased that many initiatives have been launched better to educate and inform the public about fake news and the potential harms involved in using social media, and it applauds the work done by a number of bodies to address this problem.

IPSO believes that it can make a major contribution to UK journalism. As a body, it has greater powers than its predecessors. In particular, it has required 20 front-page corrections and offers low-cost arbitration to those who might have taken a paper to court but were unable to do so. All this should help to produce journalism of a higher quality and that is accountable, but does not at the same time inhibit the freedom of the press. The giants of social media have, in my view, at last begun to respond to the challenge of the posting of often unreliable news and disinformation. If they fail to make real progress, the Government may have to intervene substantially.

The *Cairncross Review* rightly emphasised the importance of journalism and in particular regional journalism. There is plainly a need to develop media literacy and to encourage readers and consumers to identify when they can rely on a source of news. IPSO has a significant contribution to make in this regard.

2.32 pm

Earl Attlee (Con): My Lords, I have to say that I am disappointed by some aspects of the Government's response to the *Cairncross Review*. Where it called for charitable status to be more widely available for publishers who choose to operate for the public good, the Government have rejected that recommendation as well as that calling for targeted funding to support high-quality news. Instead, the few initiatives from the review supported by the Government provide little incentive or encouragement to improve the quality of news provision.

The Government pledge to consider extending the VAT zero rating to online publications, which I welcome in principle. However, we must not forget that some of the largest titles in our national press are still subject to phone hacking litigation, a point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Hollins.

I congratulate my noble friend Lord Faulks on his appointment as chairman of IPSO and pay tribute to his predecessor, Sir Alan Moses, who skilfully but unsuccessfully engaged with me and tried to persuade me not to press to have Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act commenced. I wish my noble friend good luck in his new role.

However, it cannot be right that my noble friend the Secretary of State, metaphorically speaking, holds a loaded gun to the head of the press in the form of the power to commence Section 40 forthwith. We must either commence the carrot component of Section 40 or repeal all of it. We cannot do nothing.

Finally, I welcome the Government's pronouncements on defending media freedom internationally and the work they have done in this area to date. I repeat my

thanks to the Government for accepting last year my amendment that protects journalists from accidental arrest at the border when returning from certain prohibited conflict zones. I have one question for my noble friend the Minister: will the Government change the policy regarding FCO travel advice to reflect recent attacks on, or murders of, journalists when nobody has been held to account? When such events occur, it is clear evidence that the state concerned is in deep trouble.

2.35 pm

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (GP): My Lords, I join others in thanking the noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, for securing this debate. I guess I could say that I have fought in both camps. Until 2012, I was editor of the *Guardian Weekly*, in some ways a very traditional media publication, but I also hand-coded my first website in 1999, so I have always been on both sides.

I want to focus on a couple of points that other noble Lords have not covered in the short time available. I welcome particularly the Government's commitment in their response to a White Paper on media literacy by the summer. I know that many government schedules are very pressed at the moment, so I hope the Minister can reassure us that that will be stuck to. The review says that media literacy programmes have often focused on young people. Will this strategy cover people of all ages and not just young people? The Cairncross report said that the institute for public interest news—I share the regret expressed by the noble Baroness, Lady Hollins, that the Government have dismissed that as a possibility—should be doing the work on adult media literacy, so where are we going to do it if not through that mechanism? I spend a lot of time in schools, universities and colleges, and young people are considerably more media literate than many of their elders. They are very aware of politics. The young climate strikers and the young trade union activists I meet are very politically engaged—a huge argument for votes at 16—and they can certainly teach many of us a thing or two about media literacy. Some of them were teaching me the other day about TikTok.

Media ownership reform comes up a number of times in the report, but, so far as I could find, it is not mentioned in the government response. The Media Reform Coalition in 2014 described this as the “elephant in the room”, and the Cairncross report engages with it in a number of places. The noble Baroness, Lady Hollins, referred to the local media concentration, but in national media we have three companies controlling at least 70% of the national print market, with Rupert Murdoch's News UK holding a third of the entire market share. These are deeply concerning issues for our democracy and will continue to be so. A quarter of local government areas are not served by a local newspaper, while 35% are covered by a single local news outlet. The noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, referred to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* and its recent achievement; I would refer also to its sister paper, the *Yorkshire Post*, which did enormous work in uncovering the great scandal of the felling of street trees in Sheffield. Without that, we might have lost even more trees and might still be in a disastrous situation. Media is crucial to our democracy, as is local media.

2.38 pm

Lord Holmes of Richmond (Con): My Lords, it is a pleasure to take part in this debate. I thank the noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, for securing it and declare my interests as set out in the register. I agree with much of what has been said but want to touch on unpaid internships and diversity in respect of the *Cairncross Review*.

Paragraphs 57 and 58 of the Government's response to Cairncross identify the difficulties associated with unpaid internships. Paragraph 58 also refers to the Government being

“committed to ensuring that everyone is free to reach their full potential, regardless of their background.”

In that spirit, will my noble friend accept the difficulties that unpaid internships present to those who seek to enter journalism and the media, and will she from the Dispatch Box support my Private Member's Bill, which had its First Reading on 13 January, to prohibit all unpaid work experience exceeding four weeks? That would have an incredible impact on journalism and the media, and across our economy and society. In this respect, I also salute the work done by the *FT* with PressPad in helping young people who aspire to be journalists in the capital. Unpaid internships could also act as a huge barrier to diversity in news media, where currently 94% of journalists identify as white, while only 8% identify as disabled. What are the Government planning to do to help the news media snap out of being so massively monochrome and having largely non-disabled newsrooms right up and down the country?

We have touched upon media literacy. What are the Government doing to have media literacy threaded through all aspects of the curriculum at school and in wider society? When will my noble friend announce the 19 recipients of the first grant from the Nesta pilot fund? Similarly, turning to the United States and its use of the 501(c)(3) status, can the UK media learn anything from this status about its potential benefit for news publications?

Here is the news: we have fake news and fading news, and circulation and ad revenue are through the floor for traditional media forms. When it comes to online, if we want to ensure at least some level of veracity, we all need, at least, to commit to making that extra click.

2.41 pm

Lord McNicol of West Kilbride (Lab): My Lords, as we have heard, a fully functioning local media is a valuable community resource. It is often a lifeline for many, keeping people informed on local matters and informing communities on how local, regional and national issues may affect their lives—even if it is a stolen pint of milk. With the rapid rise in social media, many people are beginning to rely solely on social media outlets as their main source of information. The noble Baroness, Lady Lane-Fox, focused on innovation. She is correct, but I do not see it as an either/or.

As Tom Watson outlined in a debate on this subject in the other place:

“We have lost 6,000 frontline reporter jobs since 2007; newspaper circulation rates have fallen by half; 350 local news titles have closed; and half of Britons are now worried about fake news.”—*[Official Report, Commons, 12/2/19; col. 776.]*

[LORD McNICOL OF WEST KILBRIDE]

We need to ensure that local journalism is kept alive and, where possible, that local and regional media outlets have a sustainable future. We on these Benches therefore welcome the recommendations made in the *Cairncross Review*: to establish an institute for public interest news as well as direct funding for local public interest news. I will not repeat them but, to impress this on the Minister, I echo the questions asked by the noble Baroness, Lady Hollins, on this issue.

Another part of the Government's response to the *Cairncross Review* was a plan of

"continuing to ensure a free and independent press in the UK and internationally".

Is the Government's recent decision to exclude certain journalists from No. 10 briefings really in this spirit, especially as that decision has been seen as undermining press freedoms? We need to ensure that local journalism is, where possible, protected and promoted. As I outlined beforehand, local media outlets are a vital community resource and I hope the Government will always have this issue at the forefront of their thinking as they follow through on the recommendations made in the *Cairncross Review*.

Before I sit down, I notice that the Minister is about to give her maiden speech to your Lordships' House. Like all other noble Lords, I welcome her to this House and look forward to her contributions and interventions. I just hope that she has fewer hashtag-gate moments than she had in the other place—be that #handbaggate or #leathertrousersgate. I was tempted to wear my leather trousers to the debate today, but I was even more worried about the ire of our fantastic doorkeepers than what may come from the noble Baroness. I welcome her to this House.

2.44 pm

The Secretary of State, Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (Baroness Morgan of Cotes) (Con): My Lords, I thank your Lordships for this afternoon's debate. I congratulate the noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, on bringing this important issue before the House. Given how popular it has been and the expertise on all sides, I am sorry in many ways that this has been a short debate, but I am sure that we will return to these issues over the forthcoming months. I want to thank all those who have spoken. I have to fulfil the requirements of delivering my maiden speech as well as trying to do justice to some of the contributions made this afternoon. I will not get the image of the noble Lord, Lord McNicol, and his leather trousers out of my mind for some time.

First, I begin by formally thanking all noble Lords for their warm welcome since my introduction, particularly Black Rod and her staff, the doorkeepers and all the other staff, including the security and police officers who have, quite literally, pointed me in the right direction when it was clear that I had become rather lost in this red-carpeted end of the Palace. I would also like to thank my noble friends Lady Evans of Bowes Park, the Chief Whip, Lord O'Shaughnessy, Lady Chisholm of Owlpen and Lady Jenkin of Kennington, and my DCMS colleague and noble friend Lady Barran among many others for their advice and support in recent weeks. I must also thank my sponsors: my noble friend Lord Young of Cookham, who—in spite of the

provocations from some of my former colleagues—was a fabulously calm and unflappable Chief Whip when I was a very junior Whip in the other place, and my noble friend Lady Verma, who has been a great ally in my adopted home of Leicester and Leicestershire and was a very talented Minister.

The last few years in UK politics have been both challenging and fascinating for reasons which are well rehearsed. I loved being a constituency Member of Parliament, but there came a time last year when my satisfaction from being in that role and my pride in being an MP and a Minister were outweighed by my dismay at the continuing parliamentary impasse and the constant online abuse and threats, and I concluded that a fresh start was needed for me, my family and my constituency. I had not envisaged that this fresh start might actually involve becoming a Member of this House quite so quickly, but it is an enormous privilege to be here. As my noble friend Lord Black mentioned, I shortly expect to succeed in my attempt to leave the Government and join colleagues on the Back Benches, where I hope I will have the chance to speak more freely about interests I have in character education, financial services—having served two years as chair of the Treasury Select Committee in the other place—the online harms agenda, digital and tech, and women and equalities issues, as well as having a greater presence in the Morgan home, which my family say that they want. I am not sure that I will necessarily leave behind a note, but I can assure my noble friend Lord Black that I shall certainly leave behind some handover instructions.

I turn to the subject of this debate. The *Cairncross Review* vividly outlined the threat to high-quality journalism in this country. As we have heard, there are now around 6,000 fewer journalists than there were roughly a decade ago. Print circulation of daily national papers fell from 11.5 million in 2008 to 5.8 million in 2018 and, in this same period, the circulation for local newspapers has also halved. The main driver is a rapid change in how we consume content. The majority of people now read news online, including 91% of 18 to 24 year-olds. As this shift takes place, publishers have faced significant challenges in creating sustainable online business models. This combination of market conditions threatens to undermine the future financial sustainability of journalism and should concern us all, as we have heard on all sides of this Chamber today. There has been universal agreement on the importance of local journalism in particular, but also high-quality public interest journalism from everyone.

What Dame Frances termed public interest journalism—investigative and democracy reporting—holds the powerful to account and is an essential component of our democracy. It helps us to shine a light on important issues—in communities, in courtrooms, in council chambers and in this Chamber—so its sustainability is very important to all of us, including the Government. Since the publication of the review, the Government have engaged widely on its findings and recommendations. Discussions have been held with representatives of the news industry, including: the News Media Association, the Society of Editors and the National Union of Journalists; a number of online platforms, including Google, Facebook and Twitter; the BBC; and the

regulators, including the CMA, Ofcom, IPSO, the Charity Commission and many more. Last week, the Government published our initial response.

As has already been referred to, the Government support the majority of Dame Frances's recommendations. In fact, we supported all the recommendations apart from one: the proposal to establish an institute for public interest news. Some noble Lords referred to this as the Government having rejected that recommendation—as ever, there is always something in the drafting—but I think the better way to look at it is that the Government have decided that it is not for the Government to take that recommendation forward. There may well be a very good argument for an institute for public interest news but, as ever with the media side of my brief, there is a decision to be taken about exactly what the Government's role is in that. It may well be that there is another body or another way to take forward that particular recommendation.

The Government have already started to take forward some of the other interventions proposed in the review. We have worked with Nesta to deliver a £2 million pilot innovation fund, which launched in October. It seeks to invest in new technological prototypes, start-ups and innovative business models to explore new ways of sustaining the industry in this changing landscape. Last week, the Government also formally committed to extend the business rate discount for local newspapers until 2025, as part of their efforts to support local and regional journalism. The Chancellor will consider the case for a range of potential tax incentives to support the news publishing industry this year, including policy options on VAT, notwithstanding recent litigation in this area. I note those, including the noble Baroness opposite, who have appealed for VAT relief to be extended to all digital publications. Winning arguments about extending reliefs is challenging with the Treasury at the best of times, but I am sure that this will be an ongoing debate. In answer to my noble friend Lord Black, there will of course be a Budget in March and any changes in relation to tax would be made at such a fiscal event.

The Government are committed to taking forward work on the recommendation to create codes of conduct to rebalance and redefine the relationships between news publishers and online platforms, in alignment with wider work on digital regulation. We think that this will help to ensure that journalists in the UK are fairly treated and rewarded for their content. The noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, mentioned this in her opening remarks. We are working on the best way to take forward and enforce those codes and we will obviously keep the House updated. She and other noble Lords also mentioned the fact that there are a number of different reviews and publications in this space. As she set out, there are complex issues in this whole area, which need to be addressed in a systemic way. My noble friend Lord Black said that there were too many initiatives; he thought that we should identify some strategic issues. I do not disagree with that, but we have to think about how we do it. There are issues such as online advertising where it is right for the Competition and Markets Authority—which will publish its final report in July this year—to take that forward. I assure the House that, where it recommends action, the Government will act.

The noble Baroness, Lady Kidron, and I have already discussed the online harms work, on which we hope very much to make further announcements very shortly. Other noble Lords mentioned the media literacy work that is needed; it will be part of the online harms response. I entirely accept what the noble Baroness, Lady Bennett, said about media literacy being needed for all ages; I often find that it is younger people who are perhaps looking at the news with a more sceptical eye than some of us, who might need to be reminded about sources of news and the different motivations of those writing articles. There will be further announcements on that in the work on online harms.

My noble friend Lord Attlee asked about Section 40 of the Crime and Courts Act 2013. He will know, I am sure, that we included in the Conservative Party manifesto a commitment to repeal Section 40, and we are looking for a suitable legislative vehicle to do that. He also asked about the Foreign Office and foreign travel advice. I assure him that any risks or appalling incidents, murders or attacks affecting journalists are part of the way in which the Foreign Office makes decisions about travel advice to those who are travelling overseas.

My noble friend Lord Holmes talked about internships and diversity, both of which are important issues. They are perhaps not necessarily for this particular review, but he is right to say that thinking about how we get young future talent from diverse backgrounds and perspectives into our local, and indeed national, media goes to the heart of the sustainability of that journalism. The Government will certainly take away those points.

The *Cairncross Review* also outlined how news publishers are increasingly reliant on the online advertising market, and the threat this poses to the future sustainability of journalism. We have committed to reviewing how online advertising is regulated. The Government will be commissioning work, and there will also be work by the Competition and Markets Authority. We published a call for evidence last week, seeking views on the challenges, as well as the benefits, that the rise of online advertising has brought for people and businesses, including news publishers.

There is a great deal of common ground between the recommendations made by Dame Frances and this Government's wider programme of work to address the challenges raised by digital products and services. As we have heard, this includes the findings of the Furman report on digital competition and the forthcoming legislation to follow up the online harms White Paper. The Government will take account of all the work—I agree with the point made that we need a co-ordinated and coherent approach, but we also need to make progress.

There are many substantial recommendations in the review and, as a Government, we are committed to taking this work forward. I think we all agree that only high-quality journalism can hold the powerful to account and shine a light on society's important issues. We are committed to getting this work right, so that future generations can be inspired and engaged by a free and vibrant press. I thank all noble Lords who have taken part in this important debate and I have no doubt that this House will return to these issues in the near future.

Climate Change

Motion to Take Note

2.55 pm

Moved by **Lord Browne of Ladyton**

That this House takes note, further to the report by UK FIRES, *Absolute Zero*, published in November 2019, of technological and lifestyle efforts (1) to address climate change, and (2) to meet the 2050 net zero carbon emissions target.

Lord Browne of Ladyton (Lab): My Lords, in opening this debate, I am conscious that I am neither a scientist nor an engineer nor an economist. I claim no expertise in any of the many diverse issues that climate change raises and which will raise their head in this debate. My aim is to spark a broad debate that includes those with such expertise but embraces all stakeholders and, at the same time, to encourage the Government and indeed ourselves, the political classes, to provide honest and brave leadership to that process. The message of *Absolute Zero* is strongly that, without honesty and bravery, we will see the manifestation of a genuine existential risk, and our children and grandchildren—if they survive it—will never forgive us.

The authors of *Absolute Zero*—a recent report by UK FIRES, a consortium of UK academic experts—have done us all a great service by authoritatively and painstakingly exposing the degree to which we are being misled by a techno-optimistic approach to the climate change challenge. This may explain why the report, despite being funded by government money, has not really surfaced since its publication. The report poses some deeply uncomfortable questions for the Government about their strategy and about tactics. The noble Lord the Minister knows that I admire and respect him greatly; he is, in my view, the ideal Minister to face the challenge that this report presents. The House has faith in him because we have confidence that he will give straightforward answers to the many questions that the report poses. I intend to ask only the major ones in my opening remarks, but I am sure that other noble Lords will draw attention to others that also deserve a government response—I know that from conversations I have had already.

I am exceedingly grateful that so many noble Lords want to speak in this debate and I look forward eagerly to their contributions. But, in a sense, I feel the need to apologise in advance because, although it has been increased, the time available is insufficient for them to raise everything that they might want to say on what I think is the most important issue of our time.

I thank all the organisations that have circulated briefing papers to speakers and more broadly. They are all of value and, like the excellent House of Lords Library briefing, have increased my knowledge and have added to our debate even before a word has been spoken in this Chamber. On that point, let me take just a few seconds to repeat a suggestion that I made in a debate on knife crime in your Lordships' House in June last year. As I cannot do justice to any of the briefings I have received, which are all full of great

stuff, and as we are searching constantly as a House of Parliament for ways to make our deliberations more relevant to a wider audience and to embrace others, can we not open a web-based portal for every debate? I understand that it would have to be moderated, but it would both allow people who wish to engage with us to post their briefings in real time, having them preserved with the debate, and expand the debate out into society. Along with the Library briefings and other relevant papers, it would create a much more inclusive context for our work and allow us a significant amount of outreach.

Despite climate change being a pressing existential threat, leaders have so far preferred a series of long-term grand targets and few, if any, of the grand policies needed to achieve them. On Tuesday, Boris Johnson revealed why. The Prime Minister, like many other leaders, believes that technological advances will do the job for him. He is, in his own words, a self-confessed techno-optimist. It is clear from his speech on Tuesday that Mr Johnson, who may not “get” climate change, certainly knows the scale and nature of the challenge and can accurately catalogue our failures to date. He also set out a policy for achieving the goal set in bringing forward by five years the ban on the sale of petrol, diesel and hybrid vehicles. So far, so good.

However, he thinks that on the macro-target we are making good progress; in his words

“since 1990—cutting CO₂ by 42 per cent ... through sheer determination and technological optimism”.

It is 42% only if you ignore emissions from aviation and shipping and those associated with imports and exports—and do we import. If these numbers are included, the true figure is more like 15%. The most significant contributors to this success are a cleaner energy mix based on gas and renewables instead of coal and the falling demand for energy across homes, industry and business. It is difficult to see how techno-optimism has played any significant role at all, unless Mrs Thatcher's policies on coal were driven by techno-optimism—but that may lead me down a path where I do not want to go.

While our leaders talk about future technology—none of which has yet been delivered at any scale able to make a significant difference, never mind a sufficient one—cars are now heavier, internal temperatures in our houses and where we work are rising and we are purchasing more stuff and flying more than ever. In each case, we must encourage the opposite behaviour.

Clearly, not every Minister agrees. The comments made by Health Secretary Matt Hancock in response to questions about the government proposal to bail out Flybe pushed back directly on the need for us to fly less. Asked whether he should be giving a different message, he simply replied “No”, going on to say that we should continue to do so but

“use technology to reduce carbon emissions”

as

“electric planes are a potential in the not too distant future.”

The Prime Minister made the same claim on Tuesday. Apparently, he has been assured that we are

“within a couple of years of having viable electric passenger aircraft.”

Technically, he may be proved right. At the Paris Air Show last year, a manufacturer unveiled an electric-powered plane that he promised would be flying in a couple of years' time. We will see, but, even if it performs to the manufacturer's optimum promise, it will carry nine people for a maximum range of 650 miles. Welcome as this is, there is no sign that this can be scaled up into a deployable technology that meets the scale of the aviation emissions challenge. Some 80% of such emissions are from long-haul passenger flights—flights of over 900 miles—a distance no electric aircraft presently in development could ever achieve, and none will unless there is a fundamental paradigm shift in electricity energy storage, which is not even on the visible horizon.

The techno-optimists have placed their faith in massive large-scale engineering solutions, but there is no convincing evidence that we can rely on their development in time—and time is running out. However, the contrary evidence is convincing. *Absolute Zero* quotes research from Imperial College showing that no significant energy technology has ever reached 20% of its eventual scale within 30 years of its first deployment. We simply cannot wait that long.

Apart from the fact that *Absolute Zero* is the most accessible reading on this subject that I have come across, this report is important in three respects. First, net zero is a misleading concept. The true target is absolute or real zero. There are no significant technologies to create negative emissions. No matter how you choose to do it, it takes more energy to take the carbon out of the atmosphere than we gained when we put it there in the first place. This—as I have learned recently—is the second law of thermodynamics: the energy required to create structure is always greater than the energy released in the destruction of structure. You simply cannot take carbon out of the atmosphere without giving it structure. If energy created by a non-emitting source is available, using it to do this would be a waste of that energy while we still use fossil fuels. Increasing the number of trees on the planet reduces the amount of carbon in the atmosphere only once. For example, if we doubled the area of forest in the United Kingdom, that would negate two years' worth of emissions only—and only if we protected that forest for ever.

Secondly, no matter what incentives are offered, there are limits to the rate at which technologies can become significant. It is worth repeating that the report quotes research from Imperial College showing that no significant energy technology has reached 20% of its eventual scale within 30 years of its first significant deployment—we have only 30 years. This is because these new technologies are highly regulated and deploying them would require new standards, regulations, land rights, public consultations and discussions over finance and local communities. We are beyond the 11th hour on this issue and academics are screaming for the Government to show more leadership in this regard. So what confidence can we have that the Government are up to the pace of dealing with the barriers to deployment any better than they are judged to be dealing with the barriers to research investment?

Thirdly, and finally, there is the question of opportunity. The report reveals that once you embrace absolute zero, you can see a wealth of business innovation

opportunity. I will give four simple examples, although there are many in the report: electrification of all existing energy services—I accept that it is simple to say and difficult to do, but it is simple and we have the technology to do it now; improvement and expansion of video-conferencing to stop people flying all over the world unnecessarily; turning down our central heating and stopping heating empty rooms would make a significant difference to our use of energy; recycling powered by renewables offers great opportunity for growth, exploiting the fact that global supply of steel scrap will treble in the next 30 years as an alternative to what we do at present. In the UK, we collect 10 million tonnes of steel scrap per year and export 80% of it, while in the meantime operating blast furnaces with imported coal and iron ore.

The report is a serious wake-up call. As Professor Richard Templer said this morning on the "Today" programme—he is not an author; I suspect that he was brought on to the programme to contradict the report but found he could not—the Government need to get very serious about this and pay attention to everything in this report.

Now that we are awake and being honest with ourselves and the people we purport to lead, it is not all doom and gloom. The report makes it clear too that, by changing our behaviours in a positive way and with incremental change exploiting today's technologies, especially those that can be scaled up and already prove their worth, we can engage with this challenge now in a significant way and enjoy the breakthrough technologies when they emerge later. However, they will not emerge in time to solve the problem.

Constraints of time do not allow me to go into much more detail on the report, but there is not much point in doing so as noble Lords can read it for themselves. In preparation for this debate, it has been a pleasure to introduce many noble friends to this way of looking at the challenge, though not always successfully. A proportion of them responded by saying, "This report requires us to give up flying. That is unrealistic and will not be possible." It does not do any such thing. It just tells us what we do not want to hear, which is that on the current trajectory, there will come a time when we are so far short of the target we have voluntarily and legally imposed on ourselves that the only way to achieve it will be, among other things, to give up flying and shipping. The authors of the report are not responsible for that—we are. We should not shoot the messenger for returning the message to its sender. We passed the law and we are responsible.

I have many questions for the Minister, but I shall restrict myself to three. Given that all of the negative emission options require us to expend more non-emitting energy than using energy to replace fossil fuels, do the Government accept that the use of net zero is misleading and that the target we have created is absolute or real zero? Secondly, the Prime Minister's reference to the imminence of electrically powered passenger flight was calculated to make us all think that this was just the beginning of a journey that would significantly reduce aviation emissions by 2050. Will the Government publish the evidence that supports that rate of deployment of electric flight? Thirdly, assuming that Her Majesty's Government are not solely dependent on technology

[LORD BROWNE OF LADYTON]

to meet the 2050 target, can the Minister confirm that their intention is to do just as this report recommends; namely, to encourage changes of lifestyle and the incremental development of existing technologies to address this issue with what we know works? If so, will they publish a list of the initiatives that will advance that agenda?

3.11 pm

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Browne of Ladyton, for securing this important debate. It is very timely because the appalling bush fires in Australia have put the challenge of climate change into sharp focus. However, the Climate Change Act commits us only to “net zero” within the UK territory. That will not do. We need absolute zero and we must count all the emissions for which we are responsible.

The reason we have reduced emissions by 42% since 1990 is that we have picked the low-hanging fruit by cutting coal-fired generation, driving manufacturing abroad and failing to count the carbon cost of importing goods and food by ship and air, while EU laws on electrical appliance efficiency have reduced UK domestic electricity consumption by around 15% over the past decade. So the second half, or should I say the remaining 85%, of reducing our emissions is going to be much harder and more expensive, and will require radical policies. We must stop burning fossil fuels and focus on harvesting the energy of the sun in all its forms. That will require major changes in infrastructure and behaviour. So please will the Government resist the temptation to put their trust, like the United States, in technologies that have not yet been invented? The scientists in the FIRES report remind us that it can take 30 years to bring new technologies into widespread use. What we need is to lavishly apply existing technology.

The report claims that to reach absolute zero, we will need to electrify all uses of energy, which is currently feasible except for aircraft and shipping. If we carry on at the current rate of growing non-emitting generation, we could be just about there by 2050, except for the inconvenient fact that by removing the use of fossil fuels, we will have massively increased our demand. So, while we accelerate our production of clean electricity, we will also have to reduce energy demand by about 40%. We will all have to change, so it is important for the Government to ensure that they take the public along. Young people are with us already, but not everyone. The CAB tells us that 38% of people think that they will need to change the way they heat their home, and most would be happy to do it—but they would need financial support. Do the Government plan to expand support for new boilers and home insulation?

This week, it was announced that all new cars must be electric by 2035. Can the Government explain how they plan massively to increase the number of rapid charging points by then? What are their plans to strengthen the national grid? If we are to use electricity for space heating, the grid will be less stable than the gas grid when there is high demand and could leave essential users without power.

This is not simple, because all these issues are interdependent. Take, for example, the complexity for the construction industry when building new homes to

high energy efficiency standards such as Passivhaus. Building a new house costs about 65 cubic tonnes of CO₂. This could come down massively if all the materials were manufactured and transported using green electricity. When you demolish old properties, how much of the material is recycled? Are the Government planning any new regulations about this, especially in the light of the high carbon dioxide cost of making cement, given that we do not yet have a substitute? The Association for Environment Conscious Building has calculated that to deep retrofit all our old draughty homes would take one thousand million cubic tonnes of insulation, plus the new windows and doors, so a massive upsurge in retrofit to save carbon would itself have a carbon footprint, which the association amusingly calls the “carbon burp”. It makes it clear that without the decarbonisation of manufacturing and transport, the most ambitious retrofit programme will achieve nothing.

Perhaps I may now go back to the need to produce more non-emitting energy and ask the Government about their plans, after Brexit, to support the massive increase in renewable energy generation we need. In Bangor University alone, much important work is being done to help us to absolute zero, currently supported by EU and Welsh Government funding. The new Smart Efficient Energy Centre has received £4.6 million from the Welsh European Funding Office. It supports research into the development of tidal and offshore wind energy, while €1.2 million came for work on synthetic landfill microbiomes for enhanced anaerobic digestion to biogas. Research into the production of more efficient solar panels at Swansea and Bangor was funded by EU structural funds. Can the Minister say whether that funding will be replaced by the UK Government as part of the effort to reach absolute zero?

3.16 pm

The Earl of Caithness (Con): My Lords, I agree with page four of the report, which states that in reality, most UK cuts in emissions have been the result of Mrs Thatcher’s decision to switch from coal to gas-fired electricity generation. We must remember that both the Labour Party and the Liberal party fought tooth and nail against those reforms.

I am most grateful to the noble Lord, Lord Browne of Ladyton, for instituting this debate and for saying that he wants a wider debate on these issues. What is confusing to start with is whether we are going for net zero or absolute zero. Both are heading in roughly the same direction, but they will take us to different points and will affect our lifestyles and livelihoods very differently. So we need to be clear which one of the two we are going for and we also need to be clear that the rest of the world is following in the same way. We cannot go down one route by ourselves while the rest of the world goes down another.

I will focus on one key message, which is set out on page 2 and covers the food and agriculture industry. It states:

“Beef and lamb phased out by 2050 and replaced by greatly expanded demand for vegetarian food.”

That statement is contrary to the message that was put out by Dr Debra Roberts, the co-chair of the IPPC working group in August last year, that we would include sustainably sourced food as part of our diet

for the future. Which of the two are we to go for? What the report also does not do is mention any of the consequences. What are the consequences of this action for the rest of the environment and biodiversity?

The report focuses on cattle because they produce methane. Cattle are not the biggest producers of methane in the world, termites are—but we are not talking about termites because we do not farm them. What the report does not tell us is that beef cattle raised on deforested land produce 12 times more greenhouse gas emissions than cattle reared on natural pastures; there is a huge range of emissions from the same animals, depending on how you feed them. One must remember, of course, that our cattle greenhouse footprint in the UK is currently about two and a half times lower than the world average. That is because most of our cattle are on pasture.

While we are on cattle and sheep—which they want us to abolish—the report also says, on page 4, that absolute zero means absolute zero: there cannot be any emissions. So you can give up your beef and lamb, but you also have to give up your farmed prawns, farmed fish, pork, chicken, cheese, beer, dairy milk, eggs, coffee, tofu, nuts, pulses, rice, beans, carrots, barley, wheat, potatoes, oats and maize. They all produce emissions and they all have to go, if we believe this report. It is worth pointing out that a bar of chocolate from a deforested rainforest emits more in greenhouse emissions than a serving of low-impact beef—so let us treat the report with a little care.

So far as the UK is concerned, it is worth noting that our cattle numbers in England and Wales are about the same today as they were in 1932. In 1974 they were about 56% higher in the UK than they are now. So far as sheep are concerned, we graze about the same number of sheep in England and Wales now as in 1868. Sheep numbers are well down from their 1992 peak.

The report also says that we ought to reduce our cutting down of trees. The number of trees cut down in the UK in the last 100 years is not that many. In fact, in England and Wales the amount of forestry has doubled in the last 100 years, so there has not been any cutting down of trees. There is also a new report which says that, because of the increased annual rainfall, the forest and forest floor are not as good at absorbing carbon as they used to be. That is from a study in America. A lot more work needs to be done on that.

Despite the fact that this report has produced a very gory headline that appealed to the press—getting rid of lamb and beef—it needs to be treated with a certain amount of caution.

3.21 pm

The Lord Bishop of Oxford: My Lords, I warmly welcome this report and this vital debate. Never before in the scale of human history has there been such a wide and deep threat to our ecosystem or to human flourishing that was so clear and predictable on the horizon. Technology alone is not enough.

In his letter to the whole world in 2015, Pope Francis notes how

“the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor”.

Our response must be nothing less, he argues, than an “ecological conversion” of every person and every part of society. Responding to the current emergency is the responsibility of every family, workplace, village, town and city, company and public institution.

The earth is God’s gift as well as God’s creation. We need to recover the insight that human beings are far more than consumers. We are called to be just stewards of creation, to care for the poorest and the weakest. Human fulfilment lies not in escalating consumption but in meaningful rest and labour and learning to be content.

The churches and faith communities must play our part and are beginning to do so. The Church of England’s General Synod is to debate the climate emergency next week. The most reverend Primate the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent book this year, *Saying Yes to Life*, focuses on the environmental crisis. It will be supported by an extensive digital campaign, Live Lent, asking every Christian to review their lifestyle choices. Many dioceses, including my own, are placing care for the earth at the top of our agenda for the coming years, recognising the distance we still have to travel. This means measuring and restricting our own carbon emissions, commending lifestyle changes, undertaking energy audits and campaigning for wider change. It means identifying challenging but achievable targets and the practical path to reach them. We need to hear the voice of government in policy detail, not just principle.

The Church Commissioners have led the Transition Pathway Initiative, backed by investors worldwide representing over \$16 trillion in assets under management and advice, increasingly drawing companies into line with net-zero targets. Our sister churches and faith communities are each taking similar initiatives. This summer, hundreds of bishops from across the world will gather for the Lambeth Conference, many from regions already deeply affected by ecological disaster: low rainfall, rising sea levels, fire, flood and hunger. A major theme of our gathering will be the global climate emergency and the response needed by every section of society.

Along with others, I invite the Government to provide clear and ambitious policy signals, as they have just done with petrol and diesel vehicles, and to invite every institution and organisation to engage in this great question of our day so that the leadership we offer to the COP summit is demonstrably grounded in the trinity of policy intervention, technology solutions and changing the lives of our entire population.

3.25 pm

Lord Hannay of Chiswick (CB): My Lords, I hope I may be forgiven for concentrating my remarks in this extremely timely debate—for which I thank the noble Lord, Lord Browne of Ladyton—on the international negotiating challenges presented to this country by its chairing of the COP 26 meeting in Glasgow in November. It is a formidable challenge, all the more so as it comes on the heels of the relative failure of COP 25 in Madrid at the end of last year. We need to avoid being proprietorial about this. Chairing a massive international conference such as this does not mean you own it, nor that you can hope to fashion the outcome to your will and to fit your interests—but if it turns out a failure,

[LORD HANNAY OF CHISWICK]

even a relative failure, you can bet your bottom dollar that this country will get a disproportionate amount of the blame.

I declare an interest as having been at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, where I worked for a team headed by the Prime Minister, Sir John Major, and the noble Lords, Lord Howard of Lympne and Lord Blencathra. Since that promising start, there have been plenty of warm words about checking and reversing climate change and all too little effective action to achieve it. Current trends mean that, if we cannot break out of that contradiction at Glasgow, the chances of mitigating—let alone reversing—climate change will slip away from us and this world will be faced with increasingly damaging consequences for us all.

The first requirement for success is that there must be a team effort, not just an occasion for burnishing our own national image. That will mean working closely with our Italian partners, with whom we are sharing the chair during 2020. You do not hear an awful lot about that in government statements, though I recognise that the Italian Prime Minister was here this week. It also means working as a team with the United Nations, because this is a UN process—not just a national one—and there is a mass of UN expertise, from scientific to negotiating skills, that could play an integral part and needs to be harnessed, not marginalised, in any team effort.

The other requirement is to realise that this is a political process involving national decisions to be taken at the highest political level in every country involved. Important though the technical aspects of dealing with climate change are, they will not cut through if the politics are not right. That means our own Government getting involved at the top level—that is to say, the level of the Prime Minister—and our team being headed up at a level that would ensure access at the top level to Governments all around the world. In that context, and without wishing to comment on the personal aspects of it, I welcome the Government's recent decision to upgrade the leadership of our team. Since climate change policy is not a party-political issue, would it not be sensible to put together a team that cuts across party lines and disregards them, as the French did in the run-up to the Paris conference? The UN has shown us a really good example of that by the inspired choice of Mark Carney to head up their team.

In the major diplomatic effort that will have to be made, we can hope for no help from our closest ally, the US, but can we attempt to persuade President Trump at least not actively to cut across our efforts, which if successful would, after all, benefit the US every bit as much as the rest of the world? We will need to bring it home to our friendly countries, such as Saudi Arabia and India, which played an unhelpful role in Madrid, that a repeat of that will not be without consequences or pass unnoticed. At every stage we need to work in a co-operative partnership with China, without which we have little chance of success. Of course, the engine room of any successful campaign will be our recent partners in the EU, without whose solid and active support we will get nowhere. That is quite a challenge for 2020, but one to which we have every interest in rising.

3.31 pm

Lord Giddens (Lab): My Lords, for the past few days I have been absorbed in the book *A Farewell to Ice* by Peter Wadhams, the head of the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge and one of the world's leading authorities on the Arctic. The Arctic ice has crucial properties in stabilising global temperatures, since it reflects a significant proportion of solar radiation back into space, and it is simply melting away. A “practical catastrophe” for humankind is how he describes what is happening there, since there is no way back.

What can the UK do to counter such destructive forces—a country of 66 million in a very large world? The answer is pretty clear. By being in the vanguard it can act as a role model for others and in the immediate future, as noble Lords have said, inject driving force into COP 26. *Absolute Zero* is a significant contribution to this endeavour, especially if it can be further developed and generalised. I like it partly because I am an academic myself and a whole range of very distinguished scholars and other figures are involved in it. The idea of a “living lab”, in which leading figures from different branches of industry collaborate with academic experts to chart ways forward, is compelling.

At the same time, we must think much more macroscopically. We must progress locally and globally. I support those who declare a state of climate emergency. Humanly induced climate change on a grand scale is unique to our era and a fearsome challenge. It is not a question of “saving the planet”—the planet will survive whatever we do—but of saving our civilisation. It is a challenge quite different from any which ever preceded it. No society ever in human history has had to face an issue like humanly created climate change on a global level before. It shows the immense task that there is.

Every crisis is an opportunity, or so they say, and the authors are entirely right to put great emphasis on this. I also endorse their optimistic tone, as long as it is balanced with the recognition of the absolutely huge nature of the risks. The authors say that we cannot depend on breakthrough technologies to get to zero emissions, yet we must surely continue to fund research into them quite heavily. Among the billions the Government are proclaiming they will spend on this and that, they must actively promote blue-sky research into technologies that might cut emissions and I hope at the same time have positive economic benefits. I would welcome a comment on that from the Minister.

This must include geoengineering, even if the risks and dilemmas around it are very large. Here we must return to Peter Wadhams. He says we have already passed the tipping point. At this point, we have to budget to at least investigate removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere on a large scale.

As it stands, the Environment Bill falls short of reaching absolute zero emissions, yet it will codify into law that the UK must reach net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. Some 60 other countries have announced similar ambitions, including France and Germany—both sizeable economies. However, the sheer scale of the challenge is shown by the fact the three major countries standing on the sidelines—the United States, China and India—have a combined population of more than 3 billion people.

COP 26 will be the largest conference of world leaders that the UK has ever hosted. I ask the Government to involve our top researchers and scientists directly. I ask the political parties to put aside their other differences and work with the others in putting real substance into the calls for a green new deal. I ask my party, represented in front of me, not simply to bash the Government over the current difficulties with the COP 26 presidency but to be constructive and engaged. I hope the Government will listen and respond. This time, the whole world watches and waits.

3.36 pm

Lord Redesdale (LD): My Lords, I declare an interest as CEO of SECR Reporting Ltd and as CEO of the Energy Managers' Association, which represents about 5,000 energy professionals whose front-line job is to reduce the amount of energy used in the business sector. Its standing has been recently promoted by many companies declaring a climate emergency, which is a great thing to do, except that most companies in this country have not the ability or the understanding of how to reduce significantly the amount of energy they are using, which will be a problem.

I will take a different tack from many noble Lords and instead of lambasting the Government I will say that they are a world leader and, if they follow this route, will be seen at COP 26 as one of the premier Governments in dealing with climate change reduction. The reason for that is due to George Osborne. I do not think anyone has ever seen him as much of a climate champion, but back in 2016 when David Cameron was reported to say, "Let's get rid of all this green crap", what it meant was reducing the different energy subsidies such as FIT, RHI, CCAs and the CCL and replacing them with one taxation, the CCL, which came into effect in April 2019.

Linked to that was a report that 10,000 of the largest companies in the country will have to undertake in their financial year. The first tranche will have to start reporting in April 2020 when they lodge their report. The amazing thing about this report is that it sets out the road map for those companies to declare publicly what energy and carbon they are using, then set out quite clearly in a document that will be lodged with Companies House, if it is not in their own report, exactly what they are doing. For any shareholder, stakeholder or NGO that wants to look at that report, it will be totally clear to see what actions are being undertaken.

What have the Government actually mandated large companies to do? First, they have to record all their energy usage: electricity, gas and transport fuels. A lot of companies do not understand the amount of emissions they undertake on transport fuels. They have to report that in kilowatt hours. Then they have to report all the carbon in scope 1 and scope 2, and voluntarily in scope 3. They must then put in an intensity metric, which, because this report is coming out year on year, will show whether companies are going forwards or backwards. Obviously, it does not matter whether they grow or shrink, but it is a science-based target.

Interestingly, they must then say which methodology they have used to get to this—the EMA has written a handy methodology which can be used—because the next bit, which is fantastic, is that the companies must

state the principal energy efficiency measures that they have undertaken. The Government have not set out what a PEEM—sorry, the Government are not great at acronyms—is, so in the EMA methodology we have set it out quite clearly. A company should state what policy and strategy it has for energy reduction, and who in the company is responsible. It should say what capex it is spending as a company and what opex it is undertaking, what contracts it is taking out with its FM providers, or what internal and external maintenance contracts, to ensure that it is doing things in a more energy-efficient manner going forward. Companies should look at their transport—which, of course, means electrification—and behaviour change.

This report must be lodged with Companies House. I will ask a couple of questions if I have time, but we have been talking to large companies, and it could be exciting if, by the time of COP 26 in Glasgow, the 10,000 companies are well on their way to publicly declaring this information, which is not replicated anywhere in the world. The really exciting part is that we are now discussing with large companies getting their supply chain to undertake SECR. They can do it very cheaply and lodge it for free on Companies House. Any company can then check its supply chain just by going to Companies House.

I finish with two questions. Will the Minister agree to a meeting with his excellent BEIS officials, who have written a fantastic programme, to see how this can be made part of the COP 26 process? Will he discuss with Companies House enforcing this as an electronic report that should then be available to all? Currently it is paper-based.

3.41 pm

Lord Judd (Lab): My Lords, I am glad to follow that very challenging speech from the noble Lord, Lord Redesdale. It is important to have clear answers from the Government on what is being done.

I want to put on record my unqualified admiration for my noble friend Lord Browne of Ladyton, not only for this debate, but also for his consistent commitment and work in these areas. We have been talking for a long time about the challenge and responsibility to our children and grandchildren for what is happening to the world. It has become clear that it is not just a matter of our children and grandchildren. The crisis is immediate and real, affecting people now, as we debate it in this House. The urgency of action cannot be overemphasised. However, as the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Oxford reminded us, it is not only a matter of aspiration but of being certain about the means and the detail. That is why this specific debate is so important. The detail is critical in how we are going to do this.

One of the huge challenges we face is that there must be great international co-operation. There is no other way that we can achieve any slowdown in climate change. We must look to our close neighbours, and across the world. One of the challenges is that we are demanding this action and recognising the need for it at a time when millions of people across the world have not gained access to the way of life we take for granted. There are terrific issues of social justice at the heart of this.

[LORD JUDD]

Let us look for a moment at some of the immediate things that are happening, to emphasise this point. Escalating migration trends across the world, unsustainable agricultural production and irresponsible trade deals are all leading to instability and dangerous conflict. Recently, the FAO warned that the total number of people going hungry in the world has been rising again for three years in succession. The recent cyclone in Mozambique vividly illustrated how the poorest can suffer. Mozambique's emissions are negligible compared with ours, but the number of climate change-related disasters—floods, storms and extreme heat—has apparently doubled in the last 25 years. In Mali, farmers, herders and fishermen have been caught up in conflict over the reduction of the River Niger's water levels, a situation made worse by climate change and increased demand due to population growth. Plans by the Governments of the neighbouring countries to build dams will further affect the water availability in the Niger Delta. This will affect more than 1 million people.

In Uganda, many women walk for six hours a day to fetch water. As the dry season becomes longer, they will be forced to walk for longer to collect water and firewood. With millions already forced to leave their homes by climate change, the World Bank has reminded us that 143 million people in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere will be displaced in the next 30 years unless urgent action is taken. We need very convincing arguments from the Government today not just about their aspirations but about what they are doing and how they are doing it.

3.47 pm

Lord Hunt of Chesterton (Lab): My Lords, I thank my noble friend Lord Browne for introducing this debate. I declare my interest as chairman of the scientific advisory board of Tokamak Energy, a fusion energy development company—fusion has not been discussed much today—and I speak as a former researcher in the scientific challenges of fusion. Later I was director of the Met Office and developed my long-standing interest in the growing threat of climate change. There is also a pressing need for Parliaments around the world to play a strong role to address this threat.

Global measurements show a sharp increase in the average temperature in the atmosphere and ocean since the 1950s and an even sharper rise in carbon dioxide over that time. Over the past 50 years, global climate change has been caused by human-generated carbon emissions and the consequent trapping of outgoing longer-wavelength radiation within the troposphere—that is, the greenhouse effect. This is leading to a likely rise in global temperature of two to four degrees Celsius this century, with huge ecological and societal impacts.

The most effective global climate policies are those driving carbon-free energy generation, which must be accompanied by a dramatic reduction in hydrocarbon combustion. Carbon-free electricity from wind and ocean currents and photoelectric energy from the sun captured by solar panels can all contribute to these policies. However, energy supplied by these methods needs modification for essential continuity and controllability.

Nuclear fission generates electrical energy at large scale by steam-generation systems. These reactors work well, but they face regulatory and public acceptability hurdles. Fusion is of growing importance for low-carbon energy. Fusion could reduce significantly carbon emissions in the 2030s and be an important source of safe, clean energy for centuries to come as the fuel is plentiful and cheap. Currently, the UK has a world lead. The JET tokamak fusion reactor at Culham generated 16 megawatts in 1997. The UK Government continue to back fusion research at Culham and the international ITER project, despite the slow progress, but they seem to be ignoring privately funded fusion development by Tokamak Energy.

We need a sense of urgency to tackle climate change and CO₂ emissions, and if we act urgently there will be big economic benefits to the UK as well as environmental benefits to the world. Tokamak Energy, a private company that I have advised, has made great progress in developing compact spherical tokamaks, as pioneered at Culham, and combining them with the latest generation of high-field superconducting magnets. The result will be high performance in compact, low-cost systems enabling a much faster and cheaper path to commercial fusion energy. This company plans to deliver energy to the grid by 2030, about 10 years sooner than the fastest estimate of government and EU projects. The target is to produce 150-megawatt modules to be built in UK factories and shipyards and deployed rapidly around the world in the 2030s.

The heat produced in fusion reactors can be used to generate electricity and could also be used for industrial processes, such as steel making, and to produce hydrogen from water in a highly efficient manner. The oil and gas companies of the future could use the heat from fusion to produce hydrocarbons, absorbing CO₂ in the process. Fusion reactors could be mounted on ships, as by mentioned by other noble Lords, leading to massive savings of fuel and carbon emissions. Fusion power systems could be deployed globally and would be safe in the event of natural disasters, for example, the Fukushima event.

The UK FIRES report introduced by my noble friend Lord Browne suggests various options for lower use of carbon fuels. The report is sceptical about carbon capture and storage and prefers lifestyle changes as a low-carbon strategy. Perhaps this is optimistic, since most people do not pay much attention to climate change according to surveys. Using taxation to change behaviour would be regressive and unpopular. Ironically, the UK FIRES report, funded by the EPSRC, does not consider fusion seriously, despite it being a major element in the EPSRC's energy portfolio. The other factor missing from the report and, indeed, from climate change committee's reports is any consideration of the rest of the world. It is essential that UK's programme of moving to becoming carbon-neutral collaborates with other countries. These are the main points we should be considering.

3.52 pm

Lord Broers (CB): My Lords, I welcome this debate and the *Absolute Zero* report by UK FIRES. It is essential that academic experts with experience in energy issues, both technical and social, work closely

with politicians in getting us through the crisis. In the same way, I welcome *Greenhouse Gas Removal* by the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of Engineering.

This huge topic left me wondering whether to discuss something very specific—for example, the real overall systems cost of connecting wind turbines to the grid—or something broad and general. I am opting for the latter; I shall discuss how we should approach this world crisis and what an ideal energy system might look like in the future.

Regrettably, but not unusually for engineers, we find ourselves working on a problem that we cannot quantify accurately. The modelling of how human behaviour is changing weather systems is even more difficult than modelling the weather itself, and, although there have been great advances in weather forecasting, accurate long-range forecasts are still beyond our capability. However, we cannot wait around while we solve this problem. We have no option but to proceed as quickly as possible.

I spent 20 years in industry in the United States and I recall vividly what happened when we ran into serious problems in the development of large systems. Everyone who had knowledge and skills in the areas relevant to the problem, including those in the research laboratories, dropped what they were doing and applied their talents to solving the immediate problem. In that case, delivering the product was more important than working on future technologies. If the product did not reach the market in time, customers would buy from other companies and there would be no future for the company.

However, we are not dealing with a company. We have taken on something far vaster—the future of the planet. Our deadline of 2050 precludes the use of future technologies. We must concentrate more of our innovation on improving ones that have already been demonstrated to be feasible. We should therefore resist calls to work on everything we can think of in the hope of a breakthrough technology that will rescue us. As the UK FIRES report points out, 30 years is not long enough to bring breakthrough technologies to full-scale implementation. Having said that, I am tempted to agree with what the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, has just said, because I think there is hope for fusion but probably not until about 2050.

That leaves us with just wind, solar and nuclear for electricity generation, and heat pumps, improved ventilation, insulation and lower temperatures in our buildings for heat. In the end, if we truly harness nuclear, we can use electricity for heat. For transport, we are relying on electrification, perhaps optimistically assuming that the electricity is clean.

The problem with nuclear is cost but analysis of the cost of Hinkley Point shows that it should be possible to realise less than £60 per 100 megawatt hour by reducing the borrowing cost of 9%—after all, it is not the purpose of the energy sector to subsidise the financial sector—and by building replicas of our reactors. We have never built a replica in the UK. China General Nuclear has established the feasibility of the EPRs that we are trying to build at Hinkley Point by having two of them already reliably supplying 1.5 gigawatts each to the grid.

Small and modular nuclear reactors—SMRs—also offer the opportunity for lower costs in the right timescale, and the Government have now offered modest support for their development. Rolls-Royce has for decades built SMRs for submarines and heads a consortium that is proposing to build SMRs that can be located on one-tenth of the area needed for large-scale reactors. In addition, they can be built in factories with robotic assembly, and the reactor vessel can even be delivered on a truck. They will supply 220 to 440 megawatts, last for 60 years and supply electricity at a cost of less than £60 per 100 megawatt hours.

The remaining uncertainties with wind turbines are their reliability as they approach their 20 to 25-year lifetime—half that of nuclear plants—the overall systems cost of having to connect several thousand of these massive machines to the grid, which may increase their effective cost to about £50 per 100 megawatt hour, and having their highly variable output efficiently used. None the less, wind turbines have been very effective in rapidly reducing carbon, which is what we need, and they will be essential in meeting our 2050 target.

In the long term, the simplest and most efficient strategy might be to progressively increase nuclear capacity until we reach the level that exists in France—that is, about 70% or even higher. This will of course be a vast political challenge but it would be nice to join France and Scandinavia as a green country on the world energy map.

3.58 pm

Lord Reid of Cardowan (Lab): My Lords, I congratulate my noble friend Lord Browne on securing this debate and on his opening exposition of the UK FIRES report.

Like many in this House, I have, over time, come to the conclusion that maintaining the ecosystem of our planet is the defining global challenge of our age. We have been successful as a species—indeed, so successful that we have come effectively to dominate the biosphere of the planet on which we live. The next phase will be defined by how well we are able to manage that success.

As the report sets out, it is clear that, however we define success, it must be in the context of a circular economy—one that, like nature, generates no net waste. This is the question that we and the Government face: what happens if we fail to manage our success? The science and scientists of climate change are unequivocal: they are increasingly united in identifying many trends that serve as warnings and indicators that clearly point to our current mismanagement. These include carbon emissions, which we mentioned, and—no less importantly—microplastics, air quality, management of fish stocks, topsoil depletion, insect pollination, and nitrogen. I could go on.

What is less clear than the science is the impact of these various changes on the state of our national and global economies. While the science is clear, the economics are not. The current mainstream models on which the views of many, including some in the Government, I think, are based, turn out to be hopelessly conservative—no pun intended—and wholly unrealistic estimates of the likely impact of these changes. For instance, the economic impact sections of the IPCC report claim that estimates of global annual economic losses for additional temperature increases of about 2°C are between 0.2 and 2.0% of income.

[LORD REID OF CARDOWAN]

In other words, it is claimed that, economically, climate change is no big deal.

This is fake economics, which deludes and leads astray leaders and Governments. I am grateful to the experts at the Institute for Strategy, Resilience and Security at UCL, which I have the honour of chairing. They have examined in detail the underlying basis of these assertions and have identified what appear to be very serious errors in how these conclusions are reached. I will give merely two examples. In one, a distinguished economist simply assumes that over 80% of the United States economy's GDP will be unaffected because the activities happen indoors:

"they largely take place in controlled environments and are not really exposed to climate change".

Furthermore, it predicts that no less than a six-degree increase would reduce GDP by a mere 8.5%.

Scientists on the other hand regard that change as likely to drive our whole species out of existence. Clearly these two views cannot be reconciled. As we have seen in Australia this year, only a one-degree increase in global temperatures has had some terrible consequences because of the fragility and irresilience of the infrastructure on which we depend.

In this short debate, I want to highlight the issue of fake economics deluding us into a false sense of security. The assessments on which we base the urgency and magnitude of the changes that we need to make as a society—and the legislation that this House may have to consider—have been drastically underestimated. We cannot predict the exact consequences of climate change. However, when we extrapolate from our current conditions to a world unlike anything experienced not only in civilisation, as one noble Lord mentioned, but in the whole history of our species, we need to ensure that climate change economists have faithfully reflected potential consequences. I put it simply to noble Lords: the economists working on this are giving us a false view that is starkly contradicted by the conclusions of the scientists—and my money is on the scientists.

4.03 pm

Lord Birt (CB): My Lords, the UK has already made much progress on the path to net zero, and we should not diminish that. CO₂ emissions per capita are now well below comparable countries, as is our energy use; greenhouse gas emissions are down by over 40% in 20 years; half of our electricity is now produced, carbon-free, from renewables and nuclear; and coal burn will soon come to an end. However, 75% of our energy at point of use is still petroleum or gas-fuelled. Half of all our energy is consumed by households and is currently 85% carbon-generated. Transport consumes the most energy of all and is 98% carbon-fuelled.

The route ahead is mighty challenging, but we should be bold and not incremental or hair-shirt in forging a way forward. We can be optimistic, not pessimistic. However, only 1% of cars are currently electric or hybrid, as the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, reminded us. Can the Minister tell us how we will ensure readily available, easily accessible, rapid charge points for electric vehicles in our cities, towns and countryside? Only one-third of our rail network is currently electric: what is the plan for a zero-carbon

railway? How will we move to electric or hydrogen heating in our homes, which are currently 90% powered by oil or gas?

These transformations are likely to need three to four times the level of electricity that we produce now but, as we all know, renewables are intermittent and cannot reliably produce energy exactly when it is needed. Currently, we store only a miserly 6% of peak electricity demand. Will we massively increase our storage capacity? Will we build more nuclear power stations to ensure a carbon-free baseload? We and other countries are stumbling badly in our nuclear plans. Will we adapt our approach to sharing risk with contractors on these advanced technology projects?

Newer technologies may—or may not—overtake us and offer better solutions. We should remember that technology has improved enormously in respect of renewables in the last 20 years; they are very much more efficient than they were in the past. However, any plan that we forge is likely to need regular revision. As the noble Lord, Lord Hunt, reminded us, nuclear fusion may ride to the rescue. Battery technology, which is currently sluggish, may experience a breakthrough, or we may learn to extract carbon cost-effectively from the air.

The noble Lord, Lord Reid, a moment ago, amusingly raised the issue of what the impact will be on our economy, which is a hugely important question. Philip Hammond talked of a bill of £1 trillion spread over 30 years. Who will pay—the consumer or the taxpayer? What will be the impact—this is a massive issue—on other public spending? How will we protect the poor? Will net-zero investment stimulate growth or stifle it? Britain is a small country, responsible for only a tiny fraction of global emissions. How will we ensure that we march in step with the whole world, and especially the big emitters? I thought that the contribution on that matter of the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, was very effective.

We will not carry people with us through this transformation if we move well ahead of the pack; that was the warning of the noble Earl, Lord Caithness. How can we focus public debate on what most matters? One day, air travel may be electric, or powered by sustainable fuels, but it is the biggest technical challenge of all. International air travel, however, is currently responsible for only around 1% of emissions. It cannot be our first priority and crowd out far bigger and more easily achievable carbon-reducing solutions.

We cannot expect the Minister to answer all these questions today, but I hope that he will tell us how the Government plan to get a plan, and when we shall see it.

4.09 pm

Lord Whitty (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to my noble friend for introducing us to this report. It makes extremely interesting reading and I agree with many of its conclusions; not all of them—I am slightly more techno-optimistic—but I agree, essentially, that we cannot just expect some technological solution to turn up, unless we invest in it and understand the limitations. That means that we should focus on using technologies that already exist, or are very close, to change behaviour over the next 10 or 20 years.

One statistical point: we may call it net zero or absolute zero but whether we succeed in offsetting the challenges to our climate—and therefore to our society and way of life—depends not on reaching that point by 2050 but on how we reach it. We need to make dramatic reductions in the early part of the next 30 years. That means concentrating on the technologies we already have because a straight-line reduction will not do it, nor will delaying until the 2040s. We need to do it in the next 10 years.

The challenge that will face Governments, and our Government in particular since we will chair the Glasgow conference, is to ensure that we adopt on a multinational basis policies that will make a real impact. But those who will gather at Glasgow—the leaders of our nations and indeed Members of this House—are partly responsible for this situation. We tend to think that carbon in the atmosphere has gone up since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution but over half of the carbon concentrated up there now has been put there by us since the Rio conference, and therefore since the point when there was clear scientific consensus and most political leaders accepted that consensus. Yet we have failed to reverse the direction in which the planet is going. This means that the responsibility is on us and our contemporaries in other countries to ensure that we take effective steps, at Glasgow and immediately beyond, towards a coherent approach to this.

It is clear that Governments have not done enough yet to convince the population to be prepared to accept changes in their lifestyles. The evidence provided to us by Citizens Advice shows that, yes, 80% of people recognise that we need to make changes, but in relation to specifics, such as changing the heating system in your house, less than 30% are prepared to do so. We have a long way to go. Governments have persuasion but have not yet persuaded.

However, they have stronger measures at their disposal. Changes to consumers' behaviour come not from moral virtue, or through taste or fear of the future, but from the price of the product at the time they buy it. If we are trying to switch consumer behaviour away from the ever-increasing size of cars powered by petrol or diesel, we have to take fairly draconian measures in taxation to favour low-carbon and smaller cars. If we are to change our behaviour on household heating, we have to make some systems changes, which may involve using either hydrogen or electrification for domestic heating. We need an early decision on which we are going to do—or whether we will do them both—but moving in that direction will also mean that we need to persuade individual households and businesses to reduce the temperature within their buildings in the interim.

The interventions by government have to be fairly draconian. Price increases brought about through taxation are never popular but if we are to change behaviour, we will have to grasp that nettle—and grasp it with our colleagues, particularly in the developed nations, so that there will be no way in which some nations will beggar their neighbour and undercut the consensus that we need change. It means that the European Union, the United States and other developed countries need to act in concert, in a way that will probably alienate some of their citizens but will mean that they do not undercut each other.

A lot of technologies are there or almost there. Even in aviation, there are some possible benefits in taking small steps but unless we change the overall behaviour of our citizenry and businesses, we will not get there. We need to do that on an international basis; Glasgow is the first step towards doing just that.

4.14 pm

Lord Bilimoria (CB): My Lords, the world will need substantially more energy as it grows and prospers and living standards improve. But at the same time, we need a sharp reduction in carbon emissions for there to be a good chance of meeting the Paris climate goals. There is no simple solution to this challenge, but any viable, sustainable path for the energy system needs to take account of both elements—more energy, less carbon.

The UK FIRES report does not include any role for carbon capture and storage or hydrogen as a source of energy in its description of how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. On the other hand, the Committee on Climate Change states that those technologies will be key in reducing the UK's net carbon emissions. Will the Minister comment on that? The FIRES report, *Absolute Zero*, states that, rather than breakthrough technologies,

“the only solutions available in the time remaining require some change of lifestyle.”

Do the Government not agree that it should not be either/or? It should be both: technologies and a change of lifestyle. I thank the noble Lord, Lord Browne, for initiating this debate. This UK FIRES research document, funded by the Government for £5 million, is about achieving the reduction in emissions by 2050 and talks about resource efficiency.

The conversation that is now taking place is long overdue. As vice-president of the CBI, I draw attention to our recent report, *A Decade of Delivery*, which set out our policy and the fiscal decisions that must be made over the next 10 years in order to set the UK on a trajectory towards net-zero emissions by 2050. We are currently off track as a country. They include: setting the policies in an attractive investment environment, good governance of the low-carbon transition, export potential and a just transition. Some of the major hurdles to decarbonisation, such as improving energy efficiency and switching to low-carbon heat sources, will require a significant increase in skills provision to enable the delivery of new investment in technology, and the Government must adhere to this moving forward. Does the Minister agree?

It is incredibly important that we have this discussion now, when climate change sits at the forefront of the public and political agenda. Last year, 2019, was a banner year and we have a world first: a net-zero by 2050 target brought into law by us. We have seen the images coming to us from Australia and Jakarta, and 2020 will be a really important year. How we deal with this now will make a huge difference. It is five years since the Paris agreement and we will have the COP 26 summit. We must not forget that a lot of this—the net-zero target, the strong proactive action—is being driven by the private sector. We are off track to meet our carbon budgets and there is a lot of work to do, and this year will be crucial.

[LORD BILIMORIA]

The changes needed are physical and practical. Heating homes and businesses will be one of the biggest challenges to decarbonise. Some 24 million homes have natural gas boilers that will need to be replaced with a low-carbon alternative. We await progress from the Government on their heat road map due this summer. Will the Minister give us an update? It is clear from the work that the University of Birmingham and the CBI are undertaking into the policy frameworks required that we will need not just a national approach but clear responsibilities, power and resources at a local and regional level to plan effectively for this major infrastructure challenge that will require so many solutions—a long-term, credible plan, with the required inward investment by the private sector.

As we have heard, transport accounts for 25% of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. At the University of Birmingham, where I am proud to be chancellor, we have developed a hydrogen train. The Centre for Railway Research and Education, which recently won a Queen's Award, designed the Hydrogen Hero, a demonstrator train, in 2018, which has proven the technology possible. It is ready to be developed with an industrial partner. So it is possible to have more environmentally friendly technology with similar performance.

We can also make progress with aviation. BP, for example, has BP Biojet, which uses recycled cooking oil blended with conventional jet fuel. It helps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 60% compared with conventional jet fuel. BP Biojet is already available at airports in Norway and Sweden and has been used in the United States, in Chicago. Do the Government agree that these sorts of developments in aviation are possible?

Finally, the UK does not have a clear picture of its real emissions. We currently measure only territorial emissions and not consumption emissions. The CBI strongly advocates for the UK to begin measuring both consumption and territorial emissions so that we can have a true and clear picture of our impact on the rising emission levels. This will have wider-reaching impacts on what the UK chooses to import and whether we tax high-carbon products. Does the Minister agree?

To conclude, at the University of Birmingham's Institute of Forest Research we have created an "impact of climate change and environmental change woodland", where we have built a free-air carbon enhancement experiment set in woodland that will improve our climate projections. The most famous statue in the world is the Statue of Liberty; next to that should be a statue of responsibility. We have a responsibility and I am proud that the UK is leading the way.

4.20 pm

Lord Lipsey (Lab): My Lords, I, too, thank the noble Lord, Lord Browne, for bringing the report to us. It has certainly led to a fruitful debate. I was also grateful that he brought in two of the authors to meet noble Lords and have a chat about it beforehand. I say that because I am much more critical of the report than many people who have spoken in this debate. I am not so much critical of the science. Anybody who can construct diagram 2.12, which explains what I

have always wanted to know—exactly how the cement production chain works—is working very hard. It is not the science that I particularly want to dispute but the insensitivity to the politics.

My general belief is that we are not doing as well as we should be on climate change, but we are doing better than we could have done. My general belief is that the Stern report was basically right in saying that it was possible to deal with climate change and, at the same time, preserve something like our present economy. My crucial point is that there is a big difference between what we have all accepted now—zero net emissions—and what this report proposes: zero emissions. Not a single particle or atom of carbon is to be produced by man, and that means no aircraft, no shipping, no cement and various other extreme things.

Other noble Lords may find that helpful. I do not find it helpful in selling this prospectus to people in the future. I think it sounds too scary. It is not the case that if we go above zero, there will be Armageddon. There is a set of scenarios of possible temperature rises with a set of emissions. It could be worse or better—scientists do not know precisely. So the idea that we have to get rid of absolutely every particle of emissions is crazy. Having taught people that planting trees is a good thing to do, we cannot turn round and say planting trees makes no difference whatever, because we cannot plant enough in England. To spurn carbon capture and storage—one of the major potential contributors to doing something about this—is patently absurd. I also think the authors of the report are extremely pessimistic about the potential for developing more forms of electricity that are non-polluting, particularly nuclear. In Sweden, a civilised country by any standards, virtually all electricity is produced by nuclear reactors. That is a tremendous leap forward which we too will need to make if electric cars are to replace diesel cars, and so on.

We also need to think about the political challenge a bit more carefully than we sometimes do. It is all very well for the House of Lords—we will be long gone by 2050 and do not need to get elected in the meantime. We do not have to worry about it, but the political challenge is enormous. The strange thing about the report is that it acts as if climate change is all about what one country does. If we look at the practical difficulties facing us now, what are the worst of them? President Trump and Mr Scott Morrison in Australia, who says that the cause of the bush fires was that he was not allowed to light enough fires himself to cause fire breaks. I am much more sympathetic to the many leaders of developing countries who say, "Well, you have had all the benefits from carbon, why should we take all the costs, especially when our people are starving, thirsty or lack the basics that you take totally for granted?". Dealing with those issues seems absolutely major.

I am not a denier at all; I strongly believe in dealing with climate change. But if we were to put this report before the British people, it would be received in much same way as was the Labour manifesto: "Oh, you cannot be serious." And we know what the result of that was. We need a practical programme to deal with climate change, working towards a sensible target for zero net emissions. As well as spending time on developing the

technological and engineering changes needed to produce that, we need to spend time converting our people to the importance of what we are asking them to do.

4.25 pm

Baroness Lane-Fox of Soho (CB): My Lords, as global emissions from ICT have now overtaken those from air travel, you can imagine that, as someone who started an online travel agency, I am feeling pretty fantastic. I want therefore to focus today on how I perceive technologies to be at play over the next decade, while taking on board this interesting report's view that technology will not save us. I am certainly not a techno utopian—I believe that technology could do a lot of harm if not deployed correctly, if investment is not deployed correctly and if information distributed online cannot be deployed correctly—but I think that there is much to gain by putting the digital world at the heart of the debate over the next few years.

First, I am constantly flabbergasted at the level of investment, both venture capital generally and tech-specific venture capital, going into climate-based solutions. It is shockingly small. In Europe alone, I think I am right in saying that £9 billion went into financial technology start-ups over the last year, whereas only £1 billion went into anything that we could loosely determine as environmental-based start-ups. What are we doing? What are we investing in? We do not need more financial-based start-ups. I have instigated a hashtag when I speak called “#NoMoreCRMSoftware”. We do not need any more enterprise software to help businesses grow and run; we need to focus on the biggest challenge in front of us.

In the US, the picture is not much better. Some individual corporates are doing a slightly better job. Microsoft recently announced a \$1 billion climate-specific innovation fund, but, overall, the lack of investment in the things that will help us through the next decade and the derisory amount focused specifically on some of the suggestions made in the report by UK FIRES make me very alarmed. I read yesterday of another start-up that has been funded which does your shopping, brings it to your front door, comes into your home with a smart key, unpacks the shopping into your fridge, leaves you a bunch of flowers and then leaves. This, my friends, is why we are in the pickle we are in: more software developers pitching for more businesses that will help them directly build more software. We have to rebalance the investment cycle to focus on the things that really matter.

Secondly, we need to scale the innovations that are already proven and work. While I acknowledge the important point made by the noble Lord, Lord Browne, that it will take time to scale those technologies, there are technologies that are working now. I point to Impossible Foods, which has invented a plant-based way of replacing meat and other proteins. Its products are now used in manufacture across many fast-food restaurants but could still go further. There are many other inventions as well, particularly around the food and waste sectors. We need to back them and help them continue to scale.

Finally, and perhaps most crucially—I say this declaring my interest as a director of Twitter—we need to make sure that misinformation about the climate is taken

as seriously as other forms of misinformation and exploitation online. I do not for one minute suggest that the work around terrorism, child exploitation, paedophilia and so on that many platforms have undertaken has been not been valuable—of course, it has—but, to my mind, making sure that the climate-based information that we see on the internet is accurate is as important as some of those other axes. I do not believe that companies and platforms are yet homing in specifically on these issues.

What can the UK do in this? This is where I ask the Minister to respond. As a small country, post Brexit—I am not making a political point, but we are now less connected than we were previously—I believe that there is an opportunity to make sure that the UK leads in how we deploy technology well, how we show what good information looks like and how government, corporates and the civil sector come together to make sure that we build the most sustainable future using the tools of the modern age.

4.30 pm

Lord Soley (Lab): My Lords, I think every noble Lord in the House agrees about the threat and danger of climate change. I start from the position that it is not just a question of reduction but also one of removal—the two are equally important. I think it was the noble Lord, Lord Broers, who referred to the report by the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society which emphasised that point—we need both.

My concern about this report, following some of the comments made by my noble friend Lord Lipsey and others, is that it is a bit too optimistic about changing human behaviour and is focused on one country. Some years ago, I mentioned to the Malaysian Minister the problem of deforestation there. He pointed out, gently but very firmly, that Britain had chopped all its trees down 300 years ago and started the Industrial Revolution, which got us to where we are. So we have to be a bit cautious on this.

The first thing I want to say to the Minister is that, to engage the public as far as possible with this, we have to avoid frightening them and avoid the panic measures because they do not work and they tend to make people switch off and look away. What we could do—and this is where I come to one of the removal techniques, which are well known—is plant more trees. I see no reason why the Government could not lead a campaign, involving individuals, local authorities, businesses and organisations of all types, in order to plant trees across the UK on a much greater scale than we are doing. I accept the point made by the noble Earl, Lord Caithness, that we are planting more trees than we used to, but we could do a lot more. We could also make it part of our overseas aid programme to those countries who want to plant more trees and have the land space to do it. Leading a campaign of that type would be very good.

A danger which I have come across over many years in grabbing hold of a particular industry or issue is saying, “If we stop people doing other things, it will solve the problem.” It will not. If you grounded every aircraft in the UK today, you would still not be able to stop the rest of the world from flying. Aviation fuel is

[LORD SOLEY]

developing—several noble friends made the point about using renewable fuels, which are used on a number of airlines in the UK at the moment—but the point is, if you were to focus on just one issue, the one to focus on would be cement. If the cement industry worldwide was a nation state, it would be the third largest emitter after the United States and China. Does that mean we stop building houses, high-speed rail or whatever else that requires an enormous amount of cement? No, we cannot. The problem is that we do not have a quick answer to that, so we need to look for both reduction across the scale and for new technologies.

I agree with my noble friend Lord Hunt about the potential for fusion, but there are other ones here that we can relate to. I warn against panicky reactions. If you think about what happened with nuclear, both Britain and Germany gave up nuclear power stations because of the argument of the green movement. Then we had to rush like mad to try to build them again because we saw them as part of the solution. This is not the first threat to mankind. The first was CFCs and the depletion of the ozone layer, which is now repairing. It was much easier to deal with that because there were limited causes of it, whereas the causes of this are much more complex, but we cannot do it without a much wider-scale response.

I would like to hear from the Government—I have indicated this to them before—whether the Agricultural Bill will include things such as soil carbon sequestration. That is an important one and we need to know because there has to be some sort of strategy involved in here, which I do not feel any country has at the moment. We really do need a strategy and I think there is something to be said for a cross-party approach to these things. Where are we up to with the Strategic Priorities Fund, which we have not heard too much about recently? I would like to know where we are up to on that.

My final point is on the importance of getting the strategy right for our legislation. People may have received information today from Drax, which is linked up with one of the energy companies and the national grid, on producing systems that will enable us not only to reduce existing use of carbon but to develop things like hydrogen as a fuel. One point it makes is that, unless there is a regulatory system, that will not be able to be developed to its potential. Leeds City Council has expressed interest in using hydrogen as its heating fuel, but it would need some regulatory structure. That is where we need to think ahead to get right the governmental structures that enable companies to develop these systems. They are not straightforward.

I am also interested in the use of seaweed; we do not talk about it very much and I know it is still very contentious scientifically in terms of whether it could work as well as people think—though there is certainly evidence that it could. It is another thing that we ought to look at.

4.35 pm

Baroness Bennett of Manor Castle (GP): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Browne of Ladyton, for bringing this important report to our attention. I agree with it on a couple of key areas: we must not be misled by techno-optimism. Techno-optimism leads

us to think that we can have a business-as-usual approach and just change the technology behind it. It also suggests we can have a one-for-one replacement of fossil-fuel cars with electric cars when, instead, the vast bulk of the replacement has to come from walking, cycling and good, affordable, reliable and convenient public transport.

Some of that techno-optimism lies in the idea of carbon capture and storage, which, rather like nuclear fusion, is a fantasy that has been receding decades into the distance for a very long time. Similarly, there is the idea of off-setting. I was at the Bonn climate talks three years ago, where there was an understanding that off-setting was dead. We need nature-based solutions; we need to grow many more trees and to treat our land very differently, but that is as well as slashing our carbon emissions, not as an alternative. It cannot be a trade-off.

Where I disagree with this report is on the goal of either net-zero carbon or zero carbon by 2050. I know your Lordships' House has found this a very stark message, but I would say, as the science and the IPCC say, that we have to get to those levels by 2030. We need much faster change. I also very much disagree with a particular aspect of the language of this report. It talks about “lifestyle change”, which suggests a focus on how individual people behave. In fact, many people have no choices in changing their behaviour, because they are forced by the system to act the way that they do now. There is no point in telling people to leave their car at home and catch the bus if there is no bus service; it cannot be done. That is true in so many cases—people cannot afford the locally grown, organic food because it is more expensive. What we need is system change.

Perhaps to add further to the pessimism, the climate emergency is just one of the planetary limits that we are running up against. We are also trashing our planet with the nature crisis—of biodiversity and bioabundance—we are filling our oceans with plastic and we are destroying our soils. Behind all that are, essentially, externalised costs. Our current economic system is built on some people—big multinational companies, by and large—drawing large amounts of profit, with all of us carrying the weight of the cost of the climate emergency. We need system change, not climate change. We have seen growth as an alternative to equality: the poor get the crumbs; the pie gets bigger and so they get a few more crumbs. That cannot continue. We cannot have infinite growth on a finite planet.

Instead of techno-optimism—and to shift in tone—I want political optimism. That is what we can offer. In a democratic system we can offer people a better life: the green new deal and a just transition. The Minister will be very familiar with the phrase “levelling up”. We are talking about levelling up for the inequality of the north and other areas of the UK. That has been seen to mean more stuff—more high-energy transport—but let us think about levelling up life across the UK with a four-day working week as standard with no loss of pay. That can cut carbon emissions and improve people's lives. Let us level up with affordable, reliable, convenient public transport. Let us level up with warm, affordable homes for everybody. This is the political optimism we can offer the people in a democracy to make the change.

I thank the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, for bringing COP 26 into this debate. This is the crucial position we are now in. What will the future remember about the United Kingdom? Almost nothing that has ever been said in this House, but if we deliver a successful COP 26 in Glasgow, it will be remembered as a crucial turning point in global history. If we fail, that also will be what history remembers about the United Kingdom. A number of noble Lords have referred to Donald Trump and Scott Morrison. To quote the Governor of Texas at the Bonn climate talks, “Donald Trump is not an excuse for any of you.”

4.41 pm

Lord Ravensdale (CB): My Lords, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Browne, for tabling this important and timely debate. I declare my interests as an engineer in the energy industry, specialising in nuclear, and a director of the cross-party group Peers for the Planet.

I am a techno-optimist, unlike the noble Baroness, Lady Bennett. Maybe it is inherent in being an engineer. Oscar Wilde said:

“The basis of optimism is sheer terror”,

which feels appropriate in the context of the climate crisis. Although I believe the report’s approach is correct in looking at currently available technologies, there are two key omissions: first, viewing carbon capture and storage as a breakthrough rather than an incremental technology; and secondly, the nature of the absolute zero target due to the perceived lack of negative emissions options.

First, although the report is correct that carbon capture and storage technology is not yet being deployed at a meaningful scale, it is mature. I apologise for getting into the nuts and bolts somewhat, but a recent report from the Royal Society of Chemistry assessed the capture and transmission elements of CCS as being at a technology readiness level of 9, the highest available. The challenges are in the integration and scaling up of the technology.

It is quite common in these discussions to quote the glacial pace of previous energy transitions, a point made by the noble Lord, Lord Browne, as a reason that CCS cannot contribute to net zero, but in fact the current energy transition is proceeding at breakneck speed and will continue to do so. For example, gas went from a tiny fraction of our electricity generation mix to around 40% in less than 10 years. Wind got going only in the late 1990s, and look at where we are with that now. There is no reason why CCS cannot follow a similar path if the political will is there to do it. It is an oven-ready technology, as the Prime Minister might say.

Following on from CCS, bioenergy CCS is a negative emissions option currently being scaled up by industry, for example in the pilot at Drax power station. As with CCS, the key challenges are in the integration and scaling up of the technology. The Committee on Climate Change has done a lot of good work on bioenergy CCS. In its 2050 net-zero scenario, it estimates that bioenergy CCS could sequester around 35 megatonnes of CO₂ per year, enough to counter the residual effects of the aviation industry. Afforestation can play a big part there as well.

The effect of these two technologies could really change the 2050 picture completely. The effects of cement and steel production would be mitigated because the emissions from those industries can be captured. Shipping and air travel could continue because their residual emissions can be offset by, for example, bioenergy CCS. Electricity production can increase through the use of CCS generation and an increase in the use of nuclear power, as the noble Lord, Lord Broers, mentioned. But that is not to underestimate the challenge. The Government need to move quickly by investing in CCS and getting pilot projects moving to define the commercial approach.

I turn now to talk briefly about the policy implications of CCS. Along with other firm power generation methods such as nuclear, which are needed for a least-cost electricity system, it suffers from being compared on a levelised cost of electricity basis with intermittent renewables, in terms of pounds per megawatt hour. The levelised cost of energy calculation is done at the point of generation, not at the point of use, so it does not take into account the system integration costs of intermittent generators, which are significant. The Committee on Climate Change estimates that these could be up to £20 per megawatt hour for high penetrations of renewables. Perhaps the Minister could comment on how the Government intend to address the shortcomings of levelised cost of energy metrics and move towards a level playing field for generation, because it is absolutely vital to recognise that not all generation technologies provide the same services to the system.

4.46 pm

Lord Berkeley (Lab): My Lords, I am grateful to my noble friend Lord Browne for securing this debate and we have heard some very interesting speeches. I will focus on transport, which, as the noble Lord, Lord Birt, said, is one of the biggest current polluters. My worry is that a lot of us, as well as a lot of speakers in this debate, have focused on one or more new technologies, or possibly lifestyle changes, but we have to guard against focusing on the one solution that may cause us the least inconvenience. There are people in many other parts of the world at risk of drowning through weather events or suffering famine as well as everything else, which really has to be taken seriously.

Current government policies look like they will have a lot of catching up to do if they are to achieve what I think we all want as we move forward. Heavy funding is still going into new roads. The Government’s forecasts for traffic growth indicate that there will be an increase of 50% in traffic by 2050. We are looking at extra airport capacity. Why? We are looking at fuel duty, which has not gone up for many years while rail fares are rising. Why, if we want to encourage people on to rail? Where is the funding for buses, which are much more environmentally friendly than people driving around? Worst of all, while we rightly have endless debates about who is building more houses where, how are people supposed to get from those houses to their schools, offices, shops or wherever they want to go without a car? Public transport needs to be integrated with where people want to go.

[LORD BERKELEY]

We have an even greater problem with the movement of freight. We already have electric cars, but electric trucks bringing oranges from Spain are probably impossible at the moment. If they were possible, the cost of manufacturing the equipment would be very high. Cheaper rail fares and lower charges for rail freight would be a good thing, and perhaps the Government would like to follow the example of the German Government, who have just cut access charges for rail freight by 10%. I hope the Government will come up with some new policies on this before COP 26 in the autumn.

It is worth reminding ourselves that Friends of the Earth suggests that traffic reduction by 2030 should be somewhere between 20% and 60%. That is the opposite of going up by 50%. Surely that is something we should really be looking at much more seriously.

There is a great deal to be done on behaviour and the changes that will need to happen in our population growth, the nature and location of work, education, housing, healthcare and leisure. As the noble Baroness, Lady Lane-Fox, mentioned, digital technology is also very important. There is also paying for road use or electricity and possibly even reducing the need to travel in going about our business. Flying should increase in cost. We never mention shipping very much, but some of the emissions from ships need serious challenging as part of this campaign. We really need more rail travel for people—more stations and freight terminals—and to be aware, if we want hydrogen-producing transport, that it costs energy and electricity to make hydrogen. It is easy to go down one route and forget about how the rest of it will happen.

There needs to be a plan of action. As a colleague, Professor Anable of Leeds ITS, told me, we need traffic-reduction targets—not an increase, and not just for roads but for rail and air—and some real incentivisation to co-ordinate transport and planning objectives with the need to reduce travel. We need to do many other things, such as regulation and increasing investment in non-car modes, but it ends up as quite a change in lifestyle as an example to the rest of the world—which will be miles behind, if we are not careful.

4.51 pm

Lord Rees of Ludlow (CB): My Lords, a key message of the UK FIRES report is that it is tough to meet even our declared 2050 targets without a drastic speed-up in the deployment of novel technologies. I argue that there is a more compelling motivation for prioritising and expanding such efforts: even if we meet our targets, it makes only about 1% difference to global CO₂ emissions. Far more crucial for the world is what happens in developing countries, whose challenges are more daunting—as the noble Lord, Lord Judd, reminded us. We could surely aim to facilitate a bigger fraction of global emission cuts by collaborating with developing countries on meeting their challenges and targets.

We in the UK can realistically move to an economy that uses less energy, but the developing countries in Asia and Africa cannot reach what we consider acceptable living standards by 2050 without generating far more power than they do today. Not only must their per capita energy consumption rise, but they will by then

harbour more than 1 billion more people. It is the CO₂ emissions from these countries that matter more to the world's climate, and indeed to us. We must hope that these countries' growth will be far greener than Europe's has been, and that they learn from our mistakes and follow the precepts of the UK FIRES report.

Unconstrained climate change, with the risk of tipping points leading to genuine catastrophe, is a threat to global security. Minimising this threat deserves the scale of sustained effort that we commit to our national defences. The urgency is appropriate to a national emergency.

We have a head start. For decades we have had the Culham laboratory for fusion research. The newly funded Faraday Centre to develop improved batteries is a welcome step. This should be the nucleus of a broader and larger venture encompassing other energy technologies—especially those where it is realistic for the UK to achieve a lead—and computational climate modelling.

If a scaled-up and wisely prioritised programme can give the UK a lead in more efficient and cheaper carbon-free generation, vast developing markets could afford to leap-frog directly to clean energy, rather than building, for instance, coal-fired power stations. Our efforts could thereby make far more than a 1% difference to the global effort to achieve net-zero carbon emissions.

The optimum structure and governance for accelerating our national effort—hubs of expertise to spearhead innovation and development—deserve serious discussion. We need institutions with long-term missions devoted to a national goal, crucial supplements to product-driven research in industry and journal-driven research in universities. Should these be free-standing national labs or beefed-up versions of the so-called catapults with mixed public/private funding? In any case, a modest fraction of funding should be reserved for blue-sky exploration of speculative ideas, probably best done in universities, which is the idea behind the fashionable ARPA model. How can we best ensure that there is take-up from UK industry so that we accrue long-term economic benefits if we pioneer important new technologies?

Unlike R&D in a defence arena, we are aiming here to combat a shared global threat, so we should forge co-operation and alliance with other nations, especially the developing countries for whom the threat is most severe and most intractable. How best this can be done is a severe political challenge that should surely be addressed.

A key mantra for the UK should be “If we don't get smarter, we'll get poorer.” With bold reforms to our education and measures to promote an innovation culture, we could contribute far more than our pro rata share to solving these global challenges. It would be hard to think of a more inspiring challenge for young engineers than to deploy UK expertise to provide clean energy for ourselves and for the developing world, nor a better investment in the UK's future.

4.56 pm

Viscount Hanworth (Lab): At this late stage of the debate, I am bound to repeat much of what has already been said. For a start, it must be said that unless, in a very short period, humans can forgo the

activities that emit greenhouse gases, they will unleash forces beyond their control that will eventually overcome climate change. These would include the inundation of low-lying croplands, drought, famine, pandemic disease, industrial collapse and large-scale human mortality. In the process much of sub-Saharan Africa and much of the continent of Australia would become uninhabitable and there would be an unprecedented migration of human populations.

It may be doubted whether such eventualities can be averted by the foresight and abstinence advocated in the UK FIRES document we have been discussing. My fear is that we may run out of time before most people will be prepared to accept the stringencies being proposed. Indeed, some of the measures proposed are liable to cause an economic collapse in advance of the otherwise inevitable one. For that reason, they are liable to be resisted.

The report dismisses the possibility that significant technological advances will be available to redress climate change within the time at our disposal. It has identified activities that must cease if the 2050 target of zero emissions is to be achieved. These include terrestrial, marine and aerial transport, which contribute largely to our current emissions. Land vehicles will have to be powered exclusively by electricity. Flying must cease. International shipping, which depends largely on diesel fuel, must be curtailed.

Among the significant industrial sources of carbon emissions are the production of steel and cement. Electric furnaces must replace furnaces fuelled by coke. The emissions from steelmaking come from both the coke and the limestone or calcium carbonate employed in the processes. In future, steel would have to be obtained by recycling scrap metal within electric furnaces.

Cement, which consists of anhydrous calcium oxide, is produced by heating limestone to a high temperature to drive off the carbon dioxide. Its continued use in a decarbonised world would require carbon capture and storage, a technology about which the report is sceptical. Without an abundant supply of cement, and in the absence of other materials, building would have to be curtailed. Finally, mention should be made of the substantial quantity of methane that is emitted by grazing domestic animals. This is a potent force for global warming. We are told that to avoid the effect, we must forgo our consumption of beef and mutton.

To achieve the objectives of the report, there must be a plentitude of electric power. The report is curiously silent on how this will be provided, and the impression is given that it is expected to come from renewable sources. It is estimated that if we continue to increase the amount generated from renewable sources at the current rate, then by 2050, if we exclude all fossil-fuel generation, we will have 50% more power than we have today. This would be enough to satisfy 60% of our current energy-consuming activities. Thus, a substantial reduction in economic activity is implied, even though this has not been explicitly proposed in the report. This would amount to the economic collapse that I have mentioned previously.

We can do much better than this if, without delay, we espouse a nuclear future. I am surprised by the reticence of the report in this connection, and by its failure to recognise some of the resulting advantages,

not least of which would be the ability to store energy in the form of hydrogen. This could be generated by electrolysis, if nuclear power was sufficiently abundant. The storage of energy in hydrogen would overcome the problem of the intermittence of renewable sources of power. Much of our transport could be powered by hydrogen fuel cells, and the two-tonne Tesla electric car—of which a quarter of the weight comes from the battery—would be seen as a white elephant.

The question arises of whether our nation can afford to go it alone in staunching our emissions of greenhouse gases. The authors of the report assert that if there is to be any chance of averting the catastrophe, we must take the initiative. We must give a lead to others, regardless of how unwilling they might be to follow us. In the process, we are bound to seek technological alliances to promote the development of, for example, fourth generation nuclear reactors and the use of hydrogen for the storage of energy, for heating and for powering our transport.

5.01 pm

Lord Oates (LD): My Lords, I draw attention to my interests as set out in the register, having worked until recently for the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, which is a major grant-giver to organisations working to tackle climate change.

It is daunting to speak from the Front Bench for the first time on this subject, amid the great expertise and knowledge that have been on hand in this debate. It has been made even more daunting by my Chief Whip walking in about a minute before I stood up. I hope noble Lords will bear with me.

I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Browne of Ladyton, on having secured a debate on such an important report. As we have heard, the challenge facing us can feel overwhelming and insurmountable. The efforts required of our society, and of us as individuals, have been likened to mobilising for war. However, this is complicated by the fact that, to a significant degree, we are our own enemies. It is we collectively who are resistant to taking the actions that we know need to be taken. Unlike tackling an issue such as TB or malaria, here we will have to reduce doing some of the things that we like to do, such as flying. We must understand this.

As a political society, we are quite good at setting ambitious targets for the years ahead, and these are welcome, but we are much more reluctant to set out the detail of what reaching these targets will entail for us all. So long as the targets are a long way ahead and the detail of how we will reach them is not given, these are, to some extent, costless promises and, to a degree, worthless. However, this report is very important, because it starts to lay out the choices that will be demanded of us. As the noble Lord, Lord Browne of Ladyton, said, this is not about telling us what we must do. The noble Earl, Lord Caithness said "they" want us to give up beef or lamb. I do not think they want us to do anything. What they want us to understand is the things that will have to be done if we are to meet that target.

As my noble friend Lady Walmsley and other noble Lords have said—and the report makes the point—we cannot focus simply on reaching net zero. We have to

[LORD OATES]

aim at absolute zero, and not just on the territory of the UK but in relation to the carbon that we are in effect generating. The scale of that challenge is enormous. It is matched only by the scale of our moral obligation to the generations who follow us. As the noble Lord, Lord Browne, said, if we do not act with the urgency that the situation requires, our children and our grandchildren will, rightly, never forgive us.

The noble Baroness, Lady Bennett, made the important point that we cannot think of these as just lifestyle choices that people make. We have to create the environment in which people are capable of making them and in which the choices are available. This will require significant attention from the Government because it requires action across the board. A lot of what is talked about in this report is incredibly challenging for us to deliver politically, which is why it is worrying that we are not doing even some of the things we need to do which are less challenging. For example, on transport, we are way behind on electrifying the whole railway system, and that would be relatively easy to do. Likewise, my noble friend Lord Stunell did a lot of pioneering work in government on emissions from buildings and established the zero-carbon homes standards, which were later allowed to lapse. We simply cannot go on pretending we can achieve the targets we set when we are not doing even the relatively easy things.

On our energy mix, I have a number of reservations about nuclear but I fundamentally believe that at this point we cannot afford to be ideological. We have to investigate all the options in front of us in a sensible, rational and scientific manner to ensure that we have the tools available to meet the challenge ahead.

I agree with my noble friend Lord Redesdale that this issue is far too important for us to allow it to become a partisan football. While I slightly disagree with him on George Osborne's position—I spent quite a lot of time battling with him during the coalition Government when he seemed to want to block everything from the Department of Energy and Climate Change—I take the point that this is something that we have to tackle together, and I welcome the actions that the Government have taken, including the recent announcement of the phasing out of petrol, diesel and hybrid cars by 2035, and I welcomed the previous Government's adoption of the 100% target. This issue lends itself to far-off political decisions without much political cost, and we must address that.

In this debate and in previous debates noble Lords have mentioned worries about costs falling on people on the most marginal incomes. This is a serious issue. We must urgently turn our attention to how we take the actions we have to take in a way that creates an equitable burden. However, the actions we need to take are not an option. We have to take them, so cost is not an excuse for not acting. We just have to work out how to take those actions. It is incredibly urgent that we do so because, as the noble Lord, Lord Judd, said, this is not just an issue for the future; particularly for people in developing societies, it is a current issue. It is impacting on people in a devastating way and it is increasingly likely to fuel conflict and mass migration.

Although we must be prepared to understand the scale of the threat that we face and the significant changes that will be required, like the noble Lord, Lord Soley, I also believe that we should not think that fear is the best way to effect change. We have to inject hope into the debate if we are to effectively galvanise society to take the decisions that have to be taken. As the noble Lord, Lord Giddens, wrote in his excellent book, *The Politics of Climate Change*:

“Martin Luther King didn't stir people to action by proclaiming ‘I have a nightmare!’”

He gave people a dream. He did not try to pretend that there were not huge obstacles in the way of achieving that dream but he gave people a reason to seek to overcome them. I fear that in some of the language of despair, we give people a reason to think that there is nothing that we can do.

Luckily, as the report tells us, there are great opportunities, as well as threats. The report says that delivery of absolute zero within 30 years with today's technologies requires restraint, not despair. It also sets out the tremendous opportunities that exist through committing to zero carbon. To borrow again from Martin Luther King, we all have to recognise the “fierce urgency of now”. We have to act but, in devoting our attention and efforts to acting, we have to look not just at the technical and practical steps but—perhaps as importantly, if not more importantly—as the noble Lord, Lord Lipsey, said, at how we tackle the political challenges, which may well prove to be the most complex problem of all.

5.12 pm

Lord Grantchester (Lab): This has been an excellent debate on the imperatives of climate change. I start by thanking my noble friend Lord Browne of Ladyton for initiating the debate and throwing down the challenge with the report entitled *Absolute Zero* by UK FIRES, a research collaboration of five British universities. I also welcome the noble Lord, Lord Oates, to his party's Front Bench.

The report is an excellent critique, with a fresh look at what must be achieved to reverse climate change, set against the parameters outlined by the Committee on Climate Change in its advice to government on achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The vast span of these reports is reflected in the number of speakers today, and I thank all contributors for their thoughtful remarks.

It is also interesting to reflect on a third report called *Zero Carbon Britain*, recently published by the Centre for Alternative Technology, an educational charity dedicated to researching and communicating positive studies for environmental change.

The obvious realisation is how far behind the pace the Conservative Government are. They need to move forward from standing on the shoulders of the giants of the climate change transition movement, especially when they have reversed policies, cut programmes and cancelled projects in the 10 years they have been in unfettered power. Back in May 2019, the Committee on Climate Change reported:

“Current policy is insufficient for even the existing targets.”

That refers to the target of reducing emissions to 80% below the baseline of 1990 by 2050. The committee

repeatedly points out that the Government are not even on track to meet the fourth and fifth carbon budgets.

The pace of climate change is quickening. The policy reports from the IPCC and others are piling up, and the Government are dithering. The UK now has the challenge of a net-zero target by 2050. The Government are yet to set policies to achieve this. They have secured COP 26 in Glasgow and are waking up to how vital it is for the international community to begin to make rapid progress on climate change action, as the noble Lord, Lord Hannay, and the noble Baroness, Lady Bennett, said in their remarks.

The Government must reset the dial after the weekend's debacle and demonstrate determination by getting on with the agenda, publishing the long-overdue White Paper and the road map across all technologies and sectors of the economy. A wonderful achievement would be for the world leaders to sign up to announcements at the conference to bring international aviation and shipping within the scope of measures to combat climate change.

The international aspects and politics of climate change were reflected in the remarks of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Oxford and my noble friends Lord Lipsey and Lord Soley. New disasters can trigger conflicts in fragile settings, while climate-related disasters already displace 25 million people annually.

The importance of this report, so ably introduced by my noble friend Lord Browne, is that it suggests a further, more ultimate objective. Over time, as progress is made, new horizons, possibilities and imperatives for further progress materialise. If the Government's pace of response does not speed up, more will have to be achieved with more urgency. It will be a huge challenge even to meet the necessary parameters of the new net-zero legislation, which must be interpreted as a mere staging-post that will have to be replaced with better horizons even before these targets can be reached.

The second message of this report is that plans should build on existing and experienced technologies to be reliable, rather than expecting untried, theoretical technologies to come to the rescue. My noble friend Lord Browne calls this mindset "techno-optimism". As advised by the CCC, the Government cannot reliably build on carbon capture utilisation and storage as achievable in time when they have not set up any trials or projects that could get the technology going.

That does not mean that the Government should not embark on this and other technologies: all will be needed to power past milestones set by targets such as net zero. The energy mix will change and advance. For example, the UK, a coastal state, has yet to make much progress on tidal power.

The comparison of net zero and the absolute zero of this report, coupled with realistic assessments of timing achievements, is startling. While it calls for incremental change, the report challenges the Government, business and the general public to make strategic change a priority. As the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, told us, the Stock Exchange and the CBI are already responding to investments set by environmental, societal and governance goals. Further returns to companies, pension funds and investors are being shown to be consistent with this new measure.

All sectors of the economy are assessing their future risk registers with climate change in mind. This includes their employees. As members of the public, they too want to be able to add their contributions through supporting renewable schemes. In this regard, I congratulate the Government on introducing the smart export guarantee scheme for solar PV and other technologies last month.

All speakers highlighted the extent of the challenge that societal changes will make to people's everyday lives. It was hugely disappointing that the Conservative Government scrapped Labour's zero-carbon homes. Energy efficiency of homes still remains a huge challenge after the failure of the Green Deal. Citizens Advice said that 92% of survey respondents would be happy to make their homes more energy-efficient to ensure that the UK meets its net zero targets, and 60% of them suggested that they would need support to do this. Some 79% said that they would be happy to change the way they heat their homes; of these, 76% also suggested that they would need some help. This is 60% of all homes—that is, 17 million households.

Still requiring insulation, improved lighting efficiency and a ramping up of the introduction of heat pumps, buildings account for roughly 34% of greenhouse gas emissions in the UK. My noble friend Lord Whitty reminded us that the Government have all the powers of persuasion through incentives and the tax system, as well as the stick of regulation. In this regard, mayors, local government and councils also have their roles to play. All needs to be bold on the huge challenge of decarbonising heat—a once-in-a-generation challenge, perhaps the biggest since North Sea gas.

While the UK has made progress on adapting and changing sources of power generation, especially through renewables and nuclear, it is way behind on transport, currently the largest source of emissions, which regrettably rose between 2013 and 2017. The *Absolute Zero* report argues that all transport must either be electrified or phased out. The report also sensibly calls on the Government to focus on scalable technologies and stop giving out mixed messages with contradictory actions. All forms of transport are still works in progress, including aviation and shipping.

To the public, Britain's railways have been a shambles since the Government's privatisation agenda, yet the challenge is to integrate not just the UK's disparate rail network but that of the continent. There is no reason why rail journeys cannot replace all flights where journey times are less than five or six hours, including check-in and other time-consuming activities; travellers can already reach their destinations by rail and cut out these polluting flights. This is a new perspective on the requirement for high-speed rail.

The breadth of topics and areas covered by this report is extensive. It is impossible to do justice in the time available to all the important points drawn out by our speakers today. Climate change sets the parameters within which the Government need to keep up with policies that focus on reducing this one global threat. My noble friend Lord Reid set out the responsibilities of government. The Government need to make headway; they need to respond with ambition, tenacity and

[LORD GRANTCHESTER]
encouragement, and this cannot be soon enough. The challenge is to stop consuming the planet. No one can pretend that it will be easy.

5.22 pm

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and Northern Ireland Office (Lord Duncan of Springbank) (Con): My Lords, as expected, this has been a wide-ranging debate, covering a great many aspects of energy.

I have before me a big lump of coal, which I picked up on the beach of St Andrews when I was studying geology there many years ago. This has powered a revolution, changed the world and brought poverty under control. It has also begun to create the very issues that we are dealing with right now—some of the most serious issues this planet will ever have to deal with. It sits as a bookend on my desk. I put this piece of coal before me as a reminder that, back in 2015, we said that we would phase out coal by 2025. Today, in 2020, we are going through several weeks at a time with no coal whatever in our electricity generation. Setting a target further away does not mean that you wait until that date arrives; it means that you set your ambition and try to achieve it before then. There is every possibility now that we will reach a situation in which no coal is used in our electricity generation at all, nearly five years ahead of that scheduled date.

I have tried to think of a way of summarising the report. It is like fashion in the 1970s: good in parts, shocking in parts, and in some other bits, not so good at all. The reality is that the things we see in it shock us. They are a reminder that we cannot be complacent. A number of noble Lords today have spoken of their fear of our complacency. A number of others have said that we cannot rely on these breakthrough technologies because—goodness me—they will take so long to reach that point at which the reality of what they can deliver will be manifest. But we have to recognise, as we have with offshore wind and some of the other technologies that we are seeing now, that we do seem to move them forward faster than expected. I appreciate the challenge in aviation, but I note that the distance between the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk in 1903 and having significant fleets that could cross the Atlantic was far less than 30 years. We are finding that we can see technologies moving faster than expected.

We are not talking about breakthrough technologies. The noble Lord, Lord Ravensdale, reminded us that, as we look at something such as carbon capture and storage, the real question is often one of scalability. The elements of the technology are in place; what is required now is commitment to deliver against them. If we start looking at bioenergy with carbon capture and storage, we begin to see the movement we might even make towards the negative emissions world. This will not be easy, and it will require investment. Right now, our Government are committed to investing in carbon capture and storage; we have to do that as part of the solution. Look again at the IPCC's report: it says that carbon capture and storage will be part of the solution. This country is slightly guilty, having put forward £1 billion to address this, but then no one

took it up and the £1 billion disappeared. You might therefore think the UK was particularly bad but, as a former MEP, I can tell you that a significant sum of money was put forward for carbon capture and storage across Europe—and no country took it forward. We missed a trick some time ago, but we cannot miss it again and will not do so. This Government are committed to making sure that carbon capture and storage is a significant part of what we do.

Equally, when we look at the emergent technologies within nuclear, it is easy to talk, as many do, of fusion as always being over the horizon. However, we can start looking at different sorts of nuclear now: the small modular reactors and advanced modular reactors. We are putting substantial amounts of money into them, and there is a remembrance that doing so can also begin to change the paradigm. If we set off with the assumption that we cannot do it with these particular technologies, then the report may well be accurate; but the problem is that it is not accurate if these technologies can be developed at scale. We have to grasp that with both hands, particularly in the year of COP 26 in Glasgow. I am struck by how important that event will be for us here in this country to send a message elsewhere.

I was also struck by some of the words of the noble Lord, Lord Judd. He is right to remind us of the question of social justice across the globe. It is easy for us here, who dug out the coal and hewed it from the pits to build an Industrial Revolution, to look across the globe at those who still have those resources but will not be able to take them out without the climate experiencing problems. Look at Africa: Botswana sits atop one of the largest untapped coal reserves in the world. Can we tell them “Leave it in the ground”, and that their electricity must therefore come from other sources? Bear in mind that, right now, most of their electricity comes from over the border. It does not even get generated inside that country. The reality is that most of that country does not have electricity at all; people create their energy by burning wood. We have to recognise that there needs to be a fair transition and a just transition.

We in this country have not just talked the talk; we have walked the walk. Since 1990, we have seen a 42% reduction in our emissions. It may be argued that these are low-hanging fruits, but we have still done more than anybody else, alongside a 73% increase in our GDP. That is the message India wants to hear: that they can have economic development and growth by decoupling from emissions. What they do not want to hear is that they will have to put a depressant upon their ability to grow. One of the most frightening things to have in the developing world is for this nation or others to say, “You shall go no further; you must rest where your development is now, because that is what we dictate it must be”. We cannot do that. It will not surprise your Lordships to realise that no country will follow our lead if that is what we say. We must be able to show how to decouple our energy and emissions from our ability to generate economic growth. If we can do that, we will make significant progress.

As we look at the calendar year ahead, this Government will be making statements about the way forward that will take us towards net zero by 2050. I say again net

zero, not absolute zero, based upon what the Committee on Climate Change says. That committee was established to advise the Government—whichever party happens to occupy the Government—and we rely upon it to give us the advice that we will go forward with. We will have a number of strategies.

In housing, we will look at the domestic decarbonisation approach and our strategy to deliver this. We will need to do so in tandem with fuel poverty; again, there is no point in decarbonising while making people cold and sick. We need to make sure we go hand-in-hand with that just transition for all the people.

We need to look at a decarbonising strategy inside transport. There, we have a challenge that will not be easy to meet because, in truth, most people do not have an electric car, and we are nowhere near the tipping point where that car will become affordable. Again, we need to find that tipping point and we have a strategy coming out in order to help us deliver that.

There will be an overarching energy White Paper that will look at the bigger decisions that we have to take. Decarbonising domestic heating will be a real challenge. Shall we electrify the entire grid? If we do so, bearing in mind that electricity tends to be more expensive, we need to address fuel poverty head on if that is the case. Or are we looking at putting hydrogen into the grid in a hybrid or pure form? We will resolve that question this year. We will make a decision to determine that and to support the way forward. It will not be an easy transition, however. Underpinning all the things that we have spoken about today is the question of who will pay. The answer is that we will all pay. Either as consumers or taxpayers, the same individuals will pay, whether through the tax code or ultimately through bills. We need to recognise that.

Also this year we will have to address the issue of agriculture. My noble friend Lord Caithness was very clear. He basically asked what message we were seeking to send to our own farmers. If the message as we approach the distant point of 2050 and have not met the target is simply that there will be no more sheep on the hillsides and no cattle at all, we are not sending a message that helps them build and grow. So, again, we must look at what the EU will do and what the UK will do. There needs to be a support structure in place to help our farmers address the emission challenges. We need to recognise that that will not be straightforward. It will not be easy and there will be a cost that will need to be met. But we have to encourage them to do that. Again, the Agriculture Bill coming forward will be necessary to do that.

There will need to be a peatlands strategy. The last thing we want in Scotland, Wales or the north of England is our peatlands drying out. We sometimes forget how important the carbon sinks are. A number of noble Lords spoke about that. If we find ourselves in a situation where that is possible, we need to find a way of addressing it. There will be an English tree strategy—which sounds slightly niche, but it is about not just one tree but a whole, wide forest. The Government have made a commitment to plant the Northumberland forest.

Some may say that forests are a little like the notion in the Catholic Church of someone praying for your sins on your behalf—I look to the right reverend

Prelate on that, although I am not suggesting that it is perpetuating it. But we have to recognise that afforestation will have a significant part to play, not just in the sequestration of carbon but in biodiversity. Restoring quality forest will matter—not just plantation forests. That could make a significant difference.

The noble Lord, Lord Hannay, said that we were sometimes guilty of not speaking enough about Italy. Of course, we are co-hosts of COP this year and it is important to stress that we are working in collaboration with Italy. We will be doing significant events with Italy, whose focus this year will be on Africa and youth. We are working in collaboration with Italy to ensure that COP 26 going forward recognises both those things.

The noble Lord, Lord Giddens, posed a question about ice and seeing the end of ice. The albedo effect is absolutely critical in the way that we address warming and we need to ensure that we do all we can to preserve the ice structures that we presently have. That will perhaps be the biggest test that we have, and some will say that it might be beyond our ability because of the systems inherent in the ice itself. I do not believe that that is necessarily true.

The noble Lord, Lord Redesdale, was very helpful with a number of the points that he raised. He was supportive of the Government. I am not sure his Chief Whip will be smiling at him, but I none the less recognise that the statements he made were helpful. The Government have done a significant amount, particularly in relation to companies and the register at Companies House, to ensure that people are now on track to record the wider question of energy usage. He asked whether that could be done electronically. I see no reason why it cannot, so I will give a tentative commitment to say that I will explore that as strongly as I can to see if we can do it. I am sure that I will quickly receive a letter from the Box if I am wrong, but I happily commit to that in the short term.

The noble Lord, Lord Reid, is often very specific in the way that he puts his points. He spoke about the dislocate between what a scientist might say and what an economist might say. I remember an old joke. When different people on a desert island were asked how they would escape, the scientist explained how he would build a boat. When asked the same question, the economist said, “First, assume you have a boat”. The problem with economists is that often they have a very different way of looking at things. We need to be talking about science, and the Government’s policy needs to rest on science. It cannot rest on the idea that economics will drive this forward. There needs to be a balance between them.

I have been told that I have one minute to finish, which seems a limited amount. I will say two things to end: the net-zero approach is important and we are a global leader in that. The challenge will be to get others to come alongside in this year of climate action, not least the European Union to join us in the same endeavour—that will be important. We need to be able to show that our technologies are scalable at home and deliverable abroad. They need to be available to the rest of the globe, so that the globe can enjoy the benefits of our technological achievements and scientific advances. If we can do that, we can make progress.

[LORD DUNCAN OF SPRINGBANK]

The important point—the Banquo’s ghost of this discussion—is that finance will be at the heart of decarbonising the globe. In doubling our commitment to the International Climate Fund to £11.7 billion, we are making a substantial commitment. We invite other countries to do the same. That money will be used for mitigation and adaptation, in order to address the climate and also climate consequences. We need more money to do that going forward, otherwise it will be a very different world a lot sooner than 2050, because we are living through real change now.

I fear that I have not been able to answer all the questions that have been put today, but I am against a tighter timetable than I had anticipated. I hope noble Lords will forgive me if I have not. I am happy to commit to writing at any point in answer to these questions. I will give the rest of the time to the noble Lord, Lord Browne, whom I thank for bringing the debate before us. It has been a useful discussion and I hope that he will be able to use the time I can give him to complete his journey.

5.36 pm

Lord Browne of Ladyton: My Lords, I knew when I secured this debate that it would be a good one. It is a privilege to be a Member of this House, where so many noble Lords know so much and are so willing to share that knowledge. It has been a pleasure to listen to so many interesting and informative speeches and I have learned from them. In thanking all noble Lords who have contributed, including the Minister, whom I will come back to in a moment, I hope they will forgive me if I do not engage with individual points; I intend to reflect on the debate.

At the outset, I said that I hoped to generate a debate. I will be true to that. I have the benefit in UK FIRES of some of the best minds in the country to reflect on what was said and to advise me. To some

degree, because of reactions that I would not have had otherwise to the debate, they can fact-check some of the things that have been said. I will respond in detail and encourage UK FIRES to publish that on its website. It has an open-portal website that invites conversations. If I cannot persuade Parliament to open such portals, I will continue this debate in that way, if noble Lords will permit me, and they can engage further.

I thank the Minister, who did not let me down. He made a spirited defence of techno-optimism. He gave us comprehensive lists, which he will be held to, of the Government’s aspirations—the things they will do and the challenges that, if not met, will have bad consequences that will have to be engaged with. I will do my best to keep him to them and he will thank me for it.

I will try to encourage the scientists to have a wee bit more political sensitivity. It is important that they have a bit of political sensitivity, but I shall say, “Everything that I want you to do, I want you to do against the standard that the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Oxford has challenged his diocesan parishioners with.” I will ask them not to worry about us and not to worry about the difficulties that other people will have in living up to what they need to do. I will ask them just to place care for the earth at the top of their agenda.

Motion agreed.

Oaths and Affirmations

5.39 pm

Lord Kestenbaum took the oath, and signed an undertaking to abide by the Code of Conduct.

House adjourned at 5.39 pm.

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