

Vol. 832
No. 201



Tuesday
25 July 2023

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

HOUSE OF LORDS

OFFICIAL REPORT

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Retirements of Members.....	117
Questions	
Creative and Cultural Industries: Impact of Visa and Immigration Policies.....	117
Respiratory Syncytial Virus.....	121
Folic Acid Fortification	124
T-levels	127
Rhodes Wildfires: Repatriation of Holidaymakers	
<i>Private Notice Question</i>	131
Immigration and Nationality (Fees) (Amendment) Order 2023	
<i>Motion to Approve</i>	135
Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matter) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2023	
<i>Motion to Approve</i>	136
Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (Amendment) Order 2023	
<i>Motion to Approve</i>	136
Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023	
Human Medicines (Amendment Relating to Original Pack Dispensing) (England and Wales and Scotland) Regulations 2023	
<i>Motions to Approve</i>	136
Land Use in England Committee Report	
<i>Motion to Take Note</i>	137

Lords wishing to be supplied with these Daily Reports should give notice to this effect to the Printed Paper Office.

No proofs of Daily Reports are provided. Corrections for the bound volume which Lords wish to suggest to the report of their speeches should be clearly indicated in a copy of the Daily Report, which, with the column numbers concerned shown on the front cover, should be sent to the Editor of Debates, House of Lords, within 14 days of the date of the Daily Report.

*This issue of the Official Report is also available on the Internet at
<https://hansard.parliament.uk/lords/2023-07-25>*

The abbreviation [V] after a Member's name indicates that they contributed by video call.

The following abbreviations are used to show a Member's party affiliation:

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

No party affiliation is given for Members serving the House in a formal capacity or for the Lords spiritual.

© Parliamentary Copyright House of Lords 2023,
*this publication may be reproduced under the terms of the Open Parliament licence,
which is published at www.parliament.uk/site-information/copyright/.*

House of Lords

Tuesday 25 July 2023

11 am

Prayers—read by the Lord Bishop of Carlisle.

Oaths and Affirmations

11.07 am

Lord Botham took the oath.

Retirements of Members

Announcement

11.08 am

The Senior Deputy Speaker (Lord Gardiner of Kimble): My Lords, I should like to notify the House of the retirements, with effect from today, of the noble Lords, Lord Davies of Stamford, Lord Hoyle and Lord Watson of Richmond, pursuant to Section 1 of the House of Lords Reform Act 2014. On behalf of the House, I should like to thank all three noble Lords for their much-valued service to the House.

Creative and Cultural Industries: Impact of Visa and Immigration Policies

Question

11.09 am

Asked by **Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the impact that the United Kingdom's visa and immigration policies have on the UK creative and cultural industries.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Migration and Borders (Lord Murray of Blidworth) (Con): My Lords, the United Kingdom is, and will continue to be, an attractive destination for top international talent in these fields. Our visa and immigration system has been designed to support, and is supporting, all areas of the United Kingdom's thriving and expanding creative and cultural industries. It is a very generous, adaptive and flexible proposition from the department.

Baroness Bonham-Carter of Yarnbury (LD): I thank the Minister for his response. As I think he was trying to say, and as the Chancellor recently said, the creative industries are one of the UK's five high-growth priority sectors. Skills and talent from a global pool are essential to its success, but it is experiencing widespread workforce shortages from both here and abroad—exacerbated, of course, by Brexit. Does the Minister accept the concerns of the chief executive of Creative UK that the Migration Advisory Committee's shortage occupation list, as a mechanism for addressing this problem, is not fit for its core purpose? Some occupations from the

creative sectors already appear to have been deemed out of scope. Why? The recently published *Creative Industries Sector Vision* says:

“the Home Office, DCMS and industry will work together to maximise the effectiveness of existing immigration routes for the creative industries workforce”.

How is the Minister's department planning to do this while at the same time limiting such an essential route?

Lord Murray of Blidworth (Con): I am afraid that I do not accept the noble Baroness's proposition that we are, in some way, limiting access to the United Kingdom for creative workers. As I alluded to in my Answer, our domestic law allows musicians, entertainers, artists and their technical staff from non-visa national countries, such as EU member states, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, to perform in the UK without requiring a visa. A non-visa national can stay one month without a visa if they are invited to the UK by a UK-based client or organisation and paid by a UK source, under the permitted paid engagement visitor rules. A non-visa national can stay three months without a visa if they have been assigned a certificate of sponsorship by a licensed sponsor, which is usually a UK company. A non-visa national can stay six months without a visa if performing at a permit-free festival; they are listed in the Immigration Rules and run from Glastonbury to Glyndeboune. All nationalities can apply for a 12-month stay, on a temporary work creative worker route visa, if they obtain a visa and have a certificate of sponsorship.

The Earl of Clancarty (CB): My Lords—

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Lab): My Lords, the recently announced increase of at least 20% in the visa charge for people on the 10-year route to settlement and their families will mean a rise of at least £18,265 for an adult and much more for a family. What assessment has been made of the impact on long-term residents, many of whom are on lower incomes and already struggle to meet visa fees?

Lord Murray of Blidworth (Con): I regret that I did not hear the beginning of the noble Baroness's question. How is that connected to the creative visa schemes?

Baroness Lister of Burtersett (Lab): My question is connected to visas, and visas were in the original Question. I asked about the recently announced increase of at least 20% in the charge for people and their families on the 10-year settlement route, which will mean a rise of at least £18,265 for an adult and more for a family.

Lord Murray of Blidworth (Con): I am afraid that I still do not follow the noble Baroness's question, but I reassure her that we will bring forward a further fees order in the autumn. No doubt she will ask further questions then, but I reassure her that visa fees are carefully studied by the department. It is vital that they appropriately reflect the cost of running the visa scheme.

The Earl of Clancarty (CB): My Lords, looking at this in the opposite direction to the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, is the Minister aware of the real concern of losing British creative skills permanently to Europe, including our music touring technicians such as sound engineers and lighting crews, because of the obstacles the current agreement with the EU now poses to their work if they remain in this country?

Lord Murray of Blidworth (Con): As I have already said, we are proud of the fact that we have a very generous offer to those coming into the UK for creative purposes. We hope that other countries will reciprocate. I reassure the noble Earl that we have spoken to every EU member state about the issues facing our creative and cultural industries. From these discussions, 20 member states of the EU have confirmed that they offer visa and work permit-free routes for UK musicians and performers.

Lord Hamilton of Epsom (Con): My Lords, I find myself meeting nothing but young homegrown Brits who want jobs in the creative industries. What are we doing to develop our own national talent in this area?

Lord Murray of Blidworth (Con): DCMS recently published its *Creative Industries Sector Vision*, which was published in June and has been developed in partnership between the Government and industry. It is a vision for creative industries to become an even greater growth engine, where creative talent from all backgrounds and creative businesses from all areas of the United Kingdom can thrive.

Baroness Bull (CB): My Lords, there have been recent welcome discussions between the UK and some European countries about a bilateral reciprocal youth mobility visa to address the needs of specific sectors. This would not be the complete answer, but it would help those people most impacted by the current situation, which is young and emerging still-to-be-established talent. Will the Minister ensure that, if such a youth mobility scheme is introduced, it includes roles and paid work in the cultural and creative sector?

Lord Murray of Blidworth (Con): I agree with virtually everything the noble Baroness said. I reassure her that we remain committed to expanding our YMSs—youth mobility schemes—to more nations, including, but not limited to, those within the EU. Those youth mobility schemes provide cultural exchange programmes, to allow a person aged between 18 and 30 from participating countries and territories to experience life in the United Kingdom for up to two years. As the noble Baroness says, it is subject to bilateral reciprocal agreements which benefit British citizens equally.

Lord Coaker (Lab): My Lords, can the Minister explain why so many people in the creative industries are complaining about the length of time it takes to get a visa and why they often cannot get their equipment

here? From listening to what the Minister outlined, there does not seem to be any problem, but that is not the view of the creative industries, so what will he do to sort it out?

Lord Murray of Blidworth (Con): I reassure the noble Lord that the visa system is operating within the service standard in every sector, so there is no delay in creative visas being awarded to those who apply. The system works well. I simply do not recognise the account that he gives; if he has any particular cases, I would be grateful if he would write to me, and I can look into them.

Lord Swire (Con): I think the noble Baroness, Lady Bonham-Carter, has hit on something, because we all know, if only anecdotally, that the system is not working as well as it should. Will my noble friend the Minister commit to going back to his department and having a discussion with DCMS as to how this regime can be better applied? There is no threat of people overstaying, particularly in the performing arts—it is unlikely, other than the national state orchestra of North Korea, who would probably want to stay here, but otherwise they just want to come here and perform and then go away. We are shooting ourselves in the foot by making it rather difficult for some of these performing artists to go about their business.

Lord Murray of Blidworth (Con): I am afraid, timid as I am to disagree with my noble friend, that is just wrong. There are no issues here. In 2022, we issued 6,498 creative worker visas, of which 180 were issued to EEA nationals. Over the last decade, the number of creative visas issued has remained consistently high compared to other temporary work routes, such as the charity and religious worker visa routes. While the volumes fell during the pandemic, as one might expect, they have returned to high volumes. I suggest that the high volumes and low barriers to entry are a symbol of the excellence of our own success in the areas of work to which these visas relate.

Lord Cashman (Lab): My Lords—

Lord McNally (LD): My Lords, I am sorry not to give way to the noble Lord.

The Minister's assurances roll over the Dispatch Box like treacle. Is he not aware that organisations as diverse as BECTU, the technicians' trade union, and Barbican, the arts centre, are making exactly the same complaints as his noble friend just made? Is not the root cause of this that Brexit, far from being oven-ready, is half-baked and has left our creative industries in particular bereft of support?

Lord Murray of Blidworth (Con): My Lords, the answer is no.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus Question

11.20 am

Asked by **Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick**

To ask His Majesty's Government, following advice issued by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation on 7 June, whether they are planning to undertake an immunisation programme against respiratory syncytial virus before winter; and if not, what are the barriers to doing so.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord Markham) (Con): My Lords, officials are currently developing policy options based on Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation, or JCVI, advice regarding an expanded RSV vaccination programme for infants and older children. While officials are working at speed, challenges such as procurement negotiations, system readiness and delivery capacity mean that a universal programme in time for this winter is not possible. The department is working with partners to mitigate those challenges and to support implementation as soon as possible.

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Lab): My Lords, I thank the Minister for his Answer, albeit a little disappointing. When will that policy position on the introduction of the RSV immunisation programme be submitted to Ministers? When will the business case, including funding priorities, for the introduction of such an RSV immunisation programme be developed and put to the Treasury? Does the Department of Health plan to accept the joint industry offer to work with manufacturers to overcome barriers to rapid implementation?

Lord Markham (Con): I thank the noble Baroness. The issue is that the current jab, palivizumab, is very expensive and lasts for only one month at a time, so it is logistically quite difficult. Promisingly, a new jab, nirsevimab, has just been agreed by the JCVI. It offers six months' protection, is more effective and is lower in cost, so that is the one we are looking to roll out to more people. At the same time, there is a promising Pfizer jab which can be given to mothers. There are good new vaccines coming along; the issue is whether they are going to be licensed in time for us to be able to use them this winter.

Baroness Walmsley (LD): When immunisation is rolled out, will there be a public information programme to ensure a high level of uptake among people who are eligible for it? In the meantime, in the absence of a test, what advice is being given to people who believe they may have RSV? Should they go to their local pharmacist or to their GP?

Lord Markham (Con): It depends on the type of jab. For instance, the maternal jab can be given to the mother as part of her prenatal check-ups. Either way, if it is for her or for the baby, there will be an education campaign. The other at-risk group is, as I

am sure the noble Baroness knows, the over-75s. We are looking at a targeted programme for them as well, which they can go to their GP to find out about.

Lord Kamall (Con): Further to the noble Baroness's question about public information, we found previously when rolling out vaccines, not just for this but for Covid, that there were certain communities which were difficult to reach or to persuade to take up the vaccine. As an extension to the question from the noble Baroness, what more is being done to encourage people in those communities who are reluctant to be vaccinated to come forward, or to go to meet them in their communities and take the vaccine to them?

Lord Markham (Con): We had this question on MMR just the other day. Some groups are much harder to reach than others. Very young children are the prime at-risk group. There, it is much easier because, naturally, they are seen by their GP and medical staff either prenatally, if it is maternal, or post in terms of the baby check-ups. The group that we are talking more about here is post 75 year-olds, and there those education programmes will be put in place.

Baroness Wheeler (Lab): My Lords, the JCVI advice endorses the vaccine programme for 75 year-olds and for ages above, but we know that evidence shows that there is serious underestimation of RSV infections among older adults and an urgent need to improve testing and treatment of, in particular, those with congenital lung or heart disease or spinal muscular atrophy. What steps are the Government taking to raise awareness among these key groups and to develop information and monitoring systems that identify those most at risk?

Lord Markham (Con): This is where nirsevimab is very promising, in that it gives six months' protection. The problem with the previous jab is that it needed monthly injections and was only 50% effective. We are talking about 70%-plus effective now, which makes it more practical to have that sort of rollout. To date, we have been looking at the very targeted group of 75 year-olds only, particularly as each course costs £2,000 and has to be given monthly over the winter months. Now that we are opening up to this injection, which is much cheaper and lasts for six months, we can look at a broader range, and then there is a much more general education programme to go with it.

Lord Hunt of Kings Heath (Lab): My Lords, will the Minister comment more generally on vaccine manufacturing in the UK, which comes into play here? During Covid, we learned that having our own vaccine manufacturing capacity was important. Is that the Government's position going forward?

Lord Markham (Con): The noble Lord is correct. I have two good examples of that, BioNTech and Moderna, where as part of commercial arrangements for us to buy large amounts of Covid vaccines from them they are making investments in UK plants. It will not

[LORD MARKHAM]

always be practical, but those examples are billion pound-plus investments which I think we all agree are welcome news.

Lord Foulkes of Cumnock (Lab Co-op): My Lords, following the previous Question, it is great to have a Minister who knows what he is talking about. Does he agree that it is important that we have the same kind of policies in all parts of the United Kingdom in relation to vaccination and immunisation? What discussions is he having with his counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

Lord Markham (Con): First, I thank noble Lord. That is the nicest thing anybody has ever said to me; I think I want to go on holiday at this point. This is a devolved matter, but it is something on which we are working very closely with the devolved Administrations. I must admit, as we discussed yesterday, that there is concern about the Northern Ireland Administration. Obviously, the Executive and Assembly not meeting at the moment makes some areas more difficult. We had examples of that yesterday, and we are about to have one in a minute when we talk about the fortification of bread. However, where we can, we are working closely with our colleagues.

Baroness Ritchie of Downpatrick (Lab): My Lords, in his initial response to me, the Minister indicated that the policy papers were being drawn up. What policy options are being considered?

Lord Markham (Con): The hope is that there will be two effective and cost-effective vaccines, nirsevimab and the Pfizer maternal jab. Those are much more effective and give longer periods of protection than the current monthly jab—they give six months' protection. They are open to a mass campaign, particularly for young children, who are the most at-risk group. That allows us to have a negotiation with both parties with some healthy competitive tension so that we can get the best price, because we know that either one will do the job quite well. Where we can reach a successfully negotiated outcome, we hope that will set us up either to do either a year-round programme, if it really is very cost effective, or, if it is still quite expensive, to focus on the winter months, because that is the time when young children are most at risk if they have just been born. Those negotiations are live, and I will be happy to update the House as we learn more.

The Lord Bishop of Carlisle: My Lords, I, too, welcome the Minister's detailed knowledge of this subject. Testing it even further, if I may, can I ask him whether His Majesty's Government have made any assessment of the usefulness of glycolipid research in countering not only RSV but other viral illnesses, including influenza and Covid-19?

Lord Markham (Con): I fear I might have been taken to the limit of my knowledge. I would like to think I know when to stop and to offer to follow up in writing.

Folic Acid Fortification Question

11.29 am

Asked by **Lord Rooker**

To ask His Majesty's Government whether it remains their policy to reduce the number of pregnancies affected by neural tube defects through mandatory folic fortification of bread flour.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care (Lord Markham)

(Con): My Lords, the Government remain firmly committed to proceeding with a policy of mandatory fortification of non-wholemeal wheat flour with folic acid to help prevent neural tube defects in foetuses. As I have previously updated noble Lords, this policy is being delivered as part of the wider review of the Bread and Flour Regulations. Having consulted, we are finalising policy decisions; we expect to publish a response this summer and lay new legislation early in 2024, subject to clearances.

Lord Rooker (Lab): I remind the Minister that it is now 35 weeks since the consultation on the Bread and Flour Regulations closed. The last time they were reviewed, in 2013, the Government's decision was announced within 20 weeks of the closure. It is now four years since the Government consulted on fortification of bread flour with folic acid, and it will be two years this September since they made their seminal decision actually to do it. So, we have just lost another two years, which means another 300 babies born with lifelong illnesses, and 1,600 terminations.

When will we get some action? We have lost two years since the previous decision, when it was announced that we were going forward. The Minister has already indicated—he was clever to do so—in answer to the previous Question that he has a problem with Northern Ireland. It is a pity that the noble Lord, Lord Dodds, is not here, because then we would get the facts on Northern Ireland. If that is the excuse, it will not be good enough.

Lord Markham (Con): I first thank the noble Lord, Lord Rooker, for his tireless and passionate campaigning on this issue, which he is right to do. As I have learned, the situation is complex. We had 369 consultation responses, and more than 13,000 different SKU items—products containing flour—will be affected. We are not just talking about bread; pizza, lasagne, cakes and sauces are all affected, so you have to change the labelling of all those. We are trying to bring them all on board in a sensible manner, and to get this right quickly. We believe that a lot of people will voluntarily take this up much quicker. When you are talking about changing labels on the 22 billion items that are sold each year, you obviously need to look at how to do that practically and within a reasonable timeframe.

Lord Cormack (Con): My Lords, my noble friend was right to acknowledge the indefatigable campaigning of the noble Lord, Lord Rooker, but will he please not

rely upon these government phrases “shortly”, “in due course” and “soon”? Perhaps he could tell us which of those comes first. We feel that we are being fobbed off and that the delay is inordinate. He talked about early 2024, but will it really be early 2024? According to me, January is early 2024.

Lord Markham (Con): I thank my noble friend, and I agree. I hate the words “in due course” because they mean “whenever”. While I freely admit to using words such as “soon” and “imminent”, “in due course” is not a term I use, and I understand the point being made. The consultation will be published late in the summer. It is a complex area, and I have said that I want to get personally involved now; I want to make sure that we get the balance right between the many competing interests. The legislation is planned for early 2024. All I can do on my side is to undertake to push that forward as much as possible.

Lord Allan of Hallam (LD): My Lords, the Minister said in reply to a previous question that a lot of the industry is already voluntarily adding folic acid to bread and other foodstuffs. Of course, “a lot” is a well-known scientific term for “more than a little”. I invite the Minister to offer us a more precise figure. Does the department know what percentage of bread and similar products are currently fortified on a voluntary basis? If not, could it carry out a survey so that we can have that number?

Lord Markham (Con): Probably the best thing to do is for me to give the noble Lord the detailed information we do have and try to find out more. I am told that “a lot” means the majority of bread products, but I will give the noble Lord a more precise answer.

Baroness Hayman (CB): I ask the Minister not to be too downhearted about the complexities he faces, according to the department. In the more than 30 years since the MRC’s ground-breaking research on this subject, more than 80 countries have managed to fortify their flour. Not one has reported adverse effects; not one has withdrawn that fortification. As I have said before, I had four young children when this evidence first came out; I now have four grandchildren the same age and, honestly, I do not want to stay here until I have great-grandchildren. So can we have some action soon?

Lord Markham (Con): Yes, the noble Baroness is correct, and the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Rooker—that each year’s delay involves another 200 or so babies—was very well made. The beauty of this process is that it makes me shine a light on this issue, so I will be working on quite hard on it.

Baroness Merron (Lab): My Lords, the last time this issue was raised in the Chamber, the Minister put delays down to co-ordination with the devolved Administrations and consultation with the EU due to Northern Ireland—which he referred to in the previous Question—before allowing industry to get on board. Just yesterday, noble Lords debated two statutory

instruments that apply to the devolved Administrations, including one specific to Northern Ireland. Can the Minister explain why timely co-ordination across the nations has been possible on tobacco products and pharmacies but not on folic acid in flour, in respect of which time is obviously of the essence, given the importance of the neural health of babies?

Lord Markham (Con): I thank the noble Baroness for that question; as I am rapidly learning, this is a complicated area. For the benefit of noble Lords who were not present yesterday, the tobacco arrangements are part of the Windsor agreement, so we passed primary legislation to allow us to make those changes. On the items before us, which involve secondary legislation, my understanding—if I am wrong, I will make a correction in writing—is that the co-operation of each of the devolved authorities is needed. That is why we are not able to proceed in Northern Ireland without its involvement. The plan is that we will go forward with GB-only measures if we have to. For obvious reasons, we would prefer not to do that; we want Northern Ireland to benefit from these changes as well but, as I have learned, it is a complex area.

Lord Balfe (Con): My Lords, when I became president of the British Dietetic Association—the dieticians’ trade union—this was one of its priorities. When I stood down five years later it was still a priority. My noble friend Lord Rooker has pursued this relentlessly, but what we are overlooking, I am afraid, is that every year more and more babies are born with this defect. Some 80 countries have managed it; what has impeded us for such a long time? I echo my noble friend Lord Cormack’s question: will “early” next year really be early?

Lord Markham (Con): As I have said, there are complications. The MHRA, for instance, has raised concerns about the side-effects of certain folic acid levels in respect of anti-epilepsy drugs. We are going through various medical areas and checking that we do not have unintended consequences, and these are some of the issues that have been taking time to deal with. I am not trying to give excuses, but to allow noble Lords to understand some of the complexities involved. As I have mentioned, the plan is very much to lay legislation in early 2024. We then have to give notice periods to the EU and the World Trade Organization, so, in order to achieve complete transparency for noble Lords, I am afraid there will be a two-year implementation timeframe from then. But rest assured that I will be pushing hard on this.

Baroness Walmsley (LD): My Lords, we have heard that there are millions of products, but also that some manufacturers have implemented this policy voluntarily. Industry has had years of notice that this is going to happen. Surely it is for the Government to legislate and industry to comply.

Lord Markham (Con): Yes, and as I have said, a lot of companies are doing that. What we are really talking about is a backstop for “edge” products that

[LORD MARKHAM] are not fast-moving. There are a lot of products out there already, so relabelling takes some time. I would hope and expect to see most of this implemented pretty quickly, as soon as we get into the new year.

As I am out of time and this will probably be the last thing I say, I wish everyone a happy Summer Recess.

T-levels Question

11.39 am

Asked by **Lord Watson of Invergowrie**

To ask His Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of Ofsted's final report of its T-level thematic review, published on 20 July, specifically its conclusions that (1) in some instances, T-levels provide inappropriate work placements, and (2) many T-level students drop out after the first year.

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Department for Education (Baroness Barran) (Con): My Lords, T-levels are new, challenging qualifications, and we continue to offer extensive support for their implementation. We want every T-level student to receive outstanding vocational education. We commissioned Ofsted to help us identify what further areas for improvement might be needed. We welcome its report and are already taking action, including a £12 million employer support fund and bespoke workforce support to help address concerns around work placements and student continuity.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): I thank the Minister for that response, but the Ofsted T-level review was highly critical, identifying what it termed a "range of shortcomings". I hope this will lead to them being resolved. Until that happens, another issue raised in the report is of real urgency. Ofsted called for a review of the Government's wider level 3 reforms, including the defunding of most BTECs by 2025. It points to the impact of that on disadvantaged young people. That is a point that noble Lords across your Lordships' House have made on numerous occasions, both during the passage of the skills Act and since then. On each occasion, the Minister dismissed our fears as scaremongering. Now that Ofsted has recommended it, will she and her Ministers revisit the question of the impact of defunding alternate pathways to T-levels on young people?

Baroness Barran (Con): The Government do not have any plans to revisit the defunding of those other pathways. We are confident in the quality of T-levels and the employability that they offer students. Our job is to make them work at the level of the best institutions that have been delivering them, which the noble Lord will have seen referred to in the Ofsted report. We will make sure we offer those opportunities particularly to the young people to whom he refers.

Lord Baker of Dorking (Con): My Lords, is the Minister aware that so many students are dropping T-levels because they have been misled? They thought they were going to study a technical curriculum, but the curriculums are 75% academic and 25% technical—that is absurd. In the review she is undertaking, will she ensure that the curriculums for engineering, construction and digital skills are at least 40% technical, otherwise students will not study them? That means you will have fewer technicians for the economy, which desperately needs more.

Baroness Barran (Con): As my noble friend knows, the qualifications were designed very closely with employers. The content of the curriculum reflects what employers, working with the department and colleges, told us that they needed. I remind the House that, historically, we have had over 200 qualifications in engineering and over 200 in building and construction. There has been a complicated, unclear landscape. We will now have a clear and high quality one.

Lord Addington (LD): My Lords, the Minister talked about the problems with these courses. There are virtually no problems that were not predicted. Could the Minister tell us what we are doing about careers advice for the young people taking these qualifications? Where there are courses which have failed—if everybody fails on the second year, as is pointed out in the report, they have failed—will the careers advice in the local area reflect this, so that those courses can die if they are not delivering?

Baroness Barran (Con): I do not recognise the examples the noble Lord referred to. When I talk to students who have done T-levels, they are evangelical about the value it has brought them and proud of their achievements and the quality of what they have learned. In relation to careers advice, in spring this year we made available grants of up to £10,000 per provider to boost careers guidance in schools and colleges, so all students have a good understanding of T-levels and their benefits.

Lord Aberdare (CB): My Lords, what are the Government doing to encourage more small and medium-sized enterprises to offer T-level work placements, given that in many parts of the country placements in larger businesses may not be easily available and SMEs play a key role in many vital sectors of the economy, including the creative sector?

Baroness Barran (Con): The noble Lord is absolutely right that we need a range of choices of placements, and that must include small and medium-sized enterprises. We launched recently an employer support fund, which will pay for legitimate costs employers incur in hosting placements. We believe that will be of particular value to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Baroness Thornton (Lab): My Lords, I am slightly shocked that the Minister does not seem to be taking seriously the very serious criticisms included in the Ofsted report about T-levels—which, I have to say, my noble friend Lord Watson and other noble Lords

predicted when the House discussed the establishment of T-levels. There is no satisfaction in being right, because this concerns the lives, futures and aspirations of a cohort of young people who have been badly served by T-levels, many of whom have dropped out. Has the department tracked these youngsters? What has happened to them, and have they been offered alternative options?

Baroness Barran (Con): I will make a couple of points. I think the data that the noble Baroness and the noble Lord, Lord Addington, referred to on drop-outs refers to the T-level transition programme—we are doing a lot of work to strengthen and improve this, for the reasons both noble Lords referred to—rather than T-levels themselves. In the interests of fairness and accuracy, noble Lords have understandably reflected some of the areas for improvement highlighted by Ofsted, but I will quote the report:

“At their best, T levels provide an opportunity to combine high-quality study of theory with excellent development of practical skills”.

Baroness Berridge (Con): My Lords, your Lordships’ House had a special Select Committee on this area and found that the complication for young people not going on to A-levels was one of the issues. T-levels are a simple way to put technical qualifications on a par with the academic route of A-levels. Could my noble friend the Minister please outline whether there are specific career guidance initiatives to ensure that children in a school which is offering only A-levels and has its own sixth form are made aware of T-levels? Obviously, that may mean they leave and go to a different institution.

Baroness Barran (Con): My noble friend makes a good point. As I referred to, we are making available grants of up to £10,000 per provider to boost careers guidance in schools and colleges, so that every child is aware of the potential of T-levels. Of course, in the skills Act, the Baker clause, from my noble friend Lord Baker, means that students are getting more frequent careers input throughout their time in secondary school.

Baroness Blackwood of North Oxford (Con): My Lords, I understand that finding suitable placements, even after Covid, is a particular barrier to increasing the number of T-levels available from providers. Some employers are poorly informed about the content and structure of T-levels. Can the Minister tell me what steps the department is taking to improve this situation?

Baroness Barran (Con): We are investing in direct support for employers, including through the delivery of an employer support package which offers online guidance, workshops and hands-on support to employers. We have a T-level employer ambassador network, and I mentioned the employer support fund already. Obviously, we have made a very significant investment, both in capital and capacity and delivery, to allow T-levels to be delivered at the scale we need.

Lord Watson of Invergowrie (Lab): My Lords, the Ofsted report also refers to some young people who started in the first tranche of T-levels expecting that they would assist them in gaining access to university only to find that, in the case of their course, that was not possible. Can the Minister say how many universities accept T-levels for access? What steps are the Government taking to increase that number?

Baroness Barran (Con): There are relatively few T-levels where students have completed both years, given the timing of their introduction. Currently, 136 higher education providers have indicated that they will accept T-levels, including the vast majority of Russell group universities.

Lord Lucas (Con): My Lords, I congratulate the Government on introducing T-levels, which are, to judge from local reaction, a very successful, solidly academic qualification. We have considerable worry that there will be many students who will not be up to taking them who are currently served by BTECs. I urge my noble friend to revisit that, because these are students who we should not be letting down.

Baroness Barran (Con): We are absolutely committed to those students. I remind the House that the current applied general qualifications produce very mixed outcomes indeed. The point my noble friend makes is valid, and, of course, by increasing the quality of the offer at level 3 we also need to reform qualifications at level 2, level 1 and entry level, to make sure that we equip students to progress to the highest level to which they aspire. With that, I also wish the House a very happy and peaceful recess.

Arrangement of Business

Announcement

11.51 am

Baroness Williams of Trafford (Con): My Lords, if the House will indulge me for a few moments, I will reflect briefly on the outstanding work across the House in recent weeks and months. I am aware that the sittings of recent weeks in particular have tested the reserves of many of us. Despite the longer hours, noble Lords have maintained the usual exceptional quality of scrutiny and debate. None of us could have undertaken our roles without the support provided by the staff across the House. This includes the work of many teams. I particularly thank the staff of the Public Bill Office for their expertise, patience and dedication over recent weeks. They have shown incredible resilience and resolve in the face of late sittings and in planning for multiple rounds of ping-pong. I also thank the catering and facilities teams, those in Hansard, the Library, those printing papers for us and of course the doorkeepers, whose support is hugely appreciated by all noble Lords. Indeed, even when we did not end up sitting as late as expected, teams were prepared to increase that support.

I cannot sit down without thanking the usual channels. We may not always agree—I am sure that is not obvious at all—but I am very grateful for their constructive and very professional approach. I hope that everyone is looking forward to a slightly quieter summer, and I hope that we will have some better weather to go along with it.

Lord Kennedy of Southwark (Lab Co-op): My Lords, I join the noble Baroness in thanking all the staff of the House for their fantastic work over these last few months—and all Members of the House. I also thank the Labour Whips' Office, which supports me and our Front Bench in what we do.

We actually get on pretty well in the usual channels. I have been opposite the noble Baroness for many years, in many posts, and we work well together. All I would say is that we should always endeavour not to have those really late nights. I think we make better decisions in more normal working hours than sitting into the wee hours of the morning. With that, I wish everyone a peaceful and restful summer.

Rhodes Wildfires: Repatriation of Holidaymakers

Private Notice Question

11.53 am

Asked by Lord Young of Cookham

To ask His Majesty's Government what plans they have to assist with the repatriation of holidaymakers from Rhodes following recent wildfires.

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, we are actively monitoring the fires in Rhodes and elsewhere in Greece and are in close contact with the Greek authorities. The British vice-consulate in Rhodes is visiting local evacuation centres. The FCDO has deployed a rapid deployment team of six FCDO staff and four British Red Cross responders to Rhodes to support British nationals, whose safety is our top priority. The team is based at Rhodes International Airport and is assisting with travel documents and liaising with Greek authorities and travel operators on the ground. There are no plans for the UK Government to repatriate holidaymakers from Rhodes as the airport is operating normally.

Lord Young of Cookham (Con): I thank my noble friend for his reply and for the steps being taken. I also commend the citizens of Rhodes on the hospitality they have extended to British holidaymakers fleeing the fires. Looking ahead, some 30,000 holidaymakers have booked to go to Rhodes over the next few weeks. At the moment, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office is not advising people not to travel. The Association of British Insurers has said that unless the FCDO advises against travel, there will not be a great deal of policies that will help. Do the Government expect families booked to go to Rhodes over the next few days to go ahead with their plans?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, we should pay tribute to the people of Greece who have opened their homes to many holidaymakers in their area. The FCDO travel advice should not impact people's ability to claim insurance for things such as cancelled hotel bookings or flight changes, depending on their policy and level of cover. However, we recognise that some travel companies use FCDO advice as a reference

point to their policies. Our travel advice is focused on ensuring the safety of British nationals and is designed to give people the detail they need to make an informed decision. Of course, our travel advice is always under review.

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, can I ask the Minister to rethink this matter in the light of the information from the noble Lord, Lord Young? It seems quite poignant. We are all ready to go off on our summer holidays—last year I went to Rhodes for a week; it is a marvellous place—and our hearts go out to those people who are there and struggling, or are about to go and are worried about the consequences, and the people of Rhodes whose livelihoods rely, in many cases, on a robust and busy holiday season.

When the Minister at the FCDO was asked whether he would go to Rhodes on holiday, he admitted that he would not travel there. The Government's lack of advice is not helpful to those who are not sure whether they should fly this week, or what the financial consequences could be. With the cost of living crisis, many people make sacrifices for their annual week-long holiday. I ask the Minister to reconsider the reply he gave to the noble Lord, Lord Young. I am not convinced he entirely understands the position of insurance companies and the struggle that many families have faced to pay for these holidays.

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, I quite understand the point made by the noble Baroness, Lady Smith of Basildon. The situation in Rhodes is stabilising at the moment. The vast majority of the island is not affected by these fires and, as I said, our travel advice is kept under constant review. I understand the situation for people taking valued holidays in difficult times; they really want some certainty. I will take that back.

Lord Purvis of Tweed (LD): My Lords, I will inform the House of the current FCDO guidance. Its website says:

"If you are planning to travel to any areas affected by wildfires, please check with your travel operator or hotel prior to travel".

Is it safe, in the coming days and weeks, for people from the UK to travel to the areas affected by wildfires?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, as I said, the situation is stabilising—I had a call with the department earlier this morning—and the majority of the island is not affected by these fires. As I have reiterated time and again, the travel advice is kept under constant review.

Lord Forsyth of Drumlean (Con): My Lords, does my noble friend not think that the carriers—the airlines that take people there—have some responsibility? They put up the fares sky-high for the school holidays and so on. If people have legitimate concerns about the safety of their families in going there, should the carriers not be prepared to accept cancellations and take responsibility for getting people back?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, my noble friend Lord Forsyth makes a very important point. The first port of call for individuals in Rhodes at the moment is of course the travel operators, which have the responsibility to get them back. More empty planes were sent yesterday—I gather that more are being sent today—and there is a process of repatriating people from Rhodes.

Lord Alton of Liverpool (CB): My Lords, although the noble Lord, Lord Forsyth, is right about the responsibility that falls on the travel companies, the Minister is right to say that they have responded quite speedily and effectively in the circumstances. Does the Minister agree that the number of wildfires, not just in Rhodes but in other places, could reach a point at which it is impossible for the travel companies to deal with the numbers involved? Can he tell the House what contingencies have been put in place in those circumstances for the FCDO to be able to assist in the evacuation of people caught up in the fires?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): I thank the noble Lord, Lord Alton; he makes a very important point about the assistance to individuals and families on holidays in these areas. There is always consular assistance. We advise travellers in the areas where there are fires to ask for consular assistance, and so far that has been given to a number of individuals.

Baroness Watkins of Tavistock (CB): My Lords, can the Minister tell us what consideration the Foreign Office is giving to the state of the hospitals in Rhodes at the moment? Smoke inhalation and extreme heat are extremely dangerous for very elderly and young people. I wonder what the occupancy levels are, should British citizens need hospital care, and whether the Foreign Office is thinking about that.

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, at present, as I understand the situation, all British nationals are in good health. The noble Baroness makes a very good point about the facilities available to our nationals in Greece at the moment. As I said earlier, there is a small Red Cross team at the airport. If there is anything more that I can add to my answer, I will write to the noble Baroness.

Baroness Symons of Vernham Dean (Lab): My Lords, the Minister referred to the consular staff. Can he tell us how many British consular staff there are in our consulate in Rhodes, as opposed to the locally engaged staff?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): I do not have the number of consular staff in Rhodes to hand but, as I said, we have sent out a team to Rhodes Airport, including Red Cross personnel. The FCDO has deployed a rapid deployment team of six FCDO staff—who are based, as I understand it, at the airport—and there are four British Red Cross responders there to support British nationals.

Earl Russell (LD): My Lords, I thank the Minister for his answers to these questions. The risk of wildfires is not just confined to Rhodes but present in the Aegean and Crete. Should airspace be closed, can the Minister reassure me that the FCDO has contingency plans for repatriating British holidaymakers?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): The situation is kept continually under review. At the moment there are no plans for repatriation; it is up to the tour operators to bring back our holidaymakers. This is also a wake-up call as far as climate change is concerned. It is essential that the world recognises that, which is why the *Integrated Review Refresh* reaffirms that tackling climate change remains the Government's top thematic priority and why the Government spent £1.4 billion in international climate finance over the course of 2021-22.

Baroness Foster of Oxtton (Con): My Lords, I spent many decades in the aviation and travel industry, and we ought to think carefully about this, notwithstanding that these sorts of episodes have taken place for many years. We should also give credit to the airlines and tour operators, because it is difficult for those on the ground to try to assess the situation; until now, they have done an extremely good job. It is extremely terrifying for tourists who are there, but proper support from the Foreign Office and correct information, which should be updated at all times, should help in these situations. I urge my noble friend to ensure that the Foreign Office, the travel authorities and the travel operators are working closely together to ensure that, for those whose holidays may be cancelled, they will change their holidays for them—that is normal practice—and that everyone is kept up to date.

The Earl of Courtown (Con): My Lords, I bow to my noble friend's greater knowledge of the travel industry. She is quite right: it is very important that there is continual work with the travel industry on these issues. I can confirm that there have been discussions at senior levels with the travel industry on this issue.

Baroness Boycott (CB): My Lords, I am very glad to hear the Minister accept that climate change is behind these appalling fires. World Weather Attribution said this morning that it was virtually impossible that they could happen without climate change, so why are the Government still considering giving out licences for more oil and gas exploration in the North Sea?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): I am afraid that is just a wee bit too wide of the Question. It was a good try, but no—sorry.

Lord Harris of Haringey (Lab): On the point of the Question, is it not the case that many people who travel on holiday to places such as Rhodes and many other destinations do not go via tour operators but book their own accommodation and flights? What support is being given to them, rather than the simple statement that tour operators should be responsible?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): The noble Lord makes a very good point; that puts people in a slightly different situation. As I said, we are advising people in a vulnerable position without back-up to seek consular assistance.

Lord West of Spithead (Lab): My Lords, rescuing people from beaches is in the Royal Navy's DNA, be they British soldiers or British civilians. For two centuries, the Royal Navy was there when there was a disaster in the Mediterranean. Does the Minister not agree with me that it is rather sad that over the last 10 years or so we have not had a British ship available in the region, should there be some requirement to assist our nationals?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): I am glad that the noble Lord, Lord West of Spithead, lives up to his reputation. The serious points are, first, that the fires in Rhodes are in an area in the centre of the island, and, secondly, that the situation is stabilising. I note what the noble Lord said.

Lord Scriven (LD): My Lords, the editor of *Which?* has pointed out that, unless the Government give advice not to travel, people who are travelling on airlines such as Ryanair, which is continuing its flights, will have a choice. What would the Minister advise British nationals heading out: either to head to wildfires or to lose all the money they have paid?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): The noble Lord's question revolves around travel advice issued by the FCDO, which I mentioned earlier. That is always kept under review.

Baroness Smith of Basildon (Lab): My Lords, I bring the Minister back to a point I made at the beginning, which he did not respond to. If individual insurers and independent travellers are looking for travel advice, does he think that the Minister's comment that he would not travel to Rhodes will assist them in any claims they make?

The Earl of Courtown (Con): I am not aware that this would affect any claim that may or may not be made. Every individual has their own choice of where they go on holiday; I will be staying at home over the next six weeks. I understand the point the noble Baroness made, but the advice given to travellers is always to check the FCDO to see what its travel advice is.

Immigration and Nationality (Fees) (Amendment) Order 2023

Motion to Approve

12.09 pm

Moved by Lord Murray of Blidworth

That the draft Order laid before the House on 6 June be approved.

Relevant document: 44th Report from the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee (special attention drawn to the instrument). Considered in Grand Committee on 24 July.

Motion agreed.

Police Act 1997 (Criminal Record Certificates: Relevant Matter) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Order 2023

Motion to Approve

12.10 pm

Moved by Lord Murray of Blidworth

That the draft Order laid before the House on 19 June be approved. *Considered in Grand Committee on 24 July.*

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Migration and Borders (Lord Murray of Blidworth) (Con): On behalf of my noble friend Lord Sharpe of Epsom, I beg to move the Motion standing in his name on the Order Paper.

Motion agreed.

Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (Amendment) Order 2023

Motion to Approve

12.10 pm

Moved by Lord Harlech

That the draft Order laid before the House on 6 June be approved. *Considered in Grand Committee on 24 July.*

Motion agreed.

Tobacco and Related Products (Amendment) (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2023

Human Medicines (Amendment Relating to Original Pack Dispensing) (England and Wales and Scotland) Regulations 2023

Motions to Approve

12.10 pm

Moved by Lord Markham

That the draft Regulations laid before the House on 12 and 29 June be approved.

Relevant document: 45th Report from the Secondary Legislation Scrutiny Committee. Considered in Grand Committee on 24 July.

Motions agreed.

Land Use in England Committee Report

Motion to Take Note

12.11 pm

Moved by Lord Cameron of Dillington

That this House takes note of the Report from the Land Use in England Committee *Making the most out of England's land* (HL Paper 105).

Lord Cameron of Dillington (CB): My Lords, it is funny—when I stand up, everyone seems to leave.

First, I declare my interests as a farmer and landowner and as the chair of the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, UKCEH. I thank all those involved in our report—first, those Lordships who diligently served on the committee but, above all, thanks are due to our clerk, Simon Keal, and his team, Stephen Reed and Katie Barraclough. We just asked the questions—they produced the report. Thanks are also due to our academic adviser, Alister Scott, whose advice was invaluable.

The premise of our work was the fact that since World War II our countryside has been overfocused on producing as much food as possible, almost to the exclusion of everything else. In 1939, we were only 39% self-sufficient in food, and that fact very nearly lost us the war. We all accept that we must never go there again, but we now produce some 60% of our food, and we think that is a good percentage to maintain. That can be done with the right sort of planning even if, overall, less land is being used for actual food production.

However, the demands for land use have changed considerably in recent years. Apart from food, outputs from land now include, first and crucially, biodiversity. Our record here is one of the worst in the world: we have lost nearly 50% of our biodiversity in the past 50 years; 41% of our species have declined; 26% of our mammals are at risk of extinction; and, worse, some 60% of our insects have disappeared. I say worse because insects are to me the source of all life. Although it is true that 25% of our species, such as otters, are now growing, in general it is a terrible story. In land use, action for biodiversity is definitely required.

It is quite encouraging that, from the farmers we interviewed as a committee, to the groups of farmers I have subsequently spoken to about all this, there is a real recognition, even enthusiasm, for the need to make changes. If the Government can have real clarity in their ELMS programmes—that has yet to be achieved, I fear—and then maintain that clarity and funding for the long term, it is really possible for us all to turn that situation around. However, a farmer said to me the other day, “I know how to grow wheat but I do not know how to grow skylarks”. It could have been curlews—but the point that he was making is that existing farmers—do not forget that they have an average age of 58, or maybe now 59—have almost no training in how to nurture nature. As an aside, that is an area where we need some government help or incentivisation.

The second land use is to help in the race to net zero. Growing more trees could help, and preservation of both upland and lowland peat would definitely help. But we need metrics here: how do you measure a farm's carbon output? There are more than 50 different companies out there measuring it in as many different ways. There is a desperate need for environmental outcome metrics from government, on everything from biodiversity through soil health to net emissions, to name but a few. The corporate sector also needs guidelines in this respect. If it is going to part-fund many of these different outputs, as the Government hope, guidelines and metrics are going to be essential to ensure that shareholders and others can be satisfied that they are getting good value for their money.

Thirdly, flood relief schemes are another modern output from land which could or should be well rewarded. I see localised ELMS as the most appropriate means of delivery here, via local authorities or maybe the Environment Agency, if that were properly funded.

Fourthly, as we all know, only 10% of England is covered in forestry, the lowest amount in Europe, and we need considerably more if we are to get to net zero, help our biodiversity, increase our leisure facilities, clean our air—it is not well known that trees are a great remover of particulates—and reduce our huge timber imports. We import some 90% of our timber, at a terrifying cost of £8.5 billion per annum. I have been quite impressed with Defra's recent focus on trees and forestry. However, most farmers are nervous about growing trees: they will lose that flexibility of land use that is the key to long-term successful land management. Also, farmers know very little about growing trees; all they know is that they will not get much income from them for a very long time. But there is land—not our best land—where a farming family, in it for the long term, could be encouraged to grow more trees, so I hope that Defra can succeed with its plans.

Fifthly, we need more renewable energy, and it cannot all be done in the North Sea, so we need onshore wind farms and solar panels—but in the right place and not on productive agricultural land. I came across an interesting statistic the other day: if we were to triple our onshore wind energy, it would mean that wind farms would then occupy only one-fifth of the land currently used for golf courses. Wind farms are now becoming attractive to communities when the promoter is prepared to offer them electricity discounts or some share of the profits, but National Grid needs to get its act together to receive the power from these multiple sources of renewable energy.

Sixthly, since Covid, the demand for land for access has risen considerably in recent years. Our physical and mental health both depend on it, particularly near town centres. That output occupied quite a bit of our report, rightly, so I shall not repeat our messages here in this short speech.

Finally and seventhly, I am afraid that we undoubtedly need more land for good housing—but, again, in the right places. I said this yesterday in a debate: I believe that the political party that can provide a solution to this desperate shortage of affordable housing, to rent or to buy, in rural England, will win much of that vote at the next election.

[LORD CAMERON OF DILLINGTON]

Our committee believes that we can satisfy all these land use demands if we get the right sort of analysis, planning and frameworks in place. This is a whole new agenda for government to get to grips with. I stress that what we are looking for is a flexible framework of flexible encouragement, and definitely not a top-down, or even a bottom-up, dictatorial approach. It is not rocket science, and to me it is obvious: the changing pressures on land mean that we need now to really plan our land use on this our very small but densely populated island. The Government have already promised 1 million acres of new forestry, 1 million acres of new habitats, and 1.8 million acres of new national parks and AONBs. I should point out that 1 million acres would take up a county the size of Kent—so we have to ask: where are all these Kents coming from, without some sort of plan?

The key to such a plan, in our view, is multifunctionality. Where you have food production, you can also have biodiversity. With conservation headlands, you get minimal reduction in yield but a massive explosion in biodiversity. Where you have energy, you can mostly have food production as well, or you can also have biodiversity. On our family farm in Somerset, our FWAG officer declared that our field array of solar panels was one of the best wildlife sites in the county. Where you have woodland, you can also have access and biodiversity—et cetera. As I say, it is not rocket science.

All this is possible, but we need to constantly monitor what we have on the ground and plan, both from the top down, through a dedicated land-use commission, in our view, and the drawing-up of a national land-use framework, producing the statistics and advising all government departments on policies and the promotion of best practice locally on the ground, but also—this is really important—it is vital that we work from the bottom up, using local authorities and in particular the new local nature recovery strategies, the LNRSs. It is a great shame that we have lost the LNRS section of ELMS, because local authorities have absolutely no money to buy these services. I get the impression, from conversations that I have had, that if, as I have said, farmers are keen on this new multifaceted agenda, county councils are also enthusiastic about maximising the outputs from all the land in their public ownership, if only to set an example to other land managers—but they do need help with the data and the metrics.

Turning to the land-use commission issue, I know that Defra is not very keen on the idea and is trying instead to work, this year, alongside other relevant departments to bring together the necessary expertise, but my point, and the point of the committee, is that this is not a one-off. This plan or framework is not a “devise, report and finish” exercise; the project will be going on from year to year. It will have to include a constant, flexible analysis of the data, different aspects of which might have to be specifically commissioned in any given year. It will have to be flexible enough to adapt over the years to changing national and international circumstances and needs. For instance, just last week the Government added a whole raft of new land uses required by their *Third National Climate Adaptation Programme*. It is bound to be an ever-changing framework.

The question the Government have to ask themselves is whether it is better to have a commission, or whatever we want to call it—a panel, perhaps—with a few dedicated employees and part-time board members who become experienced in these various multidepartmental fields; or whether it is better to have to work hard to convene annual one-off get-togethers of people from different departments who, each year, will be struggling to keep up with the knowledge and data requirements which require a lot of work to manage. I have to say to the Government that having a dedicated interdepartmental body—or panel, if you like—must surely be the more efficient and also the cheaper answer.

I might add, in this respect, that in New Zealand, where they have far less pressure on the use of their land than in our very crowded England, they have a national Spatial Planning Policy Unit. This SPPU reports to an executive board, made up of politicians in their case, and it creates a unifying link with regional spatial planning bodies, providing the models of best regional practice, as proposed in our report. I do hope the Government can reconsider their view on a central land-use body, panel or commission. I beg to move.

12.23 pm

Lord Moylan (Con): My Lords, it is a pleasure to speak after the noble Lord. I feel something of an interloper speaking among the many noble Lords who have contributed to the work of this valuable Select Committee, but I do so because I have the privilege of chairing the Built Environment Select Committee, which has been looking at a closely related issue, the interaction of environmental legislation with government ambitions for housebuilding and infrastructure promotion. This has inevitably drawn us, of course, into questions of land use. It is our hope and our plan that we will publish our report in September or, at the very latest, in October.

It is not my role today to anticipate conclusions and recommendations that the committee might arrive at, but I thought it might help debate if I gave a flavour of some of the evidence that we have heard in the course of our inquiry. We have heard, for example, that 14% of the land in England is now effectively under a ban on any form of development, as a result of advice given by Natural England following a judgment delivered in the European Court of Justice in what is known as the “Dutch N case”, which relates to intensive farming in the Netherlands and its consequences for effluents into watercourses, particularly nitrates and phosphates. Although we have left the European Union, it is held by the Government, no doubt rightly—I am not a lawyer qualified to comment on this—that our courts would uphold that judgment if it arrived in front of them and that therefore, in effect, it applies to us. The Government, through the Secretary of State for Defra, have issued guidance to local authorities to adhere to the Natural England advice, with the result that there is, as I say, the ban that now exists, which affects housebuilding very seriously.

There is one mitigation scheme in place. I said 14% of England’s land: that includes 26 catchment areas and there is one mitigation scheme in place covering

one catchment area. One cannot make use of it unless one is trying to develop in that catchment area, so there is a need for 25 more simply to meet that judgment. There is no timetable for delivering those 25, so there is a complete ban on housebuilding and development, in practice, in those areas. We could, of course, now that we have left the European Union, change the law to amend that. I would be interested to know from my noble friend when he comes to speak at the end if the Government plan to do that, because it has been hinted at in the press, especially in the last few weeks. In particular, does he intend to use the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill as the vehicle for doing that, or does he anticipate separate legislation?

I come now to the question of biodiversity net growth, a consequence of the Environment Act, I believe, which is going to come into force in October this year but is already being imposed by a number of local planning authorities in anticipation of that. Of course, the requirement for 10% biodiversity net growth as a result of development is a statutory minimum: there is encouragement to local authorities to ask for more. This has the effect, if it is delivered on site, which is the preferred outcome, of either reducing the land available for housing on site, logically, or, if it is to be off site, of sterilising land—sterilising is not the right word, but taking out of production land elsewhere that is to be used to accommodate the biodiversity growth that is needed to offset the development site. The result of this is that we heard evidence that housebuilders are already buying up land elsewhere in the country not for development purposes but with a view to closing down the farms that are operating on it in order to accommodate the offsetting measures needed either for nutrient neutrality mitigation or to accommodate biodiversity net growth.

We heard evidence that for six houses, one needs approximately a hectare of arable land. Of course, it would be a smaller amount of land if what you were closing down was a pig farm or a chicken farm, because they produce much more effluvia. While that figure of six houses per hectare is a very rough estimate, we have had confirmation from other witnesses of numbers broadly in that sphere. So I would not hold myself to it as a precise figure, but it is an indication of the scale of land set-aside needed for this purpose.

We also heard evidence—here I will perhaps anticipate a conclusion, but I think one we have all reached—that the Government have not got a proper grip of this across the piece, as they say, and that there is a degree of tension between Defra and DLUHC in achieving the ambitions both for the environment, on the one hand, and housebuilding and infrastructure development on the other.

I will now make a few remarks on my own account and am no longer speaking for the committee. In these circumstances, the idea of a land use plan or a land use commission might seem very attractive; it might seem that we need a large, centralised direction that can bring everything together and make sure that we get the right outcomes. However, I have my doubts.

First, we must remember that we are fortunate to live in a country where the vast majority of land is private property, and private property is the basis of

our liberties. The notion that we can go around directing people what to do with their land in the national interest effectively puts us on a wartime footing economically—except, rather than for the duration of the war, in perpetuity. I worry about that. I am not comfortable with it. There must be a role for the market here if we are to find a solution to this.

Secondly, and finally—I make this point very tentatively—I am not wholly persuaded that the correct and immediate response to all this is an institutional one. It is easy to think that, if one sets up a committee and makes changes to the institutions of government, one will get the outcome one wants. Even the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, spoke of a commission that would need to be so fleet of foot in constantly adjusting and changing in the light of varying national and international demands. We do not know of any such body in government that is ever capable of being fleet of foot; we know of bodies which set rules that become almost impossible to change because they each generate their own vested interests which battle to keep things exactly as they are.

I think that there is a solution of sorts. Although my committee will struggle to find a compelling solution, I think we will come up with an approach, in September or October, when we publish our report, but it will probably be more along the lines of time, patience and prioritisation in what we seek to achieve, rather than wholesale or even modest institutional change. Those are the key elements that we will have to focus on. As I say, I am not here today to offer a solution to a difficulty which this committee has so successfully put its finger on, and which my committee, to some extent, only supplements.

12.32 pm

Baroness Mallalieu (Lab): My Lords, I remind the House of my interests as president of the Countryside Alliance and as a very small-scale farmer up on the Exmoor National Park. I have the privilege of being one of the members of the Land Use in England Committee, chaired expertly by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, to whom we are all indebted for today's debate. It is something of a rarity, in that there is no advisory speaking time—perhaps it is not necessary because, once we stop, we can all go on holiday.

I admit that, before I sat on this committee, I had considerable cynicism about the need for a land use framework. I was aware that Scotland and Wales already had them, but I felt that we did not need yet another body to tell farmers and landowners how to conduct their operations. I thought we did not need another quango, or a body that might well impose national targets without taking into account local conditions or views, and that might well be at the mercy of powerful lobby groups in the way that the strong environmental lobby, in my view, has had its hands around the throats of government during some recent legislation. Having heard a great deal of evidence on some of those things, I have changed my mind.

Thirty-two million acres sounds like a lot of land, but England is a small country and the brutal reality is that it simply does not have enough land to meet the

[BARONESS MALLALIEU]

demands of all those who wish to use it in the ways they wish to use it. This Government have already made commitments, as future ones no doubt will—some of them even statutory, such as those on nature recovery and net zero—and they have set targets to apportion a frankly inadequate cake. The noble Lord, Lord Cameron, has already reminded us of some of these, but among them are the promises to maintain our current self-sufficiency in food at over 60%, to increase woodland by 1 million acres, to build 300,000 new houses every year and to enlarge our national parks by 1.8 million acres—not to mention the solar farms and wind turbines necessary to obtain net zero, plus major transport infrastructure and the need to increase nature provision and access to the countryside. It is all very well, but each of those things needs land, and land is finite.

If ever there was an orchestra of different and completely incompatible demands in need of a conductor, it is England's land use at present. Some body needs to monitor and keep tabs on what is going on, and alert government and local authorities if the balance is moving dangerously out of kilter in one direction, or to give information, encouragement and advice, especially on innovation and to landowners and farmers, and to collate and broadcast that data.

It cannot just be Defra that devises and maintains such a framework; it must involve the other major government departments that need access to land to fulfil their remits. Some have already been mentioned: the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which has housing, local government and some industrial and commercial infrastructure within its remit; DCMS, which deals with access to nature and tourism; the Department for Transport, which deals with infrastructure; and the departments dealing with business, energy self-sufficiency and so on. Defra is only one part of government which needs to be involved in the creation and work of an effective land use framework.

While I give the Government full marks for recognising and accepting the need for such a framework, I am afraid I have to give them nul points for their response to this report so far. In paragraph 1 of their response, they said that

“it may be necessary to assemble a group of experts to oversee the application of the Land Use Framework once published”.

Surely you need the expertise first, before the framework is published, and not after Defra officials have drawn it up alone. If this framework is to be effective, it must be cross-departmental. It needs to be independent and set up in a way that reflects the concerns of each government department that needs to use land to fulfil its role. The Government have so far turned their face against creating a commission, as the report recommended. If it is seen merely as a small part of the portfolio of one Defra Minister, it will not be able properly to fulfil a much-needed role.

As I have said, I readily understand the reluctance to create another quango, but the evidence we heard about how well the Scottish Land Commission works and how well received it is by landowners, who readily seek its advice, shows that a cumbersome and costly body is not necessary to fulfil this important function.

Another of my fears was that a land use framework might dictate. I am pleased that the Government accept—I think they do; I hope for reassurance from the Minister on this—that it will not prescribe or tell people what must be done or not done and where, unlike Natural England does too often. I want it to be about gathering and publishing existing data, promulgating best practice, giving advice in an open and user-friendly way, and working closely with stakeholders—if it is to be effective, not just with landowners and managers and not just in a Defra silo but across departments—local authorities and the relevant public bodies, taking account of and responding to local conditions.

When changes are needed—they could well be needed urgently, for example in relation to food security; we have seen some of that already—that body must be ready to advise Governments and land managers on what needs to be done to encourage greater production. Where trees are being planted on highly productive farmland—for example, as unhappily I know, down in the West Country by the National Trust, and in Wales, as those who listened to “Farming Today” would have heard—if future adjustments need to be made to the ELM scheme to ensure the survival of small family farms, which I suspect will have to be done, an effective land use framework has a vital job to do in monitoring the trends, and on occasion, advising government on the incentives needed to meet changing needs, not to mention the encouragement of innovation. Could the Minister please give us reassurance that this framework will be truly cross-departmental? If not, I fear it will be a missed opportunity.

12.40 pm

The Earl of Devon (CB): My Lords, what a privilege to be sandwiched between the noble Baroness, Lady Mallalieu, and the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle for his valedictory speech—two Members of your Lordships' House who have contributed so much to rural issues.

I point out my interests in the register, and thank the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, and the whole committee, for their excellent work on this important topic. There is so much to debate but, as has been mentioned, it is the last day of term, so I will contribute solely to three matters: the three Ms of multifunctionality, mud, and medieval land tenure.

As to multifunctionality, I note the Government's reluctance to agree to a separate land use commission, which I am sure is disappointing to the committee. I suspect the next Government might be more attracted to the idea and I look forward to hearing the views of the Front Benches around the House. I am, however, somewhat sympathetic to their reluctance. Not only does a land use commission suggest connotations of a 1930s command economy, where the Government dictate what shall or shall not be done with each piece of land, but a land use commission may add unduly to a sense of bureaucracy and confusion surrounding land use.

The NFU has highlighted farmers' overwhelm by the plethora of competing demands and, as a farmer and land manager, I have to agree. Since I started farming at home in 2015, the flood of acronyms that

has deluged us is exhausting—from the relatively comprehensible BPS, ELS and HLS, we now have ELMS, SFI, BNG, LNRS, EIA, EIP, NbS, NRNs and SEAs, and that is just part of the glossary. The sector is drowning in well-intentioned initials and is confused. Are we farmers making food? Are we ecosystem services managers offering sequestration? Are we habitat bankers trading biodiversity? Are we public enemies responsible for climate change thanks to our belching livestock and river pollution due to our slurry pits? Are we purveyors of access, health and well-being? Are we rural business proprietors seeking to diversify into tourism and hospitality? Or are we simply stewards of our green and pleasant land, trying to get by and leave something for the next generation? In truth, we are all these things, and the sooner government policy and public perception can embrace the multifunctionality of these roles, the better.

For that reason, I applaud the committee's emphasis on multifunctionality. I am, however, somewhat concerned that, despite its breadth of aspiration, it has been somewhat blinkered as to the extent of land and land uses that it has considered—which leads me on to mud. I note that the report contains 70 references to “wood” and 46 references to “forest”, but only two references to “wetlands” and seven references to “marsh”—of which five references are to Dr Tim Marshall, who is a planner. I note my interests as a member of the Wetlands APPG, alongside the noble Earl, Lord Leicester, and I am therefore surprised that not more could be said by the committee about the potential of our internationally significant wetlands and marshlands.

Anyone present for yesterday's climate change debate would have heard me beat the same drum and repeat yet again the concern I raised in debating what are now the Agriculture Act and the Environment Act—that the intertidal habitats around our island nation are ignored at our peril. They are the front line in our defence against the sea and storms, they are the most protein-abundant and biodiverse ecosystems, they have huge sequestration and water purification capacities, and they are accessible and often approximate to our large and needy urban populations. They are where we mostly go on holiday yet they are hugely vulnerable and repeatedly ignored, and the regulations that govern them are not fit for purpose. I will repeat the request that I made last night of the noble Lord, Lord Callanan: will the Minister please acknowledge the importance of intertidal habitats and undertake to consider how they are best regulated and managed for all our benefit?

Finally, on medieval land tenure, August is medieval month at Powderham so it is very much the theme of the month. The noble Lord, Lord Moylan, has set this up well by his reference to private property rights. Here I note my interests as someone whose property interests derive from medieval times—the period of feudal rights. That may sound archaic and somewhat eccentric, but a surprisingly vast proportion of UK land is owned by the descendants of William the Conqueror's Norman invaders. At a time of debate over land use and access and the duty of private landowners to offer public goods, it is perhaps worth considering that fact afresh.

I note that I am working with the University of Exeter alongside the Duchy of Cornwall on a proposed research project entitled “Past Harvests”, looking at medieval sustainable land management practices to extract lessons for our future land management. The thing that struck me was that feudal barons owed clear and defined duties to their sovereign, arising from their title to the land. Those duties included the duty to protect the kingdom and to provide knights and soldiers, most famously, but also other public duties. The noble Lord, Lord Moylan, references a war footing and, in this day and age, landowners are once more integral to the defence of the realm: this time, against the ravages of climate change. Does the Minister therefore agree that private land ownership could give rise, by its very nature, to a set of public duties to provide managed access to land, healthy, locally sourced food, carbon sequestration and water purification that could provide a fresh paradigm for considering in the context of the Government's land use framework? I would be interested to hear the Minister's thoughts.

12.47 pm

The Lord Bishop of Carlisle (Valedictory Speech):

My Lords, this is a valedictory speech. I rise to deliver it with a mixture of huge gratitude and considerable sadness. The gratitude is what I feel towards so many in your Lordships' House, both Members and staff, whose kindness, friendship and wisdom have made my 10 years here a time of great enjoyment, huge learning and constant interest. Thank you so much.

The sadness, of course, derives from the fact that this chapter of my life now comes to an end. As lead bishop on health and social care, I have had the particular privilege of getting to know a whole series of Health Ministers—all extremely gracious and accommodating—of engaging with some fascinating, and often contentious debates, especially in the area of medical ethics; and sitting on Select Committees on the sustainability of the NHS and on the future of social care. Indeed, I had been hoping to speak about social care—which is still by no means fixed—in the debate originally planned for today. That was not to be, and instead I am delighted that this topic of land use relates so very closely and immediately to that part of England in which I have lived and worked as a bishop for the last 21 years: Cumbria. I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, and the Land Use in England Committee, on producing such a thorough and very judicious report.

My right reverend friend the Bishop of Chelmsford had hoped to be here in her capacity as lead bishop for housing. Regrettably she is unable to come so, in her absence and on her behalf, I focus my comments primarily on housing, with particular reference to recommendation 28 in the report. It goes without saying that housing has to be an integral pillar of any effective land use framework. As the report observes, the built environment in England is still relatively small, especially in very sparsely populated areas and counties such as Cumbria. New housing represents only a fraction even of that.

There is, as we all know, an enormous need for more houses—but they must be in the right places, as the noble Lords, Lord Cameron and Lord Moylan,

[THE LORD BISHOP OF CARLISLE] have indicated. Wise planning is essential both for meeting that human need and for stimulating economic growth. Those new houses must, above all, be sustainable. This was one of the five principles for good housing mentioned by a recent report of the Archbishops' commission on housing called *Coming Home*. It means that any new housing must work in harmony with its local environment and sustain the balance of the natural world in which it sits.

Sustainability is also a golden thread which runs right through the report we are considering today. I was particularly struck by a comment made by Dr Alison Caffyn of the Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, who said that while communities were not necessarily against new housing,

"they see so many missed opportunities for integrating more trees, more biodiversity, more play areas and more transport connections, cycle routes and so on".

As we have heard, another word for this is "multifunctionality". It applies just as much to urban areas as it does to rural ones. It is a vital principle of land use that any housing development should offer a happy, healthy environment for those who live in or near it.

The report makes clear that we need developments which are biodiverse with plenty of access to green space. Those are the developments which are good for the planet, for people's physical and mental health, as we have heard, and for secure and productive communities. In Cumbria, there is of course huge potential for multifunctionality of this sort, with carbon sequestration, public access to green and open space, and biodiversity projects.

We are all acutely aware of the need to make decisions about appropriate land use in close consultation with local communities, acknowledging their particular history and culture, as the noble Baroness, Lady Mallalieu, pointed out earlier. I hope that this too will be incorporated in any future land use framework. I should mention that the Church Commissioners are already working on a number of biodiversity-focused projects in close collaboration with several tenant farmers, offering a kind of example in this area.

I must also add my voice to the several calls we have already heard for such a framework to be cross-departmental. The report is very strong on this, and I think it is widely recognised that none of the land use challenges we face can be tackled by one government department alone. Only yesterday my right reverend friend the Bishop of Exeter spoke in your Lordships' House about the need for a cross-cutting rural strategy. My hope—and I am not alone in hoping it—is that this approach could be dovetailed with the land use framework and duly incorporated into the brief of the proposed land use commission, should that ever come into being.

12.54 pm

Lord Inglewood (Non-Aff): My Lords, I am delighted to speak as the words of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle's swansong die away across your Lordships' House. I have been one of his flock in the diocese of Carlisle for the 21 years in which he has

served both as suffragan and then as diocesan bishop. While it is true that I am president of the National Sheep Association, I do not think I am ever likely to win a rosette in his class at the Loweswater Show.

As his comments today have shown, he has throughout his time here ceaselessly promoted the concerns and problems of his diocese in your Lordships' House. As he has explained, he has also been the Bishops' spokesman for health and social care. I understand that this arose out of a slight misunderstanding about his previous experience, which seems to me to echo the generality of how things work in politics. One of the leitmotifs of his activities has been an overriding wish to try to draw people together to get genuine agreement about the appropriate way forward.

While I have made innumerable speeches in your Lordships' House about sheep, I have never once in over 30 years spoken about health or social care, so I am not qualified to comment, other than to say that it is quite clear from the respect he is accorded across the House that he has made a real contribution. I am sure I speak for all of us when I say to him and his family that we wish them every good wish as they emigrate from Cumbria to Oxfordshire.

Before I proceed with the rest of my remarks, I declare my interests in the register. For my part, I welcome this report and congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, and his committee on it, as much for the corpus of evidence assembled as for its detailed conclusions. They underscore the problems facing rural England today—indeed, rural Britain as a whole—and they are, as we have already heard, a real challenge. This collection of all the evidence is important, because the discussion of this topic has been bedevilled by there being no clear overall picture of the underlying issues, which in turn has to be the starting point for resolving the problems they pose.

The Government may have rejected the report's main conclusion, but that does not mean that they should or can reject the reasons the committee had for reaching it. They simply cannot say, "We'll just muddle through; it'll all turn out all right on the night"—because I do not think it will. I, and I expect the whole House, will be interested to hear what the Minister has to tell us, if anything, about all this.

One of the most refreshing aspects of the report is that I believe it starts in the right place—the breakdown of the post-war agricultural and rural policy settlement—and does not tilt at the windmill of the CAP, which really has remarkably little to do with it. We are now in a world where the aspiration for rural England is that of a "place"—I use that word in its contemporary, slightly changed, meaning—of a mosaic of differing, quite exactly defined, land uses, rather than that of a broad sweep of a narrow range of quasi-agricultural activities. Unfortunately, it seems to me that government policy appears principally to be focused on saving money and doing this on the cheap.

On 13 July, I happened to intervene at Question Time and asked the Minister at the Dispatch Box, the noble Lord, Lord Callanan, whether he agreed that emissions trading schemes offered a very valuable

opportunity for regions of both this country and elsewhere to generate some much-needed income and revenue. I am afraid that the response I got was:

“I understand the point that my noble friend is making. A happy by-product for the Treasury of the emissions trading scheme is the considerable revenue that it generates, and I am sure that it is spending all this money very wisely”.—[*Official Report*, 13/7/23; col. 1890.]

Frankly, I was horrified by that, and I hope your Lordships are too, because it amounts to saying that the Treasury intends to use emissions trading schemes as a cash cow for itself and not to enable rural and other areas to earn money from their own activities that they need to level up. I hope the Minister can confirm that the comments of the noble Lord, Lord Callanan, on that occasion were a slip of the tongue and that the revenues generated will go to the people in the places earning them and not elsewhere. I am equally interested—as I am sure the whole House is—to hear the thoughts of the Opposition Front Bench on the same point.

It is well known that, according to economic and social indicators, much of rural England is in need of levelling up, as are the more urban and northerly parts of the country. Indeed, there is quite a lot of overlap. Critics may say that there are millionaires in the countryside, and of course that is true. But equally, there are millionaires in Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, and so on, so that is deliberately missing the point, because much of the wealth now concentrated in the countryside comes from elsewhere. Rural England, as opposed to suburban or urban England in the countryside, needs, deserves and is entitled to expect that the countryside should be able to pay its own way and should not be a kind of neocolonial satrapy of urban Britain. Currently there is insufficient internally generated working capital, which inhibits the changes sought and the longer-term continuity and sustainability they require.

These days, the word “partnership” is on everyone’s lips, but it seems that there are at least two problems. First, there are many different visions, as the noble Baroness, Lady Mallalieu, already said, and there is need for at least a degree of agreement about what is needed. It is no good agreeing about what you do not want; it is necessary to have at least some consensus about what you do. The various arguments so often tend to be advanced by obsessives and extremists. What is required is an overall compromise to resolve mutually conflicting ideas, and intellectual rigour and flexibility are needed to effect acceptable compromise. I ask myself whether it is there.

Secondly, when government is involved in partnerships, too often it imposes its ideas and does not accord genuine engagement with others’ opinions. In this context, as was hinted at earlier, it seems that the current Government’s and the Administration’s understanding and appreciation of the realities of rural England are, shall we say, not strong.

Furthermore—again, this has been touched on—hearts and minds have to be captured. If that does not happen, it cannot work, and things cannot be achieved, as the noble Lord, Lord Moylan, said, only by the “big battalions” or the substance of the command economy. Private property, frequently in small units, is

the essential characteristic and building block of the countryside, and that and the role of SMEs and microbusinesses are at the heart of solving these problems.

As well as the obvious physical characteristics of the land itself and what is happening on it, two further essentials are not really touched on in the report. The first is tax. A lawyer I know who specialises in these matters recently commented that it is now simply not clear how either capital gains tax or stamp duty land tax affect conservation covenants. If they do, they will probably render the whole idea more or less useless, and without clarity and certainty there can be no significant progress. The same principle applies right across the board. As I intimated earlier, in the real world, unless it is worth people’s while to implement these new ideas, things simply will not happen.

Secondly, at least as important albeit perhaps more esoteric is the legal character of the rights and processes needed to bring this about. For example, how do conservation covenants relate to instruments involved with carbon capture or food production? Can payments be stacked or are they mutually incompatible?

A century ago, the complications of traditional English land law and the manorial system were comprehensively reduced by the impact of the property legislation of 1925. There is a real risk that what may now come into being, with all its attendant cost, delay and obfuscating, could recreate much of what I might call the Dickensian law that was swept away at that point—again, the noble Earl, Lord Devon, touched on that point. Perhaps that might be a matter for the Law Commission.

In conclusion, when I was a boy, I remember enjoying Aesop’s Fables, one of which your Lordships will recall was “Belling the Cat”. A convention of mice concluded that their safety and well-being would be enhanced if one of them tied a bell around the cat’s neck. A volunteer was sought but none was forthcoming. It was a good idea but a bad plan because it could not be put into effect sensibly. There is a real possibility that the same may be true here.

1.04 pm

Baroness Rock (Con): My Lords, I too pay tribute to the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle for his valuable contributions to this House. I declare my interests as a tenant farmer and as chair of the Tenancy Working Group and the Rock Review. I pay particular tribute to the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, and the members of the Select Committee for producing such a thorough and extremely important report.

The committee heard that a significant barrier to achieving high take-up of ELMS is uncertainty around the schemes and how they will work in practice. This includes provision of access to those schemes for tenant farmers. Your Lordships have heard me say many times in this House that 64% of England has a tenant farmer as a custodian of the land. It was encouraging to hear the noble Baroness, Lady Mallalieu, talk about land managers as opposed to landowners.

Defra could have a quick win in this area. It could ensure that the design of its Countryside Stewardship Plus scheme, which is due to be rolled out over the coming months, takes on board the measures already employed within the Sustainable Farming Incentive to

[BARONESS ROCK]

ensure that tenant farmers are not excluded from participation. This would include not routinely requiring landlords' consent, providing flexibility on scheme length and avoiding the imposition of penalties where land is lost to tenant farmers. Will the Minister confirm that Countryside Stewardship Plus will be as tenant friendly as SFI?

The Government's stated policy is that they want to ensure that we maintain the area of land within the let sector of agriculture to help new entrants, promote resilience within the tenanted sector and enhance productivity. It will therefore be key to ensure that there are important safeguards to stop land leaving the sector inappropriately for things such as field-scale solar schemes, rewilding or nutrient neutrality. The committee's report showed that insufficient provisions are in place to protect tenant farmers from having land taken out of tenancy by landowners looking to turn their land over to solar farms, and the committee heard opposing views about the extent to which solar farms offer the potential for genuinely multifunctional uses. The Rock Review raised that there are ever-increasing examples of land being taken away from a tenant farmer by a landowner for large-scale solar schemes. Can the Minister say what the Government's position is when the best, most versatile and productive farmland is taken away from a tenant farmer through no fault of their own and often with no recourse?

On livestock farming, we need a better evidence base for assessing the contribution to carbon emissions. Our grasslands maintain a really important store of carbon that is maintained on behalf of the nation by our livestock farmers, who are often vilified in the climate change debate. Rather than replacing meat and dairy in our diets, we should encourage the food chain to access more of its meat and dairy products from sustainable sources domestically rather than from other parts of the globe with a poorer carbon story.

We also need to review the way in which we use designations. The recent designation of the West Penwith Moors and Downs SSSI is a case in point. Drawing a regulatory line on the map will not improve the capacity of landowners, tenants and public bodies to deal with any of the environmental issues identified as being of concern. Better ways of producing collegiate solutions need to be found. Natural England needs to be more of a facilitator than a regulator in that context. The situation in Dartmoor is another case in point. Everybody agrees that many of the SSSIs there are in poor condition, but that is after having followed the mantra of stock reduction followed by Natural England and its predecessor bodies for 25 years. If it has not worked over the past quarter of a century, why is more of the same going to work now? I therefore welcome the review to be carried out by David Fursdon and hope that a more practical, collegiate outcome can be achieved.

To deliver productivity and environmental outcomes from our land, tenant farmers need greater security of tenure over tenanted land. The recent CAAV land occupation survey, which came out last month, records that the average length of term on new farmed tenancies is only 3.66 years. Eighty-five per cent of all new farm business tenancies are let for five years or less. How can a tenant farmer contribute effectively to our nation's

food security and environmental ambitions when they have so little security themselves for the future use of their tenanted land?

I welcomed the Treasury's consultation as part of the Spring Budget to look at restricting agricultural property relief to those landlords letting for the longest terms: eight years or more, as recommended by the Rock review. I now encourage the Treasury to set out a road map for implementing this change to press forward with more secure tenancies.

As the committee has already said, we have challenging and often conflicting demands on our land. Any approach to a land use framework must be flexible to meet the needs of housing, agriculture, food security and the environment.

1.10 pm

Lord Rosser (Lab): My Lords, my comments will be largely addressed to the issue of access to land—land being a commodity which is in short supply because, as someone once said, they are not making it any more.

In its well-argued report, the committee draws attention to the reality that access to green and open spaces is important for health and well-being, as well as providing an important economic function through tourism. However, it also says that while the Government have made commitments to access in their 25-year environment plan and as part of environmental land management schemes, these do not have the same status as other land commitments.

As far as I can see, the Government did not directly refute this statement in their response document. They did, however, refer to the opening of the England coast path. A commitment was made by the Government in 2014 that the path would be completed and opened in 2020. In a Written Answer in 2019, the Government said that

"the path in its entirety is unlikely to be open in 2020".

I have a feeling that that may be the understatement of the decade and rather supports the committee's point that access does not have the same status as other land commitments. Will the Government say in their response when all 66 stretches of the England coastal path will be open, and then say: how many miles of the England coastal path and associated access rights are already open; how many miles have been approved in whole but are not yet open; how many miles have been approved in part but are not yet open; how many miles are there for which proposals have been published but not yet approved; and how many miles are there for which proposals are still in development?

Just as with other long-distance paths, the England coastal path will be a great asset, giving the right of access to many areas, the coastal margin, between the path and the sea, thus allowing people to explore dunes, cliff slopes and beaches right up to the water's edge. That is why it is so infuriating that it has been so heavily delayed, and adds to the suspicion that public access issues do not have the same importance within Defra as other land commitments.

There is also another area of concern over the priority the Government give to public access issues compared with other land use issues. Referring to the

increase in the number of people who sought access to our countryside during the Covid lockdown periods, the Minister said:

“We want to see that continue and be encouraged. That is why, in the schemes that we are bringing forward under environmental land management, there will be a very clear access commitment, backed by funding”.—[*Official Report*, 27/5/21; col. 1097.]

There is of course much to gain from an approach to ELM with public access at its heart, but there have been reports of a review of the plans which have caused concern. The Government have stated that they are looking at the frameworks for regulation, innovation and investment that impact farmers and land managers to make sure that their policies are best placed to both boost food production and protect the environment. Could the Minister in his response say whether this or any other review will include looking at public access, and if so with what purpose in mind?

In England and Wales, excluding inner London, the right of way is a legally protected right of the public to pass and repass on specific paths. The rights of way exist only where they are so designated, or are able to be designated if not already so. Definitive maps of public rights of way have been compiled for all of England and Wales, except inner London, as a result of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. There are currently some 140,000 miles of footpaths, bridleways and byways which are public rights of way.

The Ramblers organisation says that, thanks to support from members of the public, it is aware of some 49,000 miles of potentially lost paths across England, these being paths that are not legally recorded but which have been historically used as a right of way and which could be lost unless successful evidence-based applications are made to add them to official records.

In February 2022, the Government announced that they were committed to abolishing the 2026 deadline to get the lost paths legally recognised. The Government now appear to have broken that commitment to abolishing the deadline for saving lost paths and have reinstated a deadline which I believe will come into effect in 2031. A right for many to access and enjoy the outdoors has been placed in jeopardy in respect of these lost paths—another reason to query the strength of the Government’s commitment to enhancing public access to our countryside.

Can the Government say why they changed their stance on abolishing the deadline date, and whether, as appears to be the case, they would be quite happy to see potentially thousands of miles of paths lost? Is that an unsaid part of this Government’s land use strategy. Following representations from which organisations did the Government reinstate a deadline, this time of 2031? We should surely be improving opportunities for communities to get outdoors and connect with nature, not reducing them. While members of the public who are volunteers are putting in the time to do the research required to save the potentially 49,000 miles of paths that are missing from the definitive map in England, and submitting the necessary applications to do just this, local highways authorities appear underresourced to deal with the workload.

I have been given a figure of more than 4,000 applications waiting to be processed. Can the Government say in their reply to this debate whether they agree with that figure and, if not, what their figure is for the backlog of such applications? The Government must have sought that figure before deciding to reinstate a deadline; otherwise, how could they have been satisfied that the necessary funding would be in place to make it possible for paths to be researched, applied for and processed within the time limit they have now imposed?

On top of that, there is the issue of whether local authorities should not be taking the lead in doing the research into these paths, which are missing from the map within their area. But, as we all know, local authorities have been ravaged by this Government over the last 13 years and in many cases no longer, it seems, have the staffing levels even to ensure that proper access to existing paths is maintained—another reason to question the strength of the Government’s stated commitment to enhance public access to our countryside.

In 2000, through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, the then Government introduced the freedom to roam across 3 million acres of open access mountain, moor, heath and downland in England and Wales, with a very substantial percentage of these acres being in national parks such as the Lake District, Peak District and Yorkshire Dales.

The freedom to roam gives the right to walk without fear of trespassing, but at present it covers only 8% of England and is not evenly distributed. The freedom to roam is not just about remote mountains or a relative wilderness. It is also about places right on our doorsteps, closer to our homes. The freedom to explore places off-path is an important part of many people’s enjoyment of the outdoors. But millions of people do not have the opportunity close to home. Freedom to roam needs to be extended to woodland, watersides and more grassland so that it is more equally accessible and better connected to our footpath network and to our towns and cities. Opening access to woodland, for example, would more than double the coverage of freedom to roam in England.

In some areas of England there is very little open access land. For example, only 0.6% of land in Kent is open access, compared with 72% of the Peak District. There is also little open access land in the areas surrounding our towns and cities, meaning that much of the English population, in particular, has limited opportunity to explore freely near to where they live.

Legal rights to walk in the countryside must be preferable to relying on landowners giving permission to walk, because where rights are legally secure the public can be sure about where they can go and can have the confidence to explore freely. However, exploring freely also must be done responsibly and not in a way that damages landowner property, harms livestock or jeopardises livelihoods. We can have no time for the small minority of people who do that—not only for the obvious reason, but because by their actions they increase opposition to the strong case for greater access rights to our countryside.

[LORD ROSSER]

I have expressed my concerns about the weight that the views of the many, who want greater access to our countryside and the proper maintenance and protection of existing rights of way, have within government in general and Defra in particular, compared with other interest groups, when it comes to land use issues. I noticed that in his letter of 19 July, which we have just received, with its list of actions since the *Environmental Improvement Plan* was launched, the Minister appears not to have included a great deal about improving access and freedom to roam. Even the reference to the England coastal path completely glossed over the apparent continuing delay in the full opening of that path. Is there a government commitment to extending freedom to roam, or is the Government's silence on the potential implications for access rights of the recent court case involving land on Dartmoor another reason to doubt the strength of the Government's commitment to enhancing public access to our countryside?

I await the Minister's response with interest—including his answers to the questions I have asked.

1.21 pm

Baroness Boycott (CB): My Lords, I declare my interest as a vice-chair of Peers for the Planet. I thoroughly welcome the report from the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, and thoroughly support all his recommendations.

As a country, we have made a number of crucial commitments. One is to net zero, and another is to nature recovery and biodiversity gain. There is no way we can deliver on those two goals without a radical change in how we use our land because, as other noble Lords have pointed out, they are not the only challenges facing our land. As the noble Lord, Lord Rosser, has just said, there is the question of public access. As other noble Lords have said, there is the challenge of building enough houses, and there is also the challenge of growing enough food. However, given how we are going about this—lax building regulations, houses being tossed up in areas without adequate resources—it will not be possible to do all we need to do on our tiny, precious island. There are also the two big new demands of restoring biodiversity and nature and decarbonising the economy, along with, as we heard in last night's debate, adapting to climate change, and all the other things we need to do.

You would not build a house without first having a floor plan; indeed, you would not try to redesign a house without a floor plan. You would not design a new town without thinking about where to put the amenities, and you would not design a transport system without a plan—although in the past we have. London is a great case in point, with no tubes going to the south of the city. Noble Lords may say, "Well, how do you retrofit on to an existing situation where we have towns and counties and roads and fields and everything is organised?" The point is that we have now reached a watershed, and it is pretty simple: we are faced with a climate emergency and a natural resources and biodiversity emergency. Unless, as the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, and others have said, we figure out how to use the land—how we eat from it, grow from it; how we use it in all its different ways—there is no way we can

muddle our way through this. You cannot do it without a proper system. As much as many noble Lords have attested to the right of private landowners to do what they like, I do not believe that we will do it without very clear government guidance.

We must have a land use framework for England which will deliver integrated, collaborative and place-based decision-making, optimising the multifunctional benefits that our land can give us. At a national level, we need to join up land use policy-making across government departments, especially between land use planning, agriculture and the natural environment. This is a pressing concern for local leaders around the country who want to see a more strategic approach to allow better land use decision-making at local authority, catchment and landscape scales, which will support more proactive, integrated action to deliver net zero. The local nature recovery strategies are only a small part of this picture.

In addition, this will help individual landowners and farmers to make long-term plans, to help assess what their land is best for. As we speak, innovative farmers and landowners are trying to join up their land to create essential nature corridors in which wildlife can move freely. A framework would make this essential task, which is in everyone's interest, including farmers, that much easier. However, already land is being purchased by private equity and business for particular purposes such as forestry and carbon sequestration, without any strategic or democratic assessment of whether that land could be better used for another purpose, such as agroecological farming, which could deliver multiple benefits—food, biodiversity, reduced greenhouse gases and green jobs, or enabling people to live and work right there in their communities. This would enable many more government targets to be achieved, joining up the delivery of many complementary goals for food, jobs, housing, nature and net zero. The most appropriate land would be used for a mix of uses that it is best suited to. It would also deliver process benefits, reducing conflicts over land use, which will save us time and money. We do not have much time and we are always being told that we have no money. Collaborative approaches would help to align and pool resources and share data, knowledge and skills. Finally, a framework could help to corral and align private finance—currently widely described in some quarters as a "wild west"—as well as philanthropic funds in support of transparent, democratic, fair and sustainable investments.

The ideas have been brilliantly set out by the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, but they are not new. The *National Food Strategy*, written by Henry Dimbleby along with a bunch of advisers, of whom I was one, states as recommendation 9 that the only way the UK will meet those targets—on net zero and nature recovery—is

"to change the way we use the land".

He recommends developing

"a Rural Land Use Framework",

with all the ministries being involved. The new regulations and payment systems, as has been noted by other noble Lords, are confusing at the best of times, so a clear land strategy would really help.

The wonderful Food, Farming and Countryside Commission, which I recommend to anyone who does not know its work, has recently been running two trials on how to make a land use framework work. Its conclusions are really heartening:

“The need for change is most often expressed around joining up the planning system for the built environment with other land use changes and enabling planners and other decision makers to take a more holistic approach to decision-making. If a Framework is given statutory weight, alongside those policies that it should help join up (such as Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Biodiversity Net Gain and the planning system), that would enable it to do this ... Land use frameworks can facilitate the creation of a shared, long-term vision for an area—setting out what combination of housing, employment, transport, landscape, seascape, biodiversity, food production, natural beauty etc. future generations should enjoy”.

There is no other way to do it.

It is not unprecedented to have these. We have national targets for many areas of policy which are delivered locally. I look forward to hearing from the Minister about the progress the Government will make towards producing this vital strategy.

1.28 pm

The Earl of Leicester (Con): My Lords, I do not want to appear too self-congratulatory as I refer your Lordships to my interests as set out in the register, as a landowner and farmer in north Norfolk. On our holding, to quote from the summary of *Making the Most Out of England's Land*, we have achieved

“place-based multifunctionality—the concept that simultaneous multiple benefits can be achieved in the same location”.

Examples include food production with carbon sequestration, with biodiversity, with renewable energy production; biodiversity, wetlands, access, tourism, landscape and commerce; and old and new housing and new office space, with the latter powered by renewable energies, with forestry and carbon sequestration. These are all examples of land sharing. That, of course, is only an example of multifunctionality at a localised scale, but it is mirrored up and down the country in the private and charitable sectors.

I briefly pay tribute to my fellow committee members, some of whom are in the Chamber, and one who is not—the noble Lord, Lord Curry. My noble friend Lady Rock, who is sitting in front of me, said she wanted tenant farmers to be able to carry out actions on their farms without the permission of their landlords. I remember the noble Lord, Lord Curry, saying during a committee meeting that it would not occur to him not to ask permission from his landlord to do something that might deviate from the original plan.

I believe it was the noble Baroness, Lady Young, who asked for this Select Committee on land use to be held, but sadly she is not here. I pay tribute to her and to my noble friend Lord Cameron of Dillington, whose pedigree confirmed him as an excellent choice to chair the committee. He worked as an elected officer for the Country Land and Business Association between 1991 and 1997, and as its president for the last two of those years. From 1997 he was a member of the UK Government's Round Table on Sustainable Development, and he chaired the Countryside Agency for five years until 2004. I will stop at 2004, lest I embarrass him.

He is also a practitioner, of course, managing his own estate in Somerset, which I believe he has now handed over to one of his children. He was an excellent chair.

I pay tribute to Simon Keal, our clerk. I understand that we do not like to point in this House, so I will do a broad sweep of the hand to a smiling Simon in the corner. He and his team did a fantastic job. I also pay tribute to Alister Scott, who is professor of geography and planning at Northumbria University, and finally to the 106 people who submitted written evidence and the 52 we interviewed face to face or on Teams.

I turn to a couple of aspects of the report and, where necessary, the Government's response to it. I make no apology for referring to rural matters, as that is where my knowledge lies. According to our report, agriculture takes place on 63.1% of England's land. Some of that follows the land sparing route and is very intensive. How sustainable that is in the long term is questionable. Encouragingly, an increasing number of farmers are embracing renewable agricultural techniques.

There are two things that our report does not recognise, and I blame myself for them both. My noble friend Lord Devon pointed out that we did not refer to the importance of wetlands in our report. They are the quickest sequestrator of carbon. The other one to mention is the multiple benefits that renewable farming brings, such as reduced chemical inputs, longer rotations, the mix of livestock back into arable operations leading to improved biodiversity and—this is the point we neglected to highlight—improved carbon sequestration. It is not just trees that sequester carbon; cover crops and leguminous herbal and grass lays can provide a green cover on the soil for up to 12 months.

Allied to rediscovering ancient wisdom from the agricultural revolution of the late 18th century, it is essential that agriculture also embraces technological advances. We recently passed the Genetic Technology (Precision Breeding) Act, which could give us drought-resistant seeds, for example, leading to resilience against climate change, higher yields and possibly the need for less arable land. Precision agriculture using robotic machinery in the fields, with cameras that can identify weeds within crops and either zap or spray just those single weeds, will lead to huge reductions in chemical usage and damage to the land with huge benefits to biodiversity and the bottom line.

It was encouraging to see in paragraph 22 of the Government's response their acknowledgement of the importance of making open sources of data more accessible and usable for land managers. That can only improve management decisions. We also heard evidence of vertical growing of salad crops using technology, often in urban areas closer to market.

I turn briefly to access to green spaces and the countryside, which we all know has numerous mental health and wellness benefits. I add a note of caution: this should be handled with a great deal of thought, because unfettered access to the countryside by humans, dogs and cats in a suburban environment has a deleterious effect on biodiversity. I have just come back from Iceland, a country of only 360,000 people, where the correlation between very few people and a plethora of flora and fauna could not be more obvious. I note that

[THE EARL OF LEICESTER]

the noble Lord, Lord Rosser, in his argument about freer access to the countryside, did not even mention biodiversity.

Finally, on tree-planting, it was good to see the Government highlighting, in paragraph 15 of their response, the importance of encouraging good woodland management. That is something that has not happened a great deal in Britain—our reputation for managing woodland is not as good as that of the continent—but it improves biodiversity such as by cutting in butterfly glades. A 30% thinning of a wood every seven to 10 years lets in more light and speeds up growth of trees in a multi-canopied woodland, which increases carbon sequestration and, importantly, carbon storage in the wood itself.

To conclude, I again thank everyone who took part. I am happy with some of the Government's reaction to our report, but I have concerns that siloed thinking is still prevalent, with Defra very much taking the lead, almost to the exclusion of other government departments. *Making the Most out of England's Land* is a great report and a great start, and I am excited about what the future can bring thanks to this body of work.

1.37 pm

Lord Lucas (Con): My Lords, it is a great honour to follow my noble friend Lord Leicester, who, not for the first time in his family's history, is at the forefront of agricultural innovation. It is a great pleasure, too, to take part in a debate on such an excellent committee report.

I very much agree with the central recommendation that we need a connected, comprehensive and long-term look at how we use land in this country—something that is full of research, revision and questioning. I see it very much as a body which is concerned with curation and comment, rather than control. I take to heart what my noble friend Lord Moylan said about the tendency of institutions to fossilise and become stuck in their precedent and their past. I think that it is possible to create something which is much more interested in getting conversation going, creating controversy and pursuing new avenues, but not within the Civil Service. The Civil Service, with its habit of changing personnel every three years and constant interdepartmental quarrels, is really not the right environment for this. It has to be something separate, and I hope that the Government will come to realise that. In summary, I rather share the vision of the noble Baroness, Lady Mallalieu, which she expressed rather better than I have.

I will give some examples of the sort of things that we need to pay attention to. For instance, it is clear to me that we should not encourage forestry on prime agricultural land. It is also being borne on me, in the context of where I live in Eastbourne, that we should not encourage forestry on grassland, where it is intended to let the water soak into the aquifer so that we can have a bit more of it. Forestry tends to send water back into the atmosphere rather than down into the soil, so what we want is well-managed grassland.

Further, if you start introducing forestry into some of our open landscapes, you make big changes in them, both visually—something that is important to

us as humans—and to wildlife. The curlew is an obvious example; it requires open spaces and a decent distance between the nearest forestry which harbours its predators and the space where it is nesting.

We are looking at something which requires an integrated understanding and a set of government policies which reflect that. When it comes to forestry, we should not only control, to some extent, where it is but really encourage the development of a long-term industry, so that it is a profitable and sensible thing for people to do.

It seems to me that, in moving in this direction, we should recognise that we are, in adding to the planning system, restricting the rights of private property owners. Again, my noble friend Lord Moylan pointed out that that is something that we have to have regard for.

If we go for a right to roam—something I have sympathy with; I have a woodland in Kent, and I allow public access to it—it is not without consequence. The noble Lord, Lord Rosser, said: "Let's let everybody into woodland". That is a wonderful idea, but who is going to pay for the management and insurance that follows from that? The amount of money that it is necessary to spend to make sure that bits of trees do not fall on people, and to cover the consequences of what might happen if they do, is quite considerable. Woodland in the south of England does not realise an income, unless it is somewhere that is sandy enough to grow pine trees. We need to think through the consequences of a right to roam for the landowners and, as my noble friend Lord Leicester said, for wildlife. It is fairly obvious that, if you have got a wood full of dogs, this will not encourage the ground-nesting birds much.

Respect for private property is something which is becoming obvious in the controversy over the Welsh plans for agricultural reform—the idea that farmers should be mandated to have 10% of their land under woodland and 10% under wildflowers. I just do not think that things work that way. To work as a matter of collaboration and incentivisation, recognising that each piece of land is unique and that you need flexibility, with different people doing things in different ways, as we are doing through ELMS, is a much better idea. I very much hope that the Government will come, even in the cause of multifunctionality, to encourage flowers on golf courses, which are at the moment a green desert but do not need to be. I cannot see that daisies on the fairway would be a great impediment to the noble game, which probably shows that I do not play it.

We clearly need guidance from the Government on where they will allow solar farms. Allowing solar farms on prime agricultural land is just daffy. We know we need that land for other purposes. We should also not allow biodiversity net gain schemes on prime agricultural land; there are bits where we really ought to be growing crops, and there is plenty of this country that we could happily cover in solar farms and wildflowers without losing a great deal. As the noble Earl, Lord Devon, said, if you manage a solar farm well, you will get an increase in wildlife, because you produce a pretty varied habitat among and between the panels.

To come back to what the noble Earl, Lord Devon, said, we are heading towards an understanding that owners of land have public duties, which we have forgotten and ought to be reminded of. My ancestors, as his did, got a lot out of King William and his successors, but it all came with obligations. Over the centuries, we and our successors have managed to shed those obligations; perhaps now is the time we get them back. I do not think that would be a bad thing at all.

As my noble friend Lady Rock said, why are we giving tax incentives to people who put in a solar farm or who run short agricultural tenancies? The point of giving inheritance tax exemption to farming was to encourage a long-term outlook. It is not necessary if you have a wind farm or a solar farm, or if you are running a five-year agricultural tenancy rotation. You are not doing what the tax incentive is there for. We really ought to review that.

I hope the Government—in whatever structure they choose, but if they choose the structure advocated by the committee—will look at research into carbon offsetting. We do not know enough over a long enough timescale about what land management systems work to achieve that. We ought to be looking at carbon sequestration in everything we do, in all our activities—building, infrastructure, planning, everything. One of the questions we ask should be, “How is this going to sequester carbon?” We are very short on that at the moment. There are big opportunities to come from adding that to our list of questions.

In looking at how we use land, we ought also to take a real look at infrastructure. I particularly think of water in that context. It is already becoming clear that substantial areas of this country are bad and will get worse when it comes to water shortages, whereas other bits will become inundated by the sea unless we are really careful and spend a lot of money on it. Eastbourne, where I live, comes into both categories. I would really like to see us having an institution which will take a really long view. In terms of water, we are talking about a hundred years rather than tens of years. Where is water going to come from? How are we going to keep water out? What are sensible policies to make that happen? A centre for conversation and research—something with no policies of its own, but a mission to uncover and encourage the generation of policies from around the country and its academic and active institutions, something long-term and independent—would be a great outcome of this report.

1.47 pm

Lord Bilimoria (CB): My Lords, the Land Use in England Committee produced its report *Making the Most Out of England's Land* in December 2022. The noble Lord, Lord Cameron, highlighted that one of the main recommendations was the creation of a land use commission and gave the example of New Zealand, which has a national spatial planning unit. The committee took evidence from a variety of institutions including the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Natural England, the National Farmers' Union, the Country Land and Business Association, the Woodland Trust and the Ramblers. I congratulate the committee and the noble Lord on leading this debate.

I wish the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle all the very best and thank him for his 10 years of service to our House.

My wife, Heather, is South African and comes from a farming family. For many years, I was heavily involved in the family farm in the Free State and learned a great deal about farming. In 2021, on Report on the then Environment Bill, the noble Baroness, Lady Young of Old Scone, set out the need for a framework for England. She that the pressures on land were growing and gave examples of the requirements for land:

“the need for more land for carbon sequestration, for food production and increasing our food security, for tree planting and for forestry, to reduce our reliance on imported timber”—

as the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, outlined—

“to halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity, provide green open spaces post Covid and help communities and people protect their health and their mental health”.—[*Official Report*, 15/9/21; col. 1445.]

She argued there would be increased pressure for housing from an increasing population and, of course, this is another challenge for the Government. Is 300,000 houses per year their target? Is there a target? Is there no target? I believe that there should be. To meet all society's need for land over the next two decades, we will need one-third more land than we have.

The noble Lord, Lord Cameron, made an important point about the need for metrics. Does the Minister agree that we need metrics, because what gets measured gets done?

The Covid pandemic and the sad war in Ukraine have had a huge effect on the supply chain, including in every area of our lives. When I was president of the CBI in May last year—I finished my tenure in June last year—it was brought to my notice by the Ukrainian ambassador that the port of Odessa was being blocked. At the B7 before the G7, I was able to take this forward with the German Chancellor when Germany was chairing the G7, and after that the UN, with Russia, Turkey and Ukraine, got the port unblocked and we had that grain flowing. Now we have heard that that deal has stopped, sadly. This has had a huge effect on food supplies around the world, particularly in developing countries desperately needing that grain coming from Ukraine.

The Dasgupta review, which I will come to later, speaks about “the soils”. It says that

“if soil biodiversity were lost completely, the land-based food system would cease to function”.

My noble friend Lord Devon spoke about acronyms, and here is one: SFI, the sustainable farming incentive. It has arable and horticulture and soil standards, an improved grassland soil standard, a moorland standard, as well as nutrient management, integrated pest management, hedgerow and low/no input grassland standards.

In my role as Chancellor of the University of Birmingham last year, I had the privilege of hosting one of India's most famous spiritual leaders, Sadhguru. It was an amazing event, organised in conjunction with the Indian High Commission. He set off from here—we flagged him off in Parliament Square—on a journey to India to raise awareness to save the soil. His simple message was this: we need a minimum of 3% to

[LORD BILIMORIA]

6% organic content in soil. Is that something the Government are aware of and, if so, do they think it should be pushed in the way that Sadhguru did very successfully last year?

I had the privilege for some years of chairing TIGR2ESS, a University of Cambridge initiative led by Professor Howard Griffiths, a famous scientist. I put it to the Government that we should consider that TIGR2ESS was so successful because it was multi-disciplinary, multi-university, between the UK and India, and included organisations such as ICRISAT for crop research in arid zones, to increase crop yields in India, leading to almost a second green revolution and produce such as millet. We should have much more cross-functional, cross-border research, which would help make the most of our land in England. Does the Minister agree?

The Dasgupta review refers to genetically modified crops. It says that “GM crops remain controversial”, even though prominent scientific bodies such as the Nuffield Council on Bioethics continue to affirm their salience in a world with growing food needs. There are numerous examples of how classic genetic modification and the newer, faster and more precise techniques of gene editing have conferred desirable traits on crops. One important example of transformational crop change through genetic engineering relates to rice, changing its primary metabolism to increase yield dramatically. Because rice makes up 20% of global calorie intake, improvements with growth efficiency have far-reaching consequences. What is the Government’s position with regard to genetically modified crops and their benefits?

Many people have covered the area that we are talking about. The Green Alliance stated that over 70% of the UK’s land surface is farmed—the noble Earl, Lord Leicester, mentioned 64%, which you could round up to 70%. The Green Alliance also states:

“By contrast, the projected expansion of housing, solar or wind energy will occupy two per cent, 0.3 per cent and 0.2 per cent of land area respectively by 2050”.

Agricultural land use accounts for approximately 12% of the UK’s greenhouse gas emissions.

The world will need to produce 30% to 60% more food by mid-century to meet the demand of a growing and wealthier global population. Demand for food is likely to rise in the UK but by a smaller amount. The exact figure depends on, among other things, future diets and reducing food waste. I will come to this later as well.

The good thing about this country is that we were one of the first countries to legislate for net zero by 2050. As president of the CBI, I was very proud that, as one of my achievements, over two thirds of our FTSE 100 companies committed to net zero by 2050.

On the other hand—I sound like a stuck record here—why are we not setting up small modular reactors? Rolls-Royce says that it can produce reactors producing 500 megawatts for just under £2 billion. These would provide power for about a million people, versus an example such as Sizewell C, which costs £22 billion and produces 3,200 megawatts. Why is there a delay? Rolls-Royce says that it can produce 16 of these clean, sustainable, low-cost, repeatable and scalable SMRs.

Can we start these as soon as possible? I was talking with India, which is going to be hosting the G20, and I will be attending the B20. If Rolls-Royce gets permission to produce one of those reactors here—just the first one—that would open the door to exporting them to countries such as India. Rolls-Royce cannot do it until it gets at least one over here in the UK.

The Royal Society produced a fantastic report, *Multifunctional Landscapes*, which has been covered by many noble Lords in this debate. It clearly lays out the benefits of multifunctional landscapes:

“Land-based mitigation could provide up to 30% of the UK’s planned net emissions reductions needed by 2050. Land management is also central to preventing and reversing ecosystem loss”.

However, it goes on that say that:

“A core element of driving up land productivity is to explore the use of land for simultaneously delivering more than one ‘function’”.

This multifunctional approach will be absolutely superb. Of course, my noble friends Lord Cameron and Lord Devon mentioned this as well.

Another of the acronyms used by my noble friend Lord Devon was BNG: biodiversity net gain. This is the Government’s strategy to develop land and contribute to the recovery of nature to ensure that habitats for wildlife are left in a better condition than before they were developed. This is where I come back to the brilliant report by Professor Sir Partha Dasgupta of the University of Cambridge, in 2021. He describes nature as “our most precious asset” and finds that humanity has collectively mismanaged its “global portfolio”.

Our demands far exceed nature’s capacity to supply the goods and services that we all rely on, and the last few decades have taken a devastating ecological toll. The review highlights that recent estimates suggest that we would need 1.6 earths to maintain humanity’s current way of life. Professor Dasgupta said:

“Truly sustainable economic growth and development means recognising that our long-term prosperity relies on rebalancing our demand of nature’s goods and services with its capacity to supply them”.

Since 1970, there has been an almost 70% drop, on average, in the populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians. Some 1 million animal and plant species—almost a quarter of the global total—are believed to be threatened with extinction. Protecting the environment for future generations should be at the heart of any economic vision for the UK.

A point that has not been mentioned is the circular economy, where resources are used efficiently. I can think of no better example than my own industry. When we brew and manufacture Cobra Beer, it is a perfect example of the circular economy. Of the grain used to brew the beer, the waste grain is used for cattle feed; the waste yeast is used to make marmite; the water is treated through effluent treatment and is reused; the carbon dioxide used is captured and reused; the glass in the bottles is used to make new glass bottles as well. The circular economy is absolutely crucial.

As we address the challenge of reducing carbon emissions, we need to think about biodiversity. We need business and government to work closer together and to prioritise national policies which support the development of the markets that value biodiversity

and the natural environment—for example, natural carbon sinks and nature-positive business activity. Biodiversity loss is occurring worldwide, and the decline is set to continue under business-as-usual patterns of activity. The World Economic Forum estimates that over half of global GDP is threatened by nature loss. Preserving nature is central to a sustainable future. The OECD speaks about natural capital underpinning all economic activity.

I conclude by quoting one of my heroes and the individual who wrote the foreword of the Dasgupta review, Sir David Attenborough, the famed Cambridge alumnus. He welcomed the Dasgupta review, saying that it is

“the compass that we urgently need”.

He said:

“Economics is a discipline that shapes decisions of the utmost consequence, and so matters to us all. The Dasgupta Review at last puts biodiversity at its core ... This comprehensive and immensely important report shows us how by bringing economics and ecology face to face, we can help to save the natural world and in doing so save ourselves”.

1.59 pm

Lord Greenhalgh (Con): My Lords, I declare my interests as set out in the register: my residential and commercial property interests and my vice-presidency of the Local Government Association.

It is a great pleasure to follow the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria. We have known each other since university. While his speech was a tour d’horizon, I will keep my remarks focused on issues to do with housing, as a member of the Lords Select Committee looking into the impact of environmental regulations on development.

I pay tribute to the right reverend Prelate for his decade-long contribution to this House and his interest in these matters, and particularly in the long-term future of health and social care. There is no greater conundrum than how we remove the “Berlin Wall” between health and social care and create a sustainable future so that people, particularly in old age, get the care they deserve.

It is important to recognise the scope of this ad hoc committee, which was established last year. It was called to examine the pressures on land use, but excludes the built environment, and to consider land use needs outside the planning system. The central recommendation of the committee is for the creation of a land use commission, although, because of the Government’s negative response, I think the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, has potentially reframed that as a panel: an independent, statutory, arm’s-length public body tasked with producing a land use framework. While it is not suggested that this land use framework set any distinct housing development policy or replace the planning system in any way, it is certainly all about the interaction between housing and land use that clearly should be acknowledged.

The report is comprehensive and includes an impressive amount of evidence—both taken orally and written. I will not comment on the many conclusions and recommendations focused on agricultural land use, afforestation and the importance of combining food production and environmental needs, where possible.

My focus is on the built environment, given my involvement in the Built Environment Committee chaired by my noble friend Lord Moylan. I will focus on three matters: planning, resources and data.

On planning, my understanding is that the land use commission should assess the amount of new land used for housing and employment on a three-yearly basis, and collate information on existing and future demand; and that this information should be used to help determine what land should be used for housing versus land that is more suited to agriculture or food production, combined with carbon sequestration. That is the nub and is clearly fundamental to the future of our planning system. That is where there is a need for a cross-departmental approach. The Government’s response is that they will establish a land use framework but are not keen on having a separate, independent body. I have some sympathy with that, and I share the concern of my noble friend Lord Moylan that perhaps an institutional response is not needed. Although many noble Lords seem convinced by the case for a separate body, I am not—but I am convinced that we need cross-government working. As someone who worked as a Minister in two government departments, I ask my noble friend the Minister: what is being done to ensure that the land use framework—whose publication is promised for this year—has input from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in particular, so that we get joined-up government and consideration of the very broad land uses that are possible?

I have great sympathy with the committee’s finding on resource, and it is something that has been picked up in our committee. The committee strongly supports the need to increase resources for local planning authorities. Otherwise, we will not hit the Government’s nature recovery and biodiversity net gain targets. If we are to support the delivery of local nature recovery strategies and ensure that they are implemented, and achieve those biodiversity net gains, we are going to need more money. We completely support that. Local planning authorities are not in a place where they can deliver all these additional burdens without significant investment.

I am pleased that the Government have responded with some additional funding—£4.18 million in 2022 and a further £16.71 million between April and November 2023—but I am sure that we have to keep a weather eye on the amount of resource for local planning authorities; that will be critical. I would like to have reassurance from my noble friend the Minister that he will keep a weather eye on the amount of resource that is committed, to ensure that the planning system works to deliver the policy agenda.

The other area I have great sympathy for is the need for data, which is important. I support the committee’s call for an effective and up-to-date evidence base for the land use framework. When we took oral evidence, I was struck by the lack of evidence that there is to develop strategies. We certainly need a structure to capture and update data on land use and ecology at local, regional and central levels, which should be accessible, open source, rigorous and up to date. The Government are doing what they can. My understanding is that £140 million is being invested over three years

[LORD GREENHALGH]

to deliver a natural capital and ecosystem development, and that there is a national land data programme—which is across government, in this case—exploring how better to use, visualise and communicate the data and analysis; that is also incredibly important. We recognise that we need better data.

In those three areas, including planning, we need to be aware of how a land use framework needs to work across government. I am sceptical about the need for a separate new public body, but I support the committee's recommendations for greater resource and better data in the absence of enough data at the moment. Let us bring it all together and ensure that, while we protect our rural countryside and have a multiplicity of uses, we also have some chance of building the many thousands of homes that this country desperately needs.

2.07 pm

Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbotts (Con): My Lords, I am tail-end Charlie and also an interloper, so I need to begin by drawing the House's attention to my entry on the register. I congratulate the committee, as others have, on producing such a clear and informative report and on having done so without losing itself in impenetrable jargon and the alphabet soup referred to by the noble Earl, Lord Devon. I also congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, on his magisterial introduction.

If I had been a member of the committee, I would have been pretty disappointed with the Government's response to the central recommendation to create a land use commission. I found the case pretty strongly made. For me, the coup de grâce was given in paragraph 225, which lists the five separate government departments that will have responsibility in this area.

Governments, constrained by the demands of the five-year electoral cycle, find it awfully hard to enter into the long-term commitments that provide the bedrock on which so much of our long-term planning depends. In a previous life, I chaired another committee of your Lordships' House on citizenship and civic engagement. The House will understand from its title that it was cross-departmental and dealt with a very long tail. We learned some lessons from that, because the then Government were also reluctant to consider a co-ordinating body. We discovered two particular problems, which I offer now to my noble friend the Minister on the Front Bench and the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, as chairman of the committee. The first is what we call "initiativitis". Ministers would arrive keen to do a job and to show that they were doing something quickly, so they would set a hare running. Then, because it takes time for that hare to prove that it is worth having or not, by the time it was so proved or not proved, the Minister was gone—up or down the greasy ministerial pole—and, as a result, the initiative then mouldered in decent obscurity.

Linked to this was the absence that we found of any institutional memory—some body, somewhere, responsible for learning from and sharing success and failure, for co-ordinating different policies in different departments and along the way ensuring value for money for the taxpayer. I hope that the Minister can find a way to think further about that issue.

I have two points to make about the report itself. On the first, my fox was largely shot by my noble friend Lord Lucas, because he talked about the issue of water. I was disappointed that chapter 2 did not refer to water security but dealt only with food security, as water security is, in my view, an even more important point. The Environment Agency will tell us that by 2075 we will have run out of water in London and the south-east. We may be able to move water around the country, using our canal network, as has been talked about, but if we are going to build reservoirs, there will be a very substantial use of space, and it would have been helpful if the committee had spent a moment or two on that issue.

My second and absolutely fundamental issue—the elephant in the room for me—is people. It is our population, the likely rate of growth and the consequent impact, good or bad, including particularly on the many areas that are the subject of this report. I shall give noble Lords a couple of numbers. In the past 25 years, since 1997, our population has increased every year by 365,000 people, of which 100,000 is the natural increase and about 250,000 or 275,000 are arrivals from overseas. That means that our population has, over the period, increased by 9.2 million people. What do 9.2 million people look like? They look like three cities the size of Greater Manchester, which has a population of about 2.8 million or 2.9 million.

Since we are talking about a committee report on land use, I should mention that Greater Manchester has an area of about 1,276 square kilometres—so we have three of those, which is going to be about 3,800 square kilometres, which in turn is 1.5 times the size of Berkshire, which has an area of about 2,400 or 2,500 square kilometres. So over the past 25 years, we are likely to have built over an area 1.5 times the size of Berkshire.

Many believed that Brexit would bring that all to an end, but in fact the reverse has been the case. In 2021, we gave rights to remain here permanently to 500,000 people; in 2022, that number went up to 606,000 people. Allowing for some natural increases, we have probably given rights to remain here to between 1.25 million and 1.5 million people in the past two years. The Migration Observatory at Oxford University, a well-regarded think tank, thinks that the UK population is likely to increase by between 8 million and 9 million people by 2045. That means having to build over yet another 1.5 Berkshires to house them and look after them.

How is this happening? It is happening because the discussion about this has become strangely unbalanced. There are two views, both in favour of higher levels of population growth, dominating the discussion. The first is what I call the moral case—that we owe it to people less fortunate than ourselves to welcome them here—and the second is the business case—that we need people to do jobs that Brits cannot or will not do. Both those have their points of view. It is not so much about the fact that we should not have any new arrivals, as we need the economic and cultural dynamic that some new arrivals give. But it is an issue about scale, particularly in relation to the business case, because British industry and commerce are now treating migration as the default option, with consequent very serious

long-term consequences for our settled population. But along the way, away from those two cases, there remain the 67.3 million people who live in this country, the settled population, whose views are rarely heard.

Their worries and concerns range widely. They do not ignore the moral or the economic case but they are about overcrowding, about damage to our environment and ecology, about our ability to meet our climate change goals and about threats to our social cohesion. In short, they are the people who would agree with Robert Kennedy when he said that GDP

“measures everything ... except that which makes life worthwhile”.

What can we do about this? There is an answer, and it could be to have some sort of overarching body, perhaps called the office for democratic change, or the office for population sustainability if you prefer, perhaps created along the lines of the Office for Budget Responsibility, to provide authoritative, transparent and evidenced-based reports on the inevitable trade-offs as our population grows fast. Importantly, it would report to Parliament, thus ensuring that the concerns of the unheard, the 67.3 million unheard, including committees such as the one whose report we are discussing today, have been registered at a supra-departmental level.

What will my noble friend say? He will say nothing, if he can possibly get away with it. If he is pressed, he will say, “Nothing to do with me, guv”, and that of course means that this issue, like so many of the issues referred to in this report, will fall between the cracks of various government departments.

Let me conclude. Some Members of your Lordships’ House may read Caitlin Moran in the *Times*. She is a Wolverhampton born and bred journalist, and therefore an urban soul. She wrote in the *Times* a couple of weeks ago

“For, really, what victory has been gained if our country is one of the wealthiest in the world but our rivers are too sewage-riddled to swim in, our dawns stripped of the dawn chorus, and our children can reach university age without having heard a spring cuckoo, seen a swallow in flight or a hedgehog trundle across the lawn?”

That seems to be the challenge that this committee sought to address, a challenge that in my view will be much more difficult to meet if we continue to increase our population as we have over the recent past, but it is surely a challenge we have to continue to address, because at root it is about the sort of country we want to leave to future generations, and what could be more important than that?

2.17 pm

Baroness Bakewell of Hardington Mandeville (LD): My Lords, I declare my interest as set out in the register as a vice-president of the LGA. I congratulate the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle on his valedictory speech. His contribution will be sorely missed in the House after he has left us.

I congratulate the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, on his introduction to this debate and on his excellent chairmanship of the Land Use in England Committee, of which I was a member. The noble Lord is enthusiastic about the rural countryside, the environmental and economic well-being of the countryside and how it fits into and contributes to the prosperity of the whole of England.

The committee spent many hours listening to evidence from experts and those heavily involved in land use of one sort or another and reading the many and varied submissions we received. Had it not been for the tabling of this debate on the last day before the Recess, I am sure that more of our number would have taken part in the debate. The report of the committee was extensive and contained 41 recommendations. It was clear from the outset that our recommendations would not be confined to the work of Defra alone.

Our major recommendation was for the setting up of an independent land use commission which would cover five departments: DLUHC, representing housing, local government and planning; BEIS, representing the need for increased self-sufficiency in renewable energy, a vital growth area; DCMS, representing the need for access to nature and tourism, including rights of way, as referred to by the noble Lord, Lord Rosser; the Department for Transport, representing the need for transport infrastructure; and of course Defra, representing the interests of food, biodiversity and forestry.

The government response to the report is to bring forward a land use framework, which will be the purview of Defra alone. Can the Minister say when this is going to be brought forward? How wide-ranging will it be? Is it going to cover agricultural land alone?

The inference is that experts will devise the framework. Experts tend to have their own agendas; we need those with a wider field of vision to bring to the issue of land use, as the noble Baroness, Lady Mallalieu, referred to.

The land use committee heard evidence from a wide range of sources. One emerging theme was the uncertainty felt by the farming community about the implementation of ELMS, which was heralded as a saviour of the landscape during the Brexit negotiations. The three strands—the sustainable farming incentive, local nature recovery and landscape recovery—are all important, but there is such uncertainty in the NFU farming community that take-up has been slow. The last, landscape recovery, has yet to announce its first round of applications, which should happen “shortly”. Can the Minister say whether this will be before we return in September, before the King’s Speech or perhaps before Christmas?

Local nature recovery strategies are an essential element of land use and for recovery. The noble Baroness, Lady Willis of Summertown, made an excellent case for LNRS during her recent regret Motion but, however excellent local nature recovery strategies are, they will fail if more emphasis is not placed on their importance and if they are not properly resourced, as mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Greenhalgh. The current language around local authorities’ powers and duties under the Environment Act—“having due regard” to ensure LNRS are successful—is weak and ineffective. This is a missed opportunity to give some real backbone to, and ensure proper resourcing of, this vital strand of biodiversity recovery.

Another flag in the committee’s report was biodiversity net gain—what developers can contribute at the same time as they appear to destroy. The noble Lord, Lord Moylan, referred to this. Biodiversity net gain off site is not

[BARONESS BAKEWELL OF HARDINGTON MANDEVILLE] acceptable and gives no real ownership to developers of the impact of their actions. BNG must be on site and considered at the initial planning stage. Loss of habitat equates very quickly to loss of species; the only way to prevent this is to take it into account at the start of the development process.

Land use change is an inevitable consequence of climate change mitigation and adaptation. The NFU believes that we need a multifunctional land use strategy that manages the risk of significant competition between land use categories. Local authorities are the planning authorities and are governed by national planning policies. They need to facilitate agricultural modernisation and productivity growth at the same time as meeting biodiversity, public amenity and landscape culture. This must be done by working on environmental market principles while recognising and ensuring the involvement of tenant farmers, who should be able to benefit from the services from the land—after all, they farm 64% of it. The noble Baroness, Lady Rock, referred to this.

While there have been a handful of questions in the Chamber on biodiversity, there have been plenty on water quality and availability. Reducing the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture in our waterways is vital. However, can the Minister say why agriculture is expected to carry the whole weight of reducing this, while water companies are asked to do nothing, despite contributing between one-quarter and one-third of all nitrogen pollution?

It is a great pity that the date of this debate has meant that the noble Baroness, Lady Young of Old Scone, cannot be present to press the case for tree planting and woodland preservation. Defra is keen to increase woodland cover from 14.5% to 17.5% of the total land area in England, with 11 million trees. While it is important that more trees are planted, it must be the right trees in the right places. Farmers and land managers are willing to take part in this role of meeting environmental change to our countryside, but this must be alongside providing food for the nation.

While the public, if asked, are behind the Government's plans to stop the decline in biodiversity, increase woodland cover and re-establish species recovery, they are also enthusiastic about producing our own food, and want to support British farmers and producers whenever they can. This is a balancing act, but one which the farming community is ready to engage with. They do need clarity, as farming is not a short-term activity but one which needs careful planning and preparation, especially for the tenant farmers. Clarity around the ELMS programme is still a drawback for many farmers, and the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, has referred to this. The land they either rent or own has a role to play in a land use strategy. The Government cannot ignore the role of these farmers when they produce a land use framework.

The Government's response to the committee's report was underwhelming and is a missed opportunity to do something really effective. I wonder whether the Government really understand the impact they could have if they got it right. Given the contribution from the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots, I am somewhat timid in making my next point, but

I am going to do it anyway. The Prime Minister's announcement yesterday, that housing development would be exclusively in cities and large towns, has sounded the death knell for our rural communities. This demonstrates how vitally a multinational, multicultural strategy is needed.

There will now be no low-cost housing for young people, young couples or young families in rural areas. This will result in social engineering on a grand scale. Who will provide the children for our rural schools? Where will the teachers, the voluntary firefighters, the police officers, the hairdressers, the nurses and the farm workers live? All of these are essential occupations in rural hamlets and villages. The right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle referred to the need for sustainable housing. Having no new homes means fewer residents, which means fewer bus services. Young people will be unable to mix in the evenings, and young people do need each other. They are noisy and they like loud music, but they are full of life and need stimulation and something to do. They will be pushed out of the countryside.

This announcement may well deliver the number of homes the Government have promised, but it is very short-sighted. I am not surprised; the lack of a proper rural strategy is about to come home to roost. Rural areas are not just about agriculture and farming. There is a real need for a vision for land use that covers departments other than Defra, and many others have referred to this. The Government's response is, sadly, a missed opportunity to make a real difference, and I remain deeply disappointed.

2.28 pm

Baroness Hayman of Ullock (Lab): My Lords, I start by declaring my interest as president of the Rare Breeds Survival Trust, but also as co-chair of the APPG for the Timber Industries and the work that I do with them.

I thank the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, for his excellent introduction, and all the members of the committee who have taken part in producing the report and who have spoken in the debate today. It has been a really important debate, and one that I am sure that we will continue. In particular, I congratulate the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle on his valedictory speech and wish him happy birthday for yesterday. It has been a real privilege knowing the right reverend Prelate—Bishop James—initially through the Church in Cumbria, then as a Member of Parliament, and now in your Lordships' House. He has given many of us his experience, knowledge and wisdom in everything that he has worked on. He will be missed both here and in Cumbria.

When I was reading this report, I found that it drew a close focus on to why we need a land use framework: the fact that there is a finite amount of land in England yet increasing pressures on what this land needs to deliver. The current system, where different needs are delivered in isolation by different teams and organisations following policies set by different departments, is inefficient and, as we know, can have unintended and unforeseen consequences. The report talks about the challenges, pressures and missed opportunities from working in these siloes. This point has come across very strongly

in the debate. As we have heard, it does not have to be like this, and I hope the Government will take much of what is in the report and actually act on its suggestions.

My noble friend Lady Mallalieu talked about the fact that there is already a land use strategy in Scotland and that Wales has produced *Future Wales*, its spatial plan. So, England is missing out on this cross-departmental approach to how we are going to use our land in the future. It is good that Defra is developing its land use framework for England, and I am sure we all look forward to its publication in May.

Listening to the debate has thrown up a number of questions that face planners, farmers, landowners, land managers, local authorities and local communities all over the country. For example, how much food should the UK actually aim to produce? Where should it be produced? How can we improve our food security? How do we grow more healthy food that is suited to current conditions and future conditions as we face the challenges of climate change?

How much land needs to be devoted to energy—to solar, wind, nuclear, tidal—and where should this infrastructure go? How do we incorporate this green infrastructure right across the landscape while improving public access to nature, as noble Lords have said? How sustainable does the UK want to be for timber production, for example, and other green building materials? What should we be growing and where? Where should we build our houses? As the noble Lord, Lord Hodgson of Astley Abbots, said, what are we going to do about water and reservoirs? Again, that is something we need to take much more seriously.

There has been much debate about food production and the challenges facing farmers and agriculture. The food strategy the Government set out last year said that domestic food production is a vital contributor to national resilience and food security, but we have heard about the challenges of Brexit and Ukraine, as the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, mentioned. They demonstrate that our food system has a fragility, with many farmers struggling.

We also know from this debate the importance of nature and food security working together. It is critical that land use and yield are viewed in a holistic and balanced way, recognising that some land—we have heard about the peat and wetland we could use for carbon sequestration, for example—is better used for nature restoration while other land needs to balance the needs of nature at the same time as delivering good agricultural yields. The noble Baroness, Lady Rock, talked about the challenges for tenant farmers; that has to be taken into account.

If we are looking at nature and biodiversity, agriculture and land use change is not only driving climate impacts but causing a dramatic decline in wildlife—as we have heard from many noble Lords today—meaning that we are one of the most nature-depleted countries on earth. It is shocking to me that that is continuing to get worse; we are not turning it around. We really have to grasp the nettle on this—I know the Minister feels strongly about it—because, with the right approach, responsible land management can produce the food we need while at the same time creating space for a diverse range of plant and animal life to thrive.

Noble Lords have talked about the importance of forestry and woodland, but the woodland targets set out in the England trees action plan have not been reached. There were a number of reasons why Confor said that this was the case, the first being uncertainty as to what land trees can be planted on. We need to grasp this.

The noble Lord, Lord Cameron, mentioned farmers' concerns about moving to tree planting, so how are we going to address this? As the noble Earl, Lord Leicester, mentioned, we have heard how trees and different planting schemes can contribute to carbon sequestration. However, the noble Lord, Lord Lucas, asked a number of questions about exactly how we measure this—how do we know what we are achieving?

Tourism and access to nature was mentioned by noble Lords. Many people want better access, improved rights of way, and value; as we heard, the benefits of enjoying the countryside and getting outside in nature were very much apparent during Covid. In particular, my noble friend Lord Rosser talked about the section of the report which mentions access and open spaces and how important that is for health and well-being, and that the commitments to access do not have the same status as other land commitments. He asked a number of important questions about how we will manage rights of way in the future.

Housing and planning were mentioned by the noble Lord, Lord Greenhalgh, the right reverend Prelate and a number of other noble Lords. How do we consider new housing and associated development alongside the energy and related infrastructure we need when we are developing new housing? Water is part of that, because it puts significant demands on land in very specific areas. Again, how do we decide where those areas are and what we need?

The report does not propose that the land use framework set any distinct housing development policy or replace the planning system in any way. However, you cannot ignore the interaction of housing with land use, so we need to somehow bring this together in a sensible and practical way.

Green infrastructure was discussed. The noble Lord, Lord Cameron, said that it needs to be in the right place, not on productive land, and the noble Baroness, Lady Rock, talked about that in relation to solar farms, for example. In the report, Natural England suggested that

“it would be beneficial to fully integrate energy and other infrastructure planning with other aspects of the land use and marine planning systems”.

Again, I would be interested to hear the Government's and the Minister's response to those comments.

However, the key thing that came through was the issue of multifunctionality. The noble Earl, Lord Devon, talked about this at some length, and about the NFU's concerns and the pressures that come from farmers on how to deliver this. The NFU's briefing, for which I thank it, said that its vision for a land-use framework is based on a principle of land sharing—the delivery of multiple outputs and benefits from the same parcel of land—not land sparing, which is the repurchasing of farmland to deliver new outcomes, and that it must represent viable business propositions. That is a really

[BARONESS HAYMAN OF ULLOCK]

key point. You cannot expect farmers not to maintain viable businesses. Given the finite land area of the UK and the importance of our food security—it has been fairly volatile recently, and we need to recognise that—we need to ensure that our countryside is a multifunctional and dynamic space.

I also thank the Nature Friendly Farming Network for its report, *Rethink Food*, which explicitly recognises that farms play multiple roles in our national economy and landscape. They produce food but also protect, restore and expand habitats and ecosystems. We must therefore ensure that these land-use decisions have all the different targets, needs and aspirations we need as our country moves forward. As the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, said, we need to achieve a flexible framework, and we need flexible encouragement; we do not need a top-down approach.

In the light of the Government's land use framework, which is due in May, and their decision not to accept the report's recommendations on a land use commission to deliver on the outcomes we need, can the Minister confirm that the May report will be substantial and, as the noble Lord, Lord Greenhalgh, said, that all the different sections of government will have contributed to it, so that it is substantial and capable of delivering what the excellent report we have been debating today clearly shows is needed for the future of our land?

2.40 pm

The Minister of State, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Lord Benyon) (Con): My Lords, I refer you to my entry in the register. I start by paying tribute to the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle. His contribution to this House and the wisdom of his involvement here over a decade was well known to me as a new arrival, and I pay tribute to what he said today but also for his service to this House. He talked about many issues that came up in this debate, and his interest in social welfare is of course very pronounced. It was great that he could speak in this debate, because I think understanding nature's ability to heal us in body and mind is fundamental. I know that he will continue to take a great interest and we wish him well for the future.

On behalf of the Government, I thank the noble Lord, Lord Cameron of Dillington, and members of the Land Use in England Committee for its report. I reiterate the commitment made in the government response: that the land use framework to be published later this year will build on the committee's insights and recommendations. It is certainly one of the most readable reports that I have read from a committee of either House. It was evidence-based and took a wide range of advice, and I pay tribute to the depth in which it went into the matter. He said in his remarks that we live at a time of a whole new agenda for land use, and he is absolutely right. I will come on to talk about how we have got to this point and how I hope the Government can take forward the very important work that he has set in train.

The noble Baroness, Lady Young of Old Scone, who cannot be here today, was absolutely right to press the issue of land use as a priority for this House to

address with a year-long special Select Committee inquiry. Like the committee, the Government have tried to take a long-term view on land use. Somebody, I think from behind me, said that they rather suspected that we just wanted to muddle through. I can only try to reassure the House that this is a serious attempt at doing the very opposite of muddling through: this is about being strategic, understanding the difficulties, complexities and contradictions and coming forward with a plan—a strategy that will work for the future.

The Government have legislated to tackle the challenges of our times through the updated Climate Change Act, the Environment Act and the Agriculture Act. Meeting these challenges will require a shift in the way we think about land and how it is used.

We still live in a country shaped by the 1947 Agriculture Act and the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act. These Acts built on the Scott report of 1942, which began with an observation that still holds true:

“that Britain is exceptionally fortunate in the great diversity of physical environment in a small space, and that successful planning consists in finding the right uses for each type of what is a major national asset—the land”.

Even just 40 years ago—a heartbeat in terms of the natural environment—the Wildlife and Countryside Act was made law. In that piece of legislation, there was no mention of climate change or the crisis of species decline. I pay tribute to the noble Baroness, Lady Boycott, because too often, Governments, officials and agencies talk about biodiversity decline. There is a real and present crisis in species decline, and the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, talked about Professor Partha Dasgupta's report, which showed that it is not just an environmental crisis; it is an economic one as well, one that we have to address. It is absolutely at the heart of this issue.

It is often said that we live in a time of unprecedented challenges, but these reforms that I have spoken about—these different Acts of Parliament over those decades, often prepared in the midst of World War Two—put our present challenges into perspective.

In that spirit, I turn to four of the challenges raised by the committee: climate change, nature recovery, food security and economic infrastructure. Each of those challenges presents a different chance to make a virtue of the huge diversity of England's natural capital. The framework will explain how policy development can more accurately reflect the value of land as a durable asset. This is not a simple task, but the work is already under way to bring the latest advances in spatial data science into government. This represents a step change in policy-making. There are probably few people in this building who understand multifunctionality more than my noble friend Lord Leicester. He spoke with real understanding about joining together the need to produce food, to sequester carbon, to create new habitats for biodiversity and to tie all that in with innovation. He spoke really well. The work that we have undertaken means that we can now consider not just the market value but the public and intrinsic value of land.

Our landscapes have a major part to play in contributing to our emissions reduction targets. We must mitigate climate change while adapting to a changing

climate as well as restoring nature and delivering resilient infrastructure. This is in addition to building on the high levels of resilience in our food system. With those challenges come opportunities. These objectives can be mutually supportive, with improved infrastructure leading to enhanced rural and agricultural productivity, nature restoration supporting food production by improving soil health, and better green infrastructure improving the quality of urban places. To take the point made by the noble Lord, Lord Bilimoria, soils are absolutely at the heart of this, as is increasing organic matter—Sadhguru, who I heard speak in this building and was probably brought by the noble Lord, is leading a global campaign on this.

What is needed is the proper metrics. The Government have set out what good looks like in terms of enticing large amounts of private sector capital into nature conservation. We have sought to tackle what some people have referred to as what did exist with a plethora of different baselines and measures of what is good in terms of carbon and biodiversity. We are providing support to farmers to baseline through our farm resilience advice scheme, which is paid for by government. We recently gave 30 contracts around the country to people who will guide farmers. We talk about farmers a lot in this, because 70% of the land that we are talking about is farmed. Therefore, it is right that we support farmers in making the right decisions on land use.

Our legally binding targets will drive forward action to restore our natural capital and protect our much-loved landscapes and green spaces. These efforts will be boosted by our pledge to protect 30% of the UK's land by 2030. Delivering on this pledge will also demonstrate our commitment to lead by example internationally on nature recovery. As we implement these measures, we will continue to ensure that habitats are restored and created as part of a joined-up ecological network. Local nature recovery strategies will support local authorities to establish the most appropriate actions to take in their area to contribute to this national effort to restore and enhance our natural environment.

The Government committed broadly to maintain the current level of food that is produced domestically in the food strategy White Paper that was published in June 2022. The land use framework will prioritise food production and thriving farming businesses. Our environmental land management schemes will ensure our long-term food security by investing in the foundations of food production: healthy soil, clean, plentiful water and diverse, resilient ecosystems. In March this year, the Government published the *Nature Markets* framework, which clarifies our vision and principles for accelerating the development of high-integrity nature markets. Later this year, we will consult on the role of specific steps and interventions to be taken by government and regulators to enable the growth of these markets. We are committed to ensuring that policy builds on a strong evidence base and to monitoring and analysing the operation of markets as they grow.

We must ensure that the planning system capitalises on these opportunities. The Government are working to streamline the planning regime for large-scale infrastructure to ensure that we deliver the *Nationally Significant Infrastructure: Action Plan for Reforms to*

the Planning Process—a snappy title, but it does what it says on the tin. As part of this, Defra is working to introduce a new biodiversity net gain requirement for new nationally significant infrastructure projects from November 2025.

I am sorry if I was chuntering while the noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, was speaking. It is not my usual behaviour and I have great respect for her, but does she really believe that all biodiversity net gain can be done within the curtilage of a development? That surely is a massive missed opportunity. As much as possible can be done on development sites, but there is an opportunity here to create new wetlands, forests and open spaces for people. If we are so timid as to allow developers to think that they can just do it on-site, this would be impossible and we would miss out.

I pay tribute to my noble friend Lord Moylan for his remarks, and say how much I look forward to his committee's report. His point about nutrient neutrality was extremely well made, because it showed the difficulties that we face. I am often brought to the Dispatch Box to talk about the quality of water in our rivers and why more homes are not being built. It is often because, unless we put in the right measures, those new homes would contribute towards a poorer quality of rivers. My noble friend's point about multifunctionality was absolutely heard by the Government.

The noble Earl, Lord Devon, seemed to predict the result of the next election slightly, but it is far from being decided yet. To his point I say this: in many elections of my youth, the Labour Party's manifesto used to say that it would nationalise land. I remember it well, and I hope that those days are gone, but we all have to be careful that we do not nationalise the use of land by mistake.

Lord Morgan (Lab): I am sorry to interrupt but, as a point of information, the Labour Party did not propose to nationalise land after 1935.

Lord Benyon (Con): I remember standing in an election party meeting and hearing a Labour candidate stating this. Perhaps that was his view, but I do not want to get bogged down in this. I am happy to talk to the noble Lord later.

My point is that we have to be careful that we are using the right incentives. I think my noble friend Lord Inglewood needs cheering up a bit. He is not in his place—he has gone to catch a train, and that may be why he was a little acerbic in his remarks. I wanted to cheer him up and say that I understand the value of incentivising private land ownership, as we should in this country. I understand the power of markets when correctly incentivised and regulated. They can be an extraordinary agent for change in the land management scenario.

We value my noble friend Lady Rock's report very much. I think small farmers are often most able to be engines of change and to adapt. There are huge opportunities here, and I agree with her that we must ensure that the tenant farming sector remains vibrant and a key part of our land use and agricultural policy in the future.

[LORD BENYON]

The noble Lord, Lord Inglewood, talked about the value of the emissions trading scheme. The main purpose of the emissions trading scheme is that it drives down greenhouse gas emissions; that is the key point of what it seeks to do. To the noble Earl, Lord Devon, I just say that the scope of this land use framework is the terrestrial area of England. Many policies, plans and projects referenced in the framework reach across the marine and intertidal areas, which is important for aligning objectives and avoiding issues for projects which span these different zones.

To all noble Lords who are concerned that this is Defra-led and therefore just a Defra matter, I say that they could not be more wrong. I reassure them that several government departments have targets with land use implications. We are working with them to understand and take account of their land use expectations, as well as those within Defra. This includes the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero; the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities; and the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. We want to make absolutely sure that this is being embraced across government; I will come on to talk a bit about that in my concluding remarks.

To the noble Lord, Lord Rosser, I would just say that the Government's plan is to complete the King Charles III England Coast Path by the end of this Parliament. We are nearly there; over 2,000 miles of the England coastal path have now been approved, with over 850 miles now open. I pay tribute to those officials in Natural England who have driven this forward. It is extremely complicated and brings into clear relief the kinds of issues we are talking about; you are dealing with access, activities that might be unsafe for people using that access, and the legitimate use of land for people to run their business, whether it is farming or any other activity. I have been there and seen how they have worked through these problems, and I hope I have reassured the noble Lord that we are making great progress.

The Geospatial Commission recently concluded that a cross-government land use analysis task force was needed. The intention is that departments should draw from shared data on land use to ensure that national priorities are deliverable within our finite supply of land. I agree with the noble Lord, Lord Cameron, on two key points—I agree with most of what he said, but certainly on these two key points. This work is of a continuing nature; it is not a one-off piece of government policy-making that is then considered to be done and dusted. It is like any other long-term policy of the Government, whether it is the NHS or education. It will have to be taken forward; the world is fast-changing and this needs to be an iterative process that delivers and changes policy as and when needed.

The second thing I absolutely agree with him on is that some level of cross-government co-ordination is required. That may or may not be a commission—the noble Lord knows that we are uncertain about that as a way forward—but it certainly will need a group of experts, and a degree of co-ordination.

People sometimes say to me that these matters should be taken out of politics. Well, you cannot take these sorts of matters out of politics. If the wrong

decisions are taken, the Government of the day are rightly accountable, so this does need to have an accountable political element to it. Whether or not that manifests itself in some machinery of government position, I assure noble Lords that there will be a clear understanding that this is a cross-government initiative, that it is for the long term and that it does need to be driven by a force in the centre that co-ordinates that. I hope that I have given my noble friend Lord Greenhalgh the reassurance he needed.

The framework is intended as a guide for anyone involved in land use decisions, whether it be businesses looking to invest in new developments or farmers considering how to build a more resilient business—or indeed the Government themselves. Departments are already making good progress towards developing their estates into multifunctional landscapes, and we must continue on this path, demonstrating clearly that what we are asking of the wider land ownership and land management community, the Government are doing themselves.

I will respond to certain other points that have been made. My noble friend Lady Rock asked whether Countryside Stewardship Plus will be as tenant friendly as SFI. We are making it as tenant friendly as it is possible for it to be. Sometimes, when a massive change of use is being made, you need consultation with the landlord, but we understand the need for tenants to be part of these schemes. I hope I have reassured the noble Lord, Lord Rosser, on his point.

On what is often called the right to roam, I would love the opportunity to have a full debate on access because I have done it all my life in a land management role on the outskirts of a large town. I know how people can be encouraged into the countryside, how they can get the benefits of it and how we should be greening the green belt and creating more space. The Government's commitment that nobody should be more than 15 minutes' walk from green open space is the kind of policy that really starts to develop into a realistic way to allow land managers and the wider public to benefit from it in terms of what can be achieved. The chairman of Natural England made it very clear in an interview he gave to the *Times* some months ago.

I refer back to my points in response to the noble Baroness, Lady Boycott. We have a crisis of species decline, which we are determined to reverse in a very few years. Nothing must stop us doing that, because it is fundamental to the future of the kind of society we want. My noble friend Lord Hodgson made a bleak remark at the end of his speech. I do not want our children and grandchildren not to know the species of plants and animals that I have been brought up with. It requires us all to be part of that. I am not saying that access is exclusive to that. It is not—it is totally complementary if we do it in the right way, in a way that is meaningful and through co-operation.

My noble friend Lord Lucas talked about the churn of people within the Civil Service. I think the churn of people in politics is sometimes quicker, but he is absolutely right. That is why we need to make sure that corporate knowledge on this continues. That is why the House of Lords committee will continue to do that, I know.

A number of noble Lords spoke about water and water resources management. I wish I had more time to go into it because there is a real requirement now for water companies to have water resources management plans that look at not just 10 years or 20 years but to the end of the century, and we are building infrastructure to support them.

In response to the remarks of the noble Baroness, Lady Bakewell, we are absolutely addressing the needs of rural communities. I urge her to read the response to this report and our *Unleashing Rural Opportunity* report, which shows exactly what we are talking about: protecting the kind of countryside we have in this country and the communities that depend on it and live there. I think that would mean that she would be more informed about how we are supporting those very important communities in this country.

When we imagine a scene of rural idyll or a favourite view on a chocolate box or in our minds, it tends to be silent because we are looking at a photograph. I hope that what we can create through this is a very noisy scene that is full of wildlife but also human life, with tractors on prosperous farms, a chainsaw going somewhere in the wood, harvesting sustainable timber, and a rural school playing field with children playing on it, bringing life to that image.

That is just part of what this committee has set out to do. I thank noble Lords for their contributions to this debate. I again thank the committee for setting us on a path, and I urge all noble Lords to look at what we produce. I am not so conceited as to think that it will be perfect, but I hope noble Lords will think that it is genuine and that it is a start to bring together all the conflicting requirements of this single piece of real estate in a meaningful strategy that can inform how we manage land in the future.

3.04 pm

Lord Cameron of Dillington (CB): My Lords, I must first thank all noble Lords who have contributed to this debate, especially the valedictory speech of the right reverend Prelate the Bishop of Carlisle, who has contributed so much to this House. I join others in wishing him well in his retirement, although I suspect that, like most people who are born contributors, his retirement will not be retirement in the sense that a lot of people think of it. I also thank the Minister and his team for the meeting we had last week, and I thank the Minister for his concluding remarks just now.

As I hope I managed to get across in my introduction, the main point is that this subject is not business as usual in the countryside. The Government, I hope led by Defra, has to plan, manipulate and flexibly manage—I am not quite sure what the right word is—our land use going into the future. I emphasise to those noble Lords who expressed concern that we on the committee were not proposing that some large commission would take over and command not necessarily the nationalisation of land but the nationalisation of land use. That is definitely not what we were looking for. We were looking for a small panel with data-collecting and analysis ability, taking the long view, as the noble Lord,

Lord Lucas, mentioned; definitely no dictatorial powers, either from the bottom or the top. Again, as the noble Lord, Lord Lucas, said, you will not achieve your wanted outputs unless you have collaboration. Demanding outputs will never work, and we are very well aware of that. If you want more skylarks, you have to put up the rewards for skylarks. If you want more forestry, you put up the planting grants. You just have to analyse it and work it all out.

On both those subjects, as I mentioned in my introductory remarks, training is so important. You get people involved. I was on the Glover review and I remember visiting the Cranborne Chase AONB, where there was a local scheme to encourage more plovers' nests. I visited a farmer there and, that night, a fox had killed two of his plovers. He was in tears—he was emotionally involved in what he was trying to achieve. It is not all about the money; it is about involving the farmers. Certainly, I am aware that all the farmers I have spoken to on this subject, both before and since we produced our report, have become emotionally involved. However, they need guidance, and for Defra and the Government to help them.

Probably the most important role of our proposed panel, or commission, will be to advise Defra and other departments as to their role in maximising the numerous outputs from rural land and promulgating best practice to both landowners and local authorities. We must know what we have and know the best way to deliver what we want. Just as under the Agriculture Act the Government are duty-bound to report on our food self-sufficiency every three years, and in the same way the Environment Act requires them to report on the delivery of their environmental improvement plans, so too in my view the Government should be reporting on the state of play of the other interdepartmental outputs that I mentioned in my introduction. It should not be a smorgasbord—if that is the right word—of independent departments delivering their bits in separate silos. At the risk of mixing my metaphors, this is an orchestra and desperately in need of an independent conductor; it is a whole new ball game.

I am still of the impression that the Secretary of State at Defra—noble Lords will note that I am not including the Minister in this category—does not really get that this is not business as usual. Our proposals are to help the people of the countryside, the managers of land, to be incentivised to deliver all the various outputs of land. I admit that we did miss out on salt marshes and wetlands, and indeed on the whole subject of water we could perhaps have done a bit more. We want to see all these outputs of land delivered to the nation, particularly to the 83% who live in our towns and cities. We really want to get these outputs from our wonderful countryside.

This incentivisation needs to be bottom-up and top-down, supported by government. It needs the Government's expertise, best practice and, above all, data, on a continuous basis. Our countryside is precious, and we must maximise all that it has to offer us. I thank all noble Lords again for their input to this debate.

Motion agreed.

Lord Harlech (Con): My Lords, I take this opportunity to wish all noble Lords, doorkeepers and House staff a very happy and restful recess. With that, I beg to move that the House do now adjourn.

The Deputy Speaker (Lord Faulkner of Worcester) (Lab): My Lords, I second the good wishes from the Government Whip. The Motion is that the House do now adjourn.

House adjourned at 3.10 pm.